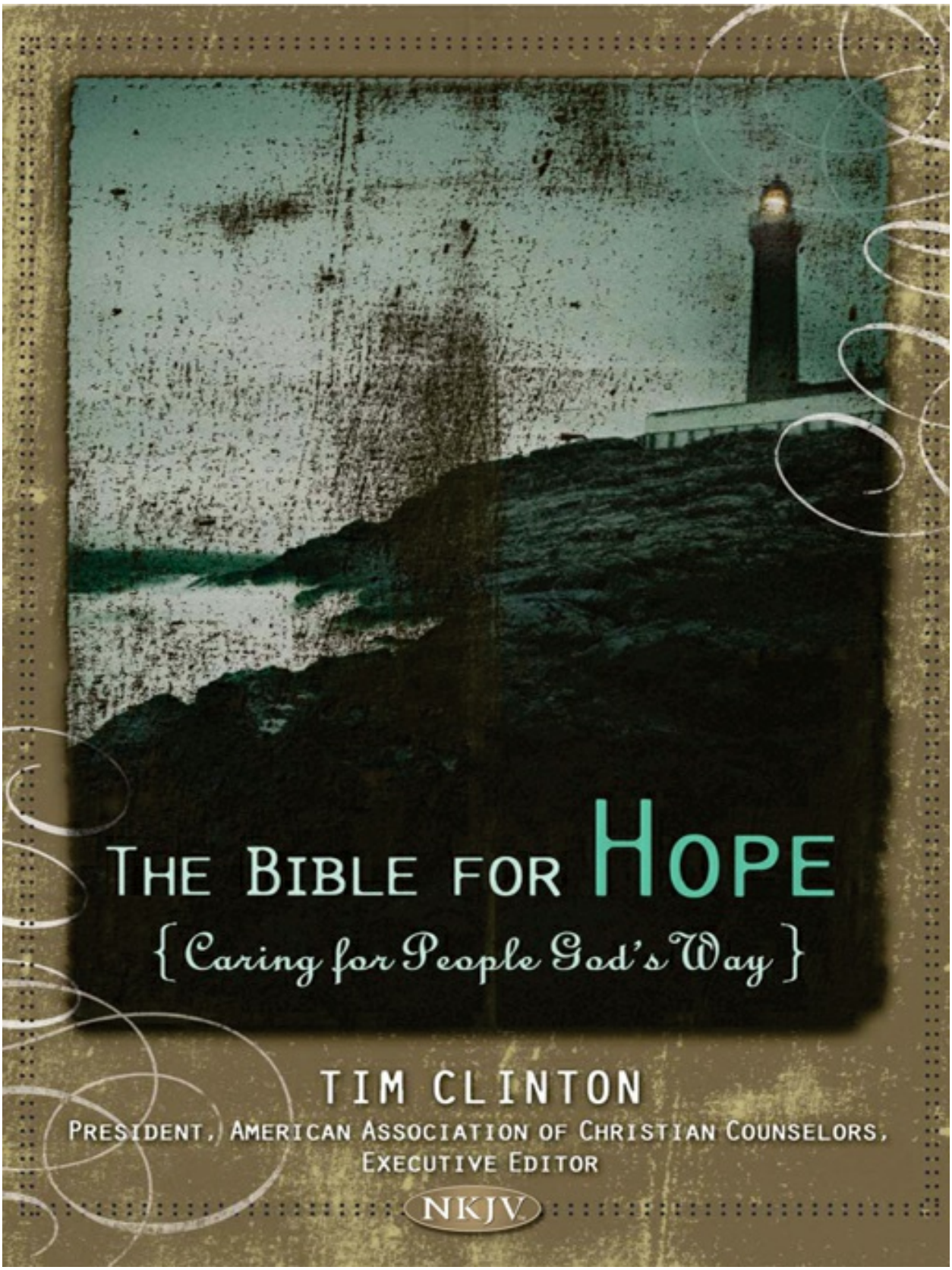
# The Bible for Hope

{Caring for People God's Way}


TIM CLINTON

President, American Association of Christian Counselors,
Executive Editor


NKJV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# THE BIBLE FOR HOPE

## {CARING FOR PEOPLE GOD'S WAY}

NEW KING JAMES VERSION®


TIM CLINTON
PRESIDENT, AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF CHRISTIAN COUNSELORS
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

EDWARD HINDSON
GENERAL EDITOR

GEORGE OHLSCHLAGER
CONSULTING EDITOR



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**THE BIBLE FOR HOPE:**
**CARING FOR PEOPLE GOD'S WAY**
**(FORMERLY TITLED *THE SOUL CARE BIBLE*)**

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# Well-known Christian leaders endorse *The Bible for Hope* for all who need God's care:

"As I pored through the pages of *The Bible for Hope* I felt hopeful. I thought of all the people I meet along the way who look at life past, present, and future with a sense of futility and frustration. The Word of God is their answer. *The Bible for Hope* is a very practical tool, filled with 'real life' examples to encourage them along the path to victorious living."

**H.B. London Jr.**
Vice President, Ministry Outreach / Pastoral Ministries
Focus on the Family

"*The Bible for Hope* reminds us how deeply God knows, understands, and cares for each of us. It offers a path of healing and greater intimacy with Him."

**Josh McDowell**
Josh McDowell Ministries

"*The Bible for Hope* provides a greater understanding of God's guidelines for helping us to live happier, healthier lives. The applications for each passage of Scripture make it easier for us to grasp His infinite love for us and understand why caring for our souls should be a priority."

**Paul Meier**
Psychiatrist, Co-founder and Medical Director of New Life Clinics

"*The Bible for Hope* is written with compassion and concern. There is nothing like it. It will meet people at the point of their need and is destined to be a resource to which all of us will continually resort."

**Woodrow Kroll**
President and Senior Bible Teacher

Back to the Bible

“I used to live with anxiety, depression, fear, hopelessness, and emotional pain every day of my life. I don’t live with any of those things anymore, because I’ve learned the truth about who God is, how He wants me to live, who He made me to be, and how great His love is for me. This same truth is there for you, too, and it can now be most easily found in *The Bible for Hope.”*

**Stormie Omartian**
Author, singer, dancer, actress

*“The Bible for Hope* will enable both trained and untrained people helpers to become Bible-based encouragers who can effectively minister to the many needy souls in our culture. I enthusiastically recommend this much needed resource.”

**Tim LaHaye**
Author, pastor, Christian educator

“I am genuinely excited about *The Bible for Hope!* We finally have a tool both pastors and counselors can use together to help hurting people. Representing the best of biblical scholarship and counseling insight, it is written in a warm and practical style that informs the mind, encourages the heart, and moves the soul. Every Christian needs this Bible.”

**Jerry Falwell**
Chancellor, Liberty University

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# Dedication

To all those who dare to be open to the heart of God
and to the suffering of others.

May you be
encouraged to reach beyond yourselves,
gifted to impart wisdom and comfort, and
blessed as you give care and nurture to another.

# About the Editors

**Timothy Clinton, Ed.D., LPC, LMFT**
Tim is President of the 40,000-member American Association of Christian Counselors (AACC), the largest and most diverse Christian counseling association in the world. He is Professor of Counseling and Pastoral Care and Executive Director of the Center for Christian Counseling and Family Studies at Liberty University. Licensed in Virginia as both a Professional Counselor (LPC) and Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT), he is President and maintains a part-time counseling practice with Light Counseling, Inc., in Lynchburg, Virginia, and also serves part-time as Pastor of Caring Ministries at Calvary Church in Charlotte, North Carolina. Tim holds certification from the National Board of Certified Counselors and serves on the Virginia Board of Counseling. He hosts a national radio call-in program on Christian counseling and living, and is a featured guest expert on the nationally syndicated *Al Denson Television Show.*

Tim coauthored *Competent Christian Counseling* and *Baby Boomer Blues,* and is the author of *Before a Bad Goodbye: How to Turn Your Marriage Around,* and, with his wife Julie, *The Marriage You Always Wanted*. He is a contributing editor for *Christian Counseling Today* magazine and the *National Liberty Journal*, a columnist for *Parent Life* magazine, and the "Inside Law & Ethics" co-columnist in *The Christian Counseling Connection*.

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Ed is Professor of Religion at Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, and

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Ed is coeditor of *The Knowing Jesus Study Bible*, served as Associate Editor of *The Tim LaHaye Prophecy Study Bible*, was a contributor to *The Complete Bible Commentary*, and served as a translator for the New King James Version of the Bible. He is the author of many other books on the Bible, prophecy, pastoral ministry, and counseling, including *Earth's Final Hour* and *Totally Sufficient*. He also writes an ongoing column for the *National Liberty Journal.*

An M.A. graduate of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Ed has a Th.D. from Trinity Graduate School, a D.Min. from Westminster Theological Seminary, and a D.Phil. from the University of South Africa. Ed and his wife, Donna, live in Forest, Virginia.

**George Ohlschlager, J.D., LCSW**

George is Executive Director of the American Board of Christian Counselors, the national Christian counselor credentialing, ethics management, and advocacy agency of the AACC. He is Director of Policy and Professional Affairs for the AACC, a Program Director of the Geneva Institute, and is also founding editor and primary writer of *AACC eNews & cNotes,* the monthly electronic newsletter of the AACC. George chairs the Law and Ethics Committee of the AACC, and drafted the new *AACC Christian Counseling Code of Ethics.* He is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) and maintains a worldwide consulting, coaching, training, and clinical-ethics development practice in conjunction with AACC and Light Counseling. He is a part-time faculty member of AACC's Center for Biblical Counseling, and in pastoral counseling at Western Seminary in Portland, Oregon.

George is coauthor of *Competent Christian Counseling, Law for the Christian Counselor, Sexual Misconduct in Counseling and Ministry*, and the *Liability Management Notebook for Pastoral Counselors.* He is the "Inside

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George holds an M.A. in counseling psychology and biblical-theological studies from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. He has M.S.W. and J.D. degrees from a dual-degree, interdisciplinary studies program in social work and law at the University of Iowa. George and his wife, Lorraine, and their three children live in Lynchburg, Virginia.

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INTRODUCTION TO

# The Bible for Hope

***Timothy Clinton, Ed Hindson, George Ohlschlager***

Life is full of trouble. But you know that. No one goes through life unscathed. Maybe you've recently walked the dark road of suffering. Maybe you are doing so now, or know someone close to you suffering at this very moment.

If so, we hope that you will come to love *The Bible for Hope,* for this Bible was written for you and those you care about.

The entire Bible is a story of a "sacred love"-of God's immeasurable love toward you, a love made complete in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. This love is wide enough to cover every sorrow and deep enough to swallow the worst pain imaginable.

God longs to share this love with everyone on earth, and with you personally. He is eager to reveal this love to you, if you would receive it. He wants you to partake of His glory, to be enveloped with His joy, and to enjoy the sweetest intimacy with Himself.

But, as in the beginning, men and women still incline their ears to evil's deception-that man is the measure of all things and God is not needed. We have suffered the consequences of this terrible lie ever since. Now, billions of people and an abused planet groan under the weight of the accumulated sin of hundreds of generations.

We are still susceptible to evil's intent to confuse us and turn our hearts and minds away from the One who created us for Himself. The Grand Lie still attempts to deceive. Confused and divided in spirit, people often turn to false lovers. Many have idols-whether images in ancient stone or modern markets and feel-good addictions. Such betrayal grieves God deeply, yet He still pursues us relentlessly.

The Bible gives us stories of real people with real problems. It constantly shows us God's compassion and grace as He seeks to bring us back to Himself. The only true solution to life's problems begins in the pages of this book-God's holy Word to us. The awesome message of the Bible is that the God of the universe loves us, cares for us deeply, and desires to have a relationship with us. He alone is our faithful source of strength and our hope in the journey.

## The Hope and Healing Ministry

God has called each of us to have a relationship with Him; He has also called us to reach out to others, whatever their needs. We are dedicated to encouraging believers in this vital ministry of caring for others' souls.

Caring for people God's way means we are compassionate and loving to someone suffering from sorrow, pain, and tribulation. Everyone has suffered life's travails. We generally suffer alone, and sometimes we call out for help, seeking hope and direction. At times, God's Word has ministered to us. At other times, however, our struggle with sin, shame, and suffering has become overwhelming.

With help from God and other believers, we can not only survive trouble, but we can learn the deeper lessons of faith. With help, we are able to move through brokenness and suffering to become wiser, humbler, stronger, and more understanding and caring toward others. The Bible says:

> *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.*
>
> (2 Corinthians 1:3, 4)

*The Bible for Hope* is meant to be a tool to help God's people survive, even thrive, in the midst of the difficulties of life. We believe that God will come alive in His Word-and then He will assist us in the call to help others. This particular edition is designed to lift up those who are suffering, those who are seeking direction, and then to guide us to walk humbly yet powerfully with those who need a friend to come alongside during the dark paths of their journey.

## Hope and Healing for Souls in the Modern Age

In our developed, modern world that overflows with abundance, more and more people are searching for fulfillment by amassing fortunes, pursuing pleasure, or acquiring power. A profound spiritual discontent animates and motivates the pursuit of filling the "hole in our soul. "

Christian soul care is designed to help people get from wherever they are to a place of greater intimacy with and maturity in Christ. Jesus is the Alpha and Omega of such ministry. Soul care starts with Him and asks His Spirit to transform both the helper and the one being helped. Soul care also ends with Him, revealing His Spirit and character alive in us and pouring out of us.

We can view the helping ministry of the church as a three-legged stool. The first leg is the pastor (or pastoral counselor). This is where most counseling starts and often ends. Like the family physician, the pastor is usually the first to intervene and the one responsible for oversight and referral, when needed, to the other two legs. The second leg is the lay helpers working in volunteer ministry under pastoral and church supervision. The third leg is the professional Christian counselor, to whom the more severe and difficult cases are referred. All three legs must be strong and working in unison to fulfill their ministry to hurting souls.

This Bible gives helpers throughout the body of Christ an opportunity to increase knowledge, hone skills, search the Spirit, and reflect on the moral and ethical dilemmas that they will face in the work of ministry. Helping others to grow up in Christ is a wonderful calling, but one that we must practice with all humility and grace, knowing we are responsible to God and to those helped. We need to seek each other's support, with each person trusting the other to hold them accountable for their work. We must strive to one day see Jesus smiling on us and declaring: "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Matt. 25:21).

In short, this Bible is designed to help God's people help themselves and others too.

## Goals of *The Bible for Hope*

This Bible is geared to help believers grow up in Christ and to show how to be effective helpers, assisting others to become more like Christ. This Bible

is designed to:

- describe 116 of life's most difficult problems and outline the divine path of healing, God's way through each one;
- help believers to more confidently know and use God's Word as they deal with, or help another person deal with, these difficulties; and
- provide practical tools, usable strategies, and clear direction as we work through our own life challenges with God's help, and assist others in doing the same.

This Bible is structured to help believers achieve these goals from a problem-to-solution format. Each of the 116 areas of life difficulty are covered in four different ways:

1. A *theme article* by an expert in that particular field defines the subject in a clear and concise way and then encourages action to overcome the problem or help someone overcome the problem.
2. A *key passage note* is located at a targeted passage for each topic. The note briefly describes God's overarching plan regarding that particular topic or difficulty.
3. There is also a *personality profile* of a Bible person who struggled with this issue. Sometimes the person is a good example; sometimes we learn from his or her bad example.
4. *Soul notes* are located throughout the Bible text where a verse or passage speaks to one of the topics. These short notes point out what God's Word says about this topic.

Other features include:

- "see" references that tie together the theme article, key passage note, and personality profile for each of the 116 topics;
- introductions to each Bible book;
- *soul quotes* that focus on encouraging Bible verses; and
- a subject index-concordance.

## Elements of Hope and Healing Ministry

Modern research is confirming what the Scriptures revealed thousands of

years ago: It is the person and the character of the helper, not the technique or model of counseling, that is the more crucial variable for counseling success. People who desire to have a hope and healing ministry should cultivate the following six fundamental attributes:

*1. Compassion*

Our best motivation for helping is rooted in a deep-seated compassion for others. Compassion is the heart of the hope and healing ministry. It allows us, beyond mere intellectual understanding, to feel the struggles of others-to mourn when they mourn and rejoice when they rejoice. People being helped respond to compassion by drawing near in a deeper trust. This simply won't happen unless a helper is filled with compassion.

*2. Knowledge*

Helpers need to be equipped with sufficient knowledge to attain excellence in ministry. We need to gain knowledge of the Scriptures, of personal and interpersonal dynamics, and of the issue at hand. Also, we must have a good knowledge of the person being helped. Not only is it important to have a clear grasp of the problem, but even more we have to know the strengths, hopes, and aspirations of the one being helped. We must be able to:

- help others to tell their story honestly, and then accurately define with them the problem(s) to be addressed;
- help others to set clear goals for changes that reflect godly values, are owned by them, and are doable with the resources available;
- guide others into a study of the Scriptures so that both the goals and the ways to achieve them are biblically sound; and
- help others to translate their current change into principles for lifelong learning and living, leaving them able to continue growth after counseling.

*3. Skill*

Helping others grow up in Christ is a practiced skill, one that usually improves as one does it more and more. We need not be professionally trained, but we should attempt to learn as much as we can. We need to learn how:

- to listen well, hearing others accurately without distorting their perceptions

with our own judgments;

- to join with and accurately reflect the emotions of others;
- to understand and assess the spiritual condition of others, knowing how to help them get unstuck and move through the blockages between them and God;
- to give the right word at the right time, and to be silent at the appropriate times;
- to encourage and guide godly action, rather than merely listening and reflecting; and
- to help others dig more deeply into God and His Word for solace and direction, rather than just telling them what to do.

*4. Holy Spirit's Power*

True Christian counseling always has an invisible partner present-the Holy Spirit. His presence can help resolve any quandary, break through any resistance, and overcome any fear that arises in the helping process.

We helpers must tune our inner ear to hear the voice of the Spirit. A properly tuned ear will also hear the pacing instructions of the Spirit-when to slow down and linger, and when to forge ahead and confront something with boldness.

God knows the right word and the right time to use it. We will be forever changed as helpers when we learn to rely on that still, small voice inside. If we want our ministry to have eternal significance, we must remember that without Him and the Spirit He gave us, we can do nothing.

*5. Ethical Integrity*

If we lack ethical integrity, the word gets out and will be known by all. Eventually, no one will come to us for help. In a sense this is a logical extension of Holy Spirit reliance, because building and maintaining impeccable ethics cannot be done by our own strength. It is a continuing work of sanctification that God does in and through us.

*6. Body Life*

We must be members of a body of believers. In the church there is strength we don't have, wisdom we have not attained, support we cannot give to

ourselves, discipline we have yet to grow into, and mercy beyond all that any one person can know or give. When we mourn, that weight is shared throughout the body, and when we rejoice, that power is multiplied throughout the body. Our undeniable interconnectedness is one big reason why we have helping ministry at all.

Helping ministry in the body of Christ will also help set and maintain clear limits-respecting the limits of our time, energy, knowledge, and skill. Sometimes helping-especially helping those in crisis-calls for intervention by many people who must learn to work together for the good of others. The body will also include other helpers who are more experienced or more easily connectable to those who are being helped, so that one person isn't overwhelmed by the problems of all.

### The Helping Model of Jesus

The very best model of helping is Jesus Himself. He was *compassionate* with others. He challenged false beliefs and dark thoughts with His *knowledge* of the truth. He *skillfully* gave people life-changing hope. He promised rest and peace through the *Holy Spirit*. He was the model of *ethical integrity*. He got others (who would be part of his *body*) involved in the process. Notice how all these elements of helping were alive in the call of Nathanael, recorded in John 1:45-51.

First, Jesus relied on Philip. He used the *body* (another person) to assist in His work of calling this new disciple. Jesus knew Nathanael (with supernatural *knowledge)* and knew Nathanael's skepticism would be a barrier unless He sent a friend. Though God can bypass these steps with power beyond compare, He chooses to use us to help bring others to Him.

Philip's intervention helped get Nathanael oriented to Jesus, approaching Him instead of moving away from Him. Jesus then did something unusual, something unexpected, something very *skillful*. He proclaimed about Nathanael that he was an Israelite with no deceit. Again, He *knew* Nathanael deeply-Jesus clearly saw the depths of the man's soul. We can trust God for supernatural knowledge; at other times, He will simply give us discernment so that we can see where we need to help.

By the fullness of the *Holy Spirit*, Jesus saw all of these things in

Nathanael's soul. Rather than challenging his skepticism, Jesus affirmed the best hopes and aspirations of Nathanael. In doing so, He disarmed Nathanael's resistance and drew him in deeper to that secret place of transforming faith. God has given us that same Holy Spirit to help and guide us as we help others.

Jesus then spoke to Nathanael in a *compassionate* way that was designed to keep him walking with and growing in Christ. As we get involved in the hurts of others, our compassion for them will remove many barriers.

Notice also the *ethical* respect that Jesus had for Nathanael throughout the encounter. Nathanael's best interests were always paramount, and the problems of his skepticism and resistance were respected and dealt with forthrightly. Jesus never lapsed into tricks or coercion, nor did He use His power to intimidate or overwhelm. He sought to persuade, respecting the need to bring Nathanael to a voluntary exclamation of the Truth. As we maintain our ethics, we build a level of trust with others.

Was Nathanael changed? Yes! He was transformed by the love and power of the Messiah and became a dedicated disciple.

Beginning with skepticism, moving to wariness, and then to hopefulness is a process that those who seek to help others face just about universally. Yet we can count on God:

- to give us compassion;
- to help us find the knowledge we need;
- to help us discover the skills to intervene;
- to give us His Holy Spirit to partner with us;
- to challenge us to maintain our ethical integrity; and
- to surround us with others who can give help, encourage, or act as a resource.

May God bless you as you are helped and seek to help others. We pray that this Bible will be a great help to you in your ministry of hope and healing.

# The Bible for Hope Topical Index

**ABORTION**

| | | |
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| Theme Article: | "The Debate of Life: Abortion" (Craig and Janet Parshall) | Ps. 139:16 |
| Key Passage: | "A New Life" | Ps. 139:16 |
| Personality Profile: | "Herod: When a Choice Is Deadly" | Matt. 2:16-18 |
| Soul Notes: | "Choosing Life" | Ex. 21:22 |
| | "What Might Have Been" | Jer. 1:5 |
| | "Leaping Baby" | Luke 1:41 |

More scriptures about abortion:

| | |
|---|---|
| Gen. 1:26 | God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; |
| Gen. 25:23 | The LORD said to her, "Two nations are in your womb, |
| Ps. 22:9 | You are He who took Me out of the womb; |
| Ps. 127:3 | The fruit of the womb is a reward. |
| Ps. 139:14 | I am fearfully and wonderfully made; |
| Eccl. 11:5 | the bones grow in the womb |
| Is. 44:24 | He who formed you from the womb; |
| Is. 49:1 | The LORD has called Me from the womb; |
| Gal. 1:15 | it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb |

**ABUSE**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Hope for Healing" (Diane Langberg) | Judg. 19:25 |
| Key Passage: | "Tragic Chain of Events" | Gen. 19:4-9 |
| Personality Profile: | "The Levite's Concubine" | Judg. 19 |

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| Soul Notes: | “An Inexcusable Act” | Gen. 34:2 |
| | “Rising Above the Pain” | Gen. 50:20 |
| | “Staying Pure” | Lev. 19:29 |
| | “Through the Fire” | 2 Kin. 16:3 |

More scriptures about abuse:

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|---|---|
| Ex. 22:21 | neither mistreat a stranger nor oppress him, |
| Num. 22:29 | Because you have abused me |
| 1 Sam. 31:4 | come and thrust me through and abuse me |
| Jer. 38:19 | and they abused me |
| Acts 14:5 | to abuse and stone them, |
| 1 Cor. 9:18 | that I may not abuse my authority |
| 1 Tim. 3:3 | not given to wine, not violent, |
| James 3:6 | The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity |

**ACCOUNTABILITY**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | “Personal Growth Through Personal Accountability” (Jesse Dillinger) | Jer. 3:11 |
| Key Passage: | “Before the Throne” | Rom. 14:12 |
| Personality Profile: | “Nathan: An Honest Friend” | 2 Sam. 12 |
| Soul Notes: | “Who’s Calling” | Num. 3:1-13 |
| | “Cycles” | Judg. 3:7, 8 |
| | “Seriously” | 1 Kin. 9:5 |
| | “The Best Counselor” | Ps. 73:23-26 |
| | “Sharpener” | Prov. 27:17 |
| | “Heart Condition” | Jer. 17:9, 10 |
| | “The Verdict” | Ezek. |

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| | | 18:1-22 |
| | "Justice for All" | Amos 2:6 |
| | "A Rewarding Wait" | 2 Cor. 5:10 |
| | "Before the Judge" | Rev. 20:11-15 |

More scriptures about accountability:

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|---|---|
| Josh. 22:23 | let the LORD Himself require an account |
| Ps. 10:13 | "You will not require an account." |
| Eccl. 3:15 | God requires an account of what is past |
| Matt. 12:36 | they will give account of it in the day of judgment |
| Heb. 4:13 | naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account |
| Heb. 13:17 | they watch over your souls, as those who must give account |

**ADDICTIONS**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Principled Pleasure" (Mark R. Laaser) | Hab. 2:5-7 |
| Key Passage: | "The Force" | 1 Cor. 6:9-12 |
| Personality Profile: | "Gomer: Addicted to Adultery" | Hos. 3 |
| Soul Notes: | "Hooked" | Is. 5:11 |
| | "Overcomers" | Col. 3:5, 6 |

More scriptures about addictions:

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|---|---|
| Gen. 9:21 | he drank of the wine and was drunk, and became uncovered in his tent |
| Deut. 21:20 | he is a glutton and a drunkard |
| Prov. 20:1 | Wine is a mocker, strong drink is a brawler, |
| Prov. 21:17 | He who loves wine and oil will not be rich. |
| Prov. 23:20 | Do not mix with winebibbers, or with gluttonous eaters of meat; |

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| Prov. 23:21 | For the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty, |
| Prov. 28:7 | a companion of gluttons shames his father. |
| Matt. 11:19 | Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners! |
| Gal. 5:21 | envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, |
| Eph. 5:18 | do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; |
| Titus 1:12 | liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons |
| 1 Pet. 4:3 | we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, |

**ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Helping Teens Grow with God" (Dawson McAllister) | Dan. 1:8 |
| Key Passage: | "Sensible Adolescence" | 1 Tim. 4:7 |
| Personality Profile: | "Daniel Served God First" | Dan. 1 |
| Soul Notes: | "Coming of Age" | Luke 2:41, 42 |

More scriptures about adolescent development:

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|---|---|
| Ex. 20:12 | Honor your father and your mother, |
| 1 Sam. 16:12 | Now he was ruddy, with bright eyes, and good-looking |
| Prov. 1:8 | My son, hear the instruction of your father, |
| Eccl. 11:9 | Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, |
| Eccl. 12:1 | Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, |
| Mark 14:51 | a certain young man followed Him, |
| Luke 2:52 | Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, |
| 1 Tim. 4:12 | Let no one despise your youth, |
| 2 Tim. 3:15 | from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures |

**ADOLESCENT PROBLEMS**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "The Disconnected Generation" (Josh | 2 Sam. 15 |

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| | McDowell) | |
| Key Passage: | “Now I Get It!” | Luke 15:17, 18 |
| Personality Profile: | “Eli’s Sons-Wayward Children” | 1 Sam. 2:12 |
| Soul Notes: | “Who’s Responsible?” | Deut. 21:18-21 |
| | “Right Stand” | Prov. 1:8-19 |
| | “Never Give Up” | 2 Tim. 2:25, 26 |

More scriptures about adolescent problems:

Gen. 8:21 the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth;
Gen. 37:11 his brothers envied him,
Ex. 20:12 Honor your father and your mother,
Lev. 20:9 curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death
Prov. 7:7 a young man devoid of understanding,
Rom. 1:30 inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,
1 Cor. 7:36 if she is past the flower of her youth,
2 Tim. 2:22 Flee also youth lusts;

**ADULTERY**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | “Adultery” (David M. Carder) | Hos. 1 |
| Key Passage: | “Illicit Attraction” | Prov. 5:1-23 |
| Personality Profile: | “The Woman Caught in Adultery: Sin No More” | John 8:1-11 |
| Soul Notes: | “Fresh Water” | Prov. 5:15-23 |
| | “God the Jilted Groom” | Ezek. 16:8-14 |
| | “In the Heart” | Matt. 5:27 |

More scriptures about adultery:

Gen. 38:18 he gave them to her, and went in to her, and she conceived by

him.

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| Ex. 20:14 | You shall not commit adultery |
| Lev. 20:10 | the adulterer and the adulteress, shall surely be put to death. |
| Prov. 30:20 | This is the way of an adulterous woman: |
| Matt. 15:19 | out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, |
| Mark 10:11 | divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery |
| 1 Cor. 6:18 | Flee sexual immorality |
| James 4:4 | Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know |
| 2 Pet. 2:14 | having eyes full of adultery |

**AGING/ELDERLY**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Gracefully Growing Older" (David Seamands) | Josh. 14 |
| Key Passage: | "In the Twilight" | Ps. 71:9 |
| Personality Profile: | "The Graceful Aging of Caleb" | Josh. 14:6-15 |
| Soul Notes: | "Elder Care" | Lev. 19:32 |
| | "Age Is No Object" | Deut. 34:7-12 |
| | "A Raindrop in the Ocean" | Ps. 39:4, 5 |
| | "This Old House" | Eccl. 12:1-7 |

More scriptures about aging/elderly:

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|---|---|
| Job 32:4 | because they were years older than he, |
| Prov. 17:6 | Children's children are the crown of old men, |
| Prov. 20:29 | the splendor of old men is their gray head |
| Prov. 23:22 | do not despise your mother when she is old. |
| 1 Tim. 5:1 | Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father, |
| 1 Tim. 5:2 | older women as mothers, |
| Titus 2:2 | that the older men be sober, |

1 Pet. 5:5 younger people, submit yourselves to your elders.

**ANGER**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Cultivating Healthy Anger" (Gary J. Oliver) | Ps. 19:14 |
| Key Passage: | "Before the Sun Sets" | Eph. 4:26, 27 |
| Personality Profile: | "Angry as Cain" | Gen. 4 |
| Soul Notes: | "Hot Anger" | Ex. 32:19 |
| | "Can't Take It Back" | Num. 20:7-13 |
| | "A Positive Solution" | Neh. 5:6 |
| | "Ready to Explode" | Prov. 22:24, 25 |
| | "A Perfect Anger" | Lam. 2:1 |
| | "Pouting Prophet" | Jon. 4:9 |

More scriptures about anger:

Gen. 49:6 in their anger they slew a man,
Eph. 4:31 wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away
Col. 3:8 put off all these: anger, wrath, malice,
1 Tim. 2:8 lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting;
James 1:19 be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath;
James 1:20 the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God

**ANXIETY**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Understanding Anxiety" (Archibald D. Hart) | Phil. 4 |
| Key Passage: | "Anxious for Nothing" | Phil. 4:6-13 |
| Personality Profile: | "David: The Anxieties of a King" | Ps. 42 |
| Soul Notes: | "Perfect Peace" | Is. 26:3 |
| | "A Resting Place" | John 14:1- |

More scriptures about anxiety:

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|---|---|
| Job 20:2 | my anxious thoughts make me answer, |
| Ps. 34:14 | Seek peace and pursue it |
| Prov. 12:25 | Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression, |
| Eccl. 3:8 | A time of war, and a time of peace |
| Matt. 5:9 | Blessed are the peacemakers, |
| John 16:33 | in Me you may have peace |
| 2 Cor. 13:11 | Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; |
| Heb. 12:14 | Pursue peace with all people, |

**ATTACHMENT/BLESSING**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "The Blessing" (John Trent) | Gen. 49 |
| Key Passage: | "Blessing Our Children" | Gen. 27:30-36 |
| Personality Profile: | "Jacob and the Art of Blessing" | Gen. 49 |
| Soul Notes: | "Bless You" | Num. 6:22-27 |
| | "Faithful Generations" | Deut. 33:1 |
| | "Bless You" | Eph. 1:3 |

More scriptures about attachment/blessing:

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|---|---|
| Gen. 28:3 | May God Almighty bless you, |
| Ps. 1:1 | Blessed is the man |
| Ps. 103:1 | Bless the LORD, O my soul; |
| Matt. 5:44 | bless those who curse you, |
| Rom. 12:14 | Bless those who persecute you; |
| 1 Cor. 4:12 | Being reviled, we bless; |
| James 3:9 | With it we bless our God and Father, |
| 1 Pet. 4:14 | reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, |
| Rev. 14:13 | Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord |

**ATTITUDES**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "How to Have a Positive Attitude" (Daniel | Mic. 6:8 |

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| | Lovett) | |
| Key Passage: | “The Choice” | Rom. 12:1, 2 |
| Personality Profile: | “Michal-Watch Your Attitude” | 2 Sam. 6:16 |
| Soul Notes: | “Don’t Fight God” | Ex. 9:12 |
| | “Lost in the Desert” | Ex. 16:1-3 |
| | “Won’t They Ever Learn?” | Num. 14:1-14 |
| | “Don’t Be Stubborn!” | Num. 16:12 |
| | “Copycat” | 1 Sam. 8:22 |
| | “Let Others See God” | Esth. 6:6 |
| | “Live and Love” | Mic. 6:6-8 |
| | “Overflowing” | Luke 6:38 |
| | “A Work of Heart” | Acts 9:26, 27 |
| | “A Hearty Welcome” | Phil. 2:2-4 |
| | “Mindset” | Col. 3:2 |

More scriptures about attitudes:

Ps. 1:2 in His law he meditates day and night.
Phil. 4:8 if there is anything praiseworthy-meditate on these things

**BELIEF**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | “Renewing Our Minds” (Chris Thurman) | Rom. 10:9, 10 |
| Key Passage: | “In Your Heart” | Rom. 10:9, 10 |
| Personality Profile: | “King Agrippa’s Refusal to Believe” | Acts 26:28 |
| Soul Notes: | “Truth or Consequences?” | Ex. 12:3 |
| | “A Glimpse of the Miraculous” | Dan. 6:23 |
| | “Just Believe” | Mark 9:23 |
| | “Help!” | Mark 9:24 |
| | “Without a Doubt” | 1 John 5:13 |

More scriptures about belief:

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|---|---|
| Deut. 1:32 | you did not believe the LORD your God, |
| Ps. 119:66 | I believe your commandments |
| Mark 6:6 | He marveled because of their unbelief |
| John 10:26 | you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, |
| John 20:27 | Do not be unbelieving, but believing. |
| 2 Cor. 6:15 | what part has a believer with an unbeliever? |
| 1 Tim. 1:13 | I did it ignorantly in unbelief |
| Heb. 11:6 | he who comes to God must believe that He is |
| Rev. 21:8 | the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, |

**BITTERNESS**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Bitterness" (Joni Eareckson Tada) | Job 21:22-26 |
| Key Passage: | "Weed It Out" | Heb. 12:12-29 |
| Personality Profile: | "Saul and the Poison of Bitter Fruit" | 1 Sam. 19 |
| Soul Notes: | "Difficult Times" | Job 21:22-26 |
| | "The Plot Thickens" | Luke 6:27, 28 |
| | "Better, Not Bitter" | Acts 8:20-24 |

More scriptures about bitterness:

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|---|---|
| Ex. 1:14 | they made their lives bitter |
| Deut. 29:18 | there may not be among you a root bearing bitterness |
| 1 Sam. 15:32 | the bitterness of death is past |
| Lam. 3:5 | surrounded me with bitterness and woe |
| Rom. 3:14 | mouth is full of cursing and bitterness |
| Eph. 4:31 | Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, |
| Col. 3:19 | love your wives and do not be bitter toward them |
| Heb. 12:15 | lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, |
| James 3:14 | if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, |

**BLENDED FAMILIES**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme | "Bringing Them Together: The Challenge of Blending | Gen. 29 |

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|---|---|---|
| Article: | Families" (David R. Miller) | |
| Key Passage: | "Blending Two Families" | Gen. 21:9-11 |
| Personality Profile: | "Jacob's Blended Family" | Gen. 29 |

More scriptures about blended families:

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|---|---|
| Ruth 4:13 | So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife; |
| 2 Sam. 13:2 | Amnon became so distressed over his sister Tamar that he became sick; |
| Esth. 2:15 | Esther the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, |

**BOUNDARIES**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Setting Healthy Boundaries" (Henry Cloud and John Townsend) | Ex. 20:1-17 |
| Key Passage: | "Pulling Together" | 2 Cor. 6:14 |
| Personality Profile: | "Lot's Blurred Boundaries" | Gen. 19 |
| Soul Notes: | "Make Your Choice" | Gen. 2:16, 17 |
| | "Youthful Exuberance" | Eccl. 11:9, 10 |
| | "Word Watch" | Matt. 5:33-37 |
| | "Setting Limits" | Luke 4:42 |

More scriptures about boundaries:

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|---|---|
| Deut. 6:12 | beware, lest you forget the LORD |
| Luke 12:15 | Take heed and beware of covetousness, |
| Rom. 13:8 | Owe no one anything except to love one another, |
| 1 Cor. 8:9 | beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block |
| Gal. 5:15 | beware lest you be consumed by one another! |

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| Gal. 6:2 | Bear one another's burdens, |
| Gal. 6:5 | each one shall bear his own load. |
| Col. 2:8 | Beware lest anyone cheat you |

**BURNOUT**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Overcoming Burnout" (H. B. London) | Is. 40:31 |
| Key Passage: | "A Bearable Burden" | Matt. 11:28-30 |
| Personality Profile: | "Jethro: A Friend in Need" | Ex. 18:17, 18 |
| Soul Notes: | "Going It Alone" | Num. 11:16, 17 |
| | "Renewed Strength" | Is. 40:31 |
| | "Rest Stop" | Mark 6:31, 32 |

More scriptures about burnout:

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|---|---|
| Rom. 5:3 | tribulation produces perseverance; |
| 2 Cor. 12:12 | accomplished among you with all perseverance, |
| Eph. 6:18 | being watchful to this end with all perseverance |
| 2 Tim. 3:10 | longsuffering, love, perseverance, |
| 2 Tim. 4:17 | the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, |
| Heb. 10:24 | consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, |
| Rev. 3:10 | you have kept my command to persevere, |

**CHANGE/MATURITY**

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|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Maturity and Change" (Ron Hawkins) | 2 Cor. 5:17 |
| Key Passage: | "A Real Put-On" | Eph. 4:22-24 |
| Personality Profile: | "Paul's Change for the Better" | Acts 9:22 |
| Soul Notes: | "Me First" | 2 Sam. 12:13 |
| | "Immediately!" | Mark 1:16-18 |
| | "Forget It" | Phil. 3:12-16 |
| | "Life Changing" | 1 Thess. 1:8, 9 |
| | "Do It!" | James 1:22 |

More scriptures about change/maturity:

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|---|---|
| 1 Cor. 2:6 | we speak wisdom among those who are mature, |

1 Cor. 14:20 in understanding be mature
Eph. 4:15 grow up in all things into Him who is the head- .
Phil. 3:15 as many as are mature, have this mind;
2 Thess. 1:3 your faith grows exceedingly,
1 Pet. 2:2 that you may grow thereby,
2 Pet. 3:18 grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord

**CHILD DEVELOPMENT**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Raising Our Children" (Paul Meier) | Deut. 4:9, 10 |
| Key Passage: | "Teach Your Children Well" | Deut. 4:9, 10 |
| Personality Profile: | "Jesus, God's Son" | Luke 2:52 |
| Soul Notes: | "Being There" | Gen. 18:19 |
| | "A Godly Heritage" | Deut. 6:4-9 |
| | "Tell the Stories" | Judg. 2:10 |
| | "Growing Up" | 1 Sam. 2:21, 26 |
| | "Childcare" | 2 Kin. 12:1, 2 |

More scriptures about child development:

Prov. 4:20 My son, give attention to my words;
Luke 2:52 Jesus increased in wisdom and stature,
Eph. 6:4 fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath,

**CHILD DISCIPLINE**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Bringing Out the Best in a Strong-Willed Child" (Cynthia Ulrich Tobias) | Prov. 22:15 |
| Key Passage: | "Spare and Spoil" | Prov. 22:15 |
| Personality Profile: | "The Wise Son" | Prov. 2-3 |
| Soul Notes: | "Do Them a Favor" | 2 Sam. 15:14 |
| | "Balancing Act" | Prov. 13:24 |

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|---|---|---|
| | "God-given Responsibility | Prov. 29:15, 17 |
| | "For Our Good" | Heb. 12:5-11 |

More scriptures about child discipline:

| | |
|---|---|
| Ex. 20:12 | Honor your father and your mother, |
| Prov. 1:10 | My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent |
| Prov. 23:14 | beat him with a rod, and deliver his soul from hell. |
| Rom. 1:30 | inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, |
| Eph. 6:1 | Children, obey your parents in the Lord, |
| Eph. 6:4 | bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord |

**CHILDREN PROBLEMS**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Article: | "Problems in Children" (Grant L. Martin) | Mal. 4:5, 6 |
| Key Passage: | "For the Children" | James 1:27 |
| Personality Profile: | "Tamar-A Legacy of Trials" | 2 Sam. 13:1 |

More scriptures about children problems:

| | |
|---|---|
| Prov. 20:11 | a child is known by his deeds, |
| Prov. 29:15 | a child left to himself brings shame to his mother |
| Eccl. 11:10 | for childhood and youth are vanity |
| Is. 1:4 | Children who are corrupters! |
| Is. 30:9 | Children who will not hear the law of the LORD; |
| Eph. 2:3 | by nature children of wrath, |

**COMMUNICATION**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Four Laws of Communication" (Howard Eyrich) | Acts 15:7 |
| Key Passage: | "Words' Worth" | Eph. 4:15 |
| Personality Profile: | "Paul and Barnabas-Communicating Truth in Life" | Acts 15:36 |
| Soul Notes: | "To Tell the Truth" | Lev. 5:1 |
| | "Saying Grace" | Eph. 4:29 |

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|---|---|---|
| | “Listen Up” | James 1:19 |
| | “Before You Speak” | James 3:5-10 |
| | “Word Watch” | 1 Pet. 3:10 |

More scriptures about communication:

| | |
|---|---|
| Ex. 20:16 | You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor |
| Ps. 119:172 | My tongue shall speak of Your word, |
| Prov. 8:7 | my mouth will speak truth; |
| Prov. 23:9 | Do not speak in the hearing of a fool, |
| Eph. 4:15 | speaking the truth in love, |
| James 4:11 | Do not speak evil of one another, |
| 1 Pet. 2:1 | hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, |

**COMPASSION**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | “Comfort and Compassion” (Barbara Johnson) | Is. 61:2 |
| Key Passage: | “Shared Comfort” | 2 Cor. 1:3-5 |
| Personality Profile: | “The Good Samaritan: Above and Beyond” | Luke 10:33 |
| Soul Notes: | “Compassion” | Is. 61:1, 2 |
| | “A Ray of Hope” | Jer. 52:32 |
| | “Showing Compassion” | Zech. 7:8-10 |
| | “The Power to Heal” | Acts 28:7-10 |
| | “Encouraging Words” | 1 Thess. 3:2 |

More scriptures about compassion:

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|---|---|
| Ex. 33:19 | I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion |
| Ps. 86:15 | You, O LORD, are a God full of compassion, |
| Lam. 3:22 | His compassions fail not |
| Matt. 9:36 | He was moved with compassion for them, |
| Heb. 5:2 | He can have compassion on those who are ignorant |

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 Pet. 3:8 | having compassion for one another; |
| Jude 22 | on some have compassion, making a distinction; |

**CONFLICT**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Restoring Broken Relationships: Hope for the Heart" (June Hunt) | Matt. 18:15-17 |
| Key Passage: | "Resolution Solution" | Matt. 18:15-17 |
| Personality Profile: | "Paul and Mark-Settling Their Differences" | Acts 15:37 |
| Soul Notes: | "Owning Up" | Num. 5:6, 7 |
| | "Careful in Conflict" | Rom. 12:14-21 |
| | "Irreconcilable Differences" | Rom. 16:17 |
| | "Careful Conflict" | Gal. 2:11-13 |
| | "Indisputable" | Titus 3:9-11 |
| | "Back Together" | Philem. 10-12 |

More scriptures about conflict:

| | |
|---|---|
| Deut. 25:1 | If there is a dispute between men, |
| 1 Cor. 1:10 | that there be no divisions among you, |
| 2 Cor. 7:5 | Outside were conflicts, inside were fears |
| Phil. 1:30 | having the same conflict which you saw in me |
| Phil. 4:2 | be of the same mind in the Lord |
| 1 Tim. 6:4 | obsessed with disputes and arguments |

**CRISES**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Crises and Crisis Intervention" (H. Norman Wright) | Zeph. 3:14-17 |

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|---|---|---|
| Key Passage: | “A Mighty Fortress” | Ps. 46:1 |
| Personality Profile: | “David and Absalom-A Crisis in the Making” | 2 Sam. 18:5-19 |
| Soul Notes: | “Go Directly to God” | Num. 17:10, 11 |
| | “Truth Grip” | 2 Thess. 2:9-12 |
| | “In His Hands” | 1 Chr. 21:13 |
| | “A Desperate Call” | 2 Chr. 20:20 |
| | “Crisis Intervention” | Esth. 8:11 |
| | “Give It Up” | Job 5:8 |

More scriptures about crises:

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|---|---|
| Deut. 4:30 | When you are in distress, |
| Ps. 25:17 | Bring me out of my distresses! |
| Rom. 8:35 | Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, |
| 1 Cor. 7:26 | this is good because of the present distress- |
| 2 Cor. 12:10 | in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake, |
| Phil. 4:14 | that you shared in my distress |
| 1 Thess. 3:7 | in all our afflictions and distress |

**CULTS**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | “Sweet Equilibrium: A Healthy, Balanced Christian Faith” (Stephen Arterburn) | Eph. 4:14 |
| Key Passage: | “Infiltrators” | Titus 1:16 |
| Personality Profile: | “Simon the Sorcerer-The Trap of False Religion” | Acts 8:9 |
| Soul Notes: | “Convenient Religion” | 1 Kin. 12:25-33 |
| | “No Other God” | 1 Kin. 18:26 |
| | “The Physical and the Spiritual” | Jer. 9:25, 26 |
| | “Satan’s Lies” | 1 Tim. 4:1-3 |

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|---|---|---|
| | "True or False?" | 2 John 7 |

More scriptures about cults:

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|---|---|
| John 17:17 | Your word is truth |
| Acts 17:18 | certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers |
| Col. 2:8 | philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, |
| 2 Pet. 2:1 | false teachers among you, |
| 1 John 2:22 | a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? |
| Jude 3 | contend earnestly for the faith |

**DEATH**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Finally Home" Woodrow Kroll) | 2 Kin. 20:1-3 |
| Key Passage: | "The Last Enemy" | 1 Cor. 15:20-22 |
| Personality Profile: | "The Unwelcome Visitor" | 2 Kin. 20:1-3 |
| Soul Notes: | "Eternal Hope" | 2 Sam. 12:23 |
| | "Facing Mortality" | 2 Kin. 1:6 |
| | "The Gateway" | Ps. 23 |
| | "True Home" | Ps. 116:15 |
| | "Final Victory" | Is. 25:8 |
| | "Present with the Lord" | 2 Cor. 5:6-8 |
| | "Ready to Go" | 2 Tim. 4:6-8 |
| | "What Truly Matters" | Rev. 14:13 |

More scriptures about death:

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|---|---|
| John 11:25 | I am the resurrection and the life |
| Rom. 1:32 | those who practice such things are deserving of death, |
| Heb. 2:9 | He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone |
| Rev. 20:14 | cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death |

**DECISION MAKING**

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|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Decision Making and the Will of God" (Charles R. Swindoll) | Rom. 12:2 |
| Key Passage: | "Making Choices" | 1 John 5:14 |

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|---|---|---|
| Personality Profile: | "The Godly Decision Making of Joshua" | Josh. 24:14, 15 |
| Soul Notes: | "Know the Way" | Josh. 3:4 |
| | "Wise Counsel" | 1 Kin. 12:8-11 |
| | "Living Sacrifices" | Rom. 12:1, 2 |
| | "Make Up Your Mind" | James 1:5 |

More scriptures about decision making:

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|---|---|
| Deut. 30:19 | choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; |
| Prov. 3:31 | choose none of his ways; |
| Prov. 12:26 | The righteous should choose his friends carefully, |
| Luke 10:42 | Mary has chosen that good part, |
| 1 Thess. 4:3 | this is the will of God, your sanctification: |
| 1 Thess. 5:18 | in everything give thanks, for this is the will of God |
| 1 Pet. 2:15 | this is the will of God, that by doing good |
| 1 John 5:14 | if we ask anything according to His will, |

**DEPRESSION**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "The Valley of Depression" (Michael R. Lyles) | Ps. 130 |
| Key Passage: | "Finding a Way Through the Darkness" | 1 Kin. 19:1-18 |
| Personality Profile: | "Elijah and the Darkness of Depression" | 1 Kin. 19:1-18 |
| Soul Notes: | "Hope in God" | Ps. 42:5-11 |
| | "Light in the Darkness" | Ps. 130 |
| | "Oil of Joy" | Is. 61:3 |

More scriptures about depression:

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|---|---|
| Ps. 71:20 | bring me up again from the depths of the earth |
| Ps. 86:13 | You have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol |
| Ps. 88:6 | You have laid me in the lowest pit, |

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| Is. 13:8 | Pangs and sorrows will take hold of them; |
| Lam. 1:12 | see if there is any sorrow like my sorrow, |
| Rom. 8:39 | nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, |
| 2 Cor. 2:7 | be swallowed up with too much sorrow |
| Phil. 2:27 | lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow |
| 1 Thess. 4:13 | lest you sorrow as others who have no hope |

**DISCOURAGEMENT**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Overcoming Discouragement" (John R. Cheydleur) | Josh. 1:6-8 |
| Key Passage: | "Give It to God" | 1 Pet. 5:7 |
| Personality Profile: | "Nehemiah-Rising above Discouragement" | Neh. 2 |
| Soul Notes: | "Overcomers" | Ezra 4:4, 5 |
| | "Victorious and Joyous" | John 16:33 |
| | "A Heart for the Harvest" | Gal. 6:9 |

More scriptures about discouragement:

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|---|---|
| Deut. 1:21 | do not fear or be discouraged |
| Is. 42:4 | He will not fail nor be discouraged, |
| Acts 16:40 | when they had seen the brethren, they encouraged them |
| Col. 2:2 | their hearts may be encouraged, knit together in love, |
| Col. 3:21 | lest they become discouraged |
| 1 Thess. 3:2 | establish you and encourage you concerning your faith, |
| Titus 1:9 | exhort and convict those who contradict |
| Heb. 12:3 | lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls |
| Heb. 12:5 | nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; |

**DIVORCE/SEPARATION**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Divorce Recovery" (Tom Whiteman) | Deut. 24:1-4 |
| Key Passage: | "Divorce Difficulties" | Matt. 19:3-8 |

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|---|---|---|
| Personality Profile: | “The Woman at the Well: Found and Forgiven” | John 4:16-18 |
| Soul Notes: | “Helpless But Not Hopeless” | Deut. 24:1-4 |
| | 8220;Tough Decisions” | Ezra 10:10, 11 |
| | 8220;Don’t Go” | 1 Cor. 7:10-16 |

More scriptures about divorce/separation:

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|---|---|
| Lev. 21:7 | nor shall they take a woman divorced from her husband; |
| Deut. 22:19 | he cannot divorce her all his days |
| Jer. 3:1 | If a man divorces his wife, |
| Mal. 2:16 | the LORD God of Israel says that He hates divorce, |
| Matt. 5:32 | whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality |
| Luke 16:18 | divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery; |
| 1 Cor. 7:39 | A wife is bound by law as long as her husband lives; |

**DOUBT**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | “The Thomas Factor: Treating Doubt” (Gary R. Habermas) | John 20:24-29 |
| Key Passage: | “Are You the One?” | Matt. 11:1-6 |
| Personality Profile: | “Thomas: From Doubt to Faith” | John 20:24-29 |
| Soul Notes: | “Look Again” | Ex. 17:7 |
| | “Dealing with Doubt” | Hab. 1:1-4 |
| | “Power Packed” | 1 Tim. 2:8 |

More scriptures about doubt:

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|---|---|
| Matt. 14:31 | you of little faith, why did you doubt? |
| Matt. 21:23 | By what authority are you doing these things? |
| Matt. 28:17 | they worshiped Him; but some doubted |

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|---|---|
| Luke 24:38 | why do doubts arise in your hearts? |
| Acts 10:20 | go with them, doubting nothing; |
| Rom. 14:23 | he who doubts is condemned if he eats, |
| James 1:6 | ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts |

**DRUG ABUSE**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "The Trap of Substance Abuse" (Mark Shadoan) | Eccl. 2:1-3 |
| Key Passage: | "Toxic Waste" | Prov. 23:19-21 |
| Personality Profile: | "Belshazzar's Substance Abuse" | Dan. 5 |
| Soul Notes: | "Out of Control" | Eccl. 2:1-3 |
| | "Too Much" | Gal. 5:19-21 |
| | "What a Waste" | Eph. 5:18 |

More scriptures about drug abuse:

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|---|---|
| Gen. 9:21 | he drank of the wine and was drunk, and became uncovered in his tent |
| Lev. 10:9 | Do not drink wine or intoxicating drink, |
| Deut. 21:20 | he is a glutton and a drunkard |
| Prov. 20:1 | Wine is a mocker, Strong drink is a brawler, |
| Prov. 21:17 | He who loves wine and oil will not be rich |
| Prov. 23:20 | Do not mix with winebibbers, or with gluttonous eaters of meat; |
| Prov. 23:30 | Those who linger long at the wine, |
| Gal. 5:21 | envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, |
| Eph. 5:18 | do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; |
| 1 Pet. 4:3 | we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, |

## EATING DISORDERS

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|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Eating Disorders: Anorexia and Bulimia Nervosa" (Jesse Dillinger and Gregory L. Jantz) | Judg. 3:17 |
| Key Passage: | "Eating Too Much" | Prov. 23:2 |
| Personality Profile: | "Eli: Unbridled Appetites" | 1 Sam. 4:18 |
| Soul Notes: | "Food Fixations" | Num. 11:4-9 |
| | "Balanced Meals" | 1 Cor. 6:12, 13 |

More scriptures about eating disorders:

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|---|---|
| Deut. 21:20 | he is a glutton and a drunkard |
| Prov. 23:20 | Do not mix with winebibbers, or with gluttonous eaters of meat; |
| Prov. 23:21 | For the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty, |
| Prov. 28:7 | a companion of gluttons shames his father |
| Matt. 11:19 | Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners! |
| 1 Cor. 6:13 | Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods, |
| Phil. 3:19 | whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, |
| Titus 1:12 | liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons |

## EMOTIONAL LIFE

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Emotional Well-Being" (Richard Dobbins) | Lam. 3 |
| Key Passage: | "New Every Morning" | Lam. 3:22-25 |
| Personality Profile: | "Jeremiah Shows It's OK to Cry" | Jer. 9 |

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|---|---|---|
| Soul Notes: | "Gaining Understanding" | Job 23:13-17 |
| | "Life's Secret" | Eccl. 1:1, 2 |

More scriptures about emotional life:

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|---|---|
| Deut. 34:8 | the days of weeping and mourning for Moses ended |
| Ps. 66:1 | Make a joyful shout to God, all the earth! |
| Matt. 5:4 | Blessed are those who mourn, |
| John 11:35 | Jesus wept |
| 2 Cor. 12:21 | I shall mourn for many who have sinned before |
| Phil. 3:18 | even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ: |
| Phil. 4:4 | Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! |
| James 4:9 | Lament and mourn and weep! |

**ETERNAL LIFE**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Eternal Life in Heaven" | Rev. 21:22 |
| Key Passage: | "Forever and Ever" | 1 Thess. 4:13-18 |
| Personality Profile: | "John's Glimpse of Heaven" | Rev. 4 |
| Soul Notes: | "The Path of Life" | Ps. 16:11 |
| | "Heavenly Promise" | Luke 23:42, 43 |
| | "Why Believe?" | John 3:36 |
| | "Secure" | John 6:39, 40 |
| | "True Home" | Rev. 21:10-27 |

More scriptures about eternal life:

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|---|---|
| Eccl. 12:5 | man goes to his eternal home, |
| Mark 10:17 | what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? |
| Luke 18:30 | in the age to come eternal life |
| John 3:16 | should not perish but have everlasting life |
| John 17:3 | this is eternal life, that they may know You, |
| Rom. 6:23 | the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord |
| 1 John 5:13 | that you may know that you have eternal life, |

**FAILURE**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | “God’s View of Failure” (Gary J. Oliver) | 2 Chr. 36 |
| Key Passage: | “Try Again” | Prov. 24:16 |
| Personality Profile: | “Peter: Failure Is Not Forever” | Luke 22:54-62 |
| Soul Notes: | “Never Too Late” | Judg. 16:28-30 |
| | “The End” | 2 Kin. 17:22, 23 |
| | “No Remedy” | 2 Chr. 36:5-8 |
| | “Don’t Give Up” | Ps. 37:23, 24 |
| | “Redeeming Failure” | Mic. 7:7, 8 |
| | “His Handiwork” | Phil. 1:6 |

More scriptures about failure:

| | |
|---|---|
| Judg. 21:25 | everyone did what was right in his own eyes |
| 1 Sam. 15:11 | he has turned back from following Me, |
| Acts 13:13 | and John, departing from them, returned to Jerusalem |
| 2 Pet. 2:20 | the latter end is worse for them than the beginning |
| 1 John 2:19 | They went out from us, but they were not of us; |
| Jude 4 | deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ |

**FAITH**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | “Faith” (Jerry Falwell) | Heb. 11:6 |
| Key Passage: | “Unseen Yet Very Real” | Heb. 11:1-6 |
| Personality Profile: | “Abraham: Stepping Out on Faith” | Gen. 15 |
| Soul Notes: | “Secret Weapon” | 1 Sam. 17:45 |
| | “Unflinching Faith” | Dan. 3:16-18 |
| | “Such Faith!” | Matt. 8:5-13 |
| | “Rock the Boat” | Mark 4:35-41 |
| | “Get in the Race” | Heb. 12:1-4 |

More scriptures about faith:

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|---|---|
| Hab. 2:4 | the just shall live by his faith |
| Rom. 1:17 | The just shall live by faith |

Rom. 5:1 having been justified by faith, we have peace with Godv
Rom. 14:23 whatever is not from faith is sin
Gal. 3:25 after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor
Eph. 2:8 by grace you have been saved through faith,
2 Thess. 1:3 your faith grows exceedingly,
James 2:20 that faith without works is dead?
1 John 5:4 the victory that has overcome the world-our faith

**FAMILY LIFE**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Strong Families" (Nick Stinnett) | Josh. 24:15 |
| Key Passage: | "A Solid Foundation" | Ps. 127:3-5 |
| Personality Profile: | "Timothy: A Godly Heritage" | 2 Tim. 1:5 |
| Soul Notes: | "Honor and Respect" | Lev. 19:3 |
| | "We Will Serve the Lord" | Josh. 24:14, 15 |
| | "Fix the Faucet" | Prov. 19:13, 14 |
| | "Bringing Them Up" | Eph. 6:1-4 |

More scriptures about family life:

Gen. 1:28 Be fruitful and multiply;
Gen. 4:1 Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain,
Ex. 20:12 Honor your father and your mother,
Deut. 6:7 You shall teach them diligently to your children,
Prov. 1:8 My son, hear the instruction of your father,
Eph. 5:22 Wives, submit to your own husbands,
Eph. 5:25 Husbands, love your wives,
1 Pet. 3:7 giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel,

**FAMILY PROBLEMS**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "No Perfect Families" (David Stoop) | Gen. 25 |
| Key Passage: | "Sibling Rivalry" | Gen. 37:3 |
| Personality Profile: | "Abraham to Joseph: A Blessed and Dysfunctional Family Tree" | Gen. 25 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Soul Notes: | "Together Again" | Gen. 46:30 |
| | "Wise Up" | 2 Sam. 3:1-5 |

More scriptures about family problems:

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|---|---|
| Gen. 3:16 | Your desire shall be for your husband, |
| Gen. 4:8 | Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him |
| Gen. 4:19 | Lamech took for himself two wives: |
| Gen. 19:36 | both the daughters of Lot were with child by their father |
| Deut. 21:20 | This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious; |
| 2 Sam. 13:21 | being stronger than she, he forced her and lay with her |
| Prov. 21:9 | Than in a house shared with a contentious woman |
| 1 Cor. 7:5 | Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, |

**FATHERHOOD**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Someone Special" (Robert Wolgemuth) | 1 Chr. 3:1 |
| Key Passage: | "Dear Old Dad" | Eph. 6:4 |
| Personality Profile: | "The Prodigal Son's Father" | Luke 15:11 |
| Soul Notes: | "Children's Glory" | Prov. 17:6 |
| | "Being Dad" | Gal. 4:6 |
| | "Helpful, Not Harmful" | Col. 3:21 |

More scriptures about fatherhood:

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|---|---|
| Ex. 20:12 | Honor your father and your mother, |
| Ps. 103:13 | As a father pities his children, |
| Prov. 3:12 | Just as a father the son in whom he delights |
| Prov. 10:1 | A wise son makes a glad father, |
| Prov. 17:21 | the father of a fool has no joy |
| Prov. 19:13 | A foolish son is the ruin of his father, |
| Prov. 29:3 | Whoever loves wisdom makes his father rejoice, |

**FEAR/FEAR OF GOD**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | “On Fearing God” (Gary W. Moon) | Prov. 1:7 |
| Key Passage: | “Awesome” | Prov. 1:7 |
| Personality Profile: | “Gideon and the Fear of God” | Judg. 6 |
| Soul Notes: | “Afraid of God?” | Gen. 28:16-19 |
| | “Do Not Be Afraid” | Deut. 7:17-21 |
| | “Seriously Now” | Deut. 10:12, 13 |
| | “The Shadow of the Almighty” | Ps. 91:1-13 |
| | “Healthy Fear” | Ezek. 8:17 |
| | “In Awe” | Hab. 3:1, 2 |

More scriptures about fear/fear of God:

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|---|---|
| Gen. 20:11 | surely the fear of God is not in this place; |
| Ex. 1:17 | the midwives feared God, |
| Job 1:9 | Does Job fear God for nothing? |
| Ps. 56:4 | I will not fear. What can flesh do to me? |
| Rom. 3:18 | There is no fear of God before their eyes |
| Heb. 10:31 | fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God |
| 1 John 4:18 | There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, |

**FORGIVENESS**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | “Forgiveness” (Everett L. Worthington, Jr.) | 2 Cor. 2:5-11 |
| Key Passage: | “Don’t Keep Count” | Matt. 18:21-35 |
| Personality Profile: | “Joseph’s Forgiveness” | Gen. 45:5 |
| Soul Notes: | “Forgiven” | Ex. 32:32 |
| | “Making Things Right” | Lev. 6:1-7 |
| | “One Person Can Forgive” | 2 Sam. 14:33 |
| | “Cleansed” | Is. 43:25 |
| | “The Beauty of Forgiveness” | Hos. 14:4-8 |
| | “Forgive” | Mark 11:26 |

More scriptures about forgiveness:

Ps. 86:5 are good, and ready to forgive,
Ps. 103:3 Who forgives all your iniquities,
Matt. 6:14 if you forgive men their trespasses,
Rom. 4:7 Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven,
Eph. 1:7 In Him we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins,
Col. 2:13 having forgiven you all trespasses,
Col. 3:13 and forgiving one another,
1 John 2:12 your sins are forgiven you

**GENETIC ISSUES**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Strength in Weakness" (Michael R. Lyles) | Ex. 4:11 |
| Key Passage: | "Promises of Healing" | Is. 35:1-6 |
| Personality Profile: | "The Blind Man: Revealing God's Glory" | John 9:1-7 |
| Soul Notes: | "In God's Image" | Ps. 139:14 |
| | "Groaning Bodies" | Rom. 8:20-23 |

More scriptures about genetic issues:

1 Cor. 15:44 a natural body, and there is a spiritual body
James 5:13 among you suffering? Let him pray

**GOD'S PROMISES**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Finding the Courage to Believe" (James Clinton) | Deut. 1:8-11 |
| Key Passage: | "Precious Promises" | 2 Pet. 1:4 |
| Personality Profile: | "Noah: Floating on God's Promises" | Gen. 9 |
| Soul Notes: | "Glory Be!" | Ex. 40:34 |
| | "The Promise Keeper" | Deut. 1:8 |
| | "Armed and Ready" | Deut. 2:24, 25 |
| | "Never Alone" | Deut. 31:7, 8 |

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|---|---|
| “God Never Changes” | 1 Kin. 8:56 |
| “His Kingdom Forever” | 1 Chr. 17:12 |
| “God Never Fails” | 2 Chr. 6:14-17 |
| “Peace Plan” | Is. 2:4, 5 |
| “With Us” | Is. 7:14 |
| “Branching Out” | Is. 11:1, 2 |
| “Brand New World” | Is. 65:17-20 |
| “Fully Convinced” | Rom. 4:20-22 |
| “Always with Us” | Rom. 8:38, 39 |
| “Promises Kept” | Titus 1:2 |
| “All Things New” | Rev. 21:5 |

More scriptures about God’s promises:

Num. 10:29 the LORD has promised good things
Heb. 10:23 He who promised is faithful
2 Pet. 1:4 given to us exceedingly great and precious promises,

**GOSSIP**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | “The Power of Gossip” (Dianna Booher) | Prov. 26:20-26 |
| Key Passage: | “A Dangerous Spark” | James 3:5-18 |
| Personality Profile: | “Diotrephes: Talking Too Much” | 3 John 9, 10 |
| Soul Notes: | “Living Justly” | Lev. 19:16 |
| | “Just Between Us” | Prov. 18:8 |
| | “Burn It Out” | Prov. 26:20-26 |
| | “Don’t Pass It On” | 1 Tim. 5:13 |

More scriptures about gossip:

Prov. 17:4 A liar listens eagerly to a spiteful tongue
Prov. 17:27 He who has knowledge spares his words,
Rom. 16:18 by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts
1 Tim. 1:6 some, having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk,

1 Tim. 3:11 reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things
James 1:26 does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart,

**GRIEF/LOSS**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Dealing with Loss and Grief" (H. Norman Wright) | Is. 53:3, 4 |
| Key Passage: | "He Understands" | John 11:35-44 |
| Personality Profile: | "Job's Wife: Learning of God and Grief" | Job 2 |
| Soul Notes: | "God Will Take Care of Them" | Gen. 44:30 |
| | "No More Tears" | 1 Sam. 30:4-6 |
| | "Express It" | 2 Sam. 1:17 |
| | "When Change Comes" | Ezra 3:12, 13 |
| | "Borne Our Griefs" | Is. 53:3, 4 |
| | "Reunion" | 1 Thess. 4:13, 14 |
| | "No More Pain" | Rev. 21:4 |

More scriptures about grief/loss:

Job 2:13 they saw that his grief was great
Rom. 9:2 I have great sorrow and continual grief
Phil. 2:27 lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow
Phil. 3:8 gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ
1 Pet. 2:19 because of conscience toward God one endures grief,

**GUILT/SHAME**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Dealing with Guilt" (Les Parrott) | Ezra 9:5-8 |
| Key Passage: | "Free!" | Rom. 8:1 |
| Personality Profile: | "Adam's Guilt; Adam's Shame" | Gen. 3 |
| Soul Notes: | "Owning Up" | Ezra 9:2-8 |
| | "No Longer Condemned" | Rom. 8:1 |

More scriptures about guilt/shame:

Gen. 2:25 both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed
Ps. 69:7 Shame has covered my face
Prov. 11:2 When pride comes, then comes shame;
Acts 5:41 counted worthy to suffer shame for His name
Rom. 1:27 men with men committing what is shameful,
Rom. 3:19 all the world may become guilty before God
1 Cor. 6:5 I say this to your shame
Eph. 5:12 it is shameful even to speak of those things
Phil. 1:20 that in nothing I shall be ashamed,
James 2:10 the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all

**HEALING/RECOVERY**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Healing and Recovery" (Dan Allender) | James 5:14 |
| Key Passage: | "Prayer for Healing" | James 5:14-16 |
| Personality Profile: | "Peter: A Job to Do" | John 21:15 |
| Soul Notes: | "Ultimate Healing" | 2 Kin. 20:1-11 |
| | "Completely Healed" | Is. 29:18, 19 |
| | "Homemade Remedies" | Is. 38:21 |
| | "Healing in His Wings" | Mal. 4:2-4 |
| | "Heal Our Souls" | Mark 2:1-12 |

More scriptures about healing/recovery:

Ex. 15:26 I am the LORD who heals you
Deut. 32:39 I make alive; I wound and I heal;
2 Chr. 7:14 will forgive their sin and heal their land
Eccl. 3:3 A time to kill, and a time to heal;
Hos. 6:1 He has torn, but He will heal us;
Luke 4:40 He laid His hands on every one of them and healed them
Heb. 12:13 what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed

**HEALTH/SPIRITUALITY**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Health and Spirituality" (George | 2 Sam. 12:1- |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Ohlschlager) | 23 |
| Key Passage: | "Good Medicine" | Prov. 17:22 |
| Personality Profile: | "Paul: Strength in Weakness" | 2 Cor. 12:9, 10 |
| Soul Notes: | "Body and Soul" | Lev. 11:44, 45 |
| | "Preventive Care" | Lev. 13 |
| | "Deliverance" | Num. 21:8, 9 |
| | "Spiritual Health" | 2 Sam. 12:1-23 |
| | "Doctor's Orders" | 2 Kin. 20:7 |
| | "Health and Strength" | Prov. 3:7, 8 |
| | "Forgive and Comfort" | 2 Cor. 2:7, 8 |
| | "Health Maintenance" | 3 John 2 |

More scriptures about health/spirituality:

| | |
|---|---|
| Rom. 8:6 | to be spiritually minded is life and peacev |
| 1 Cor. 2:14 | because they are spiritually discerned |
| Gal. 6:1 | you who are spiritual restore such a one |
| 3 John 2 | that you may prosper in all things and be in health, |

**HOMOSEXUALITY**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Understanding and Addressing Homosexuality" (Joe Dallas) | Rom. 1:27 |
| Key Passage: | "The Way Out" | Rom. 1:18-32 |
| Personality Profile: | "Sodom's Fearful Fate" | Gen. 19 |
| Soul Notes: | "A Sin Against God" | Lev. 18:22 |
| | "Against God's Plan" | Rom. 1:26, 27 |

More scriptures about homosexuality:

| | |
|---|---|
| Gen. 2:23 | She shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man |

Ex. 20:14 You shall not commit adultery
Judg. 19:22 that we may know him carnally!
Is. 1:9 like Sodom, we would have been made like Gomorrah
1 Cor. 6:9 nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites,
1 Cor. 6:18 he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body
1 Cor. 11:9 Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man
1 Tim. 1:10 for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars,

**HONOR**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Lighthouse of Honor" (Gary Smalley and Greg Smalley) | Esth. 6:6 |
| Key Passage: | "On Your Honor" | 1 Pet. 2:17 |
| Personality Profile: | "The Wise Men: Honoring the King" | Matt. 2:7-11 |
| Soul Notes: | "Honor Your Parents" | Deut. 5:16 |
| | "Honorable" | 2 Sam. 9:7 |
| | "Only the Best" | Mal. 1:6-14 |
| | "All Honor and Praise" | Mark 15:16-32 |
| | "Highest Honors" | Luke 7:44-47 |
| | "All the King's Men" | Rom. 13:1-7 |
| | "Love and Honor" | 1 Pet. 3:7 |
| | "Honorable Mention" | 3 John 5-8 |

More scriptures about honor:

John 8:54 It is My Father who honors Me,
1 Tim. 5:3 Honor widows who are really widows
1 Pet. 2:17 Honor all people
1 Pet. 2:17 Honor the king

**HOPE**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | “Hope” (John Trent) | Jer. 29 |
| Key Passage: | “The Other Side of Despair” | Jer. 29:11-13 |
| Personality Profile: | “Hope for a Woman in Need” | Mark 5:25-27 |
| Soul Notes: | “Lost Hope” | Num. 14:1-4 |
| | “Ray of Hope” | 2 Chr. 36:23 |
| | “Antidepressant” | Ps. 43:5 |
| | “Wait Watcher” | Lam. 3:26 |
| | “Hope” | Rom. 15:13 |

More scriptures about hope:

| | |
|---|---|
| Ps. 119:166 | LORD, I hope for your salvation, |
| Rom. 5:5 | hope does not disappoint, |
| Eph. 1:18 | that you may know what is the hope of His calling, |
| 1 Thess. 4:13 | lest you sorrow as others who have no hope |
| Heb. 6:19 | This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, |
| 1 Pet. 1:13 | rest your hope fully upon the grace |
| 1 John 3:3 | everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, |

**INFERTILITY**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | “Stillborn Dreams: The Heartbreak of Infertility” (W. David Hager and Linda Carruth Hager) | Gen. 18:11, 12 |
| Key Passage: | “Hannah’s Hurt” | 1 Sam. 2:5 |
| Personality Profile: | “Hannah: Coping with Infertility” | 1 Sam. 2:5 |
| Soul Notes: | “That’s a Laugh” | Gen. 18:11, 12 |
| | “Trying to Earn Love” | Gen. 29:32 |

More scriptures about infertility:

| | |
|---|---|
| Gen. 15:2 | what will you give me, seeing I go childless, |

| | |
|---|---|
| Ex. 23:26 | No one shall suffer miscarriage or be barren in your land; |
| Lev. 20:20 | they shall die childless |
| Judg. 13:2 | his wife was barren and had no children |
| Ps. 113:9 | He grants the barren woman a home, |
| Prov. 30:16 | The grave, the barren womb, |
| Is. 54:1 | Sing, O barren, You who have not borne! |
| Luke 1:7 | they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, |

**INSECURITY**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Discovering the Deceptions" (Robert McGee) | Num. 13:30-33 |
| Key Passage: | "We Were Like Grasshoppers!" | Num. 13:30-33 |
| Personality Profile: | "Moses: Humble or Insecure?" | Deut. 1 |
| Soul Notes: | "Insecure and Afraid" | 1 Sam. 10:22 |
| | "Secure" | Ps. 49:1-10 |
| | "Secure in Him" | Is. 26:4, 5 |

More scriptures about insecurity:

| | |
|---|---|
| Gen. 3:10 | I was afraid because I was naked; |
| Ruth 3:1 | shall I not seek security for you, |
| Ps. 3:6 | I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people |
| Prov. 3:25 | Do not be afraid of sudden terror, |
| Mic. 4:4 | no one shall make them afraid; |
| John 14:27 | neither let it be afraid |
| Rom. 13:4 | if you do evil, be afraid; |

**JEALOUSY**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Jealousy: A Consuming Passion" (Tim Clinton) | 1 Pet. 2:1 |
| Key Passage: | "The Wedge of Jealousy" | Num. 5:29 |
| Personality | "Rachel and Leah: Jealous Sisters" | Gen. 30:8 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Profile: | | |
| Soul Notes: | “His Alone” | Ex. 20:5 |
| | “Green with Envy” | 1 Sam. 18:8 |
| | “Jealous Jabs” | 2 Cor. 11:1-3 |
| | “Evils of Envy” | 1 Pet. 2:1 |

More scriptures about jealousy:

| | |
|---|---|
| Ex. 34:14 | for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God |
| Deut. 4:24 | the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God |
| Prov. 6:34 | jealousy is a husband’s fury; |
| Prov. 27:4 | who is able to stand before jealousy? |
| Song 8:6 | love is as strong as death, jealousy as cruel as the grave; |
| 1 Cor. 13:4 | love does not envy; |
| 2 Cor. 12:20 | lest there be contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, |
| Gal. 5:20 | hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, |

**JOY**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | “Laughing with Joy” (Liz Curtis Higgs) | Neh. 8:10 |
| Key Passage: | “Rejoice!” | Prov. 15:13-15 |
| Personality Profile: | “Isaac: Unexpected Laughter” | Gen. 21 |
| Soul Notes: | “Joyous Revival” | Neh. 8:10 |
| | “Celebrate!” | Neh. 12:43 |
| | “Keep a Record” | Esth. 9:26-28 |
| | “Marvelous” | Joel 2:19-27 |
| | “Joy in Hardships” | Hab. 3:17-19 |
| | “Rejoicing in God” | Zeph. 3:14-17 |

More scriptures about joy:

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|---|---|
| Matt. 2:10 | they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy |
| Luke 1:44 | the babe leaped in my womb for joy |
| John 15:11 | that My joy may remain in you, |
| Acts 13:52 | the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit |

Rom. 14:17 righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit
Gal. 5:22 the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace,
Phil. 2:2 fulfill my joy by being like-minded,
James 1:2 count it all joy when you fall into various trials,

**JUDGMENTALISM**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Dealing with a Critical Spirit" (Ed Hindson) | Luke 6:37, 38 |
| Key Passage: | "Passing Judgment" | Luke 6:37 |
| Personality Profile: | "Aaron and Miriam: A Case Study in Judgmentalism" | Num. 12 |
| Soul Notes: | "Rush to Judgment" | James 4:11, 12 |
| | "Too Many Critics" | 1 John 4:19-21 |

More scriptures about judgmentalism:

Prov. 1:3 the instruction of wisdom, justice, judgment,
Matt. 7:1 Judge not, that you be not judged
John 8:11 Neither do I condemn you;
Rom. 8:1 no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus,
Rom. 14:3 does not eat judge him who eats;
1 Cor. 5:3 but present in spirit, have already judged
1 Cor. 11:34 lest you come together for judgment
Col. 2:16 let no one judge you in food or in drink,
James 2:13 Mercy triumphs over judgment
1 John 3:21 if our heart does not condemn us,

**KNOWING GOD**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Knowing God" (Larry Crabb) | Lev. 26:9-13 |
| Key Passage: | "The God Who Can Be Known" | Lev. 26:9-13 |
| Personality Profile: | "The Ethiopian Eunuch's Search for God" | Acts 8:26-38 |

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|---|---|---|
| Soul Notes: | "Listen to God" | Ex. 3:1-6 |
| | "Face to Face" | Ex. 33:11 |
| | "After God's Heart" | 1 Sam. 13:14 |
| | "A Still Small Voice" | 1 Kin. 19:12 |
| | "Seek God's Plans First" | 1 Chr. 13:9-12 |
| | "God's Will, God's Way" | Ezra 6:22 |
| | "Goodness Gracious" | Neh. 9:26 |
| | "No Fooling" | Ezek. 39:7, 8 |
| | "The Power of Love" | Hos. 1:2 |
| | "God with Us" | Matt. 1:23 |
| | "Soulful Worship" | John 4:24 |
| | "Believe" | Heb. 11:6 |

More scriptures about knowing God:

Jer. 9:24 glory in this, that he understands and knows Me,
John 17:3 that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ

**KNOWING JESUS**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Who Is Jesus Christ? (Ed Hindson) | John 1:29 |
| Key Passage: | "One Way" | John 14:6 |
| Personality Profile: | "Nicodemus: A Conversation with Christ" | John 3:1 |
| Soul Notes: | "The Old Rugged Cross" | Ps. 22 |
| | "A Humble King" | Zech. 9:9, 10 |
| | "God's Beloved Son" | Matt. 3:17 |
| | "Unmistaken Identity" | John 8:16-19 |
| | "Being His" | 1 Tim. 3:16 |
| | "Worthy Is the Lamb" | Rev. 5:5, 6 |

More scriptures about knowing Jesus:

Matt. 16:16 You are the Christ, the Son of the living God
John 1:1 the Word was God
Eph. 5:23 Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior
Phil. 3:10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection,

Col. 1:15 the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation
1 Tim. 2:5 one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus,
Rev. 19:16 KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS
Rev. 22:13 I am the Alpha and the Omega,

**LEGALISM**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Legalism: Focusing on the Law" (Dan Mitchell) | Lev. 11 |
| Key Passage: | "Enslaved to Rules" | Rom. 7:6-14 |
| Personality Profile: | "The Pharisees: Living by the Rules" | Matt. 23:23-28 |
| Soul Notes: | "Ruled Out" | Matt. 12:1-8 |
| | "Assorted Scruples" | 1 Cor. 10:23-33 |
| | "Many Opinions, One Lord" | Col. 2:16 |
| | "Legal Notes" | 1 Tim. 1:8, 9 |

More scriptures about legalism:

Acts 15:10 test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples
Rom. 6:14 you are not under law but under grace
Rom. 10:4 Christ is the end of the law for righteousness
Rom. 14:1 Receive one who is weak in the faith,
Gal. 5:1 do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage
Eph. 2:15 abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law
Phil. 3:9 not having my own righteousness, which is from the law,
Col. 2:21 Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,
Heb. 8:13 He says, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete
James 2:10 the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all

**LIFE TRANSITIONS**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Seasons of Life" (Freda V. Crews) | 1 Chr. 23:1 |
| Key Passage: | "A Time for Everything" | Eccl. 3:1-11 |
| Personality Profile: | "Timothy: Lots of Changes" | 1 Tim. 4:12-16 |

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|---|---|---|
| Soul Notes: | “When Changes Come” | Gen. 19:26 |
| | “Grown Up” | 1 Cor. 13:11 |
| | “Last Words” | 2 Pet. 1:13-15 |

More scriptures about life transitions:

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|---|---|
| Prov. 20:29 | The glory of young men is their strength, |
| Prov. 23:22 | do not despise your mother when she is old |
| Mal. 3:6 | I am the LORD, I do not change; |
| 1 Cor. 13:11 | I thought as a child; but when I became a man, |

**LONELINESS**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | “Loneliness and Personal Growth” (Miriam Stark Parent) | Ps. 69:1-8 |
| Key Passage: | “Held in His Arms” | Is. 41:10 |
| Personality Profile: | “Jeremiah the Lone Prophet” | Jer. 20 |
| Soul Notes: | “Never Alone” | Ps. 69:1-12 |
| | “God Is There” | Heb. 13:5 |

More scriptures about loneliness:

| | |
|---|---|
| Gen. 2:18 | It is not good that man should be alone; |
| 1 Kin. 19:10 | I alone am left; and they seek to take my life |
| Eccl. 4:10 | woe to him who is alone when he falls, |
| Jer. 15:17 | I sat alone because of Your hand, |
| Lam. 3:28 | Let him sit alone and keep silent, |
| 1 Tim. 5:5 | she who is really a widow, and left alone, |

**LOVE**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | “Bold Love” (Dan Allender) | 1 Cor. 13:1 |
| Key Passage: | “Bears, Believes, Hopes, Endures” | 1 Cor. 13:1-7 |
| Personality Profile: | “Hosea: A Lesson in Love” | Hos. 1:2-9 |

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|---|---|---|
| Soul Notes: | “Just Do It!” | Lev. 7:37, 38 |
| | “True Love?” | Judg. 16:15 |
| | “Bold Love” | Amos 5:14, 15 |
| | “A New Commandment” | John 13:34, 35 |
| | “Learning to Love” | John 15:12, 13 |
| | “The Gift of Love” | 1 Cor. 13:7 |
| | “In Deed!” | 1 John 3:18 |
| | “Through Us” | 1 John 4:12 |

More scriptures about love:

Lev. 19:18 you shall love your neighbor as yourself:
Deut. 6:5 You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart,
Phil. 1:9 that your love may abound still more and more
1 John 4:21 he who loves God must love his brother also

**LOVE LANGUAGES**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | “The Languages of Love” (Gary D. Chapman) | 1 John 4:12 |
| Key Passage: | “Being Bilingual” | 1 John 3:18 |
| Personality Profile: | “Mary: Speaking Love’s Language” | Luke 10:38-42 |
| Soul Notes: | “The Language of Love” | Ruth 1:16, 17 |
| | “If You Love Me” | John 14:21-23 |

More scriptures about love languages:

2 Sam. 1:26 Surpassing the love of women
Song 7:12 There I will give you my love
Zech. 8:19 Therefore love truth and peace
John 13:1 He loved them to the end
1 Cor. 13:4 Love suffers long and is kind;
Eph. 5:25 love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church
Titus 2:4 that they admonish the young women to love their husbands,
Rev. 12:11 they did not love their lives to the death

## MARITAL COMMUNICATION

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Talking Sense" (Tim and Julie Clinton) | 1 Pet. 3:1-9 |
| Key Passage: | "Let's Talk" | 1 Pet. 3:8 |
| Personality Profile: | "The Teamwork of Aquila and Priscilla" | Acts 18:2 |
| Soul Notes: | "Good Insights" | Judg. 13:2-24 |
| | "Communication Is the Key" | Esth. 8:3-8 |
| | "Even at Home" | Eph. 4:15 |

More scriptures about marital communication:

| | |
|---|---|
| Gen. 21:12 | Whatever Sarah has said to you, listen to her voice; |
| Gen. 27:46 | Rebekah said to Isaac, "I am weary of my life |
| Prov. 15:1 | A soft answer turns away wrath, |
| 1 Cor. 7:5 | Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, |
| Col. 4:6 | Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, |
| James 4:11 | Do not speak evil of one another, |
| 1 Pet. 2:1 | laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, |

## MARITAL PROBLEMS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Marital Problems and Problem-Solving" (Tim Clinton) | Col. 3:18, 19 |
| Key Passage: | "The Power of Love" | Col. 3:18, 19 |
| Personality Profile: | "Rebekah and Isaac: For Worse" | Gen. 27 |
| Soul Notes: | "Extraordinary Love" | Hos. 3:1-5 |

More scriptures about marital problems:

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|---|---|
| Gen. 3:12 | The woman whom You gave to be with me, |

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|---|---|
| Gen. 3:16 | Your desire shall be for your husband, |
| Ex. 20:14 | You shall not commit adultery |
| Prov. 5:20 | why should you, my son, be enraptured by an immoral woman, |
| Prov. 19:13 | the contentions of a wife are a continual dripping |
| Matt. 19:6 | what God has joined together, let not man separate |
| 1 Cor. 7:5 | Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, |

**MARRIAGE**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Covenant Marriage" (Fred Lowery) | Mark 10:1-12 |
| Key Passage: | "Keeping the Promise" | Matt. 19:4-6 |
| Personality Profile: | "Mary and Joseph: The Bond of Love and Honesty | Matt. 1:24 |
| Soul Notes: | "Get Together" | Eccl. 9:9 |
| | "Wedding Celebration" | Song 1:2-4 |
| | "Loving One's Spouse" | Mal. 2:13-16 |
| | "Wedding Invitation" | John 2:2 |
| | "The Feeling Is Mutual" | Eph. 5:21-26 |

More scriptures about marriage:

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|---|---|
| Gen. 2:22 | He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man |
| Deut. 24:5 | he shall be free at home one year, and bring happiness to his wife |
| Prov. 5:19 | Let her breasts satisfy you at all times; |
| Prov. 18:22 | He who finds a wife finds a good thing, |
| Prov. 31:10 | Who can find a virtuous wife? |
| 1 Cor. 7:38 | he who gives her in marriage does well, |
| Heb. 13:4 | Marriage is honorable among all, |

**MEN'S ISSUES**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Being a Real Man" (Rod Cooper) | 1 Tim. 6:11 |
| Key Passage: | "Godly Examples" | Titus 2:2 |
| Personality Profile: | "Titus-Choosing Godly Men" | Titus 1:6 |
| Soul Notes: | "Standing in the Gap" | Ezek. 22:30 |
| | "Man of God" | 1 Tim. 6:11 |

More scriptures about men's issues:

| | |
|---|---|
| Gen. 1:28 | Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; |
| Gen. 2:25 | both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed |
| Gen. 3:19 | In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread |
| Gen. 4:7 | sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it |
| Deut. 6:7 | You shall teach them diligently to your children, |
| Prov. 15:21 | a man of understanding walks uprightly |
| Eph. 5:23 | the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; |
| Eph. 5:25 | love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church |
| Eph. 6:4 | fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, |
| 1 Thess. 4:11 | to mind your own business, to work with your own hands, |

**MENTAL ILLNESS**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Mental Illness: Reducing Suffering in the Church" (Paul Meier, Tim Clinton, and George Ohlschlager) | 1 Sam. 16:14-23 |
| Key Passage: | "Wholeness" | Dan. 4:33 |
| Personality Profile: | "Nebuchadnezzar's Illness" | Dan. 4:33 |
| Soul Notes: | "Distressed" | 1 Sam. 16:14-23 |
| | Min power" | Luke |

8:26, 27

More scriptures about mental illness:

| | |
|---|---|
| Ps. 34:18 | The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart, |
| Prov. 13:12 | Hope deferred makes the heart sick, |
| Eccl. 2:20 | despaired of all the labor in which I had toiled under the sun |
| Is. 40:27 | My way is hidden from the LORD, |
| Jer. 19:9 | those who seek their lives shall drive them to despair |
| 2 Cor. 4:8 | we are perplexed, but not in despair; |
| 1 Thess. 5:23 | may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless |
| James 1:12 | Blessed is the man who endures temptation; |

**MENTORING**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Master Mentoring" (Don Hawkins) | 1 Kin. 1-2 |
| Key Passage: | "Pass It On" | 2 Tim. 2:2 |
| Personality Profile: | "Elijah and Elisha: A Tough Act to Follow" | 1 Kin. 19:19 |
| Soul Notes: | "Let Others Help" | Num. 10:29-31 |
| | "Sell Out" | 2 Kin. 2:6 |
| | "Just One Child" | 2 Kin. 22:1, 2 |
| | "Follow the Leader" | Mark 3:13-19 |
| | "Watched" | Titus 2:7, 8 |

More scriptures about mentoring:

| | |
|---|---|
| Deut. 34:9 | for Moses had laid his hands on him; |
| Acts 11:25 | Barnabas departed from Tarsus to seek Saul |
| Acts 15:40 | Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended |
| 1 Tim. 1:2 | To Timothy, a true son in the faith: |
| Titus 1:4 | To Titus, a true son in our common faith: |

**MONEY**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Mastering Your Money" (Ron Blue) | 2 Kin. 5:20-27 |

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|---|---|---|
| Key Passage: | "Rooted Out" | 1 Tim. 6:6-10 |
| Personality Profile: | "Rich Man, Poor Man" | Mark 10:17-25 |
| Soul Notes: | "Heavenly Accounting" | 1 Kin. 10:14-29 |
| | "God Has It All" | 1 Chr. 29:10-12 |
| | "Joyful Giving" | Ezra 2:68, 69 |
| | "Money Chains" | Eccl. 5:12 |
| | "Wake-Up Call" | Joel 1:15-20 |
| | "Considering Our Ways" | Hag. 1:3-7 |
| | "Dare to Be Generous" | Mal. 3:8-12 |
| | "Loose Grip" | Matt. 19:16-22 |
| | "God's Place" | Mark 11:15 |
| | "His Image" | Mark 12:13-17 |
| | "Master Lock" | Luke 16:13 |
| | "Risky Giving" | Luke 21:1-4 |

More scriptures about money:

| | |
|---|---|
| Deut. 15:7 | If there is among you a poor man of your brethren, |
| Eccl. 6:2 | A man to whom God has given riches and wealth and honor, |
| James 5:1 | Come now, you rich, weep and howl |
| 1 John 2:15 | Do not love the world or the things in the world |

**MOTHERHOOD**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Does Mothering Matter? (Elisa Morgan and Carol Kuykendall) | Luke 1:26, 27 |
| Key Passage: | "More Than Full Time" | 2 Tim. 1:5 |
| Personality Profile: | "Mary: A Mother's Love" | Luke 2:5 |
| Soul Notes: | "On Loan" | 1 Sam. 1:27, 28 |
| | "Mother's Love" | 1 Kin. 3:16-27 |

More scriptures about motherhood:

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|---|---|
| Ex. 20:12 | Honor your father and your mother, |

Prov. 6:20 do not forsake the law of your mother
Prov. 10:1 a foolish son is the grief of his mother
Prov. 15:20 a foolish man despises his mother
Prov. 19:26 chases away his mother is a son who causes shame
Prov. 20:20 Whoever curses his father or his mother,
Prov. 29:15 a child left to himself brings shame to his mother
Eph. 6:1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right

**OBEDIENCE**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Obedience" (Dawson McAllister) | 2 John 6 |
| Key Passage: | "Better Than Sacrifice" | 1 Sam. 15:22 |
| Personality Profile: | "Saul's Disobedience" | 1 Sam. 15:17-23 |
| Soul Notes: | "Loving Warnings" | Deut. 28:2, 15 |
| | "What a Contrast!" | 1 Sam. 2:17, 18 |
| | "That Which Lasts" | Ezek. 24:16 |
| | "God First" | Acts 5:29 |
| | "Radical Obedience" | Heb. 5:8, 9 |
| | "Loving Shepherds" | Heb. 13:17 |
| | "Love Revealed" | 2 John 6 |

More scriptures about obedience:

Deut. 28:1 if you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God,
Jer. 7:23 Obey My voice, and I will be your God,
Rom. 6:16 of obedience leading to righteousness?
Phil. 2:12 my beloved, as you have always obeyed,
Heb. 11:8 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go

**OCCULT**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "The Occult" (Jerry Johnston) | 1 Sam. 28:7 |
| Key Passage: | "Dangerous Liaisons" | Eph. 6:10-20 |
| Personality Profile: | "The Witch of En Dor-The Occult Temptation" | 1 Sam. 28:7 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Soul Notes: | "Which Craft?" | Lev. 20:6-9 |
| | "Steer Clear!" | Deut. 18:9-14 |
| | "A Dangerous World" | 2 Kin. 21:6 |
| | "Called Out of Darkness" | Acts 26:17, 18 |
| | "Satan's Strongholds" | 2 Cor. 10:3, 4 |
| | "Battle Lines" | 1 John 4:4 |

More scriptures about occult:

| | |
|---|---|
| Ex. 22:18 | You shall not permit a sorceress to live |
| Num. 23:23 | there is no sorcery against Jacob, |
| 1 Sam. 15:23 | rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, |
| 2 Chr. 33:6 | he practiced soothsaying, used witchcraft and sorcery, |
| Acts 8:9 | a certain man called Simon, who previously practiced sorcery |
| Acts 13:6 | they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew |

**PAIN**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Pain: Problem, Puzzle, Parable" (Siang-Yang Tan and George Ohlschlager) | 2 Cor. 12:9 |
| Key Passage: | "Come Boldly" | Heb. 4:14-16 |
| Personality Profile: | "The Man at the Pool: Freedom from Pain" | John 5:6 |
| Soul Notes: | "Perfected Weakness" | 2 Cor. 12:7-10 |

More scriptures about pain:

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|---|---|
| Gen. 3:16 | In pain you shall bring forth children; |
| Job 2:13 | they saw that his grief was very great |
| Ps. 55:4 | My heart is severely pained within me, |
| Ps. 116:3 | The pains of death surrounded me, |
| Jer. 15:18 | Why is my pain perpetual |
| Rom. 9:2 | I have great sorrow and continual grief |

Phil. 2:27 lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow
Heb. 11:34 out of weakness were made strong,
Heb. 12:11 no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful;
1 Pet. 2:19 because of conscience toward God one endures grief,
Rev. 21:4 There shall be no more pain,

**PARENTING**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Godly Parenting" (Grace Ketterman) | Prov. 22:6 |
| Key Passage: | "A Most Important Job" | 1 Sam. 1:27, 28 |
| Personality Profile: | "Abraham: A Parent's Heart" | Gen. 18:19 |
| Soul Notes: | "Into God's Arms" | Lev. 10:1-3 |
| | "Teach Them Well" | Deut. 11:18, 19 |
| | "Pass It On" | Josh. 4:19-24 |
| | "Intervene!" | 1 Sam. 3:13 |
| | "A Good Investment" | 1 Kin. 1:5, 6 |
| | "Children's Children" | Ps. 103:17, 18 |
| | "Teach Them Well" | Joel 1:3 |
| | "Early Education" | 2 Tim. 3:14, 15 |

More scriptures about parenting:

Ex. 20:12 Honor your father and your mother,
Prov. 1:8 My son, hear the instruction of your father,
Eph. 6:1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right
Eph. 6:4 fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath,

**PERFECTIONISM**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Perfectionism" (Chris Thurman) | Heb. 10:1 |
| Key Passage: | "God's Work" | Heb. 10:12-14 |
| Personality Profile: | "Paul's Imperfect Perfection" | Acts 22:3, 4 |
| Soul Notes: | "Perfect?" | Matt. 5:48 |
| | "Nobody's Perfect" | Eph. 2:8, 9 |

More scriptures about perfectionism:

| | |
|---|---|
| 2 Cor. 7:1 | perfecting holiness in the fear of God |
| 2 Cor. 12:9 | for My strength is made perfect in weakness |
| Phil. 3:12 | Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; |
| Col. 3:14 | put on love, which is the bond of perfection |
| Heb. 5:9 | having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation |
| Heb. 6:1 | the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, |
| Heb. 7:11 | if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood |
| James 3:2 | does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, |
| 1 John 4:18 | perfect love casts out fear, |
| Rev. 3:2 | I have not found your works perfect before God |

**PRAISE AND WORSHIP**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "The Importance of Praise and Worship" (Al Denson) | Ps. 149 |
| Key Passage: | "True Worship" | John 4:23, 24 |
| Personality Profile: | "Praising the Lord with Asaph" | Ps. 81 |
| Soul Notes: | "A New Song" | Ex. 15:1 |
| | "Meeting with God" | Ex. 24:12 |
| | "Together" | Ex. 25:1-9 |
| | "Come to God" | Num. 28:2 |
| | "Sing Along" | 1 Chr. 6:31 |
| | "Nothing Less" | Ps. 84:1, 2 |
| | "Joyous Praise" | Ps. 150 |
| | "Be Silent" | Zeph. 1:7 |
| | "Making Melody" | Col. 3:16 |
| | "Praise the Lord" | Jude 24, 25 |

More scriptures about praise and worship:

| | |
|---|---|
| Mark 14:26 | when they had sung a hymn, they went out |
| Acts 16:25 | at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to |

God,

**PRAYER**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Powerful Prayer" (Stormie Omartian) | Matt. 6:5-13 |
| Key Passage: | "Opening Heaven's Gates" | Matt. 6:5-13 |
| Personality Profile: | "Jesus: Teaching Us to Pray" | Matt. 14:23 |
| Soul Notes: | "A Gentle Reminder" | Ex. 30:1 |
| | "Don't Forget to Pray" | Deut. 9:14, 15 |
| | "Keep on Praying" | 1 Sam. 12:23 |
| | "God Hears" | 1 Kin. 8:22-30 |
| | "Bless Me" | 1 Chr. 4:9, 10 |
| | "Heard" | Ps. 55:17, 22 |
| | "Weigh the Options" | Dan. 6:10 |
| | "Mountain Movers" | Mark 11:22-24 |
| | "Your Will" | Mark 14:32-42 |
| | "Don't Give Up" | Luke 18:1 |
| | "Talking to the Father" | John 17 |
| | "Praise Priority" | Acts 4:23-31 |
| | "A Powerful Force" | Acts 12:5 |
| | "Whatever We Ask" | 1 John 5:14, 15 |

More scriptures about prayer:

1 Thess. 5:17 pray without ceasing,

James 5:16 The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much

**PREJUDICE**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "A Christian Response to Prejudice" (Sabrina D. Black and Paris M. Finner-Williams) | James 2:1-9 |
| Key Passage: | "Created in God's Image" | Esth. 3:6 |
| Personality Profile: | "Haman's Prejudice: Playing with Fire" | Esth. 3 |
| Soul Notes: | "Rejected" | Judg. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | 11:1-3 |
| | “No Barriers” | Acts 10:28 |
| | “One Big Family” | Gal. 3:28 |
| | “Playing Favorites” | James 2:1-9 |

More scriptures about prejudice:

| | |
|---|---|
| Gen. 11:1 | the whole earth had one language and one speech |
| Lev. 24:22 | same law for the stranger and for one from your own country; |
| Jonah 4:1 | it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became angry |
| Acts 6:1 | there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, |
| Phil. 3:5 | of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; |

**PREMARITAL RELATIONSHIPS**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | “The Dating Game” (Les and Leslie Parrott) | Ruth 3:10-14 |
| Key Passage: | “Walking in Agreement” | Amos 3:3 |
| Personality Profile: | “Ruth & Boaz-Sexual Integrity in Premarital Relationships” | Ruth 2-3 |
| Soul Notes: | “People of Character” | Ruth 3:11 |
| | “Premarital Purity” | 1 Cor. 6:18-20 |

More scriptures about premarital relationships:

| | |
|---|---|
| Ex. 20:14 | You shall not commit adultery |
| 1 Kin. 11:1 | King Solomon loved many foreign women, |
| Prov. 2:16 | To deliver you from the immoral woman, |
| Prov. 6:24 | From the flattering tongue of a seductress |
| Amos 3:3 | Can two walk together, unless they are agreed? |
| 1 Cor. 6:18 | Flee sexual immorality |
| 1 Cor. 7:9 | it is better to marry than to burn with passion |
| 2 Cor. 6:14 | Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers |

**PRESENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Holy Spirit, Heavenly Dove" (Ed Hindson) | John 16:5-15 |
| Key Passage: | "A Very Real Presence" | Eph. 4:30 |
| Personality Profile: | "The Holy Spirit in Believers' Lives" | Acts 2:1 |
| Soul Notes: | "Source of Help" | Is. 63:10 |
| | "Outpouring" | Joel 2:28-32 |
| | "By God's Spirit" | Zech. 4:6 |
| | "Special Baptism" | Luke 3:16 |
| | "Put in a Good Word" | Luke 12:11, 12 |
| | "Spiritual Power" | Luke 24:49 |
| | "Another Helper" | John 14:15-18 |
| | "Spiritual Growth" | John 14:26 |
| | "The Best Gift" | Acts 2:38, 39 |
| | "Future Vision" | 1 Cor. 2:9, 10 |

More scriptures about the presence of the Holy Spirit:

Rom. 8:9 if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His
Eph. 5:18 be filled with the Spirit,

**PRIDE**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Pride Problems" (Stuart Briscoe) | 2 Chr. 26:16-19 |
| Key Passage: "Before a Fall" | James 4:6-10 | |
| Personality Profile: | "The Pride of the King of Tyre" | Ezek. 28:11-19 |
| Soul Notes: | "Look Down, Look Out" | Prov. 16:18 |
| | "The Perfect Resource" | Jer. 13:15 |
| | "Gloating" | Obad. 1-3 |
| | "Like Oil and Water" | Rom. 12:3 |
| | "Pride Problem" | Phil. 2:1-4 |

More scriptures about pride:

| | |
|---|---|
| Prov. 8:13 | Pride and arrogance and the evil way |
| Prov. 13:10 | By pride comes nothing but strife, |
| Dan. 4:37 | those who walk in pride He is able to put down |
| Mark 7:22 | evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness |
| 1 Tim. 3:6 | lest being puffed up with pride he fall |
| 1 Pet. 5:5 | God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble |
| 1 John 2:16 | -the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life- |

**RELATIONSHIPS**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Building Good Relationships" (Les and Leslie Parrott) | Eccl. 4:9 |
| Key Passage: | "Kind, Tender, Forgiving" | Eph. 4:31, 32 |
| Personality Profile: | "David and Jonathan-Best of Friends" | 1 Sam. 20:1 |
| Soul Notes: | "Closer or Farther Away?" | 1 Kin. 11:1-13 |
| | "Eternal Friendships" | Eccl. 4:9-12 |
| | "The Greatest Need" | John 11:5 |
| | "Love Story" | 1 John 4:7 |

More scriptures about relationships:

| | |
|---|---|
| Lev. 19:18 | you shall love you neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD |
| 2 Sam. 1:26 | Your love to me was wonderful, surpassing the love of women |
| Matt. 5:9 | Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God |
| Matt. 5:24 | First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift |
| Matt. 18:35 | if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother |
| Phil. 4:2 | be of the same mind in the Lord |
| Heb. 13:1 | Let brotherly love continue |

James 1:19 be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath;

**REPENTANCE**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "The Blessing of a Repentant Heart" (E. Glenn Wagner) | Ps. 51 |
| Key Passage: | "More Than Sorry" | 2 Cor. 7:7-10 |
| Personality Profile: | "The Thief and His Savior" | Luke 23:42 |
| Soul Notes: | "A Nation Under God" | Lev. 16:32, 33 |
| | "Back in Line" | 2 Kin. 22:11 |
| | "Cleansed" | Ps. 51 |
| | "Beyond Sorry" | Ezek. 14:6 |
| | "Turning Point" | Hos. 6:1-3 |
| | "The Invitation" | Joel 2:12, 13 |

More scriptures about repentance:

| | |
|---|---|
| Mark 1:4 | preaching a baptism of repentance |
| Luke 15:7 | one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons |
| 2 Tim. 2:25 | if God will perhaps grant them repentance, |
| Heb. 6:6 | to renew them again to repentance, |
| Heb. 12:17 | he found no place for repentance |
| 2 Pet. 3:9 | any should perish but that all should come to repentance |

**RESPONSIBILITY**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Responsibility: Equipped and Willing" (Woodrow Kroll and Don Hawkins) | Jer. 1:8-10 |
| Key Passage: | "A Talent for Investing" | Matt. 25:14-30 |
| Personality | "Esther: The Buck Stops Here" | Esth. 8:1- |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Profile: | | 3 |
| Soul Notes: | "Committed to the Commission" | Matt. 28:19, 20 |
| | "Unwrapped Gifts" | 1 Tim. 4:14, 15 |

More scriptures about responsibility:

| | |
|---|---|
| Ezek. 3:18 | his blood I will require at your hand |
| Matt. 28:18 | All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth |
| John 20:21 | As the Father has sent Me, I also send you |
| Gal. 6:2 | Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ |
| Gal. 6:5 | each one shall bear his own load |
| Eph. 4:1 | walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, |
| Heb. 3:13 | exhort one another daily, |
| 1 Pet. 3:15 | always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you |

**RESTORATION**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Restoration" (Earl and Sandra Wilson) | John 21:15-19 |
| Key Passage: | "Back to the Body" | Gal. 6:1-5 |
| Personality Profile: | "David Restored" | 2 Sam. 19:9-43 |
| Soul Notes: | "Sudden and Decisive" | 2 Chr. 29:1, 2 |
| | "Return" | 2 Chr. 30:6-12 |
| | "A Refuge" | Job 42:12 |
| | "God's Comfort" | Zech. 1:17 |
| | "Overwhelmed" | Luke 22:31, 32 |

More scriptures about restoration:

| | |
|---|---|
| Ps. 23:3 | He restores my soul; |
| Ps. 51:12 | Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, |
| Joel 2:25 | So I will restore to you the years |
| Matt. 17:11 | Elijah is coming first and will restore all things |
| Luke 19:8 | taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold |

Acts 3:21 until the time of restoration of all things,
Heb. 10:24 consider one another in order to stir up love and good works,

**SALVATION**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Clothed with Garments of Salvation" (James Clinton) | John 3:16 |
| Key Passage: | "God's Great Love" | John 3:16 |
| Personality Profile: | "Nathanael: From Skeptic to Disciple" | John 1:48 |
| Soul Notes: | "Undeserving" | Jon. 2:1-7 |
| | "Expensive" | John 19:28-34 |
| | "His Name Is Life" | Acts 4:12 |
| | "What You Can Do" | Acts 16:30-34 |
| | "Not Ashamed" | Rom. 1:16 |
| | "Neglect or Accept?" | Heb. 2:3 |

More scriptures about salvation:

Ex. 15:2 He has become my salvation; He is my God,
Ps. 51:12 Restore to me the joy of Your salvation,
Ps. 119:155 Salvation is far from the wicked,
Rom. 13:11 now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed
Phil. 2:12 work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;
2 Thess. 2:13 God from the beginning chose you for salvation

**SELF-DENIAL**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "The Cost of Commitment" (Vernon Brewer) | Luke 14:25-33 |
| Key Passage: | "Worth Giving Up" | Gal. 2:20 |
| Personality Profile: | "John the Baptist: Everything for Jesus" | John 3:30 |
| Soul Notes: | "Radical Denial" | Matt. 16:24 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | “Give It Up” | Mark 10:28-31 |
| | “Total Commitment” | Luke 14:25-33 |
| | “The Way of Love” | 1 Cor. 9:22 |

More scriptures about self-denial:

| | |
|---|---|
| Ps. 119:9 | How can a young man cleanse his way? |
| Rom. 12:12 | patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; |
| Gal. 5:24 | those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh |
| Phil. 2:3 | Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, |
| 2 Tim. 2:3 | endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ |
| James 1:12 | Blessed is the man who endures temptation; |

**SELF-ESTEEM**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | “Scripture’s View of Self-Esteem” (Archibald D. Hart) | Jer. 1:5 |
| Key Passage: | “In the Image of God” | Matt. 10:29-31 |
| Personality Profile: | “The Difference One Person Can Make” | 2 Chr. 34:26-28 |
| Soul Notes: | “God Is with You” | Ex. 3:11 |
| | “You Matter” | 1 Chr. 1:1 |
| | “Special and Important” | Ps. 8:3-5 |
| | “We Are His People” | Ps. 100:1-3 |
| | “Who We Are” | Is. 43:1 |
| | “God’s Own” | 1 John 3:1 |
| | “Jesus’ Own” | Rev. 1:5 |

More scriptures about self-esteem:

| | |
|---|---|
| Gen. 1:26 | Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; |
| Ps. 139:14 | I am fearfully and wonderfully made; |
| Gal. 2:20 | I have been crucified with Christ; |
| Gal. 3:26 | you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus |

1 Pet. 2:9 you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation,

**SEX IN MARRIAGE**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Sex in Marriage" (Clifford L. Penner and Joyce J. Penner) | 1 Cor. 7:1-9 |
| Key Passage: | "Intimacy" | Heb. 13:4 |
| Personality Profile: | "Solomon and the Shulamite: The Language of Love" | Song 4 |
| Soul Notes: | "Oneness" | Song 7:6-12 |
| | "Enjoy" | 1 Cor. 7:2-5 |

More scriptures about sex in marriage:

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|---|---|
| Gen. 1:28 | Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth |
| Gen. 2:25 | both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed |
| Gen. 26:8 | there was Isaac, showing endearment to Rebekah his wife |
| Ex. 20:14 | You shall not commit adultery |
| Prov. 5:18 | rejoice with the wife of your youth |
| Prov. 5:19 | Let her breasts satisfy you at all times; |
| Prov. 18:22 | He who finds a wife finds a good thing, |
| 1 Cor. 6:18 | Flee sexual immorality |

**SEXUAL INTEGRITY**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Obedience or Mere Excellence? (Stephen Arterburn) | 2 Tim. 2:22 |
| Key Passage: | "One Flesh" | 1 Cor. 6:15 |
| Personality Profile: | "Ruth & Boaz-Sexual Integrity in Premarital Relationships" | Ruth 2-3 |
| Soul Notes: | "Sometimes You've Got to Run!" | Gen. 39:7-12 |
| | "Vessels of Honor" | 1 Thess. 4:4 |

More scriptures about sexual integrity:

| | |
|---|---|
| Gen. 2:24 | a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, |
| Ex. 20:14 | You shall not commit adultery |
| Prov. 4:23 | Keep your heart with all diligence, |
| Prov. 5:19 | Let her breasts satisfy you at all times; |
| Rom. 7:15 | what I hate, that I do |
| 1 Cor. 7:5 | Do not deprive one another |
| 1 Cor. 10:13 | No temptation has overtaken you |
| Heb. 13:4 | Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; |

**SEXUAL SIN**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Sexual Sin and Personal Holiness" (Marnie C. Ferree and Mark R. Laaser) | 1 Thess. 4:5 |
| Key Passage: | "For Our Own Good" | 1 Thess. 4:3-7 |
| Personality Profile: | "David and Bathsheba-Costly Cover-Up" | 2 Sam. 11 |
| Soul Notes: | "Can't Hide It" | Gen. 38:16 |
| | "Sleeping with the Enemy" | Num. 25:1 |
| | "The Beauty Myth" | Ezek. 16:15 |
| | "In the World" | 1 Cor. 5:9-11 |
| | "Heart Search" | Rev. 2:18-23 |

More scriptures about sexual sin:

| | |
|---|---|
| Gen. 19:5 | Bring them out to us that we may know them carnally |
| Gen. 19:36 | both the daughters of Lot were with child by their father |
| Ex. 20:14 | You shall not commit adultery |

Lev. 18:22 You shall not lie with a male as with a woman
Lev. 18:23 Nor shall you mate with an animal, to defile yourself
Matt. 5:28 whoever looks at a woman to lust for her
1 Cor. 6:18 Flee sexual immorality

**SEXUALITY**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Created by a Loving God" (Doug Rosenau) | Gen. 1:27, 28 |
| Key Passage: | "God Created Sex" | Gen. 1:27, 28 |
| Personality Profile: | "Adam and Eve: God's Design for Sexuality" | Gen. 2:18-25 |

More scriptures about sexuality:

Gen. 4:1 Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived
Ex. 20:14 You shall not commit adultery
Deut. 22:13 If any man takes a wife, and goes in to her,
Prov. 5:18 rejoice with the wife of your youth
Prov. 6:32 Whoever commits adultery with a woman lacks understanding;
Song 7:6 How fair and how pleasant you are,
1 Cor. 6:15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?
1 Cor. 7:7 I wish that all men were even as I myself

**SIN**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Victorious Living" (Ron Hawkins) | 1 Kin. 8:31-40 |
| Key Passage: | "Paid in Full" | 1 John 1:9 |
| Personality Profile: | "Isaiah-Set Free from Sin" | Is. 6 |
| Soul Notes: | "Serious Business" | Lev. 1:4, 5 |
| | "Always a Way" | Lev. 4:3 |
| | "Included" | Josh. 2:1-16 |
| | "It Hurts" | Josh. 7:22-25 |
| | "Just a Prayer Away" | 1 Kin. 8:33-40 |
| | "Unpardonable?" | Matt. 12:31, 32 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | "All" | Rom. 3:23 |
| | "Crucified with Christ" | Rom. 6:6-11 |

More scriptures about sin:

| | |
|---|---|
| Ps. 51:4 | Against You, You only, have I sinned |
| Rom. 6:23 | For the wages of sin is death, |
| Rom. 14:23 | whatever is not from faith is sin. |
| James 1:15 | when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, |

**SINGLENESS**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "More Than Being Unmarried" (Alan Corry) | Matt. 19:12 |
| Key Passage: | "Singled Out" | 1 Cor. 7:26-35 |
| Personality Profile: | "Paul: Single and Not Alone" | 1 Cor. 7:8 |
| Soul Notes: | "Alone?" | Gen. 2:18 |
| | "The Single Life" | Ex. 15:20 |
| | "Being Content" | Luke 2:36 |

More scriptures about singleness:

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|---|---|
| Gen. 2:18 | It is not good that man should be alone; |
| Ex. 20:14 | You shall not commit adultery. |
| 1 Cor. 6:18 | Flee sexual immorality. . . . . |
| 1 Cor. 7:7 | I wish that all men were even as I myself |
| Phil. 4:11 | I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: |
| 1 Thess. 4:4 | know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification |
| 2 Tim. 2:22 | Flee also youthful lusts; |

**SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Spiritual Disciplines" (Ed Hindson) | Acts 2:46, 47 |
| Key Passage: | "Second Nature" | Dan. 10:12 |
| Personality Profile: | "The Early Christians: United in Christ" | Acts 2:42-47 |
| Soul Notes: | "Seek His Face" | Esth. 4:16 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | "Dedicated to God" | Zech. 14:20, 21 |
| | "Fasting and Prayer" | Matt. 4:1-3 |
| | "In His Name" | Col. 3:17 |
| | "Stay on Track" | 1 Tim. 4:7 |

More scriptures about spiritual disciplines:

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|---|---|
| Ps. 37:4 | Delight yourself also in the LORD, |
| Dan. 6:10 | he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed |
| 1 Cor. 11:23 | the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; |
| Heb. 4:12 | For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper |
| 1 Pet. 2:2 | as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, |
| 2 Pet. 1:5 | giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, |
| 1 John 4:7 | Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; |

**SPIRITUAL GROWTH**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Spiritual Growth" (John Ortberg) | 2 Pet. 1:5-11 |
| Key Passage: | "Strong, Fruitful Trees" | Ps. 1 |
| Personality Profile: | "Matthew: A Changed Life" | Matt. 9:9 |
| Soul Notes: | "Omnipresent" | 1 Chr. 28:9, 10 |
| | "Guidelines" | Rom. 12:9-13 |
| | "Growing Up" | Eph. 3:14-19 |
| | "Let's Pray" | Col. 1:9-12 |
| | "Drink Your Milk" | 1 Pet. 2:2, 3 |

More scriptures about spiritual growth:

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 Cor. 2:6 | we speak wisdom among those who are mature, |
| 1 Cor. 14:20 | in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature |
| Eph. 4:15 | may grow up in all things into Him |
| Phil. 3:15 | let us, as many as are mature, have this in mind; |
| Col. 2:19 | grows with the increase that is from God |

| | |
|---|---|
| 2 Thess. 1:3 | because your faith grows exceedingly |
| 2 Pet. 3:18 | grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ |

**SPIRITUAL WARFARE**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Spiritual Warfare" (David Powlison) | Eph. 6:10-20 |
| Key Passage: | "The Winning Team" | Eph. 6:10-20 |
| Personality Profile: | "Michael the Archangel" | Rev. 12:7-12 |
| Soul Notes: | "The Winning Team" | Is. 14:12-15 |
| | "Raging" | Luke 10:17-19 |
| | "Steadfast" | 1 Pet. 5:8-10 |

More scriptures about spiritual warfare:

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 Chr. 21:1 | Now Satan stood up against Israel, and moved David |
| Job 1:6 | and Satan also came among them |
| Matt. 12:24 | This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, |
| 1 Cor. 5:5 | deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, |
| 2 Cor. 2:11 | lest Satan should take advantage of us; |
| 2 Cor. 11:14 | Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light |
| 1 Tim. 4:1 | giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, |
| James 3:15 | but is earthly, sensual, demonic |
| Jude 9 | Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, |

**STRESS**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Stress Management" (Leslie Vernick) | 2 Sam. 22 |
| Key Passage: | "Stress Test" | 2 Cor. 4:9 |
| Personality Profile: | "James: Grace under Fire" | James 1 |
| Soul Notes: | "Joy-Full" | James 1:2-4 |

More scriptures about stress:

| | |
|---|---|
| Ps. 46:1 | God is our refuge and strength, |
| Ps. 55:22 | Cast your burden on the LORD, |

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|---|---|
| Ps. 56:3 | When I am afraid, I will trust in You, |
| Is. 26:3 | You will keep him in perfect peace, |
| Is. 40:31 | those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; |
| Matt. 11:28 | Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, |
| Gal. 6:9 | in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart |

**SUFFERING**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Suffering and Glory" (Dan Allender) | Job 9:28 |
| Key Passage: | "Faith under Fire" | 1 Pet. 4:12-16 |
| Personality Profile: | "Job's Suffering" | Job 1 |
| Soul Notes: | "Sincerely Wrong" | Job 15:17-26 |
| | "Refining Fire" | Ps. 66:10 |
| | "Count On It" | Rom. 8:18 |
| | "Leap of Loyalty" | 1 Pet. 4:19 |

More scriptures about suffering:

| | |
|---|---|
| Lam. 3:51 | My eyes bring suffering to my soul |
| Acts 14:22 | We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God |
| 1 Cor. 12:26 | if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; |
| Phil. 3:10 | the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, |
| 2 Tim. 1:8 | share with me in the sufferings for the gospel |
| Heb. 10:32 | you endured a great struggle with sufferings: |
| James 5:13 | Is anyone among you suffering? |
| 1 Pet. 1:11 | when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ |

**SUICIDE**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Choose Life" (Gary P. Stewart) | Judg. 16:28-30 |
| Key Passage: | "The Death of a King" | 1 Sam. 31:4 |
| Personality Profile: | "The Suicide of Judas" | Matt. 27:5 |
| Soul Notes: | "Unwilling to Trust" | 1 Chr. 10:4 |

More scriptures about suicide:

| | |
|---|---|
| Gen. 4:10 | The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground |
| Ex. 20:13 | You shall not murder |
| Job 1:21 | The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; |
| Ps. 40:1-3 | He also brought me up out of a horrible pit, |
| Ps. 119:116 | do not let me be ashamed of my hope |
| Jer. 29:11 | thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope |
| Acts 1:18 | falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his entrails gushed out |

**TEMPTATION**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "The Whispers of Temptation" (Gary and Barbara Rosberg) | Gen. 39:6-15 |
| Key Passage: | "The Best Weapon" | Matt. 4:1-11 |
| Personality Profile: | "Samson: Yielding to Temptation" | Judg. 16 |
| Soul Notes: | "Hide and Seek" | Ps. 119:11 |
| | "Hide and Seek" | Ps. 119:11 |
| | "Escape Hatch" | 1 Cor. 10:13 |
| | "Run Away" | 2 Tim. 2:22 |
| | "Strength to Resist" | James 1:12-15 |

More scriptures about temptation:

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|---|---|
| Deut. 6:16 | You shall not tempt the LORD your God |
| Matt. 6:13 | do not lead us into temptation, |
| Luke 22:32 | I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; |
| 1 Cor. 7:5 | come together again so that Satan does not tempt you |
| Gal. 6:1 | considering yourself lest you also be tempted |
| 1 Tim. 6:9 | those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, |
| Heb. 2:18 | being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted |

| | |
|---|---|
| 2 Pet. 2:9 | the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations |

**TOLERANCE**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Truth and Tolerance" (Josh McDowell) | Jude 3, 4 |
| Key Passage: | "When We Shouldn't Be Tolerant" | 2 Pet. 2:12-22 |
| Personality Profile: | "Micaiah: When the Truth Is Not Tolerated" | 1 Kin. 22:8 |
| Soul Notes: | "Whatever Seems Right" | Judg. 21:25 |
| | Too Tolerant" | 2 Tim. 3:1-9 |

More scriptures about tolerance:

| | |
|---|---|
| Ps. 119:158 | I see the treacherous, and am disgusted, |
| Matt. 5:7 | Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy |
| John 8:32 | you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free |
| Mark 6:11 | it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah |
| Rom. 14:5 | Let each be fully convinced in his own mind |
| 1 Cor. 8:13 | I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble |
| 1 Cor. 12:12 | all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, |
| Gal. 6:1 | you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, |
| Col. 2:16 | let no one judge you in food or in drink, |
| 2 Tim. 4:16 | May it not be charged against them |

**TRAUMA**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Healing the Wounds That Bind You" (Mark R. Laaser) | Ps. 18:2-6, 25-30 |
| Key Passage: | "Into the Valley" | Lam. 1:10-21 |
| Personality Profile: | "Jonah: Running from God" | Jon. 1:12 |
| Soul Notes: | "In the Trenches" | Lam. 3:55-57 |
| | "Traumatic Change" | Jon. 3:1-3 |
| | "Light in the Darkness" | 2 Cor. 4:8, 9 |

More scriptures about trauma:

| | |
|---|---|
| Gen. 6:13 | The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence |
| Gen. 12:1 | Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, |
| Josh. 1:2 | Moses my servant is dead. Now therefore, arise, go |
| Ps. 27:10 | When my father and mother forsake me, then the LORD |
| Ps. 34:18 | The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart, |
| Ps. 46:1 | A very present help in trouble |
| Ps. 107:20 | He sent His word and healed them, |
| Is. 61:3 | To console those who mourn in Zion, |
| 2 Cor. 1:8 | we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, |

**TRIALS**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| : | "Theme ArticleThe Trial of Rejection" (Sandra D. Wilson) | Ps. 34:18 |
| Key Passage: | "Tested Faith" | Ps. 34:18 |
| Personality Profile: | "Tamar-A Legacy of Trials" | 2 Sam. 13 |
| Soul Notes: | "Seeing God in Suffering" | Ex. 1:11 |
| | "Our Strength" | Ps. 34:17-22 |
| | "No More Tears" | Eccl. 7:13, 14 |
| | "Wherever and Whatever" | Jer. 37:15 |
| | "Refined" | Mal. 3:2, 3 |
| | "Refiner's Fire" | 1 Pet. 1:6-9 |

More scriptures about trials:

Deut. 29:3 the great trials which your eyes have seen,

| | |
|---|---|
| 2 Cor. 8:2 | in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy |
| Gal. 4:14 | And my trial which was in my flesh you did not despise |
| Heb. 11:36 | Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, |
| James 1:2 | count it all joy when you fall into various trials, |
| 1 Pet. 4:12 | do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, |

**TRUST**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Learning to Trust" (Patrick Springle) | Nah. 1:7 |
| | "Trust in Him" | Prov. 3:5, 6 |
| Personality Profile: | "Habakkuk: The Tower of Trust" | Hab. 2 |
| Soul Notes: | "Violated Trust" | Gen. 31:7 |
| | "Just Trust" | 1 Sam. 24:6 |
| | Trust in Me" | 2 Sam. 22:2, 3 |
| | "Willing to Trust" | Ps. 37:3-8 |
| | "Trust in the Lord" | Nah. 1:7 |
| | "Waiting for Answers" | Hab. 2:1-4 |
| | "Resting in God" | Zeph. 3:11-13 |
| | "Trust Talk" | 1 Tim. 4:10 |

More scriptures about trust:

| | |
|---|---|
| Is. 12:2 | I will trust and not be afraid; |
| Mark 10:24 | how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom |
| Eph. 1:12 | that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise |
| 1 Pet. 3:5 | the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, |

**TRUTH**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Discovering Truth" (Freda V. Crews) | Zech. 8:16, 17 |
| Key Passage: | "Free Indeed!" | John 8:31-36 |
| Personality Profile: | "Ananias: Caught in a Lie" | Acts 5:1-11 |
| Soul Notes: | "Speaking the Truth" | Num. 6:2-21 |
| | "Sticking to the Truth" | Deut. 13:1-5 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | "The Whole Truth" | Josh. 1:8, 9 |
| | "Final Answer" | John 8:32 |
| | "The Only Way" | John 14:6 |
| | "Truth Teaching" | 2 Tim. 2:15 |
| | "One Truth" | 2 John 1-4 |

More scriptures about truth:

| | |
|---|---|
| Gen. 24:48 | who had led me in the way of truth |
| Ps. 51:6 | You desire truth in the inward parts, |
| Rom. 1:18 | who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, |
| Eph. 4:15 | but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up |
| 1 John 5:6 | it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth |

**VALUES**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Christian Values in Contemporary Society" (Craig and Janet Parshall) | Gal. 5:22 |
| Key Passage: | "Most Valuable?" | 2 Pet. 1:5-9 |
| Personality Profile: | "Three Men and a Powerful God" | Dan. 3 |
| Soul Notes: | "The Golden Rule" | Matt. 7:12 |
| | "God's Fruit" | Gal. 5:22, 23 |

More scriptures about values:

| | |
|---|---|
| Ps. 15:1-5 | He who walks uprightly, and works righteousness, |
| Mic. 6:8 | what does the LORD require of you but to do justly, |
| Matt. 6:33 | But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, |
| 1 Cor. 10:31 | whatever you do, do all to the glory of God |
| Eph. 5:1-4 | be imitators of God as dear children |
| Phil. 2:29 | hold such men in esteem; |
| Titus 1:9 | holding fast the faithful word |
| Heb. 4:14 | let us hold fast our confession |

**VIOLENCE**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Violence" (Leslie Vernick) | 1 Chr. 11:23 |
| Key Passage: | "A Violent End" | Ps. 11:5 |
| Personality Profile: | "Naboth: In the Path of an Evil King" | 1 Kin. 21 |
| Soul Notes: | "A Violent Society" | Gen. 9:6 |
| | "Leaving Justice to God" | Ex. 2:11, 12 |
| | "Kill Everybody?" | Num. 31:17, 18 |
| | "Self-Destruction" | Judg. 9:5 |
| | "Catch Up" | 1 Kin. 21:1-16 |
| | "The Wrong Path" | 2 Kin. 8:15 |
| | "Be at Peace" | Matt. 26:51-54 |

More scriptures about violence:

| | |
|---|---|
| Ps. 72:14 | He will redeem their life from oppression and violence; |
| Prov. 16:29 | A violent man entices his neighbor, |
| Is. 53:9 | Because He had done no violence, |
| Matt. 11:12 | the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, |
| 1 Tim. 3:3 | not given to wine, not violent, |

**WEAKNESS**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "My Weakness, His Strength" (George Ohlschlager and Tim Clinton) | 1 Cor. 2:1-5 |
| Key Passage: | "Strength Builders" | 2 Cor. 12:9, 10 |
| Personality Profile: | "Mark-God's Work in Weakness" | Acts 13:13 |
| Soul Notes: | "The Answer" | Job 40:1-5 |
| | "Perfect Strength" | 1 Cor. 2:1-4 |
| | "Follow the Leader" | 2 Thess. 3:3-5 |
| | "Hidden Strength" | Heb. 4:14-16 |

More scriptures about weakness:

| | |
|---|---|
| Ps. 6:2 | Have mercy on me, O LORD, for I am weak; |
| Rom. 8:26 | Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses |
| 1 Cor. 1:25 | the weakness of God is stronger than men |
| 1 Cor. 15:43 | It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power |
| 1 Thess. 5:14 | uphold the weak, be patient with all |
| Heb. 5:2 | since he himself is also subject to weakness |
| Heb. 11:34 | out of weakness were made strong, |
| 1 Pet. 3:7 | giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, |

**WISDOM**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Wisdom" (Lloyd Ogilvie) | 1 Kin. 3:5-14 |
| Key Passage: | "Asking for It" | James 1:5 |
| Personality Profile: | "Solomon: Having Wisdom Vs. Using Wisdom" | 1 Kin. 3 |
| Soul Notes: | "In the Middle" | 1 Sam. 25:14-17 |
| | "Just Ask" | 1 Kin. 3:5-14 |
| | "Wise Words, Wise Acts | 1 Kin. 10:1-13 |
| | "Choose Wisely" | 2 Chr. 1:11, 12 |
| | "Find the Way" | Prov. 1:4 |
| | "Beautiful Wisdom" | Prov. 4:1-13 |
| | "Wisdom's House" | Prov. 9:1-18 |
| | "Looking for Meaning" | Eccl. 1:16-18 |
| | "Wise Move" | Dan. 2:20-22 |

More scriptures about wisdom:

| | |
|---|---|
| Ps. 51:6 | in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom |
| Luke 2:52 | Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, |
| 1 Cor. 1:17 | to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, |
| Col. 2:3 | in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge |
| Col. 4:5 | Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, |

**WOMEN'S ISSUES**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "Women of God" (Sandra D. Wilson) | Prov. 31 |
| Key Passage: | "Modeling" | Titus 2:3-5 |
| Personality Profile: | "The Virtuous Woman" | Prov. 31:10-31 |
| Soul Notes: | "God Is Fair" | Num. 27:1-11 |
| | "She Saved the Day" | Judg. 4:4-10 |
| | "The Ideal Woman" | Prov. 31:10-31 |
| | "R and R" | 1 Cor. 11:2-6 |
| | "Beautiful" | 1 Pet. 3:3, 4 |

More scriptures about women's issues:

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 Pet. 3:7 | heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered |
| Eph. 5:22 | Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord |
| 1 Cor. 7:34 | There is a difference between a wife and a virgin |
| Prov. 6:20 | do not forsake the law of your mother |
| Matt. 19:6 | what God has joined together, let not man separate |
| Ex. 20:14 | You shall not commit adultery |
| Ex. 20:12 | Honor your father and your mother, |

**WORK**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | "The World of Work" (Tim Clinton and George Ohlschlager) | 2 Thess. 3:10-15 |
| Key Passage: | "Off to Work" | 2 Thess. 3:10-12 |
| Personality Profile: | "Aaron: Serving Together" | Ex. 4:27 |
| Soul Notes: | "Catch the Vision" | Ex. 7:2 |
| | "The Rest of the Story" | Ex. 16:23 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | “On the Job” | Ex. 36:1 |
| | “The Gift” | Num. 18:6, 7 |
| | “Family First” | 1 Kin. 5:12-14 |
| | “Well Done” | 2 Chr. 3:1-17 |
| | “Never Give Up” | Ezra 5:1, 2 |
| | “Fruits of Our Labors” | Eccl. 5:18, 19 |
| | “God’s Work” | Acts 6:1-4 |
| | “Works Don’t Work” | Phil. 3:5, 6 |
| | “Taking Care of Business” | 1 Tim. 5:8 |

More scriptures about work:

Ps. 104:23 Man goes out to his work and to his labor
1 Cor. 15:58 always abounding in the work of the Lord,
Eph. 4:28 steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands
1 Thess. 1:3 remembering without ceasing your work of faith,

**WORRY**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theme Article: | “Worry or Pray-You Choose” (Rosemarie Scotti Hughes) | Luke 22:22-31 |
| Key Passage: | “What, Me Worry?” | Luke 12:22-31 |
| Personality Profile: | “Martha: Worried about Many Things” | Luke 10:38-42 |
| Soul Notes: | “Panic or Power” | Ex. 14:10 |
| | “Mind Clutter” | Matt. 6:25-34 |
| | “Worry Replacers” | 2 Tim. 1:7 |

More scriptures about worry:

Ps. 55:22 Cast your burden on the LORD, and He shall sustain you;

Matt. 11:28 you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest
Luke 12:29 what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind
John 14:1 Let not your heart be troubled;
John 14:27 Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you;
Phil. 4:6-9 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer
1 Pet. 5:7 casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you

## PREFACE TO THE

# New King James Version

The purpose of this most recent revision of the King James Version is in harmony with the purpose of the original King James scholars: “Not to make a new translation . . . but to make a good one better.” The New King James Version is a continuation of the labors of the King James translators, unlocking for today’s readers the spiritual treasures found especially in the Authorized Version of the Holy Bible.

While seeking to maintain the excellent *form* of the traditional English Bible, special care has also been taken to preserve the work of *precision* which is the legacy of the King James translators.

Where new translation has been necessary, the most complete representation of the original has been rendered by considering the definition and usage of the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek words in their contexts. This translation principle, known as *complete equivalence*, seeks to preserve accurately all of the information in the text while presenting it in good literary form.

In addition to accuracy, the translators have also sought to maintain those lyrical and devotional qualities that are so highly regarded in the King James Version. The thought flow and selection of phrases from the King James Version have been preserved wherever possible without sacrificing clarity.

The format of the New King James Version is designed to enhance the vividness, devotional quality, and usefulness of the Bible. Words or phrases in italics indicate expressions in the original language that require clarification by additional English words, as was done in the King James Version. Oblique type in the New Testament indicates a quotation from the Old Testament. Poetry is structured as verse to reflect the form and beauty of the passage in the original language. The covenant name of God was usually translated from the Hebrew as LORD or GOD, using capital letters as shown, as in the King James Version. This convention is also maintained in the New

King James Version when the Old Testament is quoted in the New.

The Hebrew text used for the Old Testament is the 1967/1977 Stuttgart edition of the *Biblia Hebraica*, with frequent comparisons to the Bomberg edition of 1524-25. Ancient versions and the Dead Sea Scrolls were consulted, but the Hebrew is followed wherever possible. Significant variations, explanations, and alternate renderings are mentioned in footnotes.

The Greek text used for the New Testament is the one that was followed by the King James translators: the traditional text of the Greek-speaking churches, called the Received Text or Textus Receptus, first published in 1516. Footnotes indicate significant variants from the Textus Receptus as found in two other editions of the Greek New Testament:

> (1) NU-Text: These variations generally represent the Alexandrian or Egyptian text type as found in the critical text published in the twenty-sixth edition of the NestleAland Greek New Testament (N) and in the United Bible Societies' third edition (U).
>
> (2) M-Text: These variations represent readings found in the text of the first edition of *The Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text*, which follows the consensus of the majority of surviving New Testament manuscripts.

The textual notes in the New King James Version make no evaluation, but objectively present the facts about variant readings.

# Old Testament


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Leviticus

Numbers

Deuteronomy

Joshua

Judges

Ruth

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2 Samuel

1 Kings

2 Kings

1 Chronicles

2 Chronicles

Ezra

Nehemiah

Esther

Job

Psalms

Proverbs

Ecclesiastes

Song of Solomon

Isaiah

Jeremiah

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Daniel

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Zechariah

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# Genesis



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# Genesis

Everyone needs a second chance. We all make bad choices and then must face the consequences of those bad choices. Then we try to make better choices the next time around. All the while, we are painfully aware of our tendency to fail, to disappoint, to mess things up. We need hope, forgiveness, and another chance.

Genesis means “beginning.” Written by Moses to the people of Israel, this book tells the story of the beginning of the world, the beginning of sin, and the beginning of God’s plan for redeeming sinful people. Genesis lays bare the lives of people who are just like us-real people with real problems. They struggle with uncertainty, fear, loneliness, jealousy, despair, and anger. Yet God patiently works in these imperfect people, and their faith emerges above their imperfections. God gives them second chances, and they grow and change as He works in their lives. As they make their journey through life, these people discover that God loves them, comforts them, and guides them-no matter how painful or confusing their situation might be. He does the same for us.

God is full of compassion and grace. His work in the lives of Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph shows that we don’t need to be perfect. Instead we need the perfect God. His divine presence and promises point us toward hope in spite of our sins, failures, and struggles. Genesis reveals that God longs to have an intimate relationship with us-and to give us second chances.

**SOUL CONCERNS IN**

## GENESIS

SEXUALITY (1:27, 28)
INFERTILITY (18:11, 12)

FAMILY PROBLEMS (CH. 25)
BLENDED FAMILIES (CH. 29)
TEMPTATION (39:6-15)
ATTACHMENT/BLESSING (CH. 49)

## The History of Creation

**1** In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. [2]The earth was
without form, and void; and darkness *was*[a] on the face of the deep. And
the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

[3]Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. [4]And God saw
the light, that *it was* good; and God divided the light from the darkness. [5]God
called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and
the morning were the first day.

[6]Then God said, “Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and
let it divide the waters from the waters.” [7]Thus God made the firmament, and
divided the waters which *were* under the firmament from the waters which
*were* above the firmament; and it was so. [8]And God called the firmament
Heaven. So the evening and the morning were the second day.

[9]Then God said, “Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together
into one place, and let the dry *land* appear”; and it was so. [10]And God called
the dry *land* Earth, and the gathering together of the waters He called Seas.
And God saw that *it was* good.

[11]Then God said, “Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb *that* yields seed,
*and* the fruit tree *that* yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed *is* in itself,
on the earth”; and it was so. [12]And the earth brought forth grass, the herb *that*
yields seed according to its kind, and the tree *that* yields fruit, whose seed *is*
in itself according to its kind. And God saw that *it was* good. [13]So the
evening and the morning were the third day.

> So God created man in His own image; in the image of
> God He created him; male and female He created them.
> GENESIS 1:27

[14]Then God said, “Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to
divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for
days and years; [15]and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heavens to
give light on the earth”; and it was so. [16]Then God made two great lights: the

greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night. *He made* the stars also. [17]God set them in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth, [18]and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness. And God saw that *it was* good. [19]So the evening and the morning were the fourth day.

[20]Then God said, “Let the waters abound with an abundance of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the face of the firmament of the heavens.” [21]So God created great sea creatures and every living thing that moves, with which the waters abounded, according to their kind, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that *it was* good. [22]And God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.” [23]So the evening and the morning were the fifth day.

[24]Then God said, “Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind: cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth, *each* according to its kind”; and it was so. [25]And God made the beast of the earth according to its kind, cattle according to its kind, and everything that creeps on the earth according to its kind. And God saw that *it was* good.

[26]Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all[a] the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” [27]So God created man in His *own* image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. [28]Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

[29]And God said, “See, I have given you every herb *that* yields seed which *is* on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food. [30]Also, to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which *there is* life, *I have given* every green herb for food”; and it was so. [31]Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed *it was* very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

**KEY PASSAGE**

# GOD CREATED SEX

# (1:27, 28)

God created sex and declared it "good." Along with the rest of creation, however, sex has been affected by sin. Scripture teaches God's plan for human sexuality:

• Sex is for both procreation (1:28) and pleasure (Prov. 5:18, 19; Song of Solomon).

• Sex is to be enjoyed only between a man and a woman married to each other (1 Cor. 7:2-5). The intimacy of sex is designed to bond the couple in a lifelong union (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:5).

• Sex outside of marriage is strictly prohibited (Ex. 20:14; Prov. 5:1-11; 6:23-33; 7:5-27).

• Both heterosexual and homosexual immorality are strongly condemned in Scripture (Rom. 1:26-28; 1 Thess. 4:3) because our bodies are the "temple of the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. 6:13-20).

God takes great joy when His children enjoy what He has given, provided they do so within His guidelines.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about sexuality. See also the personality profile of Adam and Eve.

# CREATED BY A LOVING GOD

DOUG ROSENAU

(Genesis 1:27, 28)

Our world is permeated by sexual images, ideas, and behaviors. Magazine covers, television shows, and movies are filled with sexual messages. With all this emphasis on sex, it is important that we remind ourselves that God is the creator of sexuality. When we understand God's sexual blueprint and the reasons He gave us this important gift, we realize why He pronounced it "good." Sexuality and the act of sex itself were designed by the loving Creator long before sex was used to sell magazines and products. To really appreciate sexuality, however, we must view sex from God's perspective.

## WHY DID GOD CREATE SEXUALITY?

God created people for relationships. He also created human beings with gender-male and female. According to the Bible, both genders were created in God's image and neither gender was valued above the other. Different cultures have stereotyped the roles of men and women in different ways. Although there is a great deal of debate about what is intrinsic to being male or female, the Bible is clear that both are image-bearers of God and

find their completion in a relationship with Him. “So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. . . . God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good” (Gen. 1:27, 31).

God gives a beautiful picture of His own nature with maleness and femaleness and their complementary interactive whole. Creating gender and opposite sexes produced the intimate concepts of marriage and family. God uses this pattern to demonstrate a very personal love relationship that He enters into with His people. He made Adam and Eve, the first lovers, incomplete without each other. “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (Gen. 2:24).

The biblical concept of sexuality helps people understand the complexity of God Himself. It is not just a behavior (having sex) or a gender (male or female). Sexuality is a foundational part of who people are and how they learn about relating to God and one another intimately.

## EXPRESSING SEXUALITY

God planned for the sexual relationship to be experienced only between a man and a woman within the covenant commitment of marriage. The sexual union is intended to help people express spiritual intimacy, emotional bonding, passionate excitement, personal fulfillment, and genuine nurturing. One of the great mysteries of life unfolds when marital partners are made complete in the “one flesh” union that God created for them with their soul mate for life. Stepping outside that plan always brings pain because God’s laws about sexuality are in place for people’s own good.

## MAINTAINING SEXUAL INTEGRITY

It takes conscious choices and a disciplined thought life to be sexually faithful to one’s spouse. Sexual integrity requires

resisting sexual temptation. Each marital partner must make godly choices to avoid ungodly sexual desires that can erupt into sin (1 Thess. 4:3-7; James 1:14, 15).

Society is filled with sexual messages that can tempt people into sin. Setting healthy boundaries for one's thought life as well as for the physical expression of sexuality will help a person maintain sexual integrity. This will mean "bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5). It will mean treating each other like brothers and sisters in the family of God "with all purity" (1 Tim. 5:2) in the rich interaction of male and female relationships.

Sexuality has been distorted by the Fall and sexual experience has been perverted by sin. Sexual brokenness results in a loss of sexual integrity and hinders the genuineness of people's relationships to others. Marriage alone cannot cure sexual brokenness. Christ alone can redeem people's sexuality through repentance and forgiveness. Only in Him can they experience a redeemed sexuality that leads to disciplined maturity, healthy boundaries, and marital faithfulness.

## HEALING SEXUAL SINS

Sexual sins have devastating consequences, but even these sins can be forgiven by God. Jesus invites people to come to Him with their sins. The following are five tools to use in the process of healing sexual sins.

*1. Confession*: Sexual sins thrive on secrecy. To experience complete healing, people must first confess the sin to God-He hears and forgives (Prov. 28:13; 1 John 1:9).

*2. Repentance*: This involves recognizing and accepting responsibility for sexual sin. Repentance frees people to make the changes needed for restoration (2 Cor. 7:10).

*3. Forgiveness*: People need to forgive themselves and the other people involved. Letting go of resentment and shame is crucial to the healing of sexual sins (Col. 3:13).

*4. Sorrow*: Sexuality misused can cause painful consequences and losses. This pain can move people to sorrow. Jesus promises healing to those who grieve (James 4:9, 10).

*5. Restitution*: Making restitution for harmful behaviors can bring reconciliation and restoration of intimacy. This may take different forms, depending on the situation. Each person should seek God's guidance regarding how to make restitution in matters of sexual sin (Ezek. 33:14, 15).

## CELEBRATING SEXUALITY

A married couple can truly celebrate their sexuality by giving pleasure to each other. This involves more than just sex. It means living honestly, sincerely, and joyfully within the covenant relationship of marriage. It is not simply a euphemism that the Old Testament uses the word "know" for sexual intercourse (Gen. 4:1). The Hebrew word for "to know" carries a deep meaning of intimacy. This foundation of covenant commitment is the groundwork for the celebration of marital lovemaking. God's plan has been right from the beginning-and it still works today.

## FURTHER MEDITATION:

Other passages to study about the issue of sexuality include:

- Deuteronomy 22:13-30
- Proverbs 5:15-23; 6:20-35
- Song of Solomon 7:1-13
- Matthew 5:27-30
- 1 Corinthians 6:12-7:16

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on sexuality at Genesis 1:27, 28. See also the personality profile of Adam and Eve.

**2** Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished.
2 And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He
rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. 3 Then God
blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His
work which God had created and made.

4 This *is* the history[a] of the heavens and the earth when they were created,
in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, 5 before any
plant of the field was in the earth and before any herb of the field had grown.
For the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the earth, and *there was* no
man to till the ground; 6 but a mist went up from the earth and watered the
whole face of the ground.

7 And the LORD God formed man *of* the dust of the ground, and breathed
into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

**LIFE IN GOD'S GARDEN**

8 The LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the
man whom He had formed. 9 And out of the ground the LORD God made
every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life
*was* also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good
and evil.

10 Now a river went out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it
parted and became four riverheads. 11 The name of the first *is* Pi-shon; it *is*
the one which skirts the whole land of Havilah, where *there is* gold. 12 And
the gold of that land *is* good. Bdellium and the onyx stone *are* there. 13 The
name of the second river *is* Gihon; it *is* the one which goes around the whole land
of Cush. 14 The name of the third river *is* Hiddekel;[a] it *is* the one which goes
toward the east of Assyria. The fourth river *is* the Euphrates.

15 Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to
tend and keep it. 16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of
every tree of the garden you may freely eat; 17 but of the tree of the
knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it
you shall surely die."

18 And the LORD God said, “*It is* not good that man should be alone; I will
make him a helper comparable to him.” 19 Out of the ground the LORD God
formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought *them* to
Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each
living creature, that *was* its name. 20 So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the
birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not
found a helper comparable to him.

21 And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept;
and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. 22 Then the
rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He
brought her to the man.

23 And Adam said:
“This *is* now bone of my bones
And flesh of my flesh;
She shall be called Woman,
Because she was taken out of Man.”
24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his
wife, and they shall become one flesh.

25 And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

## SOUL NOTE

**Make Your Choice** *(2:16, 17)* God provided an entire garden of fruit trees to satisfy Adam’s hunger as well as his taste buds. Adam, and soon Eve, were allowed to eat freely of every tree. But then God put *one* forbidden tree in the garden-just *one*-and told Adam, “You shall not eat” from that tree. In order for there to be loving obedience, there had to be the option for disobedience. Adam was given a clear boundary and a clear choice with clear consequences for disobedience. We also face choices every day. When we observe

God's boundaries, we show our love for Him. **Topic: Boundaries**

**SOUL NOTE**

**Alone?** *(2:18)* God's provision of a "helper" for Adam was not a condescending comment on singleness but an approval of marriage. God was concerned for Adam's loneliness, for He created people to have relationships-with Him and with others. Single adults include never-marrieds as well as separated, divorced, and widowed persons. Though issues may differ, each one faces the potential problems of aloneness, such as isolation, insecurity, and feelings of rejection. Being "unattached" can foster destructive responses, or it can encourage the development of a deeper relationship with God. There's nothing wrong with being single-just don't go it alone! **Topic: Singleness**

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# ADAM AND EVE: GOD'S DESIGN FOR SEXUALITY

## (GENESIS 2:18-25)

God invented sex. He built sexuality into people's original design. When God finished His work of creation, including the creation of

man and woman, God pronounced it all, “very good.” Later, when Adam saw what God had created out of his own rib, he said roughly the same thing. God allowed Adam to experience what it meant to be alone; then He created someone with whom Adam could know togetherness. It was the original case of bonding at first sight. One look and Adam was smitten.

God created Adam and Eve as a relationship unit, with sex as part of the glue to hold them together. From the beginning, God designed sexuality as one aspect of a wonderful relationship between a man and woman. But, as powerful a tool against human aloneness as sex is, it cannot do its work without another vital component of the man-woman relationship. That component is called *marriage*.

When God performed Adam and Eve’s wedding in the garden, He spelled out several aspects (besides sex) that make up the marriage relationship as He intended it. Genesis 2:24, 25 describes these aspects:

- leaving other significant relationships,
- joining to each other, and
- becoming one flesh.

That process results in a complete disclosure of one person to the other: They are “naked” but “not ashamed.” The invasion of sin into the world, however, complicated every part of life, including sex. Only Adam and Eve experienced the original version of married life. But sex continued as a lasting blessing even after the Fall. The Bible describes three important purposes of marital sex: procreation, loving pleasure, and resistance of sexual sin.

For every married couple since Adam and Eve, keeping sex a blessed part of their marriage takes work and faithfulness. When a man and woman enter and live out their marital relationship under God’s guidelines and purposes, they can still expect to discover, as Adam and Eve did so long ago, that marital sex can indeed be “very

good.”

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about sexuality Created by a Loving God. See also the key passage note at Genesis 1:27, 28.

## THE TEMPTATION AND FALL OF MAN

**3** Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden’?”

2 And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat the fruit of the trees of
the garden; 3 but of the fruit of the tree which *is* in the midst of the garden,
God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’ ”

4 Then the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. 5 For God
knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be
like God, knowing good and evil.”

6 So when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, that it *was*
pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make *one* wise, she took of its
fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. 7 Then the
eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they *were* naked; and
they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.

8 And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the
cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of
the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

9 Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, “Where *are* you?”

10 So he said, “I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I
was naked; and I hid myself.”

11 And He said, “Who told you that you *were* naked? Have you eaten from
the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?”

12 Then the man said, “The woman whom You gave *to be* with me, she
gave me of the tree, and I ate.”

13 And the LORD God said to the woman, “What *is* this you have done?”

The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

14 So the LORD God said to the serpent:

“Because you have done this,
You *are* cursed more than all cattle,

And more than every beast of the field;
On your belly you shall go,
And you shall eat dust
All the days of your life.
15 And I will put enmity
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her Seed;
He shall bruise your head,
And you shall bruise His heel."
16 To the woman He said:
"I will greatly multiply your sorrow and
your conception;
In pain you shall bring forth children;
Your desire *shall be* for your husband, And he shall rule over you."
17 Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it':

"Cursed *is* the ground for your sake;
In toil you shall eat *of* it
All the days of your life.
18 Both thorns and thistles it shall bring
forth for you,
And you shall eat the herb of the field.
19 In the sweat of your face you shall eat
bread
Till you return to the ground,
For out of it you were taken;
For dust you *are*,
And to dust you shall return."
20 And Adam called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living.

21 Also for Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.

22 Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to

know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever”- [23]therefore the LORD God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken. [24]So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# ADAM’S GUILT; ADAM’S SHAME

## (GENESIS 3)

While He had Adam’s undivided attention, God gave him some very specific instructions: “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Gen. 2:16, 17). God offered to Adam an opportunity to experience the full freedom that grows out of obedience.

Shortly after that, God introduced Eve to Adam. The two of them received God’s blessing and began their perfect life together. At this point there was no sin or suffering in the idyllic garden God gave them as a home.

One of Adam’s duties was to help Eve understand God’s instructions. He apparently gave Eve the condensed version: “See that tree over there, honey? God told us not to even touch it. Got that?” Eve was an easy prey for Satan because perhaps Adam didn’t tell her

the whole story. That's why God held Adam ultimately responsible for the sin that infected the human race when the couple ate of the forbidden fruit.

Even before God's confrontation, however, Adam already knew he had sinned. He felt that inner awareness of wrongdoing called *guilt*. He also realized that fear of exposure called *shame*. This powerful combination was given by God as an internal corrective. It could have brought Adam to repentance and confession. Instead, Adam tried to cope with guilt and shame by avoidance and denial. Adam found himself suddenly terrified of God's approach. He hid in shame. Gently questioned, Adam excused his behavior. Eve followed Adam's lead. The rest of us have done the same thing.

As long as we blame others and refuse to take responsibility for our wrong actions, we remain mired in sin. Guilt and shame rule our lives and cut us off from God's redemptive healing. But God invites us to own our sin and confess it to Him. When we do so, God is "faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about guilt/shame Dealing with Guilt. See also the key passage note at Romans 8:1.

**CAIN MURDERS ABEL**

**4** Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said,
"I have acquired a man from the LORD." [2] Then she bore again, this time
his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of
the ground. [3]And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an
offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD. [4]Abel also brought of the
firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his
offering, [5]but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very
angry, and his countenance fell.

> Sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.
> GENESIS 4:7

[6]So the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your
countenance fallen? [7]If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do
not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire *is* for you, but you should rule
over it."

[8]Now Cain talked with Abel his brother;[a] and it came to pass, when they
were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.

[9]Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where *is* Abel your brother?"

He said, "I do not know. *Am* I my brother's keeper?"

[10]And He said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood
cries out to Me from the ground. [11]So now you *are* cursed from the earth,
which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand.
[12]When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you. A
fugitive and a vagabond you shall be on the earth."

[13]And Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment *is* greater than I can bear!
[14]Surely You have driven me out this day from the face of the ground; I shall
be hidden from Your face; I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth,
and it will happen *that* anyone who finds me will kill me."

[15]And the LORD said to him, "Therefore,[a] whoever kills Cain, vengeance

shall be taken on him sevenfold." And the LORD set a mark on Cain, lest anyone finding him should kill him.

**THE FAMILY OF CAIN**

16 Then Cain went out from the presence of the LORD and dwelt in the land
of Nod on the east of Eden. 17 And Cain knew his wife, and she conceived
and bore Enoch. And he built a city, and called the name of the city after the
name of his son-Enoch. 18 To Enoch was born Irad; and Irad begot Mehujael,
and Mehujael begot Methushael, and Methushael begot La-mech.

19 Then Lamech took for himself two wives: the name of one *was* Adah,
and the name of the second *was* Zillah. 20 And Adah bore Jabal. He was the
father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock. 21 His brother's name
*was* Jubal. He was the father of all those who play the harp and flute. 22 And
as for Zillah, she also bore Tubal-Cain, an instructor of every craftsman in
bronze and iron. And the sister of Tubal-Cain *was* Naamah.

23 Then Lamech said to his wives:
"Adah and Zillah, hear my voice;
Wives of Lamech, listen to my speech!
For I have killed a man for wounding
me,
Even a young man for hurting me.
24 If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold,
Then Lamech seventy-sevenfold."

**A NEW SON**

25 And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and named him Seth,
"For God has appointed another seed for me instead of Abel, whom Cain
killed." 26 And as for Seth, to him also a son was born; and he named him
Enosh.[a] Then *men* began to call on the name of the LORD.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# ANGRY AS CAIN?

## (GENESIS 4)

Cain had a problem with anger. It wasn't that he got angry. God didn't warn him because he *got* angry; God warned him because he *stayed* angry. The incident that provoked Cain's anger occurred during a worship service. The brothers met to offer sacrifices to God. Cain brought an assortment of farm goods as an offering; Abel presented an offering of special value. Cain did his duty; Abel gave his best. God was pleased with Abel's offering, but rejected Cain's. The older brother was furious.

Cain's original anger actually represented a positive response. But the anger missed its target. Cain should have been furious with himself. Instead, Cain's anger became a deadly weapon looking for a new target. At that point, God intervened. He corrected Cain's misplaced anger and offered him another opportunity: "If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it" (Gen. 4:7).

Adam's firstborn opened the door for sin. Cain got angry at God and took it out on his younger brother Abel. Anger became murderous jealousy. Soon, Abel lay dead in a field. Killing his brother did little for Cain's anger. When God approached him, Cain denied knowing or caring where his brother might be. He resented the consequences of his sin. Cain displayed no remorse or repentance. He became stuck in his anger.

As Cain demonstrates, anger must be ruled or it will rule. Uncontrolled anger quickly becomes a destructive tyrant. When we invite God to help us identify the causes of our anger and take

corrective measures, anger can become a servant rather than a master in our lives. God's Word gives powerful counsel when it notes, "Be angry, and do not sin" (Eph. 4:26).

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about anger Cultivating Healthy Anger. See also the key passage note at Ephesians 4:26, 27.

## THE FAMILY OF ADAM

**5** This is the book of the genealogy of Adam. In the day that God created
man, He made him in the likeness of God. h3lHe created them male and
female, and blessed them and called them Mankind in the day they were
created. 3And Adam lived one hundred and thirty years, and begot *a son* in
his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth. 4After he begot Seth,
the days of Adam were eight hundred years; and he had sons and daughters.
5So all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years; and he
died.

6Seth lived one hundred and five years, and begot Enosh. 7After he begot
Enosh, Seth lived eight hundred and seven years, and had sons and daughters.
8So all the days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve years; and he died.

9Enosh lived ninety years, and begot Cainan.[a] 10After he begot Cainan,
Enosh lived eight hundred and fifteen years, and had sons and daughters.
11So all the days of Enosh were nine hundred and five years; and he died.

12Cainan lived seventy years, and begot Mahalalel. 13After he begot
Mahalalel, Cainan lived eight hundred and forty years, and had sons and
daughters. 14So all the days of Cainan were nine hundred and ten years; and
he died.

15Mahalalel lived sixty-five years, and begot Jared. 16After he begot Jared,
Mahalalel lived eight hundred and thirty years, and had sons and daughters.
17So all the days of Mahalalel were eight hundred and ninety-five years; and
he died.

18Jared lived one hundred and sixty-two years, and begot Enoch. 19After he
begot Enoch, Jared lived eight hundred years, and had sons and daughters.
20So all the days of Jared were nine hundred and sixty-two years; and he
died.

21Enoch lived sixty-five years, and begot Methuselah. 22After he begot
Methuselah, Enoch walked with God three hundred years, and had sons and
daughters. 23So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five
years. 24And Enoch walked with God; and he *was* not, for God took him.

[25]Methuselah lived one hundred and eighty-seven years, and begot Lamech. [26]After he begot Lamech, Methuselah lived seven hundred and eighty-two years, and had sons and daughters. [27]So all the days of Methuselah were nine hundred and sixty-nine years; and he died.

[28]Lamech lived one hundred and eighty-two years, and had a son. [29]And he called his name Noah, saying, “This *one* will comfort us concerning our work and the toil of our hands, because of the ground which the LORD has cursed.” [30]After he begot Noah, Lamech lived five hundred and ninety-five years, and had sons and daughters. [31]So all the days of Lamech were seven hundred and seventy-seven years; and he died.

[32]And Noah was five hundred years old, and Noah begot Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

## THE WICKEDNESS AND JUDGMENT OF MAN

**6** Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth,
and daughters were born to them, 2 that the sons of God saw the daughters
of men, that they *were* beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all
whom they chose.

3 And the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not strive[a] with man forever, for he *is*
indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years." 4 There
were giants on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of
God came in to the daughters of men and they bore *children* to them. Those
*were* the mighty men who *were* of old, men of renown.

5 Then the LORD[a] saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth,
and *that* every intent of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually.
6 And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was
grieved in His heart. 7 So the LORD said, "I will destroy man whom I have
created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and
birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them." 8 But Noah found grace
in the eyes of the LORD.

## NOAH PLEASES GOD

9 This is the genealogy of Noah. Noah was a just man, perfect in his
generations. Noah walked with God. 10 And Noah begot three sons: Shem,
Ham, and Japheth.

11 The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with
violence. 12 So God looked upon the earth, and indeed it was corrupt; for all
flesh had corrupted their way on the earth.

## THE ARK PREPARED

13 And God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the
earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them
with the earth. 14 Make yourself an ark of gopherwood; make rooms in the
ark, and cover it inside and outside with pitch. 15 And this is how you shall
make it: The length of the ark *shall be* three hundred cubits, its width fifty

cubits, and its height thirty cubits. [16]You shall make a window for the ark, and you shall finish it to a cubit from above; and set the door of the ark in its side. You shall make it *with* lower, second, and third *decks.* [17]And behold, I Myself am bringing floodwaters on the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which *is* the breath of life; everything that *is* on the earth shall die. [18]But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall go into the ark-you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you. [19]And of every living thing of all flesh you shall bring two of every *sort* into the ark, to keep *them* alive with you; they shall be male and female. [20]Of the birds after their kind, of animals after their kind, and of every creeping thing of the earth after its kind, two of every *kind* will come to you to keep *them* alive. [21]And you shall take for yourself of all food that is eaten, and you shall gather *it* to yourself; and it shall be food for you and for them."

[22]Thus Noah did; according to all that God commanded him, so he did.

## THE GREAT FLOOD

7 Then the LORD said to Noah, “Come into the ark, you and all your household, because I have seen *that* you *are* righteous before Me in this generation. 2You shall take with you seven each of every clean animal, a male and his female; two each of animals that *are* unclean, a male and his female; 3also seven each of birds of the air, male and female, to keep the species alive on the face of all the earth. 4For after seven more days I will cause it to rain on the earth forty days and forty nights, and I will destroy from the face of the earth all living things that I have made.” 5And Noah did according to all that the LORD commanded him. 6Noah *was* six hundred years old when the floodwaters were on the earth.

7So Noah, with his sons, his wife, and his sons’ wives, went into the ark because of the waters of the flood. 8Of clean animals, of animals that *are* unclean, of birds, and of everything that creeps on the earth, 9two by two they went into the ark to Noah, male and female, as God had commanded Noah. 10And it came to pass after seven days that the waters of the flood were on the earth. 11In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. 12And the rain was on the earth forty days and forty nights.

13On the very same day Noah and Noah’s sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and Noah’s wife and the three wives of his sons with them, entered the ark- 14they and every beast after its kind, all cattle after their kind, every creeping thing that creeps on the earth after its kind, and every bird after its kind, every bird of every sort. 15And they went into the ark to Noah, two by two, of all flesh in which *is* the breath of life. 16So those that entered, male and female of all flesh, went in as God had commanded him; and the LORD shut him in.

17Now the flood was on the earth forty days. The waters increased and lifted up the ark, and it rose high above the earth. 18The waters prevailed and greatly increased on the earth, and the ark moved about on the surface of the waters. 19And the waters prevailed exceedingly on the earth, and all the high hills under the whole heaven were covered. 20The waters prevailed fifteen

cubits upward, and the mountains were covered. [21]And all flesh died that moved on the earth: birds and cattle and beasts and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, and every man. [22]All in whose nostrils *was* the breath of the spirit[a] of life, all that *was* on the dry *land*, died. [23]So He destroyed all living things which were on the face of the ground: both man and cattle, creeping thing and bird of the air. They were destroyed from the earth. Only Noah and those who *were* with him in the ark remained *alive*. [24]And the waters prevailed on the earth one hundred and fifty days.

**NOAH'S DELIVERANCE**

**8** Then God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the animals
that *were* with him in the ark. And God made a wind to pass over the earth,
and the waters subsided. 2The fountains of the deep and the windows of
heaven were also stopped, and the rain from heaven was restrained. 3And the
waters receded continually from the earth. At the end of the hundred and fifty
days the waters decreased. 4Then the ark rested in the seventh month, the
seventeenth day of the month, on the mountains of Ararat. 5And the waters
decreased continually until the tenth month. In the tenth *month,* on the first
*day* of the month, the tops of the mountains were seen.

6So it came to pass, at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window
of the ark which he had made. 7Then he sent out a raven, which kept going to
and fro until the waters had dried up from the earth. 8He also sent out from
himself a dove, to see if the waters had receded from the face of the ground.
9But the dove found no resting place for the sole of her foot, and she returned
into the ark to him, for the waters *were* on the face of the whole earth. So he
put out his hand and took her, and drew her into the ark to himself. 10And he
waited yet another seven days, and again he sent the dove out from the ark.
11Then the dove came to him in the evening, and behold, a freshly plucked
olive leaf *was* in her mouth; and Noah knew that the waters had receded from
the earth. 12So he waited yet another seven days and sent out the dove, which
did not return again to him anymore.

13And it came to pass in the six hundred and first year, in the first *month,*
the first *day* of the month, that the waters were dried up from the earth; and
Noah removed the covering of the ark and looked, and indeed the surface of
the ground was dry. 14And in the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of
the month, the earth was dried.

15Then God spoke to Noah, saying, 16"Go out of the ark, you and your
wife, and your sons and your sons' wives with you. 17Bring out with you
every living thing of all flesh that *is* with you: birds and cattle and every
creeping thing that creeps on the earth, so that they may abound on the earth,
and be fruitful and multiply on the earth." 18So Noah went out, and his sons

and his wife and his sons' wives with him. [19]Every animal, every creeping thing, every bird, *and* whatever creeps on the earth, according to their families, went out of the ark.

## GOD'S COVENANT WITH CREATION

[20]Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. [21]And the LORD smelled a soothing aroma. Then the LORD said in His heart, "I will never again curse the ground for man's sake, although the imagination of man's heart *is* evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done.

[22] "While the earth remains,
Seedtime and harvest,
Cold and heat,
Winter and summer,
And day and night
Shall not cease."

**9** So God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them: “Be fruitful and
multiply, and fill the earth.[a] 2And the fear of you and the dread of you
shall be on every beast of the earth, on every bird of the air, on all that move
*on* the earth, and on all the fish of the sea. They are given into your hand.
3Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all
things, even as the green herbs. 4But you shall not eat flesh with its life, *that
is,* its blood. 5Surely for your lifeblood I will demand *a reckoning;* from the
hand of every beast I will require it, and from the hand of man. From the
hand of every man’s brother I will require the life of man.

> The rainbow shall be in the cloud, and I will look on it to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.
> GENESIS 9:16

6 “Whoever sheds man’s blood,
By man his blood shall be shed;
For in the image of God
He made man.
7 And as for you, be fruitful and multiply;
Bring forth abundantly in the earth
And multiply in it.”

8Then God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying: 9“And as for
Me, behold, I establish My covenant with you and with your descendants[a]
after you, 10and with every living creature that *is* with you: the birds, the
cattle, and every beast of the earth with you, of all that go out of the ark,
every beast of the earth. 11Thus I establish My covenant with you: Never
again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood; never again shall
there be a flood to destroy the earth.”

12And God said: “This *is* the sign of the covenant which I make between
Me and you, and every living creature that *is* with you, for perpetual
generations: 13I set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be for the sign of the
covenant between Me and the earth. 14It shall be, when I bring a cloud over
the earth, that the rainbow shall be seen in the cloud; 15and I will remember

My covenant which *is* between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. [16]The rainbow shall be in the cloud, and I will look on it to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that *is* on the earth." [17]And God said to Noah, "This *is* the sign of the covenant which I have established between Me and all flesh that *is* on the earth."

**NOAH AND HIS SONS**

[18]Now the sons of Noah who went out of the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. And Ham *was* the father of Canaan. [19]These three *were* the sons of Noah, and from these the whole earth was populated.

[20]And Noah began *to be* a farmer, and he planted a vineyard. [21]Then he drank of the wine and was drunk, and became uncovered in his tent. [22]And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside. [23]But Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid *it* on both their shoulders, and went backward and covered the nakedness of their father. Their faces *were* turned away, and they did not see their father's nakedness.

[24]So Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done to him. [25]Then he said:

"Cursed *be* Canaan;
A servant of servants
He shall be to his brethren."

[26]And he said:
"Blessed *be* the LORD,
The God of Shem, And may Canaan be his servant.
[27] May God enlarge Japheth,
And may he dwell in the tents of Shem;
And may Canaan be his servant."

[28] And Noah lived after the flood three hundred and fifty years. [29]So all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years; and he died.

## SOUL NOTE

**A Violent Society** *(9:6)* To find evidence of violence in society, just open a newspaper. Violence reflects the darkness of the human soul-the sinful nature.

God dealt harshly with Noah's generation because they were evil and the earth was "filled with violence" (6:11). People's violence toward one another grieves God. After the Flood, God instructed succeeding generations to hold people accountable for their violent behavior and to punish them appropriately. It's OK to desire that people receive just consequences for their violent behavior, but leave revenge to God. In the end, He will deal justly with all people. **Topic: Violence**

## PERSONALITY PROFILE

# NOAH: FLOATING ON GOD'S PROMISES

# (GENESIS 9)

Never underestimate the power of one person, especially one who believes God's promises. One good man can turn the tide of history. Long before the Flood, Noah learned that reliance on God would keep him afloat through life.

Noah received the divine order to build an ark because he found favor with God. In a world drowning in sin, Noah was chosen to prepare for the safety of a handful. God told Noah that because wickedness throughout the world was unrestrained, “everything that is on the earth shall die. But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall go into the ark-you, your sons, your wife, and your sons’ wives with you” (Gen. 6:17, 18).

Noah believed God and followed His instructions, building a huge ship on dry land. His neighbors could not imagine a purpose or need for such a vessel. We can only imagine the ridicule he must have endured! His ark became a monument to persistence. His faithful obedience brought about the salvation of his family. He became, like Adam, the second father of the human race.

After the Flood, God created the first rainbow as a sign of His perpetual promise to Noah and his descendants that He would never again destroy the earth by water. God’s promises are trustworthy. God fulfills His promises even when we fail completely to hold up our side of the covenant. The rainbow reminds us of one part of God’s commitment to us.

We may often feel surrounded by the rising tide of immorality in today’s world. God’s promises remain a safe vessel. In spite of overwhelming odds and the temptation to discouragement, God’s faithfulness to Noah reveals that He will also keep the “great and precious promises” He has given us (2 Pet. 1:4).

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about God’s promises Finding the Courage to Believe. See also the key passage note at 2 Peter 1:4.

## NATIONS DESCENDED FROM NOAH

**10** Now this *is* the genealogy of the sons of Noah: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.
And sons were born to them after the flood.

2 The sons of Japheth *were* Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech,
and Tiras. 3 The sons of Gomer *were* Ashkenaz, Riphath,[a] and Togarmah.
4 The sons of Javan *were* Eli-shah, Tarshish, Kittim, and Dodanim.[a] 5 From
these the coastland *peoples* of the Gentiles were separated into their lands,
everyone according to his language, according to their families, into their
nations.

6 The sons of Ham *were* Cush, Mizraim, Put,[a] and Canaan. 7 The sons of
Cush *were* Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, and Sabtechah; and the sons of
Raamah *were* Sheba and Dedan.

8 Cush begot Nimrod; he began to be a mighty one on the earth. 9 He was a
mighty hunter before the LORD; therefore it is said, “Like Nimrod the mighty
hunter before the LORD.” 10 And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel,
Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. 11 From that land he went to
Assyria and built Nineveh, Rehoboth Ir, Calah, 12 and Resen between
Nineveh and Calah (that *is* the principal city).

13 Mizraim begot Ludim, Anamim, Lehabim, Naphtuhim, 14 Pathrusim, and
Casluhim (from whom came the Philistines and Caphtorim).

15 Canaan begot Sidon his firstborn, and Heth; 16 the Jebusite, the Amorite,
and the Girgashite; 17 the Hivite, the Arkite, and the Sinite; 18 ext2the
Arvadite, the Zemarite, and the Hamathite. Afterward the families of the
Canaanites were dispersed. 19 And the border of the Canaanites was from
Sidon as you go toward Gerar, as far as Gaza; then as you go toward Sodom,
Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim, as far as Lasha. 20 These *were* the sons of
Ham, according to their families, according to their languages, in their lands
*and* in their nations.

21 And *children* were born also to Shem, the father of all the children of
Eber, the brother of Japheth the elder. 22 The sons of Shem *were* Elam,
Asshur, Arphaxad, Lud, and Aram. 23 The sons of Aram *were* Uz, Hul,

Gether, and Mash.[a] [24]Arphaxad begot Salah,[a] and Salah begot Eber. [25]To Eber were born two sons: the name of one *was* Peleg, for in his days the earth was divided; and his brother's name *was* Joktan. [26]Joktan begot Almodad, She-leph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, [27]Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, [28]Obal,[a] Abimael, Sheba, [29]Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab. All these *were* the sons of Joktan. [30]And their dwelling place was from Mesha as you go toward Sephar, the mountain of the east. [31]These *were* the sons of Shem, according to their families, according to their languages, in their lands, according to their nations.

[32]These *were* the families of the sons of Noah, according to their generations, in their nations; and from these the nations were divided on the earth after the flood.

## THE TOWER OF BABEL

**11** Now the whole earth had one language and one speech. 2 And it came to
pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land
of Shinar, and they dwelt there. 3 Then they said to one another, “Come, let us
make bricks and bake *them* thoroughly.” They had brick for stone, and they
had asphalt for mortar. 4 And they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city,
and a tower whose top *is* in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves,
lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.”

5 But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of
men had built. 6 And the LORD said, “Indeed the people *are* one and they all
have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they
propose to do will be withheld from them. 7 Come, let Us go down and there
confuse their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech.”
8 So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth,
and they ceased building the city. 9 Therefore its name is called Babel,
because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth; and from there
the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.

## SHEM’S DESCENDANTS

10 This *is* the genealogy of Shem: Shem *was* one hundred years old, and
begot Arphaxad two years after the flood. 11 After he begot Ar-phaxad, Shem
lived five hundred years, and begot sons and daughters.

12 Arphaxad lived thirty-five years, and begot Salah. 13 After he begot
Salah, Arphaxad lived four hundred and three years, and begot sons and
daughters.

14 Salah lived thirty years, and begot Eber. 15 After he begot Eber, Salah
lived four hundred and three years, and begot sons and daughters.

16 Eber lived thirty-four years, and begot Pe-leg. 17 After he begot Peleg,
Eber lived four hundred and thirty years, and begot sons and daughters.

18 Peleg lived thirty years, and begot Reu. 19 After he begot Reu, Peleg lived
two hundred and nine years, and begot sons and daughters.

[20]Reu lived thirty-two years, and begot Se-rug. [21]After he begot Serug, Reu lived two hundred and seven years, and begot sons and daughters.

[22]Serug lived thirty years, and begot Nahor. [23]After he begot Nahor, Serug lived two hundred years, and begot sons and daughters.

[24]Nahor lived twenty-nine years, and begot Terah. [25]After he begot Terah, Nahor lived one hundred and nineteen years, and begot sons and daughters.

[26]Now Terah lived seventy years, and begot Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

**TERAH'S DESCENDANTS**

[27]This *is* the genealogy of Terah: Terah begot Abram, Nahor, and Haran. Haran begot Lot. [28]And Haran died before his father Terah in his native land, in Ur of the Chaldeans. [29]Then Abram and Nahor took wives: the name of Abram's wife *was* Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran the father of Milcah and the father of Iscah. [30]But Sarai was barren; she had no child.

[31]And Terah took his son Abram and his grandson Lot, the son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, his son Abram's wife, and they went out with them from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to the land of Canaan; and they came to Haran and dwelt there. [32]So the days of Terah were two hundred and five years, and Terah died in Haran.

**PROMISES TO ABRAM**

**12** Now the LORD had said to Abram:

"Get out of your country,
From your family
And from your father's house,
To a land that I will show you.
2 I will make you a great nation;
I will bless you
And make your name great;
And you shall be a blessing.
3 I will bless those who bless you,
And I will curse him who curses you;
And in you all the families of the earth
shall be blessed."

4 So Abram departed as the LORD had spoken to him, and Lot went with him. And Abram *was* seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. 5Then Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people whom they had acquired in Haran, and they departed to go to the land of Canaan. So they came to the land of Canaan. 6Abram passed through the land to the place of Shechem, as far as the terebinth tree of Moreh.[a] And the Canaanites *were* then in the land.

7Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." And there he built an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him. 8And he moved from there to the mountain east of Bethel, and he pitched his tent *with* Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; there he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD. 9So Abram journeyed, going on still toward the South.[a]

**ABRAM IN EGYPT**

10Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to dwell there, for the famine *was* severe in the land. 11And it came to pass, when he was close to entering Egypt, that he said to Sarai his wife, "Indeed I

know that you *are* a woman of beautiful countenance. [12]Therefore it will happen, when the Egyptians see you, that they will say, ‘This *is* his wife’; and they will kill me, but they will let you live. [13]Please say you *are* my sister, that it may be well with me for your sake, and that I[a] may live because of you.”

[14]So it was, when Abram came into Egypt, that the Egyptians saw the woman, that she *was* very beautiful. [15]The princes of Pharaoh also saw her and commended her to Pharaoh. And the woman was taken to Pharaoh’s house. [16]He treated Abram well for her sake. He had sheep, oxen, male donkeys, male and female servants, female donkeys, and camels.

[17]But the LORD plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram’s wife. [18]And Pharaoh called Abram and said, “What *is* this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she *was* your wife? [19]Why did you say, ‘She *is* my sister’? I might have taken her as my wife. Now therefore, here is your wife; take *her* and go your way.” [20]So Pharaoh commanded *his* men concerning him; and they sent him away, with his wife and all that he had.

**ABRAM INHERITS CANAAN**

**13** Then Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife and all that he had,
and Lot with him, to the South.[a] 2 Abram *was* very rich in livestock, in
silver, and in gold. 3 And he went on his journey from the South as far as
Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel
and Ai, 4 to the place of the altar which he had made there at first. And there
Abram called on the name of the LORD.

5 Lot also, who went with Abram, had flocks and herds and tents. 6 Now the
land was not able to support them, that they might dwell together, for their
possessions were so great that they could not dwell together. 7 And there was
strife between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's
livestock. The Canaanites and the Perizzites then dwelt in the land.

8 So Abram said to Lot, "Please let there be no strife between you and me,
and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen; for we *are* brethren. 9 *Is* not
the whole land before you? Please separate from me. If *you take* the left, then
I will go to the right; or, if *you go* to the right, then I will go to the left."

10 And Lot lifted his eyes and saw all the plain of Jordan, that it *was* well
watered everywhere (before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah) like
the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt as you go toward Zoar. 11 Then
Lot chose for himself all the plain of Jordan, and Lot journeyed east. And
they separated from each other. 12 Abram dwelt in the land of Canaan, and
Lot dwelt in the cities of the plain and pitched *his* tent even as far as Sodom.
13 But the men of Sodom *were* exceedingly wicked and sinful against the
LORD.

14 And the LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him: "Lift
your eyes now and look from the place where you are-northward, southward,
eastward, and westward; 15 for all the land which you see I give to you and
your descendants[a] forever. 16 And I will make your descendants as the dust of
the earth; so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, *then* your
descendants also could be numbered. 17 Arise, walk in the land through its
length and its width, for I give it to you."

18 Then Abram moved *his* tent, and went and dwelt by the terebinth trees of
Mamre,[a] which *are* in Hebron, and built an altar there to the LORD.

## LOT'S CAPTIVITY AND RESCUE

**14** And it came to pass in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king
of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of nations,[a] [2]*that*
they made war with Bera king of Sodom, Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab
king of Admah, Shemeber king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is,
Zoar). [3]All these joined together in the Valley of Siddim (that is, the Salt
Sea). [4]Twelve years they served Chedorlaomer, and in the thirteenth year
they rebelled.

[5]In the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and the kings that *were* with him
came and attacked the Rephaim in Ashteroth Karnaim, the Zuzim in Ham, the
Emim in Shaveh Kiria-thaim, [6]and the Horites in their mountain of Seir, as
far as El Paran, which *is* by the wilderness. [7]Then they turned back and came
to En Mishpat (that *is*, Kadesh), and attacked all the country of the
Amalekites, and also the Amorites who dwelt in Hazezon Tamar.

[8]And the king of Sodom, the king of Gomorrah, the king of Admah, the
king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that *is*, Zoar) went out and joined
together in battle in the Valley of Siddim [9]against Chedorlaomer king of
Elam, Tidal king of nations,[a] Amraphel king of Shi-nar, and Arioch king of
Ellasar-four kings against five. [10]Now the Valley of Siddim *was full of*
asphalt pits; and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled; *some* fell there, and
the remainder fled to the mountains. [11]Then they took all the goods of Sodom
and Gomorrah, and all their provisions, and went their way. [12]They also took
Lot, Abram's brother's son who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and
departed.

[13]Then one who had escaped came and told Abram the Hebrew, for he
dwelt by the tere-binth trees of Mamre[a] the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and
brother of Aner; and they *were* allies with Abram. [14]Now when Abram heard
that his brother was taken captive, he armed his three hundred and eighteen
trained *servants* who were born in his own house, and went in pursuit as far
as Dan. [15]He divided his forces against them by night, and he and his servants
attacked them and pursued them as far as Hobah, which *is* north of
Damascus. [16]So he brought back all the goods, and also brought back his

brother Lot and his goods, as well as the women and the people.

17 And the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh
(that *is*, the King's Valley), after his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer
and the kings who *were* with him.

**ABRAM AND MELCHIZEDEK**

18 Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he *was* the
priest of God Most High. 19 And he blessed him and said:

"Blessed be Abram of God Most High,
Possessor of heaven and earth;
20 And blessed be God Most High,
Who has delivered your enemies into
your hand."

And he gave him a tithe of all.

21 Now the king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give me the persons, and take
the goods for yourself ."

22 But Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have raised my hand to the
LORD, God Most High, the Possessor of heaven and earth, 23 that I *will take*
nothing, from a thread to a sandal strap, and that I will not take anything that
*is* yours, lest you should say, 'I have made Abram rich'- 24 except only what
the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men who went with me:
Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their portion."

## GOD'S COVENANT WITH ABRAM

**15** After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision,
saying, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I *am* your shield, your exceedingly
great reward."

2But Abram said, "Lord GOD, what will You give me, seeing I go
childless, and the heir of my house *is* Eliezer of Damascus?" 3Then Abram
said, "Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is
my heir!"

> The word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying,
> "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your
> exceedingly great reward."
> GENESIS 15:1

4And behold, the word of the LORD *came* to him, saying, "This one shall
not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your
heir." 5Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven,
and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So
shall your descendants be."

6And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for
righteousness.

7Then He said to him, "I *am* the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the
Chaldeans, to give you this land to inherit it."

8And he said, "Lord GOD, how shall I know that I will inherit it?"

9So He said to him, "Bring Me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old
female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon." 10Then
he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, down the middle, and placed
each piece opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds in two. 11And when
the vultures came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

12Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and
behold, horror *and* great darkness fell upon him. 13Then He said to Abram:
"Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land *that is* not

theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. [14]And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions. [15]Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. [16]But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites *is* not yet complete."

[17]And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces. [18]On the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying:

"To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates- [19]the Kenites, the Kenez-zites, the Kadmonites, [20]the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, [21]the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebu-sites."

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# ABRAHAM: STEPPING OUT ON FAITH

## (GENESIS 15)

Abraham practiced an inside-out faith. What he believed in his mind and heart he put to action with his life. He turned trust into travel and experienced God's grace and power along the way.

God chose Abraham and invited him on a faith-stretching journey. Abraham had to pack up his large and wealthy clan, leave a lush river valley, and trust God's protection and guidance. God directed him to

Canaan, a hardscrabble land of warring tribes. God's promise had included both a land and a legacy. God told Abraham He would give him a place and make from him a people. "Get out of your country . . . to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you. . . . And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen. 12:1-3).

The promise of a land came true long before the promise of a child. When Abraham and Sarah were very old, well past childbearing years, God promised them a son who would be the tangible evidence and living carrier of God's promise. As often happens during a divine waiting period, the people involved thought of possible ways to help God accomplish His plan. But their efforts only served to make their situation more complicated. Like us, Abraham wasn't always sure what faith required him to do.

Despite their all-too-real imperfections, Sarah and Abraham are listed among the heroes in the "Hall of Faith" in Hebrews 11. God eventually did bless them with their promised son Isaac. Through them the nation of Israel was born, the lineage of Jesus Christ was begun, and the plan to bless the world with a Savior continued to develop. God's plan rested on the shoulders of a man who practiced inside-out faith.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about faith Faith. See also the key passage note at Hebrews 11:1–6.

**HAGAR AND ISHMAEL**

**16** Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no *children.* And she had an
Egyptian maidservant whose name was Hagar. 2So Sarai said to Abram,
"See now, the LORD has restrained me from bearing *children.* Please, go in to
my maid; perhaps I shall obtain children by her." And Abram heeded the
voice of Sarai. 3Then Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar her maid, the
Egyptian, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife, after Abram had
dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan. 4So he went in to Hagar, and she
conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress became
despised in her eyes.

5Then Sarai said to Abram, "My wrong *be* upon you! I gave my maid into
your embrace; and when she saw that she had conceived, I became despised
in her eyes. The LORD judge between you and me."

6So Abram said to Sarai, "Indeed your maid *is* in your hand; do to her as
you please." And when Sarai dealt harshly with her, she fled from her
presence.

7Now the Angel of the LORD found her by a spring of water in the
wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur. 8And He said, "Hagar, Sarai's
maid, where have you come from, and where are you going?"

She said, "I am fleeing from the presence of my mistress Sarai."

9The Angel of the LORD said to her, "Return to your mistress, and submit
yourself under her hand." 10Then the Angel of the LORD said to her, "I will
multiply your descendants exceedingly, so that they shall not be counted for
multitude." 11And the Angel of the LORD said to her:

"Behold, you *are* with child,
And you shall bear a son.
You shall call his name Ishmael,
Because the LORD has heard your
affliction.
12 He shall be a wild man;
His hand *shall be* against every man,
And every man's hand against him.

And he shall dwell in the presence of all
his brethren.”

13 Then she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, You-Are-the-
God-Who-Sees; for she said, “Have I also here seen Him who sees me?”
14 Therefore the well was called Beer La-hai Roi;[a] observe, *it is* between
Kadesh and Bered.

15 So Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram named his son, whom Hagar
bore, Ishmael. 16 Abram *was* eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to
Abram.

**THE SIGN OF THE COVENANT**

**17** When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram
and said to him, “I *am* Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless.
2 And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you
exceedingly.” 3 Then Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him,
saying: 4 “As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a
father of many nations. 5 No longer shall your name be called Abram, but
your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations.
6 I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and
kings shall come from you. 7 And I will establish My covenant between Me
and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an
everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you. 8 Also
I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a
stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be
their God.”

9 And God said to Abraham: “As for you, you shall keep My covenant, you
and your descendants after you throughout their generations. 10 This *is* My
covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants
after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised; 11 and you shall
be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the
covenant between Me and you. 12 He who is eight days old among you shall
be circumcised, every male child in your generations, he who is born in your
house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not your descendant.
13 He who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money must
be circumcised, and My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting
covenant. 14 And the uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the
flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has
broken My covenant.”

15 Then God said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call
her name Sarai, but Sarah *shall be* her name. 16 And I will bless her and also
give you a son by her; then I will bless her, and she shall be *a mother of*
nations; kings of peoples shall be from her.”

17 Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, “Shall
*a child* be born to a man who is one hundred years old? And shall Sarah, who
is ninety years old, bear *a child?*” 18 And Abraham said to God, “Oh, that
Ishmael might live before You!”

19 Then God said: “No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall
call his name Isaac; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting
covenant, *and* with his descendants after him. 20 And as for Ishmael, I have
heard you. Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will
multiply him exceedingly. He shall beget twelve princes, and I will make him
a great nation. 21 But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah
shall bear to you at this set time next year.” 22 Then He finished talking with
him, and God went up from Abraham.

23 So Abraham took Ishmael his son, all who were born in his house and all
who were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham’s
house, and circumcised the flesh of their foreskins that very same day, as God
had said to him. 24 Abraham *was* ninety-nine years old when he was
circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. 25 And Ishmael his son *was* thirteen
years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. 26 That very
same day Abraham was circumcised, and his son Ishmael; 27 and all the men
of his house, born in the house or bought with money from a foreigner, were
circumcised with him.

**THE SON OF PROMISE**

**18** Then the LORD appeared to him by the terebinth trees of Mamre,[a] as he
was sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day. [2]So he lifted his eyes
and looked, and behold, three men were standing by him; and when he saw
*them,* he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed himself to the
ground, [3]and said, "My Lord, if I have now found favor in Your sight, do not
pass on by Your servant. [4]Please let a little water be brought, and wash your
feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. [5]And I will bring a morsel of bread,
that you may refresh your hearts. After that you may pass by, inasmuch as
you have come to your servant."

They said, "Do as you have said."

[6]So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah and said, "Quickly, make ready
three measures of fine meal; knead *it* and make cakes." [7]And Abraham ran to
the herd, took a tender and good calf, gave *it* to a young man, and he hastened
to prepare it. [8]So he took butter and milk and the calf which he had prepared,
and set *it* before them; and he stood by them under the tree as they ate.

[9]Then they said to him, "Where *is* Sarah your wife?"

So he said, "Here, in the tent."

[10]And He said, "I will certainly return to you according to the time of life,
and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son."

(Sarah was listening in the tent door which *was* behind him.) [11]Now
Abraham and Sarah were old, well advanced in age; *and* Sarah had passed
the age of childbearing.[a] [12]Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying,
"After I have grown old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?"

[13]And the LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, saying, 'Shall I
surely bear *a child,* since I am old?' [14]Is anything too hard for the LORD? At
the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and
Sarah shall have a son." [15]But Sarah denied *it,* saying, "I did not laugh," for
she was afraid.

| Is anything too hard for the LORD? |
|---|

GENESIS 18:14

And He said, “No, but you did laugh!”

**ABRAHAM INTERCEDES FOR SODOM**

16 Then the men rose from there and looked toward Sodom, and Abraham
went with them to send them on the way. 17 And the LORD said, “Shall I hide
from Abraham what I am doing, 18 since Abraham shall surely become a great
and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?
19 For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his
household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness
and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to
him.” 20 And the LORD said, “Because the outcry against Sodom and
Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grave, 21 I will go down now
and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry against it
that has come to Me; and if not, I will know.”

22 Then the men turned away from there and went toward Sodom, but
Abraham still stood before the LORD. 23 And Abraham came near and said,
“Would You also destroy the righteous with the wicked? 24 Suppose there
were fifty righteous within the city; would You also destroy the place and not
spare *it* for the fifty righteous that were in it? 25 Far be it from You to do such
a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous
should be as the wicked; far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the
earth do right?”

26 So the LORD said, “If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then
I will spare all the place for their sakes.”

27 Then Abraham answered and said, “Indeed now, I who *am but* dust and
ashes have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord: 28 Suppose there were
five less than the fifty righteous; would You destroy all of the city for *lack of*
five?”

So He said, “If I find there forty-five, I will not destroy *it.*”

29 And he spoke to Him yet again and said, “Suppose there should be forty
found there?”

So He said, “I will not do *it* for the sake of forty.”

30 Then he said, “Let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: Suppose thirty should be found there?”

So He said, “I will not do *it* if I find thirty there.”

31 And he said, “Indeed now, I have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord: Suppose twenty should be found there?”

So He said, “I will not destroy *it* for the sake of twenty.”

32 Then he said, “Let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak but once more: Suppose ten should be found there?”

And He said, “I will not destroy *it* for the sake of ten.” 33 So the LORD went His way as soon as He had finished speaking with Abraham; and Abraham returned to his place.

**SOUL NOTE**

**That’s a Laugh!** *(18:11, 12)* When she heard God’s promise, Sarah laughed first in disbelief. Later, she laughed with joy (21:6). The desire to be a parent is powerful, and Sarah had gone to great extremes to have a child. What can a couple do as they face what the Bible calls “barrenness”? First, they should pray. They can consult with a doctor and see what measures are possible (considering their personal feelings and their budget). They can look into other options, such as adoption. But ultimately, they must trust God’s plan for their lives. **Topic: Infertility**

# STILLBORN DREAMS: THE HEARTBREAK OF INFERTILITY

W. DAVID HAGER AND LINDA CARRUTH HAGER

(Genesis 18:11, 12)

**A**n estimated 15 to 18 percent of all married couples struggle with infertility. Physicians define infertility as the inability to conceive after one year of unprotected sex. Since most couples desire to procreate, the failure to do so often generates bitterness, anger, hostility, and depression. Couples may blame each other for their inability to conceive and/or begin avoiding friends who have become parents. But perhaps the most difficult emotion to own and work through is the anger we feel toward God when our prayers are not answered in the way we hoped.

## KNOWING GOD CARES

Romans 11:33 says that the ways and wisdom of God are so deep and unsearchable that they are “past finding out.” We must remember that God is big enough to take our confusion and to work through it with us. We must be willing to own our true emotions and bring them to Him.

Infertile couples need to know that God cares deeply about their inability to conceive. He designed the process of procreation when He created people in His own image. This intricate process whereby a brain produces hormones which stimulate ovaries to produce eggs or testicles to produce sperm was conceived by the Master Reproductive Endocrinologist.

Recognizing that this intricately designed mechanism was not

functioning normally, God intervened in the lives of several biblical couples. Consider, for example, Abraham and Sarah (Gen. 17:16) and Zacharias and Elizabeth (Luke 1:13). These miraculous conceptions demonstrate God's compassion for infertile couples.

In Bible times, a woman who was unable to become pregnant was described as "barren." Modern medicine gives us a fuller understanding of this term. Some couples may be "barren" because the man does not produce enough sperm to fertilize an egg. In other cases, the woman fails to ovulate or does not produce adequate hormones to maintain a pregnancy. A woman may also be infertile when her fallopian tubes, which carry the egg from the ovary to the uterus, are blocked due to previous infection. For example, bacteria from sexually transmitted diseases denude the lining of tiny, hairlike cilia, leaving it like a barren desert.

If our own choices have caused a sexually transmitted disease to lead to the grief of infertility, it can be a crushing blow. Yet we are still not beyond the mercy and grace of God. He stands ready to forgive us if we recognize the mistakes we have made and determine to walk in a better way. But He does not always remove the consequences of bad choices. However, He is willing and able to redeem our mistakes. What is required is the willingness to die to *our* ways of fulfilling our dreams. He always gives us hope for the future. Of course, our dreams and hopes may not look the way we expected them to look. Without an adjustment of our vision, we will miss the joy and fulfillment the Father is offering to us through His redeeming gift of love.

## TRUSTING GOD'S WAYS

Regardless of the cause of infertility, the couple must treat each other with love, avoiding shame and blame. Prayer is the greatest resource during these difficult times. Sometimes a "no" from God is a provision and protection that a couple refuses to receive. We must not let our self-worth be defined by our ability to have children. We lose

a sense of direction and purpose when we hold our personal happiness hostage to our limited idea of what it means to be fertile and to nurture new life. Yes, the inability to conceive a child is undeniably painful and requires us to jump huge hurdles of faith in order to go on with a life that is not going as we hoped or planned. But, we can admit our pain while still clinging to the promises of God for abundant life. Though our capacity to produce life in one specific way may be altered, we can be very sure that our loving heavenly Father will fulfill those very ideas and desires in some way in every human being He has created.

Our Creator has given to the human mind the capacity to cultivate life in amazing ways. Techniques of assisted reproduction involving stimulation of ovulation or facilitating the placement of the husband's sperm to be proximate to his wife's egg for fertilization do not appear to be contrary to God's Word. But a couple must understand the risks involved. There is always the risk of conceiving a child with a congenital defect. Pursuit of assisted reproduction also can cause deep division in the marriage with feelings of inadequacy on the part of one or both partners. The process of using donor sperm from another male or donor eggs from another woman should be discouraged, for it may result in a conception contrary to God's design, with the biological parent being asked to give up the rights to his or her own offspring.

While we pray earnestly, our spirits must remain soft and pliable, willing to receive God's will in His way and time. Ecclesiastes 3:11 says, "He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end."

Our God is a God of love, and His ways are unfathomable, worthy of our trust and calling for our submission. This intimate love exchange will produce a rich harvest of peace and joy that will go deeper than our pain. We must pray that our hearts and minds will be opened to His unique ways of fulfilling our dreams.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of infertility include:

- 1 Samuel 1:1-2:26
- Proverbs 30:15, 16
- Luke 1:5-80

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on infertility at 1 Samuel 2:5. See also the personality profile of Hannah—Coping with Infertility.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# ABRAHAM: A PARENT'S HEART

## (GENESIS 18:19)

Abraham loved his children. In fact, the first time the Bible uses the word "love" occurs when God describes the relationship between Abraham and his son Isaac (Gen. 22:2). Abraham showered his kids with affection and hope, as any good parent will do. Better yet, he loved and obeyed God even more than he loved his children.

The birth of Isaac brought great joy to Abraham's house, for it fulfilled God's promise against impossible odds. Abraham was 100 years old and Sarah 90 at Isaac's birth. Although Isaac was the promised child, he wasn't Abraham's first. Years earlier, in a rash attempt to assist God, Sarah suggested that her husband might have a child with the much younger slave girl Hagar, a child Sarah planned to call her own. But Sarah misread her own feelings. Once Ishmael

was born, Sarah rejected him and his mother. She eventually insisted that Abraham expel them from his house. This was not an easy decision for Abraham; after all, Ishmael *was* his son.

Later, Abraham had a much harder decision to make. God asked him to sacrifice his son Isaac. The deliberate manner in which Abraham obeyed speaks volumes about painful faithfulness. And surely it spoke volumes to his son, Isaac, about his father's priorities. For Abraham, nothing was more important than God.

Earlier God had said of Abraham, "I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice" (Gen. 18:19). Abraham's parenting reflected his character, and his character was grounded in his faith in God. Whether they like it or not, parents live out their commitment to God. If that commitment is their central focus, parents will then be able to model a life of faith to their children.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about parenting Godly Parenting. See also the key passage note at 1 Samuel 1:27, 28.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Being There** *(18:19)* God chose Abraham, desiring that he "command his children" regarding the way of the Lord, righteousness, and justice. This implies that Abraham would be involved in his children's lives in order to teach them. A parent's caring involvement in his or her children's lives is a crucial factor in the children's development. Being a great parent starts with knowing God and is fulfilled in consistent teaching, fair discipline, and loving actions toward one's children. Clearly God expects parents to be

present in their children’s lives to teach them the way of the Lord.
**Topic:** **Child Development**

## SODOM'S DEPRAVITY

**19** Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting
in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw *them,* he rose to meet them, and he
bowed himself with his face toward the ground. 2And he said, "Here now, my
lords, please turn in to your servant's house and spend the night, and wash
your feet; then you may rise early and go on your way."

And they said, "No, but we will spend the night in the open square."

3But he insisted strongly; so they turned in to him and entered his house.
Then he made them a feast, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate.

4Now before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both
old and young, all the people from every quarter, surrounded the house. 5And
they called to Lot and said to him, "Where are the men who came to you
tonight? Bring them out to us that we may know them *carnally.* "

6So Lot went out to them through the doorway, shut the door behind him,
7and said, "Please, my brethren, do not do so wickedly! 8See now, I have two
daughters who have not known a man; please, let me bring them out to you,
and you may do to them as you wish; only do nothing to these men, since this
is the reason they have come under the shadow of my roof ."

9And they said, "Stand back!" Then they said, "This one came in to stay
*here,* and he keeps acting as a judge; now we will deal worse with you than
with them." So they pressed hard against the man Lot, and came near to
break down the door. 10But the men reached out their hands and pulled Lot
into the house with them, and shut the door. 11And they struck the men who
*were* at the doorway of the house with blindness, both small and great, so that
they became weary *trying* to find the door.

## SODOM AND GOMORRAH DESTROYED

12Then the men said to Lot, "Have you anyone else here? Son-in-law, your
sons, your daughters, and whomever you have in the city-take *them* out of
this place! 13For we will destroy this place, because the outcry against them
has grown great before the face of the LORD, and the LORD has sent us to
destroy it."

14 So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who had married his
daughters, and said, “Get up, get out of this place; for the LORD will destroy
this city!” But to his sons-in-law he seemed to be joking.

15 When the morning dawned, the angels urged Lot to hurry, saying,
“Arise, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be
consumed in the punishment of the city.” 16 And while he lingered, the men
took hold of his hand, his wife’s hand, and the hands of his two daughters,
the LORD being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him
outside the city. 17 So it came to pass, when they had brought them outside,
that he[a] said, “Escape for your life! Do not look behind you nor stay
anywhere in the plain. Escape to the mountains, lest you be destroyed.”

18 Then Lot said to them, “Please, no, my lords! 19 Indeed now, your servant
has found favor in your sight, and you have increased your mercy which you
have shown me by saving my life; but I cannot escape to the mountains, lest
some evil overtake me and I die. 20 See now, this city *is* near *enough* to flee
to, and it *is* a little one; please let me escape there (*is* it not a little one?) and
my soul shall live.”

21 And he said to him, “See, I have favored you concerning this thing also,
in that I will not overthrow this city for which you have spoken. 22 Hurry,
escape there. For I cannot do anything until you arrive there.”

Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar.

23 The sun had risen upon the earth when Lot entered Zoar. 24 Then the
LORD rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the LORD out
of the heavens. 25 So He overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the
inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground.

26 But his wife looked back behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.

27 And Abraham went early in the morning to the place where he had stood
before the LORD. 28 Then he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward
all the land of the plain; and he saw, and behold, the smoke of the land which
went up like the smoke of a furnace. 29 And it came to pass, when God
destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot
out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in which Lot

had dwelt.

**THE DESCENDANTS OF LOT**

30 Then Lot went up out of Zoar and dwelt in the mountains, and his two
daughters were with him; for he was afraid to dwell in Zoar. And he and his
two daughters dwelt in a cave. 31 Now the firstborn said to the younger, "Our
father *is* old, and *there is* no man on the earth to come in to us as is the
custom of all the earth. 32 Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we
will lie with him, that we may preserve the lineage of our father." 33 So they
made their father drink wine that night. And the firstborn went in and lay
with her father, and he did not know when she lay down or when she arose.

34 It happened on the next day that the firstborn said to the younger,
"Indeed I lay with my father last night; let us make him drink wine tonight
also, and you go in *and* lie with him, that we may preserve the lineage of our
father." 35 Then they made their father drink wine that night also. And the
younger arose and lay with him, and he did not know when she lay down or
when she arose.

36 Thus both the daughters of Lot were with child by their father. 37 The
firstborn bore a son and called his name Moab; he *is* the father of the
Moabites to this day. 38 And the younger, she also bore a son and called his
name BenAmmi; he *is* the father of the people of Am-mon to this day.

**KEY PASSAGE**

# TRAGIC CHAIN OF EVENTS

# (19:4-9)

Lot's terrible actions reveal the tragic chain of events that often occurs in sexual abuse cases. When he shockingly suggested that the evil men rape his daughters instead of his guests, Lot was trying to substitute one sexual sin for another. He jeopardized his own daughters and violated his responsibility as a parent. Despite the angels' miraculous intervention (Gen. 19:11), the spiritual and psychological damage had been done. The daughters' later incestuous relationships with their father was another link in the chain reaction of sexual abuse (Gen. 19:30-38).

Sexual abuse, in any form, results in low self-esteem, conflict over sexual identity, inability to trust, isolation, and feelings of guilt and shame. It can result in long-term physical and psychological damage. As in the case of all sinful actions, the abuser usually fabricates a rationale for his or her conduct. The morbid story of Lot's daughters illustrates this all too well.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about abuse Hope for Healing. See also the personality profile of The Levite's Concubine.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# LOT'S BLURRED BOUNDARIES

# (GENESIS 19)

When Lot settled near Sodom (Gen. 13:12), he picked a dangerous neighborhood. Lot's life teaches us that problems inevitably follow our poor decisions- even decisions that look very good when they are

made. When our choices leave our boundaries too open to the ways of the world, we place ourselves at risk. And sometimes we place others at risk, too.

Lot was Abraham's nephew. They traveled together from Mesopotamia when Abraham set out on his journey of obedience. By the time the two men were ready to settle in Canaan, both were wealthy. Their flocks were vying for the same grazing lands. Abraham suggested a parting of their households and gave Lot the first choice. Lot picked the Jordan valley near Sodom as an ideal location for his animals. What is best for livestock may not be good for people, however. Living in and around Sodom eventually corrupted Lot and his family. He later had to be dragged out of Sodom one step ahead of destruction. He lost his wife and all his earthly possessions. Lot paid a high price for blurred boundaries.

As it did for Lot, too much worldliness can have negative effects. Our boundaries are at risk when we dabble in activities and live by the world's values. What others call entertainment often turns out to be a web of gradual entrapment. Increasing numbness toward sinful behavior indicates breached boundaries.

God's Word provides dependable boundaries. Even the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20) describe important limits. We need God's wisdom in sharpening blurred boundaries. He can help us decide what it means for us to live the life that Jesus described as in the world, but not of the world (John 17). We also need God's help in rebuilding and guarding our breached boundaries. Lot's losses should provide a sobering incentive.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about boundaries Setting Healthy Boundaries. See also the key passage note at 2 Corinthians 6:14.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# SODOM'S FEARFUL FATE

# (GENESIS 19)

Few places in the world care to vie with Sodom's reputation for immorality. The city was ripe for God's judgment. Perversely empowered by a mob mentality, a gang of Sodomite men demanded that Lot hand over two guests for homosexual rape. Their identity as God's messengers mattered little to the mob, but it sealed the fate of the city.

The deep question is not whether the "sin of Sodom" was violence or sexual perversion, but how both these behaviors became the character of a city. Perversity rarely takes over a single part of life. It appears in multiple forms-poly-perversity.

By the time Abraham and Lot visited Sodom, the city had degenerated into a festering cesspool of sin and immorality. The destruction of the city after Abraham's negotiation with God indicates that there were not even ten righteous souls left within its walls. So God sent his angel messengers to warn Lot and his family and help them escape before destruction rained down on the city.

In spite of efforts by some of today's gay theologians to revise and reinterpret Sodom's story, the clear message of Genesis 19 has always referred to homosexual violence. It is generally thought that the Sodomites also practiced bestiality, sex with children and

adolescents, heterosexual rape, and adultery, along with other unspeakable forms of sexual perversity and violence. The severity of their punishment ought not to conceal the horrors of their behavior.

Though both homosexuality and rape are consistently condemned in the Scriptures, they are not isolated from other sexual sins, or sin in general. Whether heterosexual sin or homosexual sin, God calls us to forsake all sexual sin and to know the transforming power of His redeeming and healing grace. To choose otherwise puts us in the company of the citizens of Sodom.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about homosexuality Understanding and Addressing Homosexuality. See also the key passage note at Romans 1:18-32.

**SOUL NOTE**

**When Changes Come** *(19:26)* The Bible tells little about Lot's wife except that she "looked back" at Sodom. The angels had dragged Lot and his family out of the doomed city, warning them not to look behind as they fled (19:16, 17). Why did Lot's wife disobey? Did she miss the comfort of the place? Did she fear the unknown future? Change can be difficult, because it means exchanging familiarity for the unknown. But God is with us; He is the constant even as our lives keep changing. He knows what is unknown, so trust Him and don't look back. **Topic: Life Transitions**

**ABRAHAM AND ABIMELECH**

**20** And Abraham journeyed from there to the South, and dwelt between
Kadesh and Shur, and stayed in Gerar. 2Now Abraham said of Sarah his
wife, “She *is* my sister.” And Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah.

3But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, “Indeed
you *are* a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she *is* a
man’s wife.”

4But Abimelech had not come near her; and he said, “Lord, will You slay a
righteous nation also? 5Did he not say to me, ‘She *is* my sister’? And she,
even she herself said, ‘He *is* my brother.’ In the integrity of my heart and
innocence of my hands I have done this.”

6And God said to him in a dream, “Yes, I know that you did this in the
integrity of your heart. For I also withheld you from sinning against Me;
therefore I did not let you touch her. 7Now therefore, restore the man’s wife;
for he *is* a prophet, and he will pray for you and you shall live. But if you do
not restore *her,* know that you shall surely die, you and all who *are* yours.”

8So Abimelech rose early in the morning, called all his servants, and told
all these things in their hearing; and the men were very much afraid. 9And
Abimelech called Abraham and said to him, “What have you done to us?
How have I offended you, that you have brought on me and on my kingdom a
great sin? You have done deeds to me that ought not to be done.” 10Then
Abimelech said to Abraham, “What did you have in view, that you have done
this thing?”

11And Abraham said, “Because I thought, surely the fear of God *is* not in
this place; and they will kill me on account of my wife. 12But indeed *she is*
truly my sister. She *is* the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my
mother; and she became my wife. 13And it came to pass, when God caused
me to wander from my father’s house, that I said to her, ‘This *is* your
kindness that you should do for me: in every place, wherever we go, say of
me, “He *is* my brother.” ’ ”

14Then Abimelech took sheep, oxen, and male and female servants, and

gave *them* to Abraham; and he restored Sarah his wife to him. [15]And Abimelech said, “See, my land *is* before you; dwell where it pleases you.” [16]Then to Sarah he said, “Behold, I have given your brother a thousand *pieces* of silver; indeed this vindicates you[a] before all who *are* with you and before everybody.” Thus she was rebuked.

[17]So Abraham prayed to God; and God healed Abimelech, his wife, and his female servants. Then they bore *children;* [18]for the LORD had closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham’s wife.

## ISAAC IS BORN

**21** And the LORD visited Sarah as He had said, and the LORD did for Sarah
as He had spoken. 2For Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his
old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him. 3And Abraham
called the name of his son who was born to him-whom Sarah bore to him-
Isaac. 4Then Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old,
as God had commanded him. 5Now Abraham was one hundred years old
when his son Isaac was born to him. 6And Sarah said, "God has made me
laugh, *and* all who hear will laugh with me." 7She also said, "Who would
have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? For I have borne *him*
a son in his old age."

## HAGAR AND ISHMAEL DEPART

8So the child grew and was weaned. And Abraham made a great feast on
the same day that Isaac was weaned.

9And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to
Abraham, scoffing. 10Therefore she said to Abraham, "Cast out this
bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir
with my son, *namely* with Isaac." 11And the matter was very displeasing in
Abraham's sight because of his son.

12But God said to Abraham, "Do not let it be displeasing in your sight
because of the lad or because of your bondwoman. Whatever Sarah has said
to you, listen to her voice; for in Isaac your seed shall be called. 13Yet I will
also make a nation of the son of the bondwoman, because he *is* your seed."

14So Abraham rose early in the morning, and took bread and a skin of
water; and putting *it* on her shoulder, he gave *it* and the boy to Hagar, and
sent her away. Then she departed and wandered in the Wilderness of Be-
ersheba. 15And the water in the skin was used up, and she placed the boy
under one of the shrubs. 16Then she went and sat down across from *him* at a
distance of about a bowshot; for she said to herself, "Let me not see the death
of the boy." So she sat opposite *him*, and lifted her voice and wept.

17And God heard the voice of the lad. Then the angel of God called to

Hagar out of heaven, and said to her, “What ails you, Hagar? Fear not, for God has heard the voice of the lad where he *is.* [18]Arise, lift up the lad and hold him with your hand, for I will make him a great nation.”

[19]Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water. And she went and filled the skin with water, and gave the lad a drink. [20]So God was with the lad; and he grew and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer. [21]He dwelt in the Wilderness of Paran; and his mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt.

**A COVENANT WITH ABIMELECH**

[22]And it came to pass at that time that Abimelech and Phichol, the commander of his army, spoke to Abraham, saying, “God *is* with you in all that you do. [23]Now therefore, swear to me by God that you will not deal falsely with me, with my offspring, or with my posterity; but that according to the kindness that I have done to you, you will do to me and to the land in which you have dwelt.”

[24]And Abraham said, “I will swear.”

[25]Then Abraham rebuked Abimelech because of a well of water which Abimelech’s servants had seized. [26]And Abimelech said, “I do not know who has done this thing; you did not tell me, nor had I heard *of it* until today.” [27]So Abraham took sheep and oxen and gave them to Abimelech, and the two of them made a covenant. [28]And Abraham set seven ewe lambs of the flock by themselves.

[29]Then Abimelech asked Abraham, “What *is the meaning of* these seven ewe lambs which you have set by themselves?”

[30]And he said, “You will take *these* seven ewe lambs from my hand, that they may be my witness that I have dug this well.” [31]Therefore he called that place Beersheba,[a] because the two of them swore an oath there.

[32]Thus they made a covenant at Beersheba. So Abimelech rose with Phichol, the commander of his army, and they returned to the land of the Philistines. [33]Then *Abraham* planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba, and there called on the name of the LORD, the Everlasting God. [34]And Abraham stayed

in the land of the Philistines many days.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# ISAAC: UNEXPECTED LAUGHTER

## (GENESIS 21)

When did Isaac discover he was the punch line of a joke? His parents were so old when God informed them about his arrival that they laughed out loud. Abraham and Sarah's incredulity in the face of God's promise was best contradicted by their descendant Jesus when He said, "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God" (Luke 18:27).

From a human perspective, God's plan was laughable. It flew in the face of common sense. Ninety-year-old women don't get pregnant. Sarah knew about God's long-standing promise to her husband. She had even tried to make it come true by arranging for her husband to have a child with her slave Hagar. But God had other plans.

Like the unexpected final words of a hilarious comment, Sarah turned up pregnant in her old age. When Isaac was born, she named him "laughter." What else would fit a child who had caused such mirth? Sarah voiced her mixture of delight and embarrassment when she said, "God has made me laugh, and all who hear will laugh with me" (Gen. 21:6).

The result of trust in God takes the form of joy, which instigates

genuine laughter. The psalmist wrote, “Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning” (Ps. 30:5). Sarah may have laughed in disbelief or even in frustration as the years rolled by, but when Isaac was born, she discovered what real laughter felt like. The rich laughter that rises in those who have known God’s faithfulness expresses a deep satisfaction.

God will be faithful to His promises in your life. You may have to wait, but the joy God brings will be as real to you as the laughter that finally filled Sarah’s life.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about joy Laughing with Joy. See also the key passage note at Proverbs 15:13-15.

**KEY PASSAGE**

# BLENDING TWO FAMILIES

# (21:9-11)

Blended families face special challenges, as Abraham discovered. From the beginning, it had been Sarah’s idea to use Hagar, the slave girl, as a surrogate mother for their heir Ishmael (Gen. 16:1-16). But once Sarah had Isaac, her attitude quickly changed. By the time Isaac was born, Ishmael was a teenager. Some time later, when little Isaac was weaned, Ishmael “scoffed” (mocked him) at the family feast, setting off Sarah’s anger (Gen. 21:9). In this case, God advised Abraham to send Hagar and Ishmael away, for the covenant promise was to be accomplished through Isaac. Yet God intervened

miraculously to spare Hagar and Ishmael, showing His love and grace to the rejected woman and her child (Gen. 21:14-21).

Blended families need special wisdom from God in order to bring together two separate worlds and to love each other unconditionally. And for those who feel that they have been "sent away," God promises grace and provision, saying, "Fear not" (Gen. 21:17).

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about blended families Bringing Them Together: The Challenge Of Blending Families. See also the personality profile of Jacob's family Jacob's Blended Family.

**ABRAHAM'S FAITH CONFIRMED**

**22** Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!"

And he said, "Here I am."

2 Then He said, "Take now your son, your only *son* Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you."

3 So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he split the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. 4 Then on the third day Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place afar off. 5 And Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; the lad[a] and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you."

6 So Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid *it* on Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife, and the two of them went together. 7 But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!"

And he said, "Here I am, my son."

Then he said, "Look, the fire and the wood, but where *is* the lamb for a burnt offering?"

8 And Abraham said, "My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering." So the two of them went together.

9 Then they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. 10 And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.

11 But the Angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!"

So he said, "Here I am."

12 And He said, "Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son,

your only *son,* from Me.”

13Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind *him was* a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son. 14And Abraham called the name of the place, The-LORD-Will-Provide;[a] as it is said *to* this day, “In the Mount of the LORD it shall be provided.”

15Then the Angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, 16and said: “By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only *son*-17blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which *is* on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. 18In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.” 19So Abraham returned to his young men, and they rose and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham dwelt at Beersheba.

**THE FAMILY OF NAHOR**

20Now it came to pass after these things that it was told Abraham, saying, “Indeed Milcah also has borne children to your brother Nahor: 21Huz his firstborn, Buz his brother, Kemuel the father of Aram, 22Chesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph, and Bethuel.” 23And Bethuel begot Rebekah.[a] These eight Milcah bore to Nahor, Abraham’s brother. 24His concubine, whose name was Reumah, also bore Tebah, Gaham, Thahash, and Maachah.

## SARAH'S DEATH AND BURIAL

**23** Sarah lived one hundred and twenty-seven years; *these were* the years of
the life of Sarah. 2So Sarah died in Kirjath Arba (that *is,* Hebron) in the
land of Canaan, and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her.

3Then Abraham stood up from before his dead, and spoke to the sons of
Heth, saying, 4"I *am* a foreigner and a visitor among you. Give me property
for a burial place among you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight."

5And the sons of Heth answered Abraham, saying to him, 6"Hear us, my
lord: You *are* a mighty prince among us; bury your dead in the choicest of
our burial places. None of us will withhold from you his burial place, that
you may bury your dead."

7Then Abraham stood up and bowed himself to the people of the land, the
sons of Heth. 8And he spoke with them, saying, "If it is your wish that I bury
my dead out of my sight, hear me, and meet with Ephron the son of Zohar for
me, 9that he may give me the cave of Machpelah which he has, which *is* at
the end of his field. Let him give it to me at the full price, as property for a
burial place among you."

10Now Ephron dwelt among the sons of Heth; and Ephron the Hittite
answered Abraham in the presence of the sons of Heth, all who entered at the
gate of his city, saying, 11"No, my lord, hear me: I give you the field and the
cave that *is* in it; I give it to you in the presence of the sons of my people. I
give it to you. Bury your dead!"

12Then Abraham bowed himself down before the people of the land; 13and
he spoke to Ephron in the hearing of the people of the land, saying, "If you
*will give it,* please hear me. I will give you money for the field; take *it* from
me and I will bury my dead there."

14And Ephron answered Abraham, saying to him, 15"My lord, listen to me;
the land *is worth* four hundred shekels of silver. What *is* that between you
and me? So bury your dead." 16And Abraham listened to Ephron; and
Abraham weighed out the silver for Ephron which he had named in the
hearing of the sons of Heth, four hundred shekels of silver, currency of the
merchants.

[17]So the field of Ephron which *was* in Mach-pelah, which *was* before Mamre, the field and the cave which *was* in it, and all the trees that *were* in the field, which *were* within all the surrounding borders, were deeded [18]to Abraham as a possession in the presence of the sons of Heth, before all who went in at the gate of his city.

[19]And after this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah, before Mamre (that *is*, Hebron) in the land of Canaan. [20]So the field and the cave that *is* in it were deeded to Abraham by the sons of Heth as property for a burial place.

## A BRIDE FOR ISAAC

**24** Now Abraham was old, well advanced in age; and the LORD had blessed
Abraham in all things. 2So Abraham said to the oldest servant of his
house, who ruled over all that he had, “Please, put your hand under my thigh,
3and I will make you swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and the God of
the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the
Canaanites, among whom I dwell; 4but you shall go to my country and to my
family, and take a wife for my son Isaac.”

5And the servant said to him, “Perhaps the woman will not be willing to
follow me to this land. Must I take your son back to the land from which you
came?”

6But Abraham said to him, “Beware that you do not take my son back
there. 7The LORD God of heaven, who took me from my father’s house and
from the land of my family, and who spoke to me and swore to me, saying,
‘To your descendants[a] I give this land,’ He will send His angel before you,
and you shall take a wife for my son from there. 8And if the woman is not
willing to follow you, then you will be released from this oath; only do not
take my son back there.” 9So the servant put his hand under the thigh of
Abraham his master, and swore to him concerning this matter.

10Then the servant took ten of his master’s camels and departed, for all his
master’s goods *were in* his hand. And he arose and went to Mesopotamia, to
the city of Nahor. 11And he made his camels kneel down outside the city by a
well of water at evening time, the time when women go out to draw *water*.
12Then he said, “O LORD God of my master Abraham, please give me success
this day, and show kindness to my master Abraham. 13Behold, *here* I stand
by the well of water, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out
to draw water. 14Now let it be that the young woman to whom I say, ‘Please
let down your pitcher that I may drink,’ and she says, ‘Drink, and I will also
give your camels a drink’-*let* her *be the one* You have appointed for Your
servant Isaac. And by this I will know that You have shown kindness to my
master.”

15And it happened, before he had finished speaking, that behold, Rebekah,

who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, came out with her pitcher on her shoulder. [16]Now the young woman *was* very beautiful to behold, a virgin; no man had known her. And she went down to the well, filled her pitcher, and came up. [17]And the servant ran to meet her and said, "Please let me drink a little water from your pitcher."

[18]So she said, "Drink, my lord." Then she quickly let her pitcher down to her hand, and gave him a drink. [19]And when she had finished giving him a drink, she said, "I will draw *water* for your camels also, until they have finished drinking." [20]Then she quickly emptied her pitcher into the trough, ran back to the well to draw *water,* and drew for all his camels. [21]And the man, wondering at her, remained silent so as to know whether the LORD had made his journey prosperous or not.

[22]So it was, when the camels had finished drinking, that the man took a golden nose ring weighing half a shekel, and two bracelets for her wrists weighing ten *shekels* of gold, [23]and said, "Whose daughter *are* you? Tell me, please, is there room *in* your father's house for us to lodge?"

[24]So she said to him, "I *am* the daughter of Bethuel, Milcah's son, whom she bore to Nahor." [25]Moreover she said to him, "We have both straw and feed enough, and room to lodge."

[26]Then the man bowed down his head and worshiped the LORD. [27]And he said, "Blessed *be* the LORD God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken His mercy and His truth toward my master. As for me, being on the way, the LORD led me to the house of my master's brethren." [28]So the young woman ran and told her mother's household these things.

[29]Now Rebekah had a brother whose name *was* Laban, and Laban ran out to the man by the well. [30]So it came to pass, when he saw the nose ring, and the bracelets on his sister's wrists, and when he heard the words of his sister Rebekah, saying, "Thus the man spoke to me," that he went to the man. And there he stood by the camels at the well. [31]And he said, "Come in, O blessed of the LORD! Why do you stand outside? For I have prepared the house, and a place for the camels."

[32]Then the man came to the house. And he unloaded the camels, and

provided straw and feed for the camels, and water to wash his feet and the feet of the men who *were* with him. [33]*Food* was set before him to eat, but he said, “I will not eat until I have told about my errand.”

And he said, “Speak on.”

[34]ext2So he said, “I *am* Abraham’s servant. [35]The LORD has blessed my master greatly, and he has become great; and He has given him flocks and herds, silver and gold, male and female servants, and camels and donkeys. [36]And Sarah my master’s wife bore a son to my master when she was old; and to him he has given all that he has. [37]Now my master made me swear, saying, ‘You shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I dwell; [38]but you shall go to my father’s house and to my family, and take a wife for my son.’ [39]And I said to my master, ‘Perhaps the woman will not follow me.’ [40]But he said to me, ‘The LORD, before whom I walk, will send His angel with you and prosper your way; and you shall take a wife for my son from my family and from my father’s house. [41]You will be clear from this oath when you arrive among my family; for if they will not give *her* to you, then you will be released from my oath.’

[42]“And this day I came to the well and said, ‘O LORD God of my master Abraham, if You will now prosper the way in which I go, [43]behold, I stand by the well of water; and it shall come to pass that when the virgin comes out to draw *water*, and I say to her, “Please give me a little water from your pitcher to drink,” [44]and she says to me, “Drink, and I will draw for your camels also,”-*let* her *be* the woman whom the LORD has appointed for my master’s son.’

[45]“But before I had finished speaking in my heart, there was Rebekah, coming out with her pitcher on her shoulder; and she went down to the well and drew *water*. And I said to her, ‘Please let me drink.’ [46]And she made haste and let her pitcher down from her *shoulder*, and said, ‘Drink, and I will give your camels a drink also.’ So I drank, and she gave the camels a drink also. [47]Then I asked her, and said, ‘Whose daughter *are* you?’ And she said, ‘The daughter of Bethuel, Nahor’s son, whom Milcah bore to him.’ So I put the nose ring on her nose and the bracelets on her wrists. [48]And I bowed my head and worshiped the LORD, and blessed the LORD God of my master

Abraham, who had led me in the way of truth to take the daughter of my master's brother for his son. [49]Now if you will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me. And if not, tell me, that I may turn to the right hand or to the left."

[50]ext2Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, "The thing comes from the LORD; we cannot speak to you either bad or good. [51]Here *is* Rebekah before you; take *her* and go, and let her be your master's son's wife, as the LORD has spoken."

[52]And it came to pass, when Abraham's servant heard their words, that he worshiped the LORD, *bowing himself* to the earth. [53]Then the servant brought out jewelry of silver, jewelry of gold, and clothing, and gave *them* to Rebekah. He also gave precious things to her brother and to her mother.

[54]And he and the men who *were* with him ate and drank and stayed all night. Then they arose in the morning, and he said, "Send me away to my master."

[55]But her brother and her mother said, "Let the young woman stay with us *a few* days, at least ten; after that she may go."

[56]And he said to them, "Do not hinder me, since the LORD has prospered my way; send me away so that I may go to my master."

[57]So they said, "We will call the young woman and ask her personally." [58]Then they called Rebekah and said to her, "Will you go with this man?"

And she said, "I will go."

[59]So they sent away Rebekah their sister and her nurse, and Abraham's servant and his men. [60]And they blessed Rebekah and said to her:

"Our sister, *may* you *become*
*The mother of* thousands of ten
thousands;
And may your descendants possess
The gates of those who hate them."

[61]Then Rebekah and her maids arose, and they rode on the camels and followed the man. So the servant took Rebekah and departed.

62 Now Isaac came from the way of Beer La-hai Roi, for he dwelt in the
South. 63 And Isaac went out to meditate in the field in the evening; and he
lifted his eyes and looked, and there, the camels *were* coming. 64 Then Rebek-
ah lifted her eyes, and when she saw Isaac she dismounted from her camel;
65 for she had said to the servant, “Who *is* this man walking in the field to
meet us?”

The servant said, “It *is* my master.” So she took a veil and covered herself.

66 And the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done. 67 Then Isaac
brought her into his mother Sarah’s tent; and he took Rebekah and she
became his wife, and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother’s
*death.*

## ABRAHAM AND KETURAH

**25** Abraham again took a wife, and her name *was* Keturah. [2]And she bore
him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ish-bak, and Shuah. [3]Jokshan
begot Sheba and Dedan. And the sons of Dedan were Asshu-rim, Letushim,
and Leummim. [4]And the sons of Midian *were* Ephah, Epher, Hanoch,
Abidah, and Eldaah. All these *were* the children of Keturah.

[5]And Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac. [6]But Abraham gave gifts to
the sons of the concubines which Abraham had; and while he was still living
he sent them eastward, away from Isaac his son, to the country of the east.

## ABRAHAM'S EATH AND BURIAL

[7]This *is* the sum of the years of Abraham's life which he lived: one
hundred and seventy-five years. [8]Then Abraham breathed his last and died in
a good old age, an old man and full *of years,* and was gathered to his people.
[9]And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, which
*is* before Mamre, in the field of Ephron the son of Zo-har the Hittite, [10]the
field which Abraham purchased from the sons of Heth. There Abraham was
buried, and Sarah his wife. [11]And it came to pass, after the death of Abraham,
that God blessed his son Isaac. And Isaac dwelt at Beer Lahai Roi.

## THE FAMILIES OF ISHMAEL AND ISAAC

[12]Now this *is* the genealogy of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar the
Egyptian, Sarah's maidservant, bore to Abraham. [13]And these *were* the
names of the sons of Ishmael, by their names, according to their generations:
The firstborn of Ishmael, Nebajoth; then Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, [14]Mishma,
Du-mah, Massa, [15]Hadar,[a] Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah. [16]These
*were* the sons of Ish-mael and these *were* their names, by their towns and
their settlements, twelve princes according to their nations. [17]These *were* the
years of the life of Ishmael: one hundred and thirty-seven years; and he
breathed his last and died, and was gathered to his people. [18](They dwelt
from Havilah as far as Shur, which *is* east of Egypt as you go toward
Assyria.) He died in the presence of all his brethren.

19 This *is* the genealogy of Isaac, Abraham's son. Abraham begot Isaac.
20 Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah as wife, the daughter of
Bethuel the Syrian of Padan Aram, the sister of Laban the Syrian. 21 Now
Isaac pleaded with the LORD for his wife, because she *was* barren; and the
LORD granted his plea, and Rebekah his wife conceived. 22 But the children
struggled together within her; and she said, "If *all is* well, why *am I like*
this?" So she went to inquire of the LORD.

23 And the LORD said to her:

"Two nations *are* in your womb,

Two peoples shall be separated from
your body;
*One* people shall be stronger than the
other,
And the older shall serve the younger."

24 So when her days were fulfilled *for her* to give birth, indeed *there were*
twins in her womb. 25 And the first came out red. *He was* like a hairy garment
all over; so they called his name Esau.[a] 26 Afterward his brother came out, and
his hand took hold of Esau's heel; so his name was called Jacob.[a] Isaac *was*
sixty years old when she bore them.

27 So the boys grew. And Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field; but
Jacob was a mild man, dwelling in tents. 28 And Isaac loved Esau because he
ate *of his* game, but Rebekah loved Jacob.

## ESAU SELLS HIS BIRTHRIGHT

29 Now Jacob cooked a stew; and Esau came in from the field, and he *was*
weary. 30 And Esau said to Jacob, "Please feed me with that same red *stew*,
for I *am* weary." Therefore his name was called Edom.[a]

31 But Jacob said, "Sell me your birthright as of this day."

32 And Esau said, "Look, I *am* about to die; so what *is* this birthright to
me?"

33 Then Jacob said, "Swear to me as of this day."

So he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. [34]And Jacob gave Esau bread and stew of lentils; then he ate and drank, arose, and went his way. Thus Esau despised *his* birthright.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# ABRAHAM TO JOSEPH: A BLESSED AND DYSFUNCTIONAL FAMILY TREE

## (GENESIS 25)

There are no hidden skeletons in Abraham's family closets. Their sins and failures lie bare for the world to see. These people knew God, and sometimes it didn't make much difference in their behavior. From Abraham through Isaac and Jacob to Joseph-every generation was both blessed by God and wracked with sin and deceit.

Abraham failed to wait for the son of promise and bore Ishmael by a slave girl. The resulting enmity haunts his descendants to this day. Isaac and Rebekah lived at odds with each other in their marriage. Their differences led to deceit and pain in the lives of their twin sons, Jacob and Esau. Later, Jacob's favoritism rankled most of his sons. They, in turn, deceived their father into living with years of grief because he thought his favorite son Joseph had been killed. In the pages of Genesis we read of unfair comparisons, favoritism, divided loyalties, competition, greed, and envy.

Yet the patriarchs knew and loved God. Even though they couldn't always live up to their faith, they lived by it. These men had no

Bibles to read, no church to attend, no accountability groups. When God spoke, they listened, and they did their best to pass that reverence for God on to their children. They cherished and clung to the promise God made to Abraham. They believed in their bones that God would remain faithful. Did they love God? Certainly. Did they make mistakes in daily living? Who doesn't? Yet God reported their failures to offer us hope: If He kept His promises with them, He will keep them with us.

Today's families are no more perfect-except that we do have God's Word to teach us and people around us to help. The family is the most powerful influence on children's lives. Make your home a place of refuge, love, stability, provision, protection, and learning about God. Then trust God to keep His promises.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about family problems No Perfect Families. See also the key passage note at Genesis 37:3.

**NO PERFECT FAMILIES**

# DAVID STOOP

## (Genesis 25)

**H**ow difficult it is for a family that is facing difficult problems. When a family is in pain, the family members hurt deeply. Parents mourn when their older children rebel. Siblings may struggle with rivalry. There are as many types of family problems as there are families. Usually a family embroiled in a problem feels as though they are the

only ones who have ever suffered in that way. But even the great families of the Bible had problems.

One of Adam and Eve's sons murdered their other son. Genesis continues to record the histories of several families that also had serious problems. God worked mightily in the lives of Abraham and Sarah and their descendants, but that did not exempt those families from having struggles.

Family problems are directly related to the reality of sin-sometimes a specific sin, sometimes sinfulness in general. All families are touched by each individual's inherent sinfulness. While all sin is the same in God's eyes, sins have varying degrees of effect on families. And different families will deal differently with different sins.

So when an ugly problem rears its head in a family, how can the family members discover its source, define it, and deal with it?

## DISCOVERING AND DEFINING THE PROBLEM

When there are problems in a family, the natural tendency is to want to define the problem, place the blame, and then try to fix it. How we define the problem will determine whom we will blame, as well as the solutions we will try. For instance, in the story of Jacob and Esau in Genesis 25, the problem could be defined in different ways: the sibling rivalry between Jacob and Esau, Esau's impulsiveness, Jacob's greed, or Isaac and Rebekah's parenting.

Depending on who gets blamed, one might suggest for a solution that Esau and Jacob learn to get along, or that Esau learn more self-control, or that Jacob practice generosity, or that Rebekah and Isaac improve their parenting skills. Although these proposed solutions might produce some short-term results, the family patterns would probably change very little. A different approach is necessary.

## DEALING WITH THE PROBLEM

*Looking for the Patterns*

Most family problems have to do with patterns that have been occurring over time. For example, the competition between Jacob and Esau was part of a larger pattern that had existed for several generations. Genesis 25:28 says that Isaac loved Esau but Rebekah loved Jacob. This shows a pattern of favoritism in this family.

In the family's previous generation, the same pattern of favoring one child over another occurred with Abraham and Sarah when they favored Isaac and rejected Ishmael (Gen. 21). The family pattern of favoritism would be repeated in Jacob's family as he would favor one of his wives, and then would favor that wife's children. Across four generations of Abraham's family, each generation had a pattern of favoring some family members and rejecting others.

Each family facing difficult problems should dig deeply and be objective in or der to find a pattern that may have been in place for years, perhaps even generations. This part of the process will require honesty and careful self-evaluation, but identifying a pattern is the only way to correctly diagnose and then deal with the problem.

*Facing the Truth*

After discovering the patterns that have created the current problems, the next step is a willingness to face the truth. When families are not willing to acknowledge the patterns that are causing problems, those patterns will only continue. Sometimes it is necessary to find an objective, trustworthy person from outside the family who can explore the family patterns. In the family of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Joseph was the one who finally spoke the truth to his brothers (Gen. 45). The pattern of favoritism and sibling rivalry had resulted in the brothers actually selling another brother into slavery to get rid of him. The brothers may have done evil, but God turned it around for good. Joseph said, "God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance"

(Gen. 45:7).

*Changing Family Patterns*

*Through Forgiveness*

Discovering long-standing patterns in a family can be discouraging. It may seem that nothing can be done to change the pattern. But a family can do the same thing that God does with each person's past-they can forgive. That means canceling the emotional debts that are owed us (Col. 2:13, 14). Forgiveness may take some time. Family members may need to look at some difficult and painful family patterns many times to be sure that they know what they are forgiving.

Forgiveness does not mean forgetting or excusing the sin. Nor does it mean that reconciliation will follow. Even when forgiveness is one-sided, it can be very healthy for the one forgiving. Reconciliation, however, requires action on the part of both the forgiver and the offender. If Joseph's brothers had refused to accept his forgiveness and resume the relationship, then Joseph's forgiving them would not have led to reconciliation. Joseph could forgive because he understood that God had taken his brothers' evil actions and used them to further His purpose.

Forgiveness and reconciliation can break the longstanding patterns in a family. To deal with family problems, family members need to pray for guidance to see the *real* problem, face the truth of their own responsibility in the problem, and seek God's help in making needed changes. Giving and accepting forgiveness and resolving to change can begin the healing that God desires for us and our families.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of family problems include:

- Genesis 37:1-11
- Deuteronomy 6:1-25
- Proverbs 22:6
- Ephesians 6:1-4

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on family problems at Genesis 37:3. See also the personality profile of the families of Abraham to Joseph Abraham To Joseph: A Blessed And Dysfunctional Family Tree.

## ISAAC AND ABIMELECH

**26** There was a famine in the land, besides the first famine that was in the
days of Abraham. And Isaac went to Abimelech king of the Philistines,
in Gerar.

2 Then the LORD appeared to him and said: “Do not go down to Egypt; live
in the land of which I shall tell you. 3 Dwell in this land, and I will be with
you and bless you; for to you and your descendants I give all these lands, and
I will perform the oath which I swore to Abraham your father. 4 And I will
make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven; I will give to your
descendants all these lands; and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall
be blessed; 5 because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My
commandments, My statutes, and My laws.”

6 So Isaac dwelt in Gerar. 7 And the men of the place asked about his wife.
And he said, “She *is* my sister”; for he was afraid to say, “*She is* my wife,”
*because he thought,* “lest the men of the place kill me for Rebekah, because
she *is* beautiful to behold.” 8 Now it came to pass, when he had been there a
long time, that Abimelech king of the Philistines looked through a window,
and saw, and there was Isaac, showing endearment to Rebekah his wife.
9 Then Abimelech called Isaac and said, “Quite obviously she *is* your wife; so
how could you say, ‘She *is* my sister’?”

Isaac said to him, “Because I said, ‘Lest I die on account of her.’ ”

10 And Abimelech said, “What *is* this you have done to us? One of the
people might soon have lain with your wife, and you would have brought
guilt on us.” 11 So Abimelech charged all *his* people, saying, “He who touches
this man or his wife shall surely be put to death.”

12 Then Isaac sowed in that land, and reaped in the same year a
hundredfold; and the LORD blessed him. 13 The man began to prosper, and
continued prospering until he became very prosperous; 14 for he had
possessions of flocks and possessions of herds and a great number of
servants. So the Philistines envied him.

15 Now the Philistines had stopped up all the wells which his father’s

servants had dug in the days of Abraham his father, and they had filled them with earth. [16]And Abimelech said to Isaac, “Go away from us, for you are much mightier than we.”

[17]Then Isaac departed from there and pitched his tent in the Valley of Gerar, and dwelt there. [18]And Isaac dug again the wells of water which they had dug in the days of Abraham his father, for the Philistines had stopped them up after the death of Abraham. He called them by the names which his father had called them.

[19]Also Isaac’s servants dug in the valley, and found a well of running water there. [20]But the herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with Isaac’s herdsmen, saying, “The water *is* ours.” So he called the name of the well Esek,[a] because they quarreled with him. [21]Then they dug an other well, and they quarreled over that *one* also. So he called its name Sitnah.[a] [22]And he moved from there and dug another well, and they did not quarrel over it. So he called its name Rehoboth,[a] because he said, “For now the LORD has made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land.”

[23]Then he went up from there to Beersheba. [24]And the LORD appeared to him the same night and said, “I *am* the God of your father Abraham; do not fear, for I *am* with you. I will bless you and multiply your descendants for My servant Abraham’s sake.” [25]So he built an altar there and called on the name of the LORD, and he pitched his tent there; and there Isaac’s servants dug a well.

[26]Then Abimelech came to him from Gerar with Ahuzzath, one of his friends, and Phichol the commander of his army. [27]And Isaac said to them, “Why have you come to me, since you hate me and have sent me away from you?”

[28]But they said, “We have certainly seen that the LORD is with you. So we said, ‘Let there now be an oath between us, between you and us; and let us make a covenant with you, [29]that you will do us no harm, since we have not touched you, and since we have done nothing to you but good and have sent you away in peace. You *are* now the blessed of the LORD.’ ”

[30]So he made them a feast, and they ate and drank. [31]Then they arose early

in the morning and swore an oath with one another; and Isaac sent them away, and they departed from him in peace.

32 It came to pass the same day that Isaac's servants came and told him about the well which they had dug, and said to him, "We have found water." 33 So he called it Shebah.[a] Therefore the name of the city *is* Beersheba[b] to this day.

34 When Esau was forty years old, he took as wives Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite. 35 And they were a grief of mind to Isaac and Rebekah.

## ISAAC BLESSES JACOB

**27** Now it came to pass, when Isaac was old and his eyes were so dim that he could not see, that he called Esau his older son and said to him, “My son.”

And he answered him, “Here I am.”

2 Then he said, “Behold now, I am old. I do not know the day of my death.
3 Now therefore, please take your weapons, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field and hunt game for me. 4 And make me savory food, such as I love, and bring *it* to me that I may eat, that my soul may bless you before I die.”

5 Now Rebekah was listening when Isaac spoke to Esau his son. And Esau went to the field to hunt game and to bring *it.* 6 So Rebekah spoke to Jacob her son, saying, “Indeed I heard your father speak to Esau your brother, saying, 7 ‘Bring me game and make savory food for me, that I may eat it and bless you in the presence of the LORD before my death.’ 8 Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to what I command you. 9 Go now to the flock and bring me from there two choice kids of the goats, and I will make savory food from them for your father, such as he loves. 10 Then you shall take *it* to your father, that he may eat *it,* and that he may bless you before his death.”

11 And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, “Look, Esau my brother *is* a hairy man, and I *am* a smooth-*skinned* man. 12 Perhaps my father will feel me, and I shall seem to be a deceiver to him; and I shall bring a curse on myself and not a blessing.”

13 But his mother said to him, “*Let* your curse *be* on me, my son; only obey my voice, and go, get *them* for me.” 14 And he went and got *them* and brought *them* to his mother, and his mother made savory food, such as his father loved. 15 Then Rebekah took the choice clothes of her elder son Esau, which *were* with her in the house, and put them on Jacob her younger son. 16 And she put the skins of the kids of the goats on his hands and on the smooth part of his neck. 17 Then she gave the savory food and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob.

[18]So he went to his father and said, “My father.”

And he said, “Here I am. Who *are* you, my son?”

[19]Jacob said to his father, “I *am* Esau your firstborn; I have done just as you told me; please arise, sit and eat of my game, that your soul may bless me.”

[20]But Isaac said to his son, “How *is it* that you have found *it* so quickly, my son?”

And he said, “Because the LORD your God brought *it* to me.”

[21]Isaac said to Jacob, “Please come near, that I may feel you, my son, whether you *are* really my son Esau or not.” [22]So Jacob went near to Isaac his father, and he felt him and said, “The voice *is* Jacob’s voice, but the hands *are* the hands of Esau.” [23]And he did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like his brother Esau’s hands; so he blessed him.

[24]Then he said, “*Are* you really my son Esau?”

He said, “I *am.*”

[25]He said, “Bring *it* near to me, and I will eat of my son’s game, so that my soul may bless you.” So he brought *it* near to him, and he ate; and he brought him wine, and he drank. [26]Then his father Isaac said to him, “Come near now and kiss me, my son.” [27]And he came near and kissed him; and he smelled the smell of his clothing, and blessed him and said:

“Surely, the smell of my son
*Is* like the smell of a field
Which the LORD has blessed.
[28] Therefore may God give you
Of the dew of heaven,
Of the fatness of the earth,
And plenty of grain and wine.
[29] Let peoples serve you,
And nations bow down to you.
Be master over your brethren,
And let your mother’s sons bow down to
you.

Cursed *be* everyone who curses you,
And blessed *be* those who bless you!”

**ESAU’S LOST HOPE**

30 Now it happened, as soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, and Jacob had scarcely gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting. 31 He also had made savory food, and brought it to his father, and said to his father, “Let my father arise and eat of his son’s game, that your soul may bless me.”

32 And his father Isaac said to him, “Who *are* you?”

So he said, “I *am* your son, your firstborn, Esau.”

33 Then Isaac trembled exceedingly, and said, “Who? Where *is* the one who hunted game and brought *it* to me? I ate all *of it* before you came, and I have blessed him-*and* indeed he shall be blessed.”

34 When Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with an exceedingly great and bitter cry, and said to his father, “Bless me-me also, O my father!”

35 But he said, “Your brother came with deceit and has taken away your blessing.”

36 And *Esau* said, “Is he not rightly named Jacob? For he has supplanted me these two times. He took away my birthright, and now look, he has taken away my blessing!” And he said, “Have you not reserved a blessing for me?”

37 Then Isaac answered and said to Esau, “Indeed I have made him your master, and all his brethren I have given to him as servants; with grain and wine I have sustained him. What shall I do now for you, my son?”

38 And Esau said to his father, “Have you only one blessing, my father? Bless me-me also, O my father!” And Esau lifted up his voice and wept.

39 Then Isaac his father answered and said to him:

“Behold, your dwelling shall be of the
fatness of the earth,
And of the dew of heaven from above.
40 By your sword you shall live,

And you shall serve your brother;
And it shall come to pass, when you
become restless,
That you shall break his yoke from your
neck."

**JACOB ESCAPES FROM ESAU**

41 So Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father
blessed him, and Esau said in his heart, "The days of mourning for my father
are at hand; then I will kill my brother Jacob."

42 And the words of Esau her older son were told to Rebekah. So she sent
and called Jacob her younger son, and said to him, "Surely your brother Esau
comforts himself concerning you *by intending* to kill you. 43 Now therefore,
my son, obey my voice: arise, flee to my brother Laban in Haran. 44 And stay
with him a few days, until your brother's fury turns away, 45 until your
brother's anger turns away from you, and he forgets what you have done to
him; then I will send and bring you from there. Why should I be bereaved
also of you both in one day?" 46 And Rebekah said to Isaac, "I am weary of
my life because of the daughters of Heth; if Jacob takes a wife of the
daughters of Heth, like these *who are* the daughters of the land, what good
will my life be to me?"

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# REBEKAH AND ISAAC: FOR WORSE

# (GENESIS 27)

Isaac and Rebekah had a fairy-tale courtship. They were brought together by God's power and loved each other from their first encounter. But it seems that they failed to work at their relationship with the diligence that true lovers practice, for in the end, we find them invalidating each other instead of loving and honoring each other.

Granted there were some unusual stresses in the early years of their marriage. Rebekah was infertile for a long time. When she did get pregnant, twins were born. The boys ( Jacob and Esau) had distinctly differing characters right from birth. Unfortunately, each parent chose a favorite. Isaac favored Esau; Rebekah doted on Jacob. The marriage seems to have grown distant. When such division begins to erupt, secrecy replaces honesty, loyalties divide, manipulation occurs.

Years later, while in a foreign country to escape a famine, Isaac introduced Rebekah as his sister because he was afraid for his own life. His lack of chivalry must have had a chilling effect on his wife.

When the boys were forty years old, Esau married two women without his parents' approval. Rebekah, ever protective of Jacob, decided to conspire with her son against her husband. They devised a plan to gain for Jacob the blessing that belonged to Esau as the oldest.

Wait a minute! Rebekah conspired with her son to lie to her husband? Clearly, over time, the love they had felt for each other had disintegrated into lack of communication and companionship. Rebekah's closest friend was no longer her husband, but her son. Rebekah no longer honored her husband, so Jacob did not honor his father.

Conflicts happen in every marriage, and can be resolved when handled in a healthy, respectful manner. But couples must guard against allowing fissures to develop into uncrossable canyons. Keep open the lines of communication. Times change, circumstances change, people change. But a marriage can grow stronger, not

weaker, if both spouses are willing to repair the fissures with the putty of communication and committed love.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about marital problems Marital Problems And Problem-solving. See also the key passage note at Colossians 3:18, 19.

**KEY PASSAGE**

# BLESSING OUR CHILDREN

# (27:30-36)

Everyone needs a parent's blessing to be affirmed and assured that he or she is good and has a promising future. This ancient practice served as the last will and testament of one generation to the next. The Bible reveals that usually the father would give both the birthright and the blessing to his eldest son. This "birthright" conveyed to the eldest son the position of leadership in the family and generally provided him with a double portion of the family inheritance. Esau sold his birthright willingly (Gen. 25:29-34), but Jacob stole the blessing by deceiving his father (Gen. 27:1-36). Esau at last comprehended his great loss and the Bible tells us "he cried with an exceedingly great and bitter cry" (Gen. 27:34).

Although the times and culture are different, parents still need to bless their children. All children need from their parents positive words, meaningful touch, and active commitment in their lives.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about attachment/blessing The Blessing.

See also the personality profile of Jacob and The Art Of Blessing.

**28** Then Isaac called Jacob and blessed him, and charged him, and said to
him: “You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan. 2 Arise, go
to Padan Aram, to the house of Bethuel your mother’s father; and take
yourself a wife from there of the daughters of Laban your mother’s brother.

3 “May God Almighty bless you,
And make you fruitful and multiply you,
That you may be an assembly of
peoples;
4 And give you the blessing of Abraham,
To you and your descendants with you,
That you may inherit the land
In which you are a stranger,
Which God gave to Abraham.”

5 So Isaac sent Jacob away, and he went to Padan Aram, to Laban the son of
Bethuel the Syrian, the brother of Rebekah, the mother of Jacob and Esau.

**ESAU MARRIES MAHALATH**

6 Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him away to Padan Aram
to take himself a wife from there, *and that* as he blessed him he gave him a
charge, saying, “You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan,”
7 and that Jacob had obeyed his father and his mother and had gone to Padan
Aram. 8 Also Esau saw that the daughters of Canaan did not please his father
Isaac. 9 So Esau went to Ishma-el and took Mahalath the daughter of Ishma-el,
Abraham’s son, the sister of Nebajoth, to be his wife in addition to the wives
he had.

> Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you.
> GENESIS 28:15

**JACOB’S VOW AT BETHEL**

10 Now Jacob went out from Beersheba and went toward Haran. 11 So he
came to a certain place and stayed there all night, because the sun had set.

And he took one of the stones of that place and put it at his head, and he lay down in that place to sleep. [12]Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder *was* set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.

[13]And behold, the LORD stood above it and said: "I *am* the LORD God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants. [14]Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed. [15]Behold, I *am* with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you."

[16]Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know *it*." [17]And he was afraid and said, "How awesome *is* this place! This *is* none other than the house of God, and this *is* the gate of heaven!"

[18]Then Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put at his head, set it up as a pillar, and poured oil on top of it. [19]And he called the name of that place Bethel;[a] but the name of that city had been Luz previously. [20]Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I am going, and give me bread to eat and clothing to put on, [21]so that I come back to my father's house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God. [22]And this stone which I have set as a pillar shall be God's house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You."

**SOUL NOTE**

**Afraid of God?** *(28:16-19)* After Jacob stole Esau's blessing, Esau wanted to kill him (27:41). Jacob ran, and on his lonely journey he

lay down to rest and had a strange dream. Jacob realized that God had revealed Himself, and the Bible tells us that Jacob “was afraid.” Jacob later remembered this moment as a turning point in his life: “God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me” (48:3). God’s awesomeness should inspire fear (reverence), but don’t stop there. Let it lead you to faith. **Topic: Fear/Fear of God**

**JACOB MEETS RACHEL**

**29** So Jacob went on his journey and came to the land of the people of the East. 2And he looked, and saw a well in the field; and behold, there *were* three flocks of sheep lying by it; for out of that well they watered the flocks. A large stone *was* on the well's mouth. 3Now all the flocks would be gathered there; and they would roll the stone from the well's mouth, water the sheep, and put the stone back in its place on the well's mouth.

4And Jacob said to them, "My brethren, where *are* you from?"

And they said, "We *are* from Haran."

5Then he said to them, "Do you know La-ban the son of Nahor?"

And they said, "We know him."

6So he said to them, "Is he well?"

And they said, "*He is* well. And look, his daughter Rachel is coming with the sheep."

7Then he said, "Look, *it is* still high day; *it is* not time for the cattle to be gathered together. Water the sheep, and go and feed *them.* "

8But they said, "We cannot until all the flocks are gathered together, and they have rolled the stone from the well's mouth; then we water the sheep."

9Now while he was still speaking with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep, for she was a shepherdess. 10And it came to pass, when Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his mother's brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother's brother, that Jacob went near and rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother. 11Then Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice and wept. 12And Jacob told Rachel that he *was* her father's relative and that he *was* Rebekah's son. So she ran and told her father.

13Then it came to pass, when Laban heard the report about Jacob his sister's son, that he ran to meet him, and embraced him and kissed him, and brought him to his house. So he told Laban all these things. 14And Laban said to him, "Surely you *are* my bone and my flesh." And he stayed with him for

a month.

## JACOB MARRIES LEAH AND RACHEL

15 Then Laban said to Jacob, “Because you *are* my relative, should you
therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, what *should* your wages *be?*”
16 Now Laban had two daughters: the name of the elder *was* Leah, and the
name of the younger *was* Rachel. 17 Leah’s eyes *were* delicate, but Rachel
was beautiful of form and appearance.

18 Now Jacob loved Rachel; so he said, “I will serve you seven years for
Rachel your younger daughter.”

19 And Laban said, “*It is* better that I give her to you than that I should give
her to another man. Stay with me.” 20 So Jacob served seven years for Rachel,
and they seemed *only* a few days to him because of the love he had for her.

21 Then Jacob said to Laban, “Give *me* my wife, for my days are fulfilled,
that I may go in to her.” 22 And Laban gathered together all the men of the
place and made a feast. 23 Now it came to pass in the evening, that he took
Leah his daughter and brought her to Jacob; and he went in to her. 24 And
Laban gave his maid Zil-pah to his daughter Leah *as* a maid. 25 So it came to
pass in the morning, that behold, it *was* Leah. And he said to Laban, “What is
this you have done to me? Was it not for Rachel that I served you? Why then
have you deceived me?”

26 And Laban said, “It must not be done so in our country, to give the
younger before the firstborn. 27 Fulfill her week, and we will give you this one
also for the service which you will serve with me still another seven years.”

28 Then Jacob did so and fulfilled her week. So he gave him his daughter
Rachel as wife also. 29 And Laban gave his maid Bilhah to his daughter
Rachel as a maid. 30 Then *Jacob* also went in to Rachel, and he also loved
Rachel more than Leah. And he served with Laban still another seven years.

## THE CHILDREN OF JACOB

31 When the LORD saw that Leah *was* unloved, He opened her womb; but
Rachel *was* barren. 32 So Leah conceived and bore a son, and she called his

name Reuben;[a] for she said, “The LORD has surely looked on my affliction. Now therefore, my husband will love me.” 33Then she conceived again and bore a son, and said, “Because the LORD has heard that I *am* unloved, He has therefore given me this *son* also.” And she called his name Simeon.[a] 34She conceived again and bore a son, and said, “Now this time my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons.” Therefore his name was called Levi.[a] 35And she conceived again and bore a son, and said, “Now I will praise the LORD.” Therefore she called his name Judah.[a] Then she stopped bearing.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# JACOB’S BLENDED FAMILY

## (GENESIS 29)

Jacob didn’t plan on multiple wives; his father-in-law, Laban, had helped create that complication. The sisters Jacob married were so fiercely competitive that each put another woman in her husband’s bed. Jacob fathered twelve sons and at least one daughter with four women. Though the events that shaped his family were bizarre, the results have a contemporary look: Jacob became the father of a blended family.

Jacob loved his wife Rachel, who had been his first love. He apparently treated the rest of the women in his life with care and respect, but he favored Rachel. Instead of helping Rachel see her unique position and deal with her jealousy toward her older sister, Jacob allowed the vicious battles to rage under his roof. He escalated

the war by accepting other women into his bed.

Jacob also contributed to the chaos by obviously favoring Rachel's son Joseph. Instead of providing leadership in his home, Jacob allowed each person to struggle alone. He received cultural, but not genuine, respect from most of his sons. He allowed his family to drift into sin, hatred, and murder. He made little or no effort to intervene in desperate situations. He held his sons responsible for their mistakes, but he certainly bore part of the responsibility for his lack of clear direction. He caused most of his own deepest sorrows.

Blended families require special attention. They need more, not less, work than single couple families because the relationships increase in complication with the number of people involved. Individual children need to experience genuine love from someone, and parents are not automatically interchangeable. The challenge to make a blended family work requires the participation of everyone, particularly the adults. Passive parenting produces deadly results.

Blended parents who persist in depending on God, who regularly ask Him for wisdom, who take an active role in all their children's welfare, are pursuing the right path. The road has unusual difficulties. Those who follow the divine Guide find their way home.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about blended families Bringing Them Together: The Challenge Of Blending Families. See also the key passage note at Genesis 21:9-11.

**BRINGING THEM TOGETHER: THE CHALLENGE OF BLENDING FAMILIES**

# DAVID R. MILLER

## (Genesis 29)

**T**he family nest is being shaken as never before. Today, only one family in four consists of a mother and father and their biological children. If the current trend continues, more than half of all marriages occurring in a given year will end in divorce. In most developed countries, half of all births are to unmarried women. These factors and others eventually result in many remarried families with children, or blended families.

In the Scriptures we can clearly see that God considers children precious and that He is concerned about their welfare (Matt. 18:6, 7; Mark 10:14-16; Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:21). Certainly there are many single-parent homes where the children are dearly loved and well cared for, based on great sacrifice and hard work by the single parent. But we also know that children benefit from having two parents as they grow: Research clearly indicates that children living in a two-parent home, even a remarriage home, are significantly better off than children living in a single-parent home. But the blending of families brings with it a special set of challenges.

### CHANGES AND LOSSES

Blended families involve children from previous marriages or relationships. They result when parents-divorced or never married-remarry or marry. Most contain children from only one of the newly married partners; however, some are comprised of children from both partners' previous relationships.

Consider the possible changes and adjustments for the new family's members: the end of (at least) one marriage, new living arrangements, new family members, a new school, the loss of friends, a new church, a new last name. The children may be cut off from

formerly close grandparents and relatives. In all remarriage families, loss and change present common emotional challenges.

## DIFFERENT HISTORIES

Each member of the blended family has his or her own history, perceptions, and memories and is asked to merge and compromise them with those of other family members. What was once familiar is now reworked: Christmas and other holiday traditions, birthday celebrations, vacations, daily routines, etc. Personal history is not easily surrendered by someone who already has gone through many other changes.

## DIFFERENT EXPECTATIONS

Bible-based guidance is essential for remarriages resulting in blended families. Unfulfilled expectations are the major reason subsequent marriages end in divorce. There are expectations about parenting and discipline, finances, and how to express affection, respect, anger, and unhappiness. What about expectations concerning holidays and vacations? What about different rules during noncustodial visits? Assumptions are detrimental. Clarify expectations!

## RELATIONAL STRUGGLES

Children in remarriages need love, attention, discipline, understanding, and acceptance. Parents in blended families often struggle with loyalty issues arising from feeling that one's children need to be defended against the stepparent or stepsiblings.

The children may not be as thrilled about the remarriage arrangement as their parents are. This phenomenon is sometimes called "the myth of instant love" and can create problems unless understood and dealt with very early in the developing relationship of the blended family. Often, children feel that by loving and accepting a

stepparent they are rejecting their biological parent, which can further complicate matters.

## TWO FAMILIES

Visitation is an extremely common source of stress in blended families. The children will experience two realities, one with the blended family and the other with part-time visitation. Life can get even more complicated if the noncustodial parent remarries to create another blended family! Visitation arrangements also become tricky if the noncustodial parent lives far away. The feelings and needs of the children can create quite a challenging scenario for everyone.

## WHAT'S A PARENT TO DO?

1. *Deal with family losses and transitions*. Children in blended families need time to feel normal again and should be encouraged to share their feelings of loss and their memories of how things used to be. Visitation time and events with the noncusto-dial parent should be respected.

2. *Acknowledge different developmental needs*. Parents can help themselves and their children by taking age and maturity level into consideration and not attempting to treat all the children the same way.

3. *Establish new family traditions*. While not rejecting the traditions of the previous family life or of the noncustodial parent, the blended family should set out to create its own family traditions and events.

4. *Build a solid marital relationship*. Spouses must be intentional about taking time alone to love, support, and care for each other. A strong marriage is crucial to the entire transition and overall functioning of the family.

5. *Build a parenting coalition*. Be sure to include the non-custodial

parent if at all possible. Children, especially teenagers, are greatly stabilized by seeing parents unified, having one voice. Mom and dad should try to minimize disagreement about the kids in their presence. Consistent parenting helps to alleviate children's insecurity following divorce and also builds their trust in the parental unit.

6. *Accept continual changes in family composition*. Children will come and go as visitation arrangements occur, and they may even wish to live with their other parent for a time. Perhaps a new baby or two will come along and further stir the emotional mix. The couple's commitment to each other and to their children, along with tolerance and patience in transition, will facilitate a smoother new beginning.

Those of us who work with blended families invariably find ourselves drawn back to the issue of what's best for the children. Simply stated, kids are better off with two parents than with one. Be courageous and committed. Blended families can work!

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of blended families:

- Ruth 3:7-14
- 2 Samuel 13:1-2
- Esther 2:15-17

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on blended families at Genesis 21:9-11. See also the personality profile of Jacob's Blended Family .

**SOUL NOTE**

**Trying to Earn Love** *(29:32)* Although Jacob loved Rachel more

than Leah (29:30), Rachel envied her sister Leah who had children while Rachel was barren (30:1). Leah thought that having children would win Jacob's love, while Rachel thought that not having children meant Jacob would love her less. Both women were wrong.

Hannah felt the same. She struggled with her barrenness, but her husband acted wisely, declaring his love for her (1 Sam. 1:8). Couples facing infertility must not let that draw them apart, but instead draw closer together as they declare their love for each other.
**Topic: Infertility**

**30** Now when Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, Rachel envied
her sister, and said to Jacob, “Give me children, or else I die!”

2 And Jacob’s anger was aroused against Rachel, and he said, “*Am* I in the
place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?”

3 So she said, “Here is my maid Bilhah; go in to her, and she will bear *a*
*child* on my knees, that I also may have children by her.” 4 Then she gave him
Bilhah her maid as wife, and Jacob went in to her. 5 And Bilhah conceived
and bore Jacob a son. 6 Then Rachel said, “God has judged my case; and He
has also heard my voice and given me a son.” Therefore she called his name
Dan.[a] 7 And Rachel’s maid Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second
son. 8 Then Rachel said, “With great wrestlings I have wrestled with my
sister, *and* indeed I have prevailed.” So she called his name Naphtali.[a]

9 When Leah saw that she had stopped bearing, she took Zilpah her maid
and gave her to Jacob as wife. 10 And Leah’s maid Zilpah bore Jacob a son.
11 Then Leah said, “A troop comes!”[a] So she called his name Gad.[b] 12 And
Leah’s maid Zilpah bore Jacob a second son. 13 Then Leah said, “I am happy,
for the daughters will call me blessed.” So she called his name Asher.[a]

14 Now Reuben went in the days of wheat harvest and found mandrakes in
the field, and brought them to his mother Leah. Then Rachel said to Leah,
“Please give me *some* of your son’s mandrakes.”

15 But she said to her, “*Is it* a small matter that you have taken away my
husband? Would you take away my son’s mandrakes also?”

And Rachel said, “Therefore he will lie with you tonight for your son’s
mandrakes.”

16 When Jacob came out of the field in the evening, Leah went out to meet
him and said, “You must come in to me, for I have surely hired you with my
son’s mandrakes.” And he lay with her that night.

17 And God listened to Leah, and she conceived and bore Jacob a fifth son.
18 Leah said, “God has given me my wages, because I have given my maid to
my husband.” So she called his name Issachar.[a] 19 Then Leah conceived again
and bore Jacob a sixth son. 20 And Leah said, “God has endowed me *with* a
good endowment; now my husband will dwell with me, because I have borne

him six sons." So she called his name Zebulun.[a] [21]Afterward she bore a daughter, and called her name Dinah.

[22]Then God remembered Rachel, and God listened to her and opened her womb. [23]And she conceived and bore a son, and said, "God has taken away my reproach." [24]So she called his name Joseph,[a] and said, "The LORD shall add to me another son."

## JACOB'S AGREEMENT WITH LABAN

[25]And it came to pass, when Rachel had borne Joseph, that Jacob said to Laban, "Send me away, that I may go to my own place and to my country. [26]Give *me* my wives and my children for whom I have served you, and let me go; for you know my service which I have done for you."

[27]And Laban said to him, "Please *stay*, if I have found favor in your eyes, *for* I have learned by experience that the LORD has blessed me for your sake." [28]Then he said, "Name me your wages, and I will give *it.*"

[29]So *Jacob* said to him, "You know how I have served you and how your livestock has been with me. [30]For what you had before I *came was* little, and it has increased to a great amount; the LORD has blessed you since my coming. And now, when shall I also provide for my own house?"

[31]So he said, "What shall I give you?"

And Jacob said, "You shall not give me anything. If you will do this thing for me, I will again feed and keep your flocks: [32]Let me pass through all your flock today, removing from there all the speckled and spotted sheep, and all the brown ones among the lambs, and the spotted and speckled among the goats; and *these* shall be my wages. [33]So my righteousness will answer for me in time to come, when the subject of my wages comes before you: every one that *is* not speckled and spotted among the goats, and brown among the lambs, will be considered stolen, if *it is* with me."

[34]And Laban said, "Oh, that it were according to your word!" [35]So he removed that day the male goats that were speckled and spotted, all the female goats that were speckled and spotted, every one that had *some* white in it, and all the brown ones among the lambs, and gave *them* into the hand of

his sons. [36]Then he put three days' journey between himself and Jacob, and Jacob fed the rest of Laban's flocks.

[37]Now Jacob took for himself rods of green poplar and of the almond and chestnut trees, peeled white strips in them, and exposed the white which *was* in the rods. [38]And the rods which he had peeled, he set before the flocks in the gutters, in the watering troughs where the flocks came to drink, so that they should conceive when they came to drink. [39]So the flocks conceived before the rods, and the flocks brought forth streaked, speckled, and spotted. [40]Then Jacob separated the lambs, and made the flocks face toward the streaked and all the brown in the flock of Laban; but he put his own flocks by themselves and did not put them with Laban's flock.

[41]And it came to pass, whenever the stronger livestock conceived, that Jacob placed the rods before the eyes of the livestock in the gutters, that they might conceive among the rods. [42]But when the flocks were feeble, he did not put *them* in; so the feebler were Laban's and the stronger Jacob's. [43]Thus the man became exceedingly prosperous, and had large flocks, female and male servants, and camels and donkeys.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# RACHEL AND LEAH: JEALOUS SISTERS

## (GENESIS 30:8)

Probably no situation on earth could bring out the worst sibling rivalry between sisters than for them to be married to the same man. Both Rachel and Leah were Jacob's wives. They battled for his attention and for his affection. No weapon was considered off-limits.

Rachel originally captured Jacob's heart. He labored seven years for her father Laban in exchange for Rachel's hand in marriage. Jacob didn't mind the wait because he was in love. The years "seemed only a few days to him because of the love he had for her" (Gen. 29:20). But Laban turned out to be a treacherous father-in-law. On their wedding night, he substituted Leah for Rachel; and by the time Jacob woke up to the deception, he was already married. Laban completed his plan by offering to let Jacob still marry Rachel as long as he committed to another seven years of labor. Overnight, Jacob's home became a place of conflict.

Although Rachel had Jacob's heart, she was at first unable to have his children. Leah gave Jacob four sons. Rachel became so upset that she insisted that Jacob have children with her servant Bilhah. The two sons Jacob had with Bilhah were a costly and bitter victory for Rachel. The sisters bickered constantly.

Monogamy certainly would have been a better option for this family, but it probably would not have kept Rachel and Leah from jealous battles. Jacob could have practiced greater wisdom and compassion with his wives, but his love for Rachel blinded him to many mistakes. Leah never got over being the second-place wife. Rachel allowed her insecurities and envy toward her sister to disrupt the special place she had with Jacob.

Envy and jealousy grow as by-products of comparisons with others. Favorable comparisons tend to lead to pride and arrogance. Unfavorable ones lead to dejection and anger. Comparisons with others rarely promote goodness. In contrast, God calls us to find our worth in Him. The love God expressed to us in Christ releases us from the vicious cycle of jealousy.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about jealousy Jealousy: A Consuming Passion. See also the key passage note at Numbers 5:29.

**JACOB FLEES FROM LABAN**

**31** Now *Jacob* heard the words of La-ban's sons, saying, "Jacob has taken
away all that was our father's, and from what was our father's he has
acquired all this wealth." 2And Jacob saw the countenance of Laban, and
indeed it *was* not *favorable* toward him as before. 3Then the LORD said to
Jacob, "Return to the land of your fathers and to your family, and I will be
with you."

4So Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to the field, to his flock, 5and
said to them, "I see your father's countenance, that it *is* not *favorable*
toward me as before; but the God of my father has been with me. 6And you
know that with all my might I have served your father. 7Yet your father has
deceived me and changed my wages ten times, but God did not allow him to
hurt me. 8If he said thus: 'The speckled shall be your wages,' then all the
flocks bore speckled. And if he said thus: 'The streaked shall be your wages,'
then all the flocks bore streaked. 9So God has taken away the livestock of
your father and given *them* to me.

10"And it happened, at the time when the flocks conceived, that I lifted my
eyes and saw in a dream, and behold, the rams which leaped upon the flocks
*were* streaked, speckled, and gray-spotted. 11Then the Angel of God spoke to
me in a dream, saying, 'Jacob.' And I said, 'Here I am.' 12And He said, 'Lift
your eyes now and see, all the rams which leap on the flocks *are* streaked,
speckled, and gray-spotted; for I have seen all that Laban is doing to you. 13I
*am* the God of Bethel, where you anointed the pillar *and* where you made a
vow to Me. Now arise, get out of this land, and return to the land of your
family.' "

14Then Rachel and Leah answered and said to him, "Is there still any
portion or inheritance for us in our father's house? 15Are we not considered
strangers by him? For he has sold us, and also completely consumed our
money. 16For all these riches which God has taken from our father are *really*
ours and our children's; now then, whatever God has said to you, do it."

17Then Jacob rose and set his sons and his wives on camels. 18And he
carried away all his livestock and all his possessions which he had gained, his

acquired livestock which he had gained in Padan Aram, to go to his father Isaac in the land of Canaan. [19]Now Laban had gone to shear his sheep, and Rachel had stolen the household idols that were her father's. [20]And Jacob stole away, unknown to Laban the Syrian, in that he did not tell him that he intended to flee. [21]So he fled with all that he had. He arose and crossed the river, and headed toward the mountains of Gilead.

**LABAN PURSUES JACOB**

[22]And Laban was told on the third day that Jacob had fled. [23]Then he took his brethren with him and pursued him for seven days' journey, and he overtook him in the mountains of Gilead. [24]But God had come to Laban the Syrian in a dream by night, and said to him, "Be careful that you speak to Jacob neither good nor bad."

[25]So Laban overtook Jacob. Now Jacob had pitched his tent in the mountains, and Laban with his brethren pitched in the mountains of Gilead.

[26]And Laban said to Jacob: "What have you done, that you have stolen away unknown to me, and carried away my daughters like captives *taken* with the sword? [27]Why did you flee away secretly, and steal away from me, and not tell me; for I might have sent you away with joy and songs, with timbrel and harp? [28]And you did not allow me to kiss my sons and my daughters. Now you have done foolishly in *so* doing. [29]It is in my power to do you harm, but the God of your father spoke to me last night, saying, 'Be careful that you speak to Jacob neither good nor bad.' [30]And now you have surely gone because you greatly long for your father's house, *but* why did you steal my gods?"

[31]Then Jacob answered and said to Laban, "Because I was afraid, for I said, 'Perhaps you would take your daughters from me by force.' [32]With whomever you find your gods, do not let him live. In the presence of our brethren, identify what I have of yours and take *it* with you." For Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen them.

[33]And Laban went into Jacob's tent, into Leah's tent, and into the two maids' tents, but he did not find *them.* Then he went out of Leah's tent and entered Rachel's tent. [34]Now Rachel had taken the household idols, put them

in the camel's saddle, and sat on them. And Laban searched all about the tent but did not find *them.* [35]And she said to her father, "Let it not displease my lord that I cannot rise before you, for the manner of women *is* with me." And he searched but did not find the household idols.

[36]Then Jacob was angry and rebuked Laban, and Jacob answered and said to Laban: "What *is* my trespass? What *is* my sin, that you have so hotly pursued me? [37]Although you have searched all my things, what part of your household things have you found? Set *it* here before my brethren and your brethren, that they may judge between us both! [38]These twenty years I *have been* with you; your ewes and your female goats have not miscarried their young, and I have not eaten the rams of your flock. [39]That which was torn *by beasts* I did not bring to you; I bore the loss of it. You required it from my hand, *whether* stolen by day or stolen by night. [40]*There* I was! In the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night, and my sleep departed from my eyes. [41]Thus I have been in your house twenty years; I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock, and you have changed my wages ten times. [42]Unless the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac, had been with me, surely now you would have sent me away empty-handed. God has seen my affliction and the labor of my hands, and rebuked *you* last night."

## LABAN'S COVENANT WITH JACOB

[43]And Laban answered and said to Jacob, "*These* daughters *are* my daughters, and *these* children *are* my children, and *this* flock *is* my flock; all that you see *is* mine. But what can I do this day to these my daughters or to their children whom they have borne? [44]Now therefore, come, let us make a covenant, you and I, and let it be a witness between you and me."

[45]So Jacob took a stone and set it up *as* a pillar. [46]Then Jacob said to his brethren, "Gather stones." And they took stones and made a heap, and they ate there on the heap. [47]Laban called it Jegar Sahadutha,[a] but Jacob called it Galeed.[b] [48]And Laban said, "This heap *is* a witness between you and me this day." Therefore its name was called Galeed, [49]also Mizpah,[a] because he said, "May the LORD watch between you and me when we are absent one from

another. [50]If you afflict my daughters, or if you take *other* wives besides my daughters, *although* no man *is* with us-see, God *is* witness between you and me!"

[51]Then Laban said to Jacob, "Here is this heap and here is *this* pillar, which I have placed between you and me. [52]This heap *is* a witness, and *this* pillar *is* a witness, that I will not pass beyond this heap to you, and you will not pass beyond this heap and this pillar to me, for harm. [53]The God of Abraham, the God of Nahor, and the God of their father judge between us." And Jacob swore by the Fear of his father Isaac. [54]Then Jacob offered a sacrifice on the mountain, and called his brethren to eat bread. And they ate bread and stayed all night on the mountain. [55]And early in the morning Laban arose, and kissed his sons and daughters and blessed them. Then Laban departed and returned to his place.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Violated Trust** *(31:7)* Jacob had been deceived several times by his father-in-law. Both in his marriages and in his employment, Jacob found Laban to be less than honest. Jacob no longer trusted Laban, so he took his family and left.

Trust involves being trustworthy and being willing to trust another. Earlier in his life, Jacob too had been a deceiver. He had experienced the hurt and separation that violated trust brings into a family. Jacob fled because he had deceived (27:43); here he fled because he had been deceived. Violated trust can destroy relationships. How much better to build a bond of trust with those closest to us. **Topic: Trust**

**ESAU COMES TO MEET JACOB**

**32** So Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. 2When Jacob saw them, he said, “This *is* God’s camp.” And he called the name of that place Mahanaim.[a]

3Then Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother in the land of Seir, the country of Edom. 4And he commanded them, saying, “Speak thus to my lord Esau, ‘Thus your servant Jacob says: “I have dwelt with Laban and stayed there until now. 5I have oxen, donkeys, flocks, and male and female servants; and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find favor in your sight.” ’ ”

6Then the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, “We came to your brother Esau, and he also is coming to meet you, and four hundred men *are* with him.” 7So Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed; and he divided the people that *were* with him, and the flocks and herds and camels, into two companies. 8And he said, “If Esau comes to the one company and attacks it, then the other company which is left will escape.”

9Then Jacob said, “O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, the LORD who said to me, ‘Return to your country and to your family, and I will deal well with you’: 10I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which You have shown Your servant; for I crossed over this Jordan with my staff, and now I have become two companies. 11Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, lest he come and attack me *and* the mother with the children. 12For You said, ‘I will surely treat you well, and make your descendants as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.’ ”

13So he lodged there that same night, and took what came to his hand as a present for Esau his brother: 14two hundred female goats and twenty male goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, 15thirty milk camels with their colts, forty cows and ten bulls, twenty female donkeys and ten foals. 16Then he delivered *them* to the hand of his servants, every drove by itself, and said to his servants, “Pass over before me, and put some distance between

successive droves.” [17]And he commanded the first one, saying, “When Esau my brother meets you and asks you, saying, ‘To whom do you belong, and where are you going? Whose *are* these in front of you?’ [18]then you shall say, ‘They *are* your servant Jacob’s. It *is* a present sent to my lord Esau; and behold, he also *is* behind us.’ ” [19]So he commanded the second, the third, and all who followed the droves, saying, “In this manner you shall speak to Esau when you find him; [20]and also say, ‘Behold, your servant Jacob *is* behind us.’ ” For he said, “I will appease him with the present that goes before me, and afterward I will see his face; perhaps he will accept me.” [21]So the present went on over before him, but he himself lodged that night in the camp.

**WRESTLING WITH GOD**

[22]And he arose that night and took his two wives, his two female servants, and his eleven sons, and crossed over the ford of Jabbok. [23]He took them, sent them over the brook, and sent over what he had. [24]Then Jacob was left alone; and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day. [25]Now when He saw that He did not prevail against him, He touched the socket of his hip; and the socket of Jacob’s hip was out of joint as He wrestled with him. [26]And He said, “Let Me go, for the day breaks.”

But he said, “I will not let You go unless You bless me!”

[27]So He said to him, “What *is* your name?”

He said, “Jacob.”

[28]And He said, “Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel;[a] for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed.”

[29]Then Jacob asked, saying, “Tell *me* Your name, I pray.”

And He said, “Why *is* it *that* you ask about My name?” And He blessed him there.

[30]So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel:[a] “For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.” [31]Just as he crossed over Penuel[a] the sun rose on him, and he limped on his hip. [32]Therefore to this day the children of Israel do not eat the muscle that shrank, which *is* on the hip socket, because He touched the socket of Jacob’s hip in the muscle that shrank.

**JACOB AND ESAU MEET**

**33** Now Jacob lifted his eyes and looked, and there, Esau was coming, and with him were four hundred men. So he divided the children among Leah, Rachel, and the two maidservants. 2And he put the maidservants and their children in front, Leah and her children behind, and Rachel and Joseph last. 3Then he crossed over before them and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother.

4But Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept. 5And he lifted his eyes and saw the women and children, and said, "Who *are* these with you?"

So he said, "The children whom God has graciously given your servant." 6Then the maidservants came near, they and their children, and bowed down. 7And Leah also came near with her children, and they bowed down. Afterward Joseph and Rachel came near, and they bowed down.

8Then Esau said, "What *do* you *mean by* all this company which I met?"

And he said, "*These are* to find favor in the sight of my lord."

9But Esau said, "I have enough, my brother; keep what you have for yourself. "

10And Jacob said, "No, please, if I have now found favor in your sight, then receive my present from my hand, inasmuch as I have seen your face as though I had seen the face of God, and you were pleased with me. 11Please, take my blessing that is brought to you, because God has dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough." So he urged him, and he took *it.*

12Then Esau said, "Let us take our journey; let us go, and I will go before you."

13But Jacob said to him, "My lord knows that the children *are* weak, and the flocks and herds which are nursing *are* with me. And if the men should drive them hard one day, all the flock will die. 14Please let my lord go on ahead before his servant. I will lead on slowly at a pace which the livestock that go before me, and the children, are able to endure, until I come to my lord in Seir."

15 And Esau said, “Now let me leave with you *some* of the people who *are* with me.”

But he said, “What need is there? Let me find favor in the sight of my lord.” 16 So Esau returned that day on his way to Seir. 17 And Jacob journeyed to Succoth, built himself a house, and made booths for his livestock. Therefore the name of the place is called Succoth.[a]

## JACOB COMES TO CANAAN

18 Then Jacob came safely to the city of She-chem, which *is* in the land of Canaan, when he came from Padan Aram; and he pitched his tent before the city. 19 And he bought the parcel of land, where he had pitched his tent, from the children of Hamor, Shechem’s father, for one hundred pieces of money. 20 Then he erected an altar there and called it El Elohe Israel.[a]

**THE DINAH INCIDENT**

**34** Now Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went
out to see the daughters of the land. 2And when Shechem the son of
Hamor the Hivite, prince of the country, saw her, he took her and lay with
her, and violated her. 3His soul was strongly attracted to Dinah the daughter
of Jacob, and he loved the young woman and spoke kindly to the young
woman. 4So She-chem spoke to his father Hamor, saying, “Get me this young
woman as a wife.”

5And Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah his daughter. Now his sons
were with his livestock in the field; so Jacob held his peace until they came.
6Then Hamor the father of She-chem went out to Jacob to speak with him.
7And the sons of Jacob came in from the field when they heard *it;* and the
men were grieved and very angry, because he had done a disgraceful thing in
Israel by lying with Jacob’s daughter, a thing which ought not to be done.
8But Hamor spoke with them, saying, “The soul of my son Shechem longs
for your daughter. Please give her to him as a wife. 9And make marriages
with us; give your daughters to us, and take our daughters to yourselves. 10So
you shall dwell with us, and the land shall be before you. Dwell and trade in
it, and acquire possessions for yourselves in it.”

11Then Shechem said to her father and her brothers, “Let me find favor in
your eyes, and whatever you say to me I will give. 12Ask me ever so much
dowry and gift, and I will give according to what you say to me; but give me
the young woman as a wife.”

13But the sons of Jacob answered Shechem and Hamor his father, and
spoke deceitfully, because he had defiled Dinah their sister. 14And they said
to them, “We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to one who is
uncircumcised, for that *would be* a reproach to us. 15But on this *condition* we
will consent to you: If you will become as we *are,* if every male of you is
circumcised, 16then we will give our daughters to you, and we will take your
daughters to us; and we will dwell with you, and we will become one people.
17But if you will not heed us and be circumcised, then we will take our
daughter and be gone.”

[18]And their words pleased Hamor and She-chem, Hamor's son. [19]So the young man did not delay to do the thing, because he delighted in Jacob's daughter. He *was* more honorable than all the household of his father.

[20]And Hamor and Shechem his son came to the gate of their city, and spoke with the men of their city, saying: [21]"These men *are* at peace with us. Therefore let them dwell in the land and trade in it. For indeed the land *is* large enough for them. Let us take their daughters to us as wives, and let us give them our daughters. [22]Only on this *condition* will the men consent to dwell with us, to be one people: if every male among us is circumcised as they *are* circumcised. [23]*Will* not their livestock, their property, and every animal of theirs *be* ours? Only let us consent to them, and they will dwell with us." [24]And all who went out of the gate of his city heeded Hamor and Shechem his son; every male was circumcised, all who went out of the gate of his city.

[25]Now it came to pass on the third day, when they were in pain, that two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, each took his sword and came boldly upon the city and killed all the males. [26]And they killed Hamor and Shechem his son with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah from Shechem's house, and went out. [27]The sons of Jacob came upon the slain, and plundered the city, because their sister had been defiled. [28]They took their sheep, their oxen, and their donkeys, what *was* in the city and what *was* in the field, [29]and all their wealth. All their little ones and their wives they took captive; and they plundered even all that *was* in the houses.

[30]Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, "You have troubled me by making me obnoxious among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites; and since I *am* few in number, they will gather themselves together against me and kill me. I shall be destroyed, my household and I."

[31]But they said, "Should he treat our sister like a harlot?"

## SOUL NOTE

**An Inexcusable Act** *(34:2)* Shechem first "lay with" Dinah and "violated her," then claimed to love her and to want to marry her. While his love for her may have been genuine, his actions were inexcusable. He said he wanted to marry Dinah, but he had already done evil. A young man may think he is in love, but to force a woman to have sex with him violates and abuses her. This does not show love at all. For Shechem, his act resulted in death and destruction for an entire city. The consequences of such abuse, no matter how one tries to justify it, are far-reaching and destructive. **Topic: Abuse**

## JACOB'S RETURN TO BETHEL

**35** Then God said to Jacob, "Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there; and make an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you fled from the face of Esau your brother."

2 And Jacob said to his household and to all who *were* with him, "Put away the foreign gods that *are* among you, purify yourselves, and change your garments. 3 Then let us arise and go up to Bethel; and I will make an altar there to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and has been with me in the way which I have gone." 4 So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods which *were* in their hands, and the earrings which *were* in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the terebinth tree which *was* by Shechem.

5 And they journeyed, and the terror of God was upon the cities that *were* all around them, and they did not pursue the sons of Jacob. 6 So Jacob came to Luz (that *is,* Bethel), which *is* in the land of Canaan, he and all the people who *were* with him. 7 And he built an altar there and called the place El Bethel,[a] because there God appeared to him when he fled from the face of his brother.

8 Now Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died, and she was buried below Bethel under the tere-binth tree. So the name of it was called Allon Bachuth.[a]

9 Then God appeared to Jacob again, when he came from Padan Aram, and blessed him. 10 And God said to him, "Your name *is* Jacob; your name shall not be called Jacob anymore, but Israel shall be your name." So He called his name Israel. 11 Also God said to him: "I *am* God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall proceed from you, and kings shall come from your body. 12 The land which I gave Abraham and Isaac I give to you; and to your descendants after you I give this land." 13 Then God went up from him in the place where He talked with him. 14 So Jacob set up a pillar in the place where He talked with him, a pillar of stone; and he poured a drink offering on it, and he poured oil on it. 15 And Jacob called the name of the place where God spoke with him, Bethel.

## DEATH OF RACHEL

16 Then they journeyed from Bethel. And when there was but a little
distance to go to Ephrath, Rachel labored *in childbirth,* and she had hard
labor. 17 Now it came to pass, when she was in hard labor, that the midwife
said to her, “Do not fear; you will have this son also.” 18 And so it was, as her
soul was departing (for she died), that she called his name Ben-Oni;[a] but his
father called him Benjamin.[b] 19 So Rachel died and was buried on the way to
Eph-rath (that *is,* Bethlehem). 20 And Jacob set a pillar on her grave, which *is*
the pillar of Rachel’s grave to this day.

21 Then Israel journeyed and pitched his tent beyond the tower of Eder.
22 And it happened, when Israel dwelt in that land, that Reuben went and lay
with Bilhah his father’s concubine; and Israel heard *about it.*

## JACOB’S TWELVE SONS

Now the sons of Jacob were twelve: 23 the sons of Leah *were* Reuben,
Jacob’s firstborn, and Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebu-lun; 24 the
sons of Rachel *were* Joseph and Benjamin; 25 the sons of Bilhah, Rachel’s
maidservant, *were* Dan and Naphtali; 26 nd the sons of Zilpah, Leah’s
maidservant, *were* Gad and Asher. These *were* the sons of Jacob who were
born to him in Padan Aram.

## DEATH OF ISAAC

27 Then Jacob came to his father Isaac at Mamre, or Kirjath Arba[a] (that *is,*
Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had dwelt. 28 Now the days of Isaac were
one hundred and eighty years. 29 So Isaac breathed his last and died, and was
gathered to his people, *being* old and full of days. And his sons Esau and
Jacob buried him.

## THE FAMILY OF ESAU

**36** Now this *is* the genealogy of Esau, who is Edom. 2 Esau took his wives
from the daughters of Canaan: Adah the daughter of Elon the Hittite;
Aholibamah the daughter of Anah, the daughter of Zibeon the Hivite; 3 and
Basemath, Ishmael's daughter, sister of Nebajoth. 4 Now Adah bore Eliphaz
to Esau, and Basemath bore Reuel. 5 And Aholibamah bore Jeush, Jaalam,
and Korah. These *were* the sons of Esau who were born to him in the land of
Canaan.

6 Then Esau took his wives, his sons, his daughters, and all the persons of
his household, his cattle and all his animals, and all his goods which he had
gained in the land of Canaan, and went to a country away from the presence
of his brother Jacob. 7 For their possessions were too great for them to dwell
together, and the land where they were strangers could not support them
because of their livestock. 8 So Esau dwelt in Mount Seir. Esau *is* Edom.

9 And this *is* the genealogy of Esau the father of the Edomites in Mount
Seir. 10 These *were* the names of Esau's sons: Eliphaz the son of Adah the
wife of Esau, and Reuel the son of Base-math the wife of Esau. 11 And the
sons of Eliphaz were Teman, Omar, Zepho,[a] Gatam, and Kenaz.

12 Now Timna was the concubine of Eliphaz, Esau's son, and she bore
Amalek to Eliphaz. These *were* the sons of Adah, Esau's wife.

13 These *were* the sons of Reuel: Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah.
These were the sons of Basemath, Esau's wife.

14 These were the sons of Aholibamah, Esau's wife, the daughter of Anah,
the daughter of Zibeon. And she bore to Esau: Jeush, Jaalam, and Korah.

## THE CHIEFS OF EDOM

15 These *were* the chiefs of the sons of Esau. The sons of Eliphaz, the
firstborn *son* of Esau, were Chief Teman, Chief Omar, Chief Zepho, Chief
Kenaz, 16 Chief Korah,[a] Chief Gatam, *and* Chief Amalek. These *were* the
chiefs of Eliphaz in the land of Edom. They *were* the sons of Adah.

17 These *were* the sons of Reuel, Esau's son: Chief Nahath, Chief Zerah,

Chief Shammah, and Chief Mizzah. These *were* the chiefs of Reuel in the land of Edom. These *were* the sons of Basemath, Esau's wife.

18 And these *were* the sons of Aholibamah, Esau's wife: Chief Jeush, Chief Jaalam, and Chief Korah. These *were* the chiefs *who descended* from Aholibamah, Esau's wife, the daughter of Anah. 19 These *were* the sons of Esau, who is Edom, and these *were* their chiefs.

## THE SONS OF SEIR

20 These *were* the sons of Seir the Horite who inhabited the land: Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, 21 Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan. These *were* the chiefs of the Horites, the sons of Seir, in the land of Edom.

22 And the sons of Lotan were Hori and Hemam.[a] Lotan's sister *was* Timna.

23 These *were* the sons of Shobal: Alvan,[a] Manahath, Ebal, Shepho,[b] and Onam.

24 These *were* the sons of Zibeon: both Ajah and Anah. This *was the* Anah who found the water[a] in the wilderness as he pastured the donkeys of his father Zibeon. 25 These *were* the children of Anah: Dishon and Aholibamah the daughter of Anah.

26 These *were* the sons of Dishon:[a] Hemdan,[b] Eshban, Ithran, and Cheran. 27 These *were* the sons of Ezer: Bilhan, Zaavan, and Akan.[a] 28 These *were* the sons of Dishan: Uz and Aran.

29 These *were* the chiefs of the Horites: Chief Lotan, Chief Shobal, Chief Zibeon, Chief Anah, 30 Chief Dishon, Chief Ezer, and Chief Dishan. These *were* the chiefs of the Horites, according to their chiefs in the land of Seir.

## THE KINGS OF EDOM

31 Now these *were* the kings who reigned in the land of Edom before any king reigned over the children of Israel: 32 Bela the son of Beor reigned in Edom, and the name of his city *was* Dinhabah. 33 And when Bela died, Jobab the son of Zerah of Bozrah reigned in his place. 34 When Jobab died, Husham of the land of the Temanites reigned in his place. 35 And when Husham died,

Hadad the son of Bedad, who attacked Midian in the field of Moab, reigned in his place. And the name of his city *was* Avith. [36]When Hadad died, Samlah of Masrekah reigned in his place. [37]And when Samlah died, Saul of Rehoboth-*by*-the-River reigned in his place. [38]When Saul died, Baal-Hanan the son of Achbor reigned in his place. [39]And when Baal-Hanan the son of Achbor died, Hadar[a] reigned in his place; and the name of his city *was* Pau.[b] His wife's name *was* Mehetabel, the daughter of Matred, the daughter of Mezahab.

**THE CHIEFS OF ESAU**

[40]And these *were* the names of the chiefs of Esau, according to their families and their places, by their names: Chief Timnah, Chief Alvah,[a] Chief Jetheth, [41]Chief Aholibamah, Chief Elah, Chief Pinon, [42]Chief Kenaz, Chief Teman, Chief Mibzar, [43]Chief Magdiel, and Chief Iram. These *were* the chiefs of Edom, according to their dwelling places in the land of their possession. Esau *was* the father of the Edomites.

## JOSEPH DREAMS OF GREATNESS

**37** Now Jacob dwelt in the land where his father was a stranger, in the land
of Canaan. [2]This *is* the history of Jacob.

Joseph, *being* seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brothers. And the lad *was* with the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives; and Joseph brought a bad report of them to his father.

[3]Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he *was* the son of his old age. Also he made him a tunic of *many* colors. [4]But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peaceably to him.

[5]Now Joseph had a dream, and he told *it* to his brothers; and they hated him even more. [6]So he said to them, "Please hear this dream which I have dreamed: [7]There we were, binding sheaves in the field. Then behold, my sheaf arose and also stood upright; and indeed your sheaves stood all around and bowed down to my sheaf ."

[8]And his brothers said to him, "Shall you indeed reign over us? Or shall you indeed have dominion over us?" So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words.

[9]Then he dreamed still another dream and told it to his brothers, and said, "Look, I have dreamed another dream. And this time, the sun, the moon, and the eleven stars bowed down to me."

[10]So he told *it* to his father and his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, "What *is* this dream that you have dreamed? Shall your mother and I and your brothers indeed come to bow down to the earth before you?" [11]And his brothers envied him, but his father kept the matter *in mind.*

## JOSEPH SOLD BY HIS BROTHERS

[12]Then his brothers went to feed their father's flock in Shechem. [13]And Israel said to Joseph, "Are not your brothers feeding *the flock* in Shechem? Come, I will send you to them."

So he said to him, "Here I am."

[14]Then he said to him, “Please go and see if it is well with your brothers
and well with the flocks, and bring back word to me.” So he sent him out of
the Valley of Hebron, and he went to Shechem.

[15]Now a certain man found him, and there he was, wandering in the field.
And the man asked him, saying, “What are you seeking?”

[16]So he said, “I am seeking my brothers. Please tell me where they are
feeding *their flocks.*”

[17]And the man said, “They have departed from here, for I heard them say,
‘Let us go to Dothan.’ ” So Joseph went after his brothers and found them in
Dothan.

[18]Now when they saw him afar off, even before he came near them, they
conspired against him to kill him. [19]Then they said to one another, “Look,
this dreamer is coming! [20]Come therefore, let us now kill him and cast him
into some pit; and we shall say, ‘Some wild beast has devoured him.’ We
shall see what will become of his dreams!”

[21]But Reuben heard *it,* and he delivered him out of their hands, and said,
“Let us not kill him.” [22]And Reuben said to them, “Shed no blood, *but* cast
him into this pit which *is* in the wilderness, and do not lay a hand on him”-
that he might deliver him out of their hands, and bring him back to his father.

[23]So it came to pass, when Joseph had come to his brothers, that they
stripped Joseph *of* his tunic, the tunic of *many* colors that *was* on him. [24]Then
they took him and cast him into a pit. And the pit *was* empty; *there was* no
water in it.

[25]And they sat down to eat a meal. Then they lifted their eyes and looked,
and there was a company of Ishmaelites, coming from Gilead with their
camels, bearing spices, balm, and myrrh, on their way to carry *them* down to
Egypt. [26]So Judah said to his brothers, “What profit *is there* if we kill our
brother and conceal his blood? [27]Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites,
and let not our hand be upon him, for he *is* our brother *and* our flesh.” And
his brothers listened. [28]Then Midianite traders passed by; so *the brothers*
pulled Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites
for twenty *shekels* of silver. And they took Joseph to Egypt.

[29]Then Reuben returned to the pit, and indeed Joseph *was* not in the pit; and he tore his clothes. [30]And he returned to his brothers and said, “The lad *is* no *more;* and I, where shall I go?”

[31]So they took Joseph’s tunic, killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the tunic in the blood. [32]Then they sent the tunic of *many* colors, and they brought *it* to their father and said, “We have found this. Do you know whether it *is* your son’s tunic or not?”

[33]And he recognized it and said, “*It is* my son’s tunic. A wild beast has devoured him. Without doubt Joseph is torn to pieces.” [34]Then Jacob tore his clothes, put sackcloth on his waist, and mourned for his son many days. [35]And all his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted, and he said, “For I shall go down into the grave to my son in mourning.” Thus his father wept for him.

[36]Now the Midianites[a] had sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh *and* captain of the guard.

**KEY PASSAGE**

# SIBLING RIVALRY

# (37:3)

No families are exempt from problems. Perhaps the most common family problem is sibling rivalry, which is sometimes exacerbated by parental favoritism. This happened in Jacob’s family. Joseph was the first son of Jacob’s favorite wife Rachel (Gen. 30:22-24). As such, he quickly became his father’s favorite child, leading to family conflict

fueled by jealousy. Joseph's brothers despised his favored status, symbolized by his multicolored tunic (Gen. 37:3). When he revealed his dreams to his half brothers, they became even more angry at him (Gen. 37:5-11). Tragically, their jealousy resulted in Joseph being sold as a slave (Gen. 37:28), and Jacob being told that his favorite son was dead (Gen. 37:33).

Favoritism will quickly divide a family and cause problems among children for years to come. Parents must:

- understand that their children are different and appreciate those differences.
- love them equally.
- not overtly show favoritism but be careful to treat them fairly.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about family problems No Perfect Families. See also the personality profile of the families of Abraham To Joseph: A Blessed And Dysfunctional Family Tree.

**JUDAH AND TAMAR**

**38** It came to pass at that time that Judah departed from his brothers, and visited a certain Adullamite whose name *was* Hirah. 2And Judah saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name *was* Shua, and he married her and went in to her. 3So she conceived and bore a son, and he called his name Er. 4She conceived again and bore a son, and she called his name Onan. 5And she conceived yet again and bore a son, and called his name Shelah. He was at Chezib when she bore him.

6Then Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, and her name *was* Tamar. 7But Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD killed him. 8And Judah said to Onan, "Go in to your brother's wife and marry her, and raise up an heir to your brother." 9But Onan knew that the heir would not be his; and it came to pass, when he went in to his brother's wife, that he emitted on the ground, lest he should give an heir to his brother. 10And the thing which he did displeased the LORD; therefore He killed him also.

11Then Judah said to Tamar his daughter-in-law, "Remain a widow in your father's house till my son Shelah is grown." For he said, "Lest he also die like his brothers." And Tamar went and dwelt in her father's house.

12Now in the process of time the daughter of Shua, Judah's wife, died; and Judah was comforted, and went up to his sheepshearers at Timnah, he and his friend Hirah the Adullamite. 13And it was told Tamar, saying, "Look, your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep." 14So she took off her widow's garments, covered *herself* with a veil and wrapped herself, and sat in an open place which *was* on the way to Timnah; for she saw that Shelah was grown, and she was not given to him as a wife. 15When Judah saw her, he thought she *was* a harlot, because she had covered her face. 16Then he turned to her by the way, and said, "Please let me come in to you"; for he did not know that she *was* his daughter-in-law.

So she said, "What will you give me, that you may come in to me?"

17And he said, "I will send a young goat from the flock."

So she said, “Will you give *me* a pledge till you send *it?* ”

18Then he said, “What pledge shall I give you?”

So she said, “Your signet and cord, and your staff that *is* in your hand.” Then he gave *them* to her, and went in to her, and she conceived by him. 19So she arose and went away, and laid aside her veil and put on the garments of her widowhood.

20And Judah sent the young goat by the hand of his friend the Adullamite, to receive *his* pledge from the woman’s hand, but he did not find her. 21Then he asked the men of that place, saying, “Where is the harlot who *was* openly by the roadside?”

And they said, “There was no harlot in this *place.*”

22So he returned to Judah and said, “I cannot find her. Also, the men of the place said there was no harlot in this *place.*”

23Then Judah said, “Let her take *them* for herself, lest we be shamed; for I sent this young goat and you have not found her.”

24And it came to pass, about three months after, that Judah was told, saying, “Tamar your daughter-in-law has played the harlot; furthermore she *is* with child by harlotry.”

So Judah said, “Bring her out and let her be burned!”

25When she *was* brought out, she sent to her father-in-law, saying, “By the man to whom these belong, I *am* with child.” And she said, “Please determine whose these *are*-the signet and cord, and staff .”

26So Judah acknowledged *them* and said, “She has been more righteous than I, because I did not give her to Shelah my son.” And he never knew her again.

27Now it came to pass, at the time for giving birth, that behold, twins *were* in her womb. 28And so it was, when she was giving birth, that *the one* put out *his* hand; and the midwife took a scarlet *thread* and bound it on his hand, saying, “This one came out first.” 29Then it happened, as he drew back his hand, that his brother came out unexpectedly; and she said, “How did you break through? *This* breach *be* upon you!” Therefore his name was called

Perez.[a] [30]Afterward his brother came out who had the scarlet *thread* on his hand. And his name was called Zerah.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Can't Hide It** *(38:16)* Sexual sin, even when supposedly occurring in secret, has consequences-some immediate, some far-reaching. Tamar had been wronged, and so sought the only way she knew how to right that wrong. Judah propositioned Tamar, thinking her merely a prostitute. This complicated story, based on ancient cultural norms, seems unfamiliar to readers today, but it does reveal the manipulation and exposure that is sure to occur with sexual sin. Some may think that they can hide the sin, but they get caught. And God sees all sin anyway. **Topic: Sexual Sin**

**JOSEPH A SLAVE IN EGYPT**

**39** Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. And Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him down there. 2The LORD was with Joseph, and he was a successful man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. 3And his master saw that the LORD *was* with him and that the LORD made all he did to prosper in his hand. 4So Joseph found favor in his sight, and served him. Then he made him overseer of his house, and all *that* he had he put under his authority. 5So it was, from the time *that* he had made him overseer of his house and all that he had, that the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the LORD was on all that he had in the house and in the field. 6Thus he left all that he had in Joseph's hand, and he did not know what he had except for the bread which he ate.

Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance.

7And it came to pass after these things that his master's wife cast longing eyes on Joseph, and she said, "Lie with me."

8But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Look, my master does not know what *is* with me in the house, and he has committed all that he has to my hand. 9*There is* no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you *are* his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

10So it was, as she spoke to Joseph day by day, that he did not heed her, to lie with her *or* to be with her.

11But it happened about this time, when Joseph went into the house to do his work, and none of the men of the house *was* inside, 12that she caught him by his garment, saying, "Lie with me." But he left his garment in her hand, and fled and ran outside. 13And so it was, when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and fled outside, 14that she called to the men of her house and spoke to them, saying, "See, he has brought in to us a Hebrew to mock us. He came in to me to lie with me, and I cried out with a loud voice. 15And it happened, when he heard that I lifted my voice and cried out, that he left his garment with me, and fled and went outside."

16 So she kept his garment with her until his master came home. 17 Then she
spoke to him with words like these, saying, “The Hebrew servant whom you
brought to us came in to me to mock me; 18 so it happened, as I lifted my
voice and cried out, that he left his garment with me and fled outside.”

19 So it was, when his master heard the words which his wife spoke to him,
saying, “Your servant did to me after this manner,” that his anger was
aroused. 20 Then Joseph’s master took him and put him into the prison, a
place where the king’s prisoners *were* confined. And he was there in the
prison. 21 But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him mercy, and He gave
him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. 22 And the keeper of the
prison committed to Joseph’s hand all the prisoners who *were* in the prison;
whatever they did there, it was his doing. 23 The keeper of the prison did not
look into anything *that was* under *Joseph’s* authority,[a] because the LORD was
with him; and whatever he did, the LORD made *it* prosper.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Sometimes You’ve Got to Run!** *(39:7-12)* Lust has no logic.
Sometimes you can’t talk someone out of doing wrong-you just have
to get out of the way. Potiphar’s wife presented Joseph a difficult
dilemma. Giving in to temptation would offend his master; resisting it
would offend his master’s wife. Joseph knew only one answer to this
moral challenge: View it from God’s perspective. Thus he concluded
that violating his sexual integrity would be a “great wickedness” and
“sin against God.” Sexual sin hurts one’s relationship with God and
can destroy relationships with others. Joseph realized that he had no
choice but to run! **Topic: Sexual Integrity**

## THE WHISPERS OF TEMPTATION

GARY AND BARBARA ROSBERG

(Genesis 39:6-15)

**T**emptation. It whispers to us, appeals to our pleasure, arouses our interest, and can cause us to fall all too quickly. Temptation is like stepping into the quicksand of sin and sinking fast. When temptation leads to sin, people respond in many ways. Some weep bitterly with regret and shame, but most hide within the crevices of their soul-afraid, alone, hurt, and ashamed-with waves of guilt crashing in around them. These and similar feelings are common when we know we have gone too far, made the wrong choices, and led a reckless life. When we make poor decisions, we self-destruct-yet it was our choosing that got us there.

### SATAN'S SUBTLETIES

Temptation seems to creep around when we least expect it. We deceive ourselves into thinking that we are strong and can handle it. Satan knows just when to push our buttons, however. At precisely the wrong time-when our vigilance is weak and our defenses are down-the Enemy presents us with his temptation. He has a way of deceiving us into thinking it is all right, making us see various shades of gray rather than the black and white of right and wrong.

Seeing our weaknesses, Satan will tempt us and offer compelling reasons to compromise. We are tempted toward greed as neighbors

and coworkers assert that more is better-and then they live "the good life." We are tempted to gossip when we are genuinely concerned about someone, yet go too far by uncovering details that hurt and wound. We are tempted into wrong relationships because we fall prey to the myth that somebody is better than nobody. We are tempted to steal a few small items from the office because we feel we deserve it. Temptation to sexual gratification and lust creep into our thoughts as mass media flood our senses with sensuality.

Society says, "Live for the moment, seize the day!" We don't have to look for sin; it finds us, even chases us. By failing to walk or run from temptation, we lose. We lose strength, self-respect, health, security, and safety. We embrace a life of regret. And that is why we must guard our hearts.

## TRYING TO FILL A NEED

Often people try to use things, places, and people to bandage a wound in the soul and meet a need that cannot humanly be met. The need was created by God for only God to fill. Everything else will feel incomplete. Everyone has emotional needs that they try to meet in invalid ways such as friendships, emotional affairs, ministry, church work, and obsessions with appearance, food, and money. They grab onto false ways to meet their needs.

People long to be valued as whole and complete persons, for who they are not just for what they do. Many people search for another person to meet the need; then they get frustrated when the need is still unmet. It is God who satisfies emotionally. God wants to reside in that deep place of our souls.

## STANDING OR FALLING?

We must look at temptation for what it really is. Temptation, when it stands alone, is merely a withering, shrinking lure. Despite its prevalence, it has no power unless we choose to surrender to it.

Remember that temptation itself is not a sin-Jesus was tempted-but yielding to temptation *is* sin.

Everyone can remember falling to temptation. The memory stirs up feelings of being dirty, empty, drained, and even exploited. Grieving the sin is natural and healthy before a righteous God. These feelings and memories can serve as reminders to guard our hearts and minds.

- *Confess to God* the brokenness and admit the sin to Him (Ps. 34:18).
- *Be willing to be broken*. God delights in a broken and contrite heart (Ps. 51:17) and will meet you at your lowest point. No friend, mate, or parent can go to the depth of this valley of isolation; only God can walk it with you.
- *Make a list.* Write down what you have learned through this difficult life lesson. What have you learned about God? What has been revealed about other people's characters? What have you learned about yourself?
- *Create a second column on your list titled "The New Me,"* signifying your transformed life. "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Rom. 12:2). List areas of life that need to be lived differently.
- *Make a third column titled, "Action Plans."* Integrating these specific plans into your daily lifestyle will support transformed living. Daily prayer, continual confession to God, accountability to a friend, daily Bible reading, journaling spiritual growth, identifying weak spots, and watching for the dangers of temptation are examples. At this point, decide what needs to be done to deal with any consequences for the sin. People to whom you must apologize? Restitution to be made? Ask God's guidance in deciding how to handle these needs for action.
- *Choose like-minded friends*. Identify other people who will encourage faithfulness and help you to run from temptation (Phil. 2:1-4).

Remember, we are never alone in our temptations. We have a mighty God who has the transforming power to change us, make us godly people, satisfy our deepest needs, be our greatest defense against the enemy, protect us, keep us from temptation, and deliver us from evil. Our victory has already been won through Christ.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of temptation include:

- Genesis 3
- Matthew 4:1-11; 6:13; 26:41
- 1 Corinthians 10:1-13
- 2 Corinthians 7:10, 11; 11:3
- Ephesians 6:10-20
- 1 Thessalonians 5:22
- Titus 2:11, 12
- James 1:12-16; 4:7-10
- 1 Peter 5:8, 9
- 1 John 1:9

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on temptation at Matthew 4:1-11. See also the personality profile of Samson: Yielding To Temptation.

## THE PRISONERS' DREAMS

**40** It came to pass after these things *that* the butler and the baker of the king
of Egypt offended their lord, the king of Egypt. 2And Pharaoh was angry
with his two officers, the chief butler and the chief baker. 3So he put them in
custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the prison, the place
where Joseph *was* confined. 4And the captain of the guard charged Joseph
with them, and he served them; so they were in custody for a while.

5Then the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt, who *were* confined in
the prison, had a dream, both of them, each man's dream in one night *and*
each man's dream with its *own* interpretation. 6And Joseph came in to them
in the morning and looked at them, and saw that they *were* sad. 7So he asked
Pharaoh's officers who *were* with him in the custody of his lord's house,
saying, "Why do you look *so* sad today?"

8And they said to him, "We each have had a dream, and *there is* no
interpreter of it."

So Joseph said to them, "Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell *them*
to me, please."

9Then the chief butler told his dream to Joseph, and said to him, "Behold,
in my dream a vine *was* before me, 10and in the vine *were* three branches; it
*was* as though it budded, its blossoms shot forth, and its clusters brought forth
ripe grapes. 11Then Pharaoh's cup *was* in my hand; and I took the grapes and
pressed them into Pharaoh's cup, and placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand."

12And Joseph said to him, "This *is* the interpretation of it: The three
branches *are* three days. 13Now within three days Pharaoh will lift up your
head and restore you to your place, and you will put Pharaoh's cup in his
hand according to the former manner, when you were his butler. 14But
remember me when it is well with you, and please show kindness to me;
make mention of me to Pharaoh, and get me out of this house. 15For indeed I
was stolen away from the land of the Hebrews; and also I have done nothing
here that they should put me into the dungeon."

16When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was good, he said to

Joseph, “I also *was* in my dream, and there *were* three white baskets on my head. [17]In the uppermost basket *were* all kinds of baked goods for Pharaoh, and the birds ate them out of the basket on my head.”

[18]So Joseph answered and said, “This *is* the interpretation of it: The three baskets *are* three days. [19]Within three days Pharaoh will lift off your head from you and hang you on a tree; and the birds will eat your flesh from you.”

[20]Now it came to pass on the third day, *which was* Pharaoh’s birthday, that he made a feast for all his servants; and he lifted up the head of the chief butler and of the chief baker among his servants. [21]Then he restored the chief butler to his butlership again, and he placed the cup in Pharaoh’s hand. [22]But he hanged the chief baker, as Joseph had interpreted to them. [23]Yet the chief butler did not remember Joseph, but forgot him.

**PHARAOH'S DREAMS**

**41** Then it came to pass, at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh had a
dream; and behold, he stood by the river. 2Suddenly there came up out of
the river seven cows, fine looking and fat; and they fed in the meadow. 3Then
behold, seven other cows came up after them out of the river, ugly and gaunt,
and stood by the *other* cows on the bank of the river. 4And the ugly and gaunt
cows ate up the seven fine looking and fat cows. So Pharaoh awoke. 5He
slept and dreamed a second time; and suddenly seven heads of grain came up
on one stalk, plump and good. 6Then behold, seven thin heads, blighted by
the east wind, sprang up after them. 7And the seven thin heads devoured the
seven plump and full heads. So Pharaoh awoke, and indeed, *it was* a dream.
8Now it came to pass in the morning that his spirit was troubled, and he sent
and called for all the magicians of Egypt and all its wise men. And Pharaoh
told them his dreams, but *there was* no one who could interpret them for
Pharaoh.

9Then the chief butler spoke to Pharaoh, saying: "I remember my faults
this day. 10When Pharaoh was angry with his servants, and put me in custody
in the house of the captain of the guard, *both* me and the chief baker, 11we
each had a dream in one night, he and I. Each of us dreamed according to the
interpretation of his *own* dream. 12Now there *was* a young Hebrew man with
us there, a servant of the captain of the guard. And we told him, and he
interpreted our dreams for us; to each man he interpreted according to his
*own* dream. 13And it came to pass, just as he interpreted for us, so it
happened. He restored me to my office, and he hanged him."

14Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him quickly out
of the dungeon; and he shaved, changed his clothing, and came to Pharaoh.
15And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I have had a dream, and *there is* no one who
can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you *that* you can understand a
dream, to interpret it."

16So Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, "*It is* not in me; God will give
Pharaoh an answer of peace."

17Then Pharaoh said to Joseph: "Behold, in my dream I stood on the bank

of the river. [18]Suddenly seven cows came up out of the river, fine looking and fat; and they fed in the meadow. [19]Then behold, seven other cows came up after them, poor and very ugly and gaunt, such ugliness as I have never seen in all the land of Egypt. [20]And the gaunt and ugly cows ate up the first seven, the fat cows. [21]When they had eaten them up, no one would have known that they had eaten them, for they *were* just as ugly as at the beginning. So I awoke. [22]Also I saw in my dream, and suddenly seven heads came up on one stalk, full and good. [23]Then behold, seven heads, withered, thin, *and* blighted by the east wind, sprang up after them. [24]And the thin heads devoured the seven good heads. So I told *this* to the magicians, but *there was* no one who could explain *it* to me."

[25]Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, "The dreams of Pharaoh *are* one; God has shown Pharaoh what He *is* about to do: [26]The seven good cows *are* seven years, and the seven good heads *are* seven years; the dreams *are* one. [27]And the seven thin and ugly cows which came up after them *are* seven years, and the seven empty heads blighted by the east wind are seven years of famine. [28]This *is* the thing which I have spoken to Pharaoh. God has shown Pharaoh what He *is* about to do. [29]Indeed seven years of great plenty will come throughout all the land of Egypt; [30]but after them seven years of famine will arise, and all the plenty will be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine will deplete the land. [31]So the plenty will not be known in the land because of the famine following, for it *will be* very severe. [32]And the dream was repeated to Pharaoh twice because the thing *is* established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass.

[33]"Now therefore, let Pharaoh select a discerning and wise man, and set him over the land of Egypt. [34]Let Pharaoh do *this*, and let him appoint officers over the land, to collect one-fifth *of the produce* of the land of Egypt in the seven plentiful years. [35]And let them gather all the food of those good years that are coming, and store up grain under the authority of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities. [36]Then that food shall be as a reserve for the land for the seven years of famine which shall be in the land of Egypt, that the land may not perish during the famine."

**JOSEPH'S RISE TO POWER**

37 So the advice was good in the eyes of Pharaoh and in the eyes of all his servants. 38 And Pharaoh said to his servants, "Can we find *such a one* as this, a man in whom *is* the Spirit of God?"

39 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Inasmuch as God has shown you all this, *there is* no one as discerning and wise as you. 40 You shall be over my house, and all my people shall be ruled according to your word; only in regard to the throne will I be greater than you." 41 And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt."

42 Then Pharaoh took his signet ring off his hand and put it on Joseph's hand; and he clothed him in garments of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck. 43 And he had him ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried out before him, "Bow the knee!" So he set him over all the land of Egypt. 44 Pharaoh also said to Joseph, "I *am* Pharaoh, and without your consent no man may lift his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt." 45 And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphnath-Paaneah. And he gave him as a wife Asenath, the daughter of Poti-Pherah priest of On. So Joseph went out over *all* the land of Egypt.

46 Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt. 47 Now in the seven plentiful years the ground brought forth abundantly. 48 So he gathered up all the food of the seven years which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up the food in the cities; he laid up in every city the food of the fields which surrounded them. 49 Joseph gathered very much grain, as the sand of the sea, until he stopped counting, for *it was* immeasurable.

50 And to Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came, whom Asenath, the daughter of Poti-Pherah priest of On, bore to him. 51 Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh:[a] "For God has made me forget all my toil and all my father's house." 52 And the name of the second he called Ephraim:[a] "For God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction."

53 Then the seven years of plenty which were in the land of Egypt ended,

54and the seven years of famine began to come, as Joseph had said. The famine was in all lands, but in all the land of Egypt there was bread. 55So when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread. Then Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, “Go to Joseph; whatever he says to you, do.” 56The famine was over all the face of the earth, and Joseph opened all the storehouses[a] and sold to the Egyptians. And the famine became severe in the land of Egypt. 57So all countries came to Joseph in Egypt to buy *grain,* because the famine was severe in all lands.

## JOSEPH'S BROTHERS GO TO EGYPT

**42** When Jacob saw that there was grain in Egypt, Jacob said to his sons, "Why do you look at one another?" 2And he said, "Indeed I have heard that there is grain in Egypt; go down to that place and buy for us there, that we may live and not die."

3So Joseph's ten brothers went down to buy grain in Egypt. 4But Jacob did not send Joseph's brother Benjamin with his brothers, for he said, "Lest some calamity befall him." 5And the sons of Israel went to buy *grain* among those who journeyed, for the famine was in the land of Canaan.

6Now Joseph *was* governor over the land; and it was he who sold to all the people of the land. And Joseph's brothers came and bowed down before him with *their* faces to the earth. 7Joseph saw his brothers and recognized them, but he acted as a stranger to them and spoke roughly to them. Then he said to them, "Where do you come from?"

And they said, "From the land of Canaan to buy food."

8So Joseph recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him. 9Then Joseph remembered the dreams which he had dreamed about them, and said to them, "You *are* spies! You have come to see the nakedness of the land!"

10And they said to him, "No, my lord, but your servants have come to buy food. 11We *are* all one man's sons; we *are* honest *men;* your servants are not spies."

12But he said to them, "No, but you have come to see the nakedness of the land."

13And they said, "Your servants *are* twelve brothers, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and in fact, the youngest *is* with our father today, and one *is* no more."

14But Joseph said to them, "It *is* as I spoke to you, saying, 'You *are* spies!' 15In this *manner* you shall be tested: By the life of Pharaoh, you shall not leave this place unless your youngest brother comes here. 16Send one of you, and let him bring your brother; and you shall be kept in prison, that your words may be tested to see whether *there is* any truth in you; or else, by the

life of Pharaoh, surely you *are* spies!” [17]So he put them all together in prison three days.

[18]Then Joseph said to them the third day, “Do this and live, *for* I fear God: [19]If you *are* honest *men,* let one of your brothers be confined to your prison house; but you, go and carry grain for the famine of your houses. [20]And bring your youngest brother to me; so your words will be verified, and you shall not die.”

And they did so. [21]Then they said to one another, “We *are* truly guilty concerning our brother, for we saw the anguish of his soul when he pleaded with us, and we would not hear; therefore this distress has come upon us.”

[22]And Reuben answered them, saying, “Did I not speak to you, saying, ‘Do not sin against the boy’; and you would not listen? Therefore behold, his blood is now required of us.” [23]But they did not know that Joseph understood *them,* for he spoke to them through an interpreter. [24]And he turned himself away from them and wept. Then he returned to them again, and talked with them. And he took Sim-eon from them and bound him before their eyes.

**THE BROTHERS RETURN TO CANAAN**

[25]Then Joseph gave a command to fill their sacks with grain, to restore every man’s money to his sack, and to give them provisions for the journey. Thus he did for them. [26]So they loaded their donkeys with the grain and departed from there. [27]But as one *of them* opened his sack to give his donkey feed at the encampment, he saw his money; and there it was, in the mouth of his sack. [28]So he said to his brothers, “My money has been restored, and there it is, in my sack!” Then their hearts failed *them* and they were afraid, saying to one another, “What *is* this *that* God has done to us?”

[29]Then they went to Jacob their father in the land of Canaan and told him all that had happened to them, saying: [30]“The man *who is* lord of the land spoke roughly to us, and took us for spies of the country. [31]But we said to him, ‘We *are* honest *men;* we are not spies. [32]We *are* twelve brothers, sons of our father; one *is* no *more,* and the youngest *is* with our father this day in the land of Canaan.’ [33]Then the man, the lord of the country, said to us, ‘By this I will know that you *are* honest *men:* Leave one of your brothers *here* with me,

take *food for* the famine of your households, and be gone. [34]And bring your youngest brother to me; so I shall know that you *are* not spies, but *that* you *are* honest *men.* I will grant your brother to you, and you may trade in the land.' "

[35]Then it happened as they emptied their sacks, that surprisingly each man's bundle of money *was* in his sack; and when they and their father saw the bundles of money, they were afraid. [36]And Jacob their father said to them, "You have bereaved me: Joseph is no *more,* Simeon is no *more,* and you want to take Benjamin. All these things are against me."

[37]Then Reuben spoke to his father, saying, "Kill my two sons if I do not bring him *back* to you; put him in my hands, and I will bring him back to you."

[38]But he said, "My son shall not go down with you, for his brother is dead, and he is left alone. If any calamity should befall him along the way in which you go, then you would bring down my gray hair with sorrow to the grave."

## JOSEPH'S BROTHERS RETURN WITH BENJAMIN

**43** Now the famine *was* severe in the land. 2And it came to pass, when they had eaten up the grain which they had brought from Egypt, that their father said to them, "Go back, buy us a little food."

3But Judah spoke to him, saying, "The man solemnly warned us, saying, 'You shall not see my face unless your brother *is* with you.' 4If you send our brother with us, we will go down and buy you food. 5But if you will not send *him,* we will not go down; for the man said to us, 'You shall not see my face unless your brother *is* with you.' "

6And Israel said, "Why did you deal *so* wrongfully with me *as* to tell the man whether you had still *another* brother?"

7But they said, "The man asked us pointedly about ourselves and our family, saying, '*Is* your father still alive? Have you *another* brother?' And we told him according to these words. Could we possibly have known that he would say, 'Bring your brother down'?"

8Then Judah said to Israel his father, "Send the lad with me, and we will arise and go, that we may live and not die, both we and you *and* also our little ones. 9I myself will be surety for him; from my hand you shall require him. If I do not bring him *back* to you and set him before you, then let me bear the blame forever. 10For if we had not lingered, surely by now we would have returned this second time."

11And their father Israel said to them, "If *it must be* so, then do this: Take some of the best fruits of the land in your vessels and carry down a present for the man-a little balm and a little honey, spices and myrrh, pistachio nuts and almonds. 12Take double money in your hand, and take back in your hand the money that was returned in the mouth of your sacks; perhaps it was an oversight. 13Take your brother also, and arise, go back to the man. 14And may God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may release your other brother and Benjamin. If I am bereaved, I am bereaved!"

15So the men took that present and Benjamin, and they took double money in their hand, and arose and went down to Egypt; and they stood before

Joseph. [16]When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the steward of his house, “Take *these* men to my home, and slaughter an animal and make ready; for *these* men will dine with me at noon.” [17]Then the man did as Joseph ordered, and the man brought the men into Joseph’s house.

[18]Now the men were afraid because they were brought into Joseph’s house; and they said, “*It is* because of the money, which was returned in our sacks the first time, that we are brought in, so that he may make a case against us and seize us, to take us as slaves with our donkeys.”

[19]When they drew near to the steward of Joseph’s house, they talked with him at the door of the house, [20]and said, “O sir, we indeed came down the first time to buy food; [21]but it happened, when we came to the encampment, that we opened our sacks, and there, *each* man’s money *was* in the mouth of his sack, our money in full weight; so we have brought it back in our hand. [22]And we have brought down other money in our hands to buy food. We do not know who put our money in our sacks.”

[23]But he said, “Peace *be* with you, do not be afraid. Your God and the God of your father has given you treasure in your sacks; I had your money.” Then he brought Simeon out to them.

[24]So the man brought the men into Joseph’s house and gave *them* water, and they washed their feet; and he gave their donkeys feed. [25]Then they made the present ready for Joseph’s coming at noon, for they heard that they would eat bread there.

[26]And when Joseph came home, they brought him the present which *was* in their hand into the house, and bowed down before him to the earth. [27]Then he asked them about *their* well-being, and said, “*Is* your father well, the old man of whom you spoke? *Is* he still alive?”

[28]And they answered, “Your servant our father *is* in good health; he *is* still alive.” And they bowed their heads down and prostrated themselves.

[29]Then he lifted his eyes and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother’s son, and said, “*Is* this your younger brother of whom you spoke to me?” And he said, “God be gracious to you, my son.” [30]Now his heart yearned for his brother; so Joseph made haste and sought *somewhere* to weep. And he went

into *his* chamber and wept there. [31]Then he washed his face and came out; and he restrained himself, and said, “Serve the bread.”

[32]So they set him a place by himself, and them by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves; because the Egyptians could not eat food with the Hebrews, for that *is* an abomination to the Egyptians. [33]And they sat before him, the firstborn according to his birthright and the youngest according to his youth; and the men looked in astonishment at one another. [34]Then he took servings to them from before him, but Benjamin’s serving was five times as much as any of theirs. So they drank and were merry with him.

**JOSEPH'S CUP**

**44** And he commanded the steward of his house, saying, "Fill the men's
sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put each man's money
in the mouth of his sack. 2 Also put my cup, the silver cup, in the mouth of the
sack of the youngest, and his grain money." So he did according to the word
that Joseph had spoken. 3 As soon as the morning dawned, the men were sent
away, they and their donkeys. 4 When they had gone out of the city, *and* were
not *yet* far off, Joseph said to his steward, "Get up, follow the men; and when
you overtake them, say to them, 'Why have you repaid evil for good? 5 *Is* not
this *the one* from which my lord drinks, and with which he indeed practices
divination? You have done evil in so doing.' "

6 So he overtook them, and he spoke to them these same words. 7 And they
said to him, "Why does my lord say these words? Far be it from us that your
servants should do such a thing. 8 Look, we brought back to you from the land
of Canaan the money which we found in the mouth of our sacks. How then
could we steal silver or gold from your lord's house? 9 With whomever of
your servants it is found, let him die, and we also will be my lord's slaves."

10 And he said, "Now also *let* it *be* according to your words; he with whom
it is found shall be my slave, and you shall be blameless." 11 Then each man
speedily let down his sack to the ground, and each opened his sack. 12 So he
searched. He began with the oldest and left off with the youngest; and the cup
was found in Benjamin's sack. 13 Then they tore their clothes, and each man
loaded his donkey and returned to the city.

14 So Judah and his brothers came to Joseph's house, and he *was* still there;
and they fell before him on the ground. 15 And Joseph said to them, "What
deed *is* this you have done? Did you not know that such a man as I can
certainly practice divination?"

16 Then Judah said, "What shall we say to my lord? What shall we speak?
Or how shall we clear ourselves? God has found out the iniquity of your
servants; here we are, my lord's slaves, both we and *he* also with whom the
cup was found."

17 But he said, "Far be it from me that I should do so; the man in whose

hand the cup was found, he shall be my slave. And as for you, go up in peace to your father."

**JUDAH INTERCEDES FOR BENJAMIN**

18 Then Judah came near to him and said: "O my lord, please let your servant speak a word in my lord's hearing, and do not let your anger burn against your servant; for you *are* even like Pharaoh. 19 My lord asked his servants, saying, 'Have you a father or a brother?' 20 And we said to my lord, 'We have a father, an old man, and a child of *his* old age, *who is* young; his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother's children, and his father loves him.' 21 Then you said to your servants, 'Bring him down to me, that I may set my eyes on him.' 22 And we said to my lord, 'The lad cannot leave his father, for *if* he should leave his father, *his father* would die.' 23 But you said to your servants, 'Unless your youngest brother comes down with you, you shall see my face no more.'

24 "So it was, when we went up to your servant my father, that we told him the words of my lord. 25 And our father said, 'Go back *and* buy us a little food.' 26 But we said, 'We cannot go down; if our youngest brother is with us, then we will go down; for we may not see the man's face unless our youngest brother *is* with us.' 27 Then your servant my father said to us, 'You know that my wife bore me two sons; 28 and the one went out from me, and I said, "Surely he is torn to pieces"; and I have not seen him since. 29 But if you take this one also from me, and calamity befalls him, you shall bring down my gray hair with sorrow to the grave.'

30 "Now therefore, when I come to your servant my father, and the lad *is* not with us, since his life is bound up in the lad's life, 31 it will happen, when he sees that the lad *is* not *with us*, that he will die. So your servants will bring down the gray hair of your servant our father with sorrow to the grave. 32 For your servant became surety for the lad to my father, saying, 'If I do not bring him *back* to you, then I shall bear the blame before my father forever.' 33 Now therefore, please let your servant remain instead of the lad as a slave to my lord, and let the lad go up with his brothers. 34 For how shall I go up to my father if the lad *is* not with me, lest perhaps I see the evil that would come

upon my father?”

**SOUL NOTE**

**God Will Take Care of Them** *(44:30)* Judah interceded for Benjamin, sobbing to Joseph that his father would die if Benjamin were not returned safely, because Jacob’s life was “bound up in the lad’s life.” While parents must love and protect their children, to be “bound up” in a child’s life will lead a parent to be overprotective. A parent who has lost a child may be especially protective of other children, trying to control their lives so as to avoid any more pain. But parents need to release their children, entrusting them to God’s protection. **Topic: Grief/Loss**

## JOSEPH REVEALED TO HIS BROTHERS

**45** Then Joseph could not restrain himself before all those who stood by him, and he cried out, “Make everyone go out from me!” So no one stood with him while Joseph made himself known to his brothers. 2And he wept aloud, and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard *it.*

3Then Joseph said to his brothers, “I *am* Joseph; does my father still live?” But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed in his presence. 4And Joseph said to his brothers, “Please come near to me.” So they came near. Then he said: “I *am* Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt. 5But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. 6For these two years the famine *has been* in the land, and *there are* still five years in which *there will be* neither plowing nor harvesting. 7And God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. 8So now *it was* not you *who* sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.

9“Hurry and go up to my father, and say to him, ‘Thus says your son Joseph: “God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not tarry. 10You shall dwell in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near to me, you and your children, your children’s children, your flocks and your herds, and all that you have. 11There I will provide for you, lest you and your household, and all that you have, come to poverty; for *there are* still five years of famine.” ’

12“And behold, your eyes and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see that *it is* my mouth that speaks to you. 13So you shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that you have seen; and you shall hurry and bring my father down here.”

14Then he fell on his brother Benjamin’s neck and wept, and Benjamin wept on his neck. 15Moreover he kissed all his brothers and wept over them, and after that his brothers talked with him.

16Now the report of it was heard in Pharaoh’s house, saying, “Joseph’s

brothers have come." So it pleased Pharaoh and his servants well. [17]And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Say to your brothers, 'Do this: Load your animals and depart; go to the land of Canaan. [18]Bring your father and your households and come to me; I will give you the best of the land of Egypt, and you will eat the fat of the land. [19]Now you are commanded-do this: Take carts out of the land of Egypt for your little ones and your wives; bring your father and come. [20]Also do not be concerned about your goods, for the best of all the land of Egypt *is* yours.' "

[21]Then the sons of Israel did so; and Joseph gave them carts, according to the command of Pharaoh, and he gave them provisions for the journey. [22]He gave to all of them, to each man, changes of garments; but to Benjamin he gave three hundred *pieces* of silver and five changes of garments. [23]And he sent to his father these *things:* ten donkeys loaded with the good things of Egypt, and ten female donkeys loaded with grain, bread, and food for his father for the journey. [24]So he sent his brothers away, and they departed; and he said to them, "See that you do not become troubled along the way."

[25]Then they went up out of Egypt, and came to the land of Canaan to Jacob their father. [26]And they told him, saying, "Joseph *is* still alive, and he *is* governor over all the land of Egypt." And Jacob's heart stood still, because he did not believe them. [27]But when they told him all the words which Joseph had said to them, and when he saw the carts which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived. [28]Then Israel said, "*It is* enough. Joseph my son *is* still alive. I will go and see him before I die."

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# JOSEPH'S FORGIVENESS

# (GENESIS 45:5)

The power to forgive comes as a divine gift. We choose to forgive, but God empowers our forgiveness. The desire for vengeance can be so overpowering that without God's intervention, genuine forgiveness rarely takes place. God enabled Joseph to choose forgiveness when his brothers deserved retribution. God used that willingness to assure the survival of the very brothers who had conspired to end Joseph's life.

Joseph's early years offer a case study of a dysfunctional family. For years, he was Rachel and Jacob's only son. Jacob had ten other sons by three other women, but Joseph received special treatment. When Rachel died giving birth to Benjamin, Joseph had already become his father's favorite. Jacob singled Joseph out with a special coat of many colors. His brothers despised him.

Intense competition between their mothers, along with Jacob's favoritism, fueled jealousy and resentment among the brothers toward Joseph. Benjamin was probably too young to be involved. Joseph didn't help matters by sharing a couple of his dreams with the rest of the family. These dreams highlighted his future role as ruler over his family. Even Jacob was shocked. The brothers decided to kill Joseph.

God's intervention led to the brothers' modifying their murderous plans. Instead, they sold Joseph into slavery. They soaked the special coat in animal blood and used it to convince Jacob that his favored son had been killed by wild beasts.

Joseph's next years were a roller coaster of experiences. Divine intervention eventually ushered him into Pharaoh's palace where he managed the food supplies in Egypt during a widespread famine.

That famine brought Joseph's brothers back into his life. They came for food and had no idea that they were at the mercy of the brother they had betrayed. When Joseph finally revealed his identity,

his brothers were terrified. They knew what they deserved. But instead of revenge, Joseph offered forgiveness and mercy, thanking God who worked out everything for His glory.

Joseph demonstrated the cost of forgiveness. We forgive, not by making the offense unimportant, but by loving the offender. For that, we need God's help.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Forgiveness. See also the key passage note at Matthew 18:21-35.

## JACOB'S JOURNEY TO EGYPT

**46** So Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beersheba,
and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. 2Then God spoke to
Israel in the visions of the night, and said, "Jacob, Jacob!"

And he said, "Here I am."

3So He said, "I *am* God, the God of your father; do not fear to go down to
Egypt, for I will make of you a great nation there. 4I will go down with you to
Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up *again;* and Joseph will put his hand
on your eyes."

5Then Jacob arose from Beersheba; and the sons of Israel carried their
father Jacob, their little ones, and their wives, in the carts which Pharaoh had
sent to carry him. 6So they took their livestock and their goods, which they
had acquired in the land of Canaan, and went to Egypt, Jacob and all his
descendants with him. 7His sons and his sons' sons, his daughters and his
sons' daughters, and all his descendants he brought with him to Egypt.

8Now these *were* the names of the children of Israel, Jacob and his sons,
who went to Egypt: Reuben *was* Jacob's firstborn. 9The sons of Reuben *were*
Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi. 10The sons of Simeon *were* Jemuel,[a] Ja-
min, Ohad, Jachin,[b] Zohar,[c] and Shaul, the son of a Canaanite woman. 11The
sons of Levi *were* Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. 12The sons of Judah *were*
Er, Onan, Shelah, Perez, and Zerah (but Er and Onan died in the land of
Canaan). The sons of Perez were Hezron and Hamul. 13The sons of Issachar
*were* Tola, Puvah,[a] Job,[b] and Shimron. 14The sons of Zebulun *were* Se-red,
Elon, and Jahleel. 15These *were* the sons of Leah, whom she bore to Jacob in
Padan Aram, with his daughter Dinah. All the persons, his sons and his
daughters, *were* thirty-three.

16The sons of Gad *were* Ziphion,[a] Haggi, Shuni, Ezbon,[b] Eri, Arodi,[c] and
Areli. 17The sons of Asher *were* Jimnah, Ishuah, Isui, Beriah, and Serah, their
sister. And the sons of Beriah *were* Heber and Malchiel. 18These *were* the
sons of Zilpah, whom Laban gave to Leah his daughter; and these she bore to
Jacob: sixteen persons.

19 The sons of Rachel, Jacob's wife, *were* Joseph and Benjamin. 20 And to
Joseph in the land of Egypt were born Manasseh and Ephraim, whom
Asenath, the daughter of Poti-Pherah priest of On, bore to him. 21 The sons of
Benjamin *were* Belah, Becher, Ashbel, Gera, Naaman, Ehi, Rosh, Muppim,
Huppim,[a] and Ard. 22 These *were* the sons of Rachel, who were born to Jacob:
fourteen persons in all.

23 The son of Dan *was* Hushim.[a] 24 The sons of Naphtali *were* Jahzeel,[a]
Guni, Jezer, and Shillem.[b] 25 These *were* the sons of Bilhah, whom Laban
gave to Rachel his daughter, and she bore these to Jacob: seven persons in all.

26 All the persons who went with Jacob to Egypt, who came from his body,
besides Jacob's sons' wives, *were* sixty-six persons in all. 27 And the sons of
Joseph who were born to him in Egypt *were* two persons. All the persons of
the house of Jacob who went to Egypt were seventy.

**JACOB SETTLES IN GOSHEN**

28 Then he sent Judah before him to Joseph, to point out before him *the way*
to Goshen. And they came to the land of Goshen. 29 So Joseph made ready his
chariot and went up to Goshen to meet his father Israel; and he presented
himself to him, and fell on his neck and wept on his neck a good while.

30 And Israel said to Joseph, "Now let me die, since I have seen your face,
because you *are* still alive."

31 Then Joseph said to his brothers and to his father's household, "I will go
up and tell Pharaoh, and say to him, 'My brothers and those of my father's
house, who *were* in the land of Canaan, have come to me. 32 And the men *are*
shepherds, for their occupation has been to feed livestock; and they have
brought their flocks, their herds, and all that they have.' 33 So it shall be, when
Pharaoh calls you and says, 'What is your occupation?' 34 that you shall say,
'Your servants' occupation has been with livestock from our youth even till
now, both we *and* also our fathers,' that you may dwell in the land of
Goshen; for every shepherd *is* an abomination to the Egyptians."

## SOUL NOTE

**Together Again** *(46:30)* Years of pain and deception ended as Joseph and Jacob embraced and wept together. This family had survived intense jealousy, great tragedy, crises, separation, fear, and grief. Yet Joseph understood that God's hand had been on his life, so he was able to forgive his brothers. His willingness to forgive and to leave the past to God made this family reunion a joyous occasion. There is great joy when separated family members can reconcile and reunite. Sometimes it takes a willingness for the family members to forgive one another and move on, trusting God. **Topic: Family Problems**

**47** Then Joseph went and told Pharaoh, and said, “My father and my
brothers, their flocks and their herds and all that they possess, have come
from the land of Canaan; and indeed they *are* in the land of Goshen.” 2And
he took five men from among his brothers and presented them to Pharaoh.
3Then Pharaoh said to his brothers, “What *is* your occupation?”

And they said to Pharaoh, “Your servants *are* shepherds, both we *and* also
our fathers.” 4And they said to Pharaoh, “We have come to dwell in the land,
because your servants have no pasture for their flocks, for the famine *is*
severe in the land of Canaan. Now therefore, please let your servants dwell in
the land of Goshen.”

5Then Pharaoh spoke to Joseph, saying, “Your father and your brothers
have come to you. 6The land of Egypt *is* before you. Have your father and
brothers dwell in the best of the land; let them dwell in the land of Goshen.
And if you know *any* competent men among them, then make them chief
herdsmen over my livestock.”

7Then Joseph brought in his father Jacob and set him before Pharaoh; and
Jacob blessed Pharaoh. 8Pharaoh said to Jacob, “How old *are* you?”

9And Jacob said to Pharaoh, “The days of the years of my pilgrimage *are*
one hundred and thirty years; few and evil have been the days of the years of
my life, and they have not attained to the days of the years of the life of my
fathers in the days of their pilgrimage.” 10So Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went
out from before Pharaoh.

11And Joseph situated his father and his brothers, and gave them a
possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of
Rameses, as Pharaoh had commanded. 12Then Joseph provided his father, his
brothers, and all his father’s household with bread, according to the number
in *their* families.

### JOSEPH DEALS WITH THE FAMINE

13Now *there was* no bread in all the land; for the famine *was* very severe,
so that the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan languished because of the
famine. 14And Joseph gathered up all the money that was found in the land of
Egypt and in the land of Canaan, for the grain which they bought; and Joseph

brought the money into Pharaoh’s house.

15 So when the money failed in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan,
all the Egyptians came to Joseph and said, “Give us bread, for why should we
die in your presence? For the money has failed.”

16 Then Joseph said, “Give your livestock, and I will give you *bread* for
your livestock, if the money is gone.” 17 So they brought their livestock to
Joseph, and Joseph gave them bread *in exchange* for the horses, the flocks,
the cattle of the herds, and for the donkeys. Thus he fed them with bread *in
exchange* for all their livestock that year.

18 When that year had ended, they came to him the next year and said to
him, “We will not hide from my lord that our money is gone; my lord also
has our herds of livestock. There is nothing left in the sight of my lord but our
bodies and our lands. 19 Why should we die before your eyes, both we and our
land? Buy us and our land for bread, and we and our land will be servants of
Pharaoh; give *us* seed, that we may live and not die, that the land may not be
desolate.”

20 Then Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh; for every man of
the Egyptians sold his field, because the famine was severe upon them. So the
land became Pharaoh’s. 21 And as for the people, he moved them into the
cities,[a] from *one* end of the borders of Egypt to the *other* end. 22 Only the land
of the priests he did not buy; for the priests had rations *allotted to them* by
Pharaoh, and they ate their rations which Pharaoh gave them; therefore they
did not sell their lands.

23 Then Joseph said to the people, “Indeed I have bought you and your land
this day for Pharaoh. Look, *here is* seed for you, and you shall sow the land.
24 And it shall come to pass in the harvest that you shall give one-fifth to
Pharaoh. Four-fifths shall be your own, as seed for the field and for your
food, for those of your households and as food for your little ones.”

25 So they said, “You have saved our lives; let us find favor in the sight of
my lord, and we will be Pharaoh’s servants.” 26 And Joseph made it a law
over the land of Egypt to this day, *that* Pharaoh should have one-fifth, except
for the land of the priests only, *which* did not become Pharaoh’s.

**JOSEPH'S VOW TO JACOB**

27 So Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt, in the country of Goshen; and they had possessions there and grew and multiplied exceedingly. 28 And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years. So the length of Jacob's life was one hundred and forty-seven years. 29 When the time drew near that Israel must die, he called his son Joseph and said to him, "Now if I have found favor in your sight, please put your hand under my thigh, and deal kindly and truly with me. Please do not bury me in Egypt, 30 but let me lie with my fathers; you shall carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burial place."

And he said, "I will do as you have said."

31 Then he said, "Swear to me." And he swore to him. So Israel bowed himself on the head of the bed.

## JACOB BLESSES JOSEPH'S SONS

**48** Now it came to pass after these things that Joseph was told, "Indeed your
father *is* sick"; and he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and
Ephraim. 2And Jacob was told, "Look, your son Joseph is coming to you";
and Israel strengthened himself and sat up on the bed. 3Then Jacob said to
Joseph: "God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and
blessed me, 4and said to me, 'Behold, I will make you fruitful and multiply
you, and I will make of you a multitude of people, and give this land to your
descendants after you *as* an everlasting possession.' 5And now your two sons,
Ephraim and Manasseh, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I
came to you in Egypt, *are* mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine.
6Your offspring whom you beget after them shall be yours; they will be
called by the name of their brothers in their inheritance. 7But as for me, when
I came from Padan, Rachel died beside me in the land of Canaan on the way,
when *there was* but a little distance to go to Ephrath; and I buried her there
on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem)."

8Then Israel saw Joseph's sons, and said, "Who *are* these?"

9Joseph said to his father, "They *are* my sons, whom God has given me in
this *place*. "

And he said, "Please bring them to me, and I will bless them." 10Now the
eyes of Israel were dim with age, *so that* he could not see. Then Joseph
brought them near him, and he kissed them and embraced them. 11And Israel
said to Joseph, "I had not thought to see your face; but in fact, God has also
shown me your offspring!"

12So Joseph brought them from beside his knees, and he bowed down with
his face to the earth. 13And Joseph took them both, Ephraim with his right
hand toward Israel's left hand, and Manasseh with his left hand toward
Israel's right hand, and brought *them* near him. 14Then Israel stretched out his
right hand and laid *it* on Ephraim's head, who *was* the younger, and his left
hand on Manasseh's head, guiding his hands knowingly, for Manasseh *was*
the firstborn. 15And he blessed Joseph, and said:

"God, before whom my fathers Abraham

and Isaac walked,
The God who has fed me all my life long
to this day,
16 The Angel who has redeemed me from
all evil,
Bless the lads;
Let my name be named upon them,
And the name of my fathers Abraham
and Isaac;
And let them grow into a multitude in
the midst of the earth."
17 Now when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on the head of
Ephraim, it displeased him; so he took hold of his father's hand to
remove it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. 18 And Joseph said
to his father, "Not so, my father, for this *one is* the firstborn; put your
right hand on his head."
19 But his father refused and said, "I know, my son, I know. He also shall become a people, and he also shall be great; but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations."

20 So he blessed them that day, saying, "By you Israel will bless, saying, 'May God make you as Ephraim and as Manasseh!' " And thus he set Ephraim before Manasseh.

21 Then Israel said to Joseph, "Behold, I am dying, but God will be with you and bring you back to the land of your fathers. 22 Moreover I have given to you one portion above your brothers, which I took from the hand of the Amorite with my sword and my bow."

## JACOB'S LAST WORDS TO HIS SONS

**49** And Jacob called his sons and said, "Gather together, that I may tell you
what shall befall you in the last days:

2 "Gather together and hear, you sons of
Jacob,
And listen to Israel your father.
3 "Reuben, you are my firstborn,
My might and the beginning of my
strength,
The excellency of dignity and the
excellency of power.
4 Unstable as water, you shall not excel,
Because you went up to your father's
bed;
Then you defiled *it*-
He went up to my couch.
5 "Simeon and Levi *are* brothers;
Instruments of cruelty *are in* their
dwelling place.
6 Let not my soul enter their council;
Let not my honor be united to their
assembly;
For in their anger they slew a man,
And in their self-will they hamstrung an
ox.
7 Cursed *be* their anger, for *it is* fierce;
And their wrath, for it is cruel!
I will divide them in Jacob
And scatter them in Israel.
8 "Judah, you *are he* whom your brothers
shall praise;
Your hand *shall be* on the neck of your
enemies;

Your father's children shall bow down
before you.
9 Judah *is* a lion's whelp;
From the prey, my son, you have gone
up.
He bows down, he lies down as a lion;
And as a lion, who shall rouse him?
10 The scepter shall not depart from Judah,
Nor a lawgiver from between his feet,
Until Shiloh comes; And to Him *shall be* the obedience of the
people.
11 Binding his donkey to the vine,
And his donkey's colt to the choice vine,
He washed his garments in wine,
And his clothes in the blood of grapes.
12 His eyes *are* darker than wine,
And his teeth whiter than milk.
13 "Zebulun shall dwell by the haven of the
sea;
He *shall become* a haven for ships,
And his border shall adjoin Sidon.
14 "Issachar is a strong donkey,
Lying down between two burdens;
15 He saw that rest *was* good,
And that the land *was* pleasant;
He bowed his shoulder to bear *a*
*burden*,
And became a band of slaves.
16 "Dan shall judge his people
As one of the tribes of Israel.
17 Dan shall be a serpent by the way,
A viper by the path,
That bites the horse's heels
So that its rider shall fall backward.
18 I have waited for your salvation,

O LORD!
19 “Gad, a troop shall tramp upon him,
But he shall triumph at last.
20 “Bread from Asher *shall be* rich,
And he shall yield royal dainties.
21 “Naphtali *is* a deer let loose;
He uses beautiful words.
22 “Joseph *is* a fruitful bough,
A fruitful bough by a well;
His branches run over the wall.
23 The archers have bitterly grieved him,
Shot *at him* and hated him.
24 But his bow remained in strength,
And the arms of his hands were made strong
By the hands of the Mighty *God* of Jacob
(From there *is* the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel),
25 By the God of your father who will help you,
And by the Almighty who will bless you
*With* blessings of heaven above,
Blessings of the deep that lies beneath,
Blessings of the breasts and of the womb.
26 The blessings of your father
Have excelled the blessings of my ancestors,
Up to the utmost bound of the everlasting hills.
They shall be on the head of Joseph,
And on the crown of the head of him who was separate from his brothers.
27 “Benjamin is a ravenous wolf;
In the morning he shall devour the prey,

And at night he shall divide the spoil.”

28 All these *are* the twelve tribes of Israel, and this *is* what their father spoke to them. And he blessed them; he blessed each one according to his own blessing.

**JACOB’S DEATH AND BURIAL**

29 Then he charged them and said to them: “I am to be gathered to my people; bury me with my fathers in the cave that *is* in the field of Ephron the Hittite, 30 in the cave that *is* in the field of Machpelah, which *is* before Mamre in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite as a possession for a burial place. 31 There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife, there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife, and there I buried Leah. 32 The field and the cave that *is* there *were* purchased from the sons of Heth.” 33 And when Jacob had finished commanding his sons, he drew his feet up into the bed and breathed his last, and was gathered to his people.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# JACOB AND THE ART OF BLESSING

## (GENESIS 49)

One of the most sacred family events in ancient Middle Eastern cultures was the passing of the blessing from one generation to the next. As the last of the great Jewish patriarchs, Jacob’s blessing marked the transition from family to nation. Jacob gathered his sons around his deathbed and spoke meaningful words to each. They were about to become the 12 tribes of Israel. God allowed Jacob to speak

prophetically about his sons' futures.

Joseph received a double portion of the inheritance, although he was not the firstborn son. First Chronicles 5:1 explains that this was due to Reuben's forfeiting his birthright as the oldest by dishonoring his father. Joseph's two sons Ephraim and Manasseh each became a tribe. There was no tribe of Joseph, but Joseph's role in Egypt as the savior of the family placed him in the role of eldest and protector.

Jacob's words proved remarkably accurate for each of his sons. He described their character and foresaw those traits passed on to their descendants. He was both blunt and complimentary. His perspective allowed his sons the knowledge that their father had been thinking about them. He had been praying for them, too.

Each child wants to be known and loved by his or her parents. Blessings flow when children hear their mother or father express intimate and individualized thoughts about them. For Christian parents, the blessing involves sharing hopes and prayers for each of our children. If we question the importance of these gestures, we merely have to examine how we long to hear the same words from our own parents.

Effective parents find a way to include words of blessing in their relationship with their children. These are priceless gifts that can shape a child's life. The process begins when we look into our child's eyes and say, "I love you." After that, we fill in the details. Bless your children.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about attachment/blessing The Blessing. See also the key passage note at Genesis 27:30-36.

# THE BLESSING

## JOHN TRENT

## (Genesis 49)

**T**he Hebrew word for *blessing* is one of the most important words in the Bible. It is used over 640 times in the Old Testament and is pictured in God's original plan for human-kind: Genesis 1:27, 28 states that after God created a man and a woman in His own image, He blessed them. What an encouraging truth to know that we were created for blessing!

While unique spiritual and prophetic aspects of the blessing lay with the patriarchs alone (as seen in Gen. 49), the basic relational elements of the blessing provide powerful tools to communicate acceptance, protection, and affirmation that still apply today. The presence or absence of these elements can help us determine whether our home is, or our parents' home was, a place of blessing. A study of the blessing always begins in the context of parental acceptance. However, in studying the blessing in the Scriptures, we find that its principles can be used in any intimate relationship.

### THE BASIC ELEMENTS OF THE BLESSING

There are five basic elements to blessing others, as described below.

*Meaningful Touch*

When Isaac blessed his son, he said: "Come near now and kiss me, my son" (Gen. 27:26). This was not an isolated incident. Each time the blessing was given in the Scriptures, meaningful touch provided a caring background to the words that would be spoken. Kissing, hugging, and laying on of hands were all a part of bestowing the

blessing.

Meaningful touch has many beneficial effects. The act of touch is a key to communicating warmth, personal acceptance, and affirmation. For Isaac, as well as for any person who wishes to see the blessing grow and develop in a child, spouse, or friend, touch is an integral part of the blessing.

*A Spoken Message*

Words have an immense power to build us up or tear us down emotionally. This is particularly true when it comes to giving or gaining family approval. Many people can clearly remember the words of praise that their parents spoke years ago. Others can remember just as clearly the negative words that they heard. Throughout Scripture, we find a keen recognition of the power and importance of spoken words. In the very beginning, God spoke and the world came into being (Gen. 1:3). When God sent His Son to communicate His love and complete His plan of salvation, it was His Word that "became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). God has always communicated His blessings through spoken words.

*Attaching "High Value"*

To value something means to attach honor to it. In Hebrew, the verb "to bless" literally means, "to bow the knee." The words of blessing should carry with them the recognition that the person being blessed is valuable and has redeeming qualities. In Scripture, recognition is based on who a person is, not simply on his or her performance. In Genesis 27:27-29, Isaac used a word picture to describe how valuable his son was to him: "The smell of my son is like the smell of a field which the LORD has blessed." Word pictures are a powerful way of communicating acceptance and high value-the third element of the family blessing.

*Picturing a Special Future*

Isaac said to his son Jacob, “May God give you of the dew of heaven, of the fatness of the earth. . . . Let peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you” (Gen. 27:28, 29). Parents today cannot predict another person’s future with biblical accuracy. We can, however, encourage the person to set meaningful goals. We can also convey to them that the gifts and character traits they have right now are attributes that God can bless and use in the future. With this fourth element of the blessing, a child can gain a sense of security in the present and grow in confidence to serve God and others in the future.

*An Active Commitment to*
*Fulfill the Blessing*

The last element of the blessing pictures the responsibility that goes with giving the blessing. For the patriarchs, not only their words, but also God Himself stood behind the blessing that they bestowed on their children. Parents today need to rely on the Lord to give them the strength and staying power to confirm their children’s blessings. They too have God’s Word through Scripture as a guide, plus the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Why is an active commitment so important when it comes to bestowing the blessing? Words alone cannot communicate the blessing; they need to be backed with a commitment to doing everything possible to help the one being blessed to be successful. We can tell a child, “You have the talent to be a very good pianist,” but if we neglect to provide a way for the child to practice piano, our lack of commitment has undermined our message. The fifth element of the blessing, an active commitment, is crucial to seeing the blessing communicated in our homes.

The blessing provides five basic elements-meaningful touch, a spoken message, attaching high value to the one being blessed, picturing a special future, and confirming the blessing by active commitment-to communicate love and acceptance. These key ingredients have the power to bring warmth, healing, and hope to our intimate

relationships. They are the very relational elements God uses in blessing His children!

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of attachment/blessing include:

- Genesis 27:27-36; 35:9-15
- Proverbs 31:28
- Ezekiel 34:26
- Galatians 4:6, 7
- Ephesians 1:3-6; 6:4
- 1 Peter 3:8, 9

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on attachment/blessing at Genesis 27:30-36. See also the personality profile of Jacob And The Art Of Blessing.

**50** Then Joseph fell on his father's face and wept over him, and kissed him.
2 And Joseph commanded his servants the physicians to embalm his
father. So the physicians embalmed Israel. 3 Forty days were required for him,
for such are the days required for those who are embalmed; and the Egyptians
mourned for him seventy days.

4 Now when the days of his mourning were past, Joseph spoke to the
household of Pharaoh, saying, "If now I have found favor in your eyes,
please speak in the hearing of Pharaoh, saying, 5 'My father made me swear,
saying, "Behold, I am dying; in my grave which I dug for myself in the land
of Canaan, there you shall bury me." Now therefore, please let me go up and
bury my father, and I will come back.' "

6 And Pharaoh said, "Go up and bury your father, as he made you swear."

7 So Joseph went up to bury his father; and with him went up all the
servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house, and all the elders of the land of
Egypt, 8 as well as all the house of Joseph, his brothers, and his father's house.
Only their little ones, their flocks, and their herds they left in the land of
Goshen. 9 And there went up with him both chariots and horsemen, and it was
a very great gathering.

10 Then they came to the threshing floor of Atad, which *is* beyond the
Jordan, and they mourned there with a great and very solemn lamentation. He
observed seven days of mourning for his father. 11 And when the inhabitants
of the land, the Canaanites, saw the mourning at the threshing floor of Atad,
they said, "This *is* a deep mourning of the Egyptians." Therefore its name
was called Abel Mizraim,[a] which *is* beyond the Jordan.

12 So his sons did for him just as he had commanded them. 13 For his sons
carried him to the land of Canaan, and buried him in the cave of the field of
Machpelah, before Mamre, which Abraham bought with the field from
Ephron the Hittite as property for a burial place. 14 And after he had buried his
father, Joseph returned to Egypt, he and his brothers and all who went up
with him to bury his father.

### JOSEPH REASSURES HIS BROTHERS

15 When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said,

“Perhaps Joseph will hate us, and may actually repay us for all the evil which we did to him.” [16]So they sent *messengers* to Joseph, saying, “Before your father died he commanded, saying, [17]‘Thus you shall say to Joseph: “I beg you, please forgive the trespass of your brothers and their sin; for they did evil to you.” ’ Now, please, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of your father.” And Joseph wept when they spoke to him.

[18]Then his brothers also went and fell down before his face, and they said, “Behold, we *are* your servants.”

[19]Joseph said to them, “Do not be afraid, for *am* I in the place of God? [20]But as for you, you meant evil against me; *but* God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as *it is* this day, to save many people alive. [21]Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones.” And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

“But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good.”
GENESIS 50:20

**DEATH OF JOSEPH**

[22]So Joseph dwelt in Egypt, he and his father’s household. And Joseph lived one hundred and ten years. [23]Joseph saw Ephraim’s children to the third *generation.* The children of Machir, the son of Manasseh, were also brought up on Joseph’s knees.

[24]And Joseph said to his brethren, “I am dying; but God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land to the land of which He swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.” [25]Then Joseph took an oath from the children of Israel, saying, “God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here.” [26]So Joseph died, *being* one hundred and ten years old; and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.

## SOUL NOTE

**Rising Above the Pain** *(50:20)* If anyone had good reason for revenge, it was Joseph. His brothers' jealousy provoked them to horrible abuse-selling him as a common slave to be taken away forever (37:11-28). Before being raised to power in Egypt, Joseph had lost thirteen years of personal freedom. When Jacob died, the brothers feared that Joseph, now a powerful ruler, would exact his revenge. Instead, Joseph wisely understood that God had sovereignly overruled his brothers' abuse, making their evil turn out for good. Such a response can only come from those who trust God to rule-and overrule-in their lives. **Topic: Abuse**

# Exodus



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# Exodus

Watch a talk show. Carefully observe your neighbors. The evidence is clear: Our world is filled with people in bondage to shameful passions and addictive behaviors. Is it any wonder so many feel hopeless and desperate?

The Old Testament book of Exodus (meaning “the way out”) paints a vivid picture of deliverance. God hears the cries of His people who are slaves in Egypt (2:23, 24). With compassion, He calls Moses to lead Israel out of bondage (3:1-13:22). Following a dramatic rescue at the Red Sea (chapter 14), God takes His people on an extended spiritual retreat to Mount Sinai. There He reveals both His Law and His plans for the tabernacle, in effect demonstrating that ultimate freedom-freedom of the soul-comes only when we are living and worshiping as God intended.

Written by Moses, the Book of Exodus is not just about Israel’s journey out of slavery. It also details the beginning of the nation’s journey to the Promised Land. At the center of this drama of redemption is the writer of the book, an ordinary man who becomes a hero. At times, Moses is the epitome of great faith (14:13). At other times, he is bound by human fears (3:11-4:17) and frustrations (32:19). Like all of us, Moses must learn to trust God in both good times and bad. Again and again, God intervenes with grace and deliverance-reminding us that no one is hopelessly beyond the reach of His loving touch. He alone can set people free.

**SOUL CONCERNS IN**

## EXODUS

GENETIC ISSUES (4:11)
BOUNDARIES (20:1-17)

## ISRAEL'S SUFFERING IN EGYPT

**1** Now these *are* the names of the children of Israel who came to Egypt; each
man and his household came with Jacob: [2]Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and
Judah; [3]Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin; [4]Dan, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher.
[5]All those who were descendants[a] of Jacob were seventy[b] persons (for Joseph
was in Egypt *already*). [6]And Joseph died, all his brothers, and all that
generation. [7]But the children of Israel were fruitful and increased abundantly,
multiplied and grew exceedingly mighty; and the land was filled with them.

[8]Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. [9]And
he said to his people, "Look, the people of the children of Israel *are* more and
mightier than we; [10]come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply,
and it happen, in the event of war, that they also join our enemies and fight
against us, and *so* go up out of the land." [11]Therefore they set taskmasters
over them to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh
supply cities, Pithom and Raamses. [12]But the more they afflicted them, the
more they multiplied and grew. And they were in dread of the children of
Israel. [13]So the Egyptians made the children of Israel serve with rigor. [14]And
they made their lives bitter with hard bondage-in mortar, in brick, and in all
manner of service in the field. All their service in which they made them
serve *was* with rigor.

[15]Then the king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, of whom the
name of one *was* Shiphrah and the name of the other Puah; [16]and he said,
"When you do the duties of a midwife for the Hebrew women, and see *them*
on the birthstools, if it *is* a son, then you shall kill him; but if it *is* a daughter,
then she shall live." [17]But the midwives feared God, and did not do as the
king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the male children alive. [18]So the
king of Egypt called for the midwives and said to them, "Why have you done
this thing, and saved the male children alive?"

[19]And the midwives said to Pharaoh, "Because the Hebrew women *are* not
like the Egyptian women; for they *are* lively and give birth before the
midwives come to them."

[20]Therefore God dealt well with the midwives, and the people multiplied

and grew very mighty. [21]And so it was, because the midwives feared God, that He provided households for them.

[22]So Pharaoh commanded all his people, saying, “Every son who is born[a] you shall cast into the river, and every daughter you shall save alive.”

**SOUL NOTE**

**Seeing God in Suffering** *(1:11)* A thirst for God often grows from suffering. The Israelites became slaves, were forced to build great cities for Pharaoh, and were brutally afflicted by their taskmasters. God is not the author of evil. He allows it sometimes, however, to His own people-not to destroy them but to bring about a greater good. God would soon perform great miracles on behalf of Israel. The suffering they had experienced brought them to complete dependence on God, who alone could free them. **Topic: Trials**

## MOSES IS BORN

**2** And a man of the house of Levi went and took *as wife* a daughter of Levi.
2 So the woman conceived and bore a son. And when she saw that he *was* a
beautiful *child*, she hid him three months. 3 But when she could no longer
hide him, she took an ark of bulrushes for him, daubed it with asphalt and
pitch, put the child in it, and laid *it* in the reeds by the river's bank. 4 And his
sister stood afar off, to know what would be done to him.

5 Then the daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river. And her
maidens walked along the riverside; and when she saw the ark among the
reeds, she sent her maid to get it. 6 And when she opened *it,* she saw the child,
and behold, the baby wept. So she had compassion on him, and said, "This is
one of the Hebrews' children."

7 Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and call a nurse for
you from the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for you?"

8 And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Go." So the maiden went and called
the child's mother. 9 Then Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child
away and nurse him for me, and I will give *you* your wages." So the woman
took the child and nursed him. 10 And the child grew, and she brought him to
Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. So she called his name Moses,[a]
saying, "Because I drew him out of the water."

## MOSES FLEES TO MIDIAN

11 Now it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went
out to his brethren and looked at their burdens. And he saw an Egyptian
beating a Hebrew, one of his brethren. 12 So he looked this way and that way,
and when he saw no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.
13 And when he went out the second day, behold, two Hebrew men were
fighting, and he said to the one who did the wrong, "Why are you striking
your companion?"

14 Then he said, "Who made you a prince and a judge over us? Do you
intend to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?"

So Moses feared and said, “Surely this thing is known!” [15]When Pharaoh heard of this matter, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh and dwelt in the land of Midian; and he sat down by a well.

[16]Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters. And they came and drew water, and they filled the troughs to water their father’s flock. [17]Then the shepherds came and drove them away; but Moses stood up and helped them, and watered their flock.

[18]When they came to Reuel their father, he said, “How *is it that* you have come so soon today?”

[19]And they said, “An Egyptian delivered us from the hand of the shepherds, and he also drew enough water for us and watered the flock.”

[20]So he said to his daughters, “And where *is* he? Why *is* it *that* you have left the man? Call him, that he may eat bread.”

[21]Then Moses was content to live with the man, and he gave Zipporah his daughter to Moses. [22]And she bore *him* a son. He called his name Gershom,[a] for he said, “I have been a stranger in a foreign land.”

[23]Now it happened in the process of time that the king of Egypt died. Then the children of Israel groaned because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry came up to God because of the bondage. [24]So God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. [25]And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God acknowledged *them.*

**SOUL NOTE**

**Leaving Justice to God** *(2:11, 12)* Violence and murder have been around since Cain killed Abel. Moses' desire for justice was certainly correct, but his actions were not. Killing the Egyptian and hiding him in the sand went too far. Physical force may have been necessary, but

not murder. Although this act did not thwart God's plans for him, Moses still faced the consequences of his action. To keep from being killed himself, Moses had to run far from the life he had known.
Topic: Violence

**MOSES AT THE BURNING BUSH**

**3** Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of
Midian. And he led the flock to the back of the desert, and came to Horeb,
the mountain of God. 2And the Angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame
of fire from the midst of a bush. So he looked, and behold, the bush was
burning with fire, but the bush *was* not consumed. 3Then Moses said, "I will
now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush does not burn."

4So when the LORD saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him
from the midst of the bush and said, "Moses, Moses!"

And he said, "Here I am."

5 Then He said, "Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off your
feet, for the place where you stand *is* holy ground." 6Moreover He said, "I *am*
the God of your father-the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of
Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God.

7And the LORD said: "I have surely seen the oppression of My people who
*are* in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I
know their sorrows. 8So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of
the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and large land,
to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites and the
Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites.
9Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel has come to Me, and
I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them.
10Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring
My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt."

11But Moses said to God, "Who *am* I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I
should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?"

12So He said, "I will certainly be with you. And this *shall be* a sign to you
that I have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you
shall serve God on this mountain."

13Then Moses said to God, "Indeed, *when* I come to the children of Israel
and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they say

to me, ‘What *is* His name?’ what shall I say to them?”

[14]And God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And He said, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’ ” [15]Moreover God said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: ‘The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This *is* My name forever, and this *is* My memorial to all generations.’ [16]Go and gather the elders of Israel together, and say to them, ‘The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, appeared to me, saying, “I have surely visited you and *seen* what is done to you in Egypt; [17]and I have said I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, to a land flowing with milk and honey.” ’ [18]Then they will heed your voice; and you shall come, you and the elders of Israel, to the king of Egypt; and you shall say to him, ‘The LORD God of the Hebrews has met with us; and now, please, let us go three days’ journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God.’ [19]But I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not even by a mighty hand. [20]So I will stretch out My hand and strike Egypt with all My wonders which I will do in its midst; and after that he will let you go. [21]And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians; and it shall be, when you go, that you shall not go empty-handed. [22]But every woman shall ask of her neighbor, namely, of her who dwells near her house, articles of silver, articles of gold, and clothing; and you shall put *them* on your sons and on your daughters. So you shall plunder the Egyptians.”

**SOUL NOTE**

**Listen to God** *(3:1-6)* Moses had run from Egypt, but God was determined to use him for the task of bringing his people out of slavery there. God then spoke, warned of His holiness, described who He was, and gave Moses the task. When we read God’s Word, we are

in His presence. God speaks through His Word, shows us His holiness, tells us about Himself, and gives us tasks. Come to God's Word, and you will discover who He is and what He wants you to do. **Topic: Knowing God**

## SOUL NOTE

**God Is with You** *(3:11)* Moses was certain God was making a mistake by choosing him to lead the Israelites. His five excuses indicated a lack of confidence in his ability to get the job done. He had: (1) a crisis of identity ("who am I?" 3:11); (2) a crisis of authority ("what is His name?" 3:13); (3) a crisis of faith ("they will not believe me," 4:1); (4) a crisis of ability ("I am not eloquent," 4:10); and (5) a crisis of obedience ("send . . . whomever else," 4:13). Yet as God was with him, Moses led the nation to freedom. With God's help and guidance, great things are possible. **Topic: Self-Esteem**

**MIRACULOUS SIGNS FOR PHARAOH**

**4** Then Moses answered and said, “But suppose they will not believe me or listen to my voice; suppose they say, ‘The LORD has not appeared to you.’ ”

2 So the LORD said to him, “What *is* that in your hand?”

He said, “A rod.”

3 And He said, “Cast it on the ground.” So he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from it. 4 Then the LORD said to Moses, “Reach out your hand and take *it* by the tail” (and he reached out his hand and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand), 5 “that they may believe that the LORD God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you.”

6 Furthermore the LORD said to him, “Now put your hand in your bosom.” And he put his hand in his bosom, and when he took it out, behold, his hand *was* leprous, like snow. 7 And He said, “Put your hand in your bosom again.” So he put his hand in his bosom again, and drew it out of his bosom, and behold, it was restored like his *other* flesh. 8 “Then it will be, if they do not believe you, nor heed the message of the first sign, that they may believe the message of the latter sign. 9 And it shall be, if they do not believe even these two signs, or listen to your voice, that you shall take water from the river[a] and pour *it* on the dry *land.* The water which you take from the river will become blood on the dry *land.* ”

10 Then Moses said to the LORD, “O my Lord, I *am* not eloquent, neither before nor since You have spoken to Your servant; but I *am* slow of speech and slow of tongue.”

11 So the LORD said to him, “Who has made man’s mouth? Or who makes the mute, the deaf, the seeing, or the blind? *Have* not I, the LORD? 12 Now therefore, go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall say.”

13 But he said, “O my Lord, please send by the hand of whomever *else* You may send.”

14 So the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses, and He said: “Is not
Aaron the Levite your brother? I know that he can speak well. And look, he is
also coming out to meet you. When he sees you, he will be glad in his heart.
15 Now you shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth. And I will be
with your mouth and with his mouth, and I will teach you what you shall do.
16 So he shall be your spokesman to the people. And he himself shall be as a
mouth for you, and you shall be to him as God. 17 And you shall take this rod
in your hand, with which you shall do the signs.”

**MOSES GOES TO EGYPT**

18 So Moses went and returned to Jethro his father-in-law, and said to him,
“Please let me go and return to my brethren who *are* in Egypt, and see
whether they are still alive.”

And Jethro said to Moses, “Go in peace.”

19 Now the LORD said to Moses in Midian, “Go, return to Egypt; for all the
men who sought your life are dead.” 20 Then Moses took his wife and his sons
and set them on a donkey, and he returned to the land of Egypt. And Moses
took the rod of God in his hand.

21 And the LORD said to Moses, “When you go back to Egypt, see that you
do all those wonders before Pharaoh which I have put in your hand. But I will
harden his heart, so thathe will not let the people go. 22 Then you shall say to
Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the LORD: “Israel *is* My son, My firstborn. 23 So I say to
you, let My son go that he may serve Me. But if you refuse to let him go,
indeed I will kill your son, your firstborn.” ’ ”

> So the people believed; and when they heard that the LORD had visited the children of Israel and that He had looked on their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshiped.
> EXODUS 4:31

24 And it came to pass on the way, at the encampment, that the LORD met
him and sought to kill him. 25 Then Zipporah took a sharp stone and cut off
the foreskin of her son and cast *it* at *Moses’*[a] feet, and said, “Surely you *are* a

husband of blood to me!” [26]So He let him go. Then she said, “*You are* a husband of blood!”-because of the circumcision.

[27]And the LORD said to Aaron, “Go into the wilderness to meet Moses.” So he went and met him on the mountain of God, and kissed him. [28]So Moses told Aaron all the words of the LORD who had sent him, and all the signs which He had commanded him. [29]Then Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel. [30]And Aaron spoke all the words which the LORD had spoken to Moses. Then he did the signs in the sight of the people. [31]So the people believed; and when they heard that the LORD had visited the children of Israel and that He had looked on their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshiped.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# AARON: SERVING TOGETHER

## (EXODUS 4:27)

**Work** Before God called Moses to return to Egypt and lead Israel to the Promised Land, He sent for backup. Even as Moses and God debated the former’s leadership qualifications, Aaron was already on the way. God had an answer for all Moses’ excuses. But Moses persisted in dodging God’s call. God finally silenced Moses’ resistance with anger. It took God’s passion to get Moses’ full attention. God then agreed to assign Aaron as Moses’ spokesman and assistant.

Moses and Aaron functioned as a task force. They fulfilled God’s

plan to free the Israelites because they worked together. Some people make their greatest contribution, not as individual stars, but as part of a team-in relationship to another or to a group. History is full of good working teams whose accomplishments are greater than the sum of their individual parts. In the Bible, we see David and Jonathan, Paul and Silas, Mary and Martha, and Peter, James, and John.

Like Aaron, some teammates always play "backup," never stepping into the starring role. During the infamous golden calf incident, Aaron learned a valuable lesson about himself-he wasn't cut out to lead alone. His most effective role was derived from his unique relationship with Moses. The mark of a successful supporting teammate is a commitment to promote and enhance the lead player, and to do so without jealousy or competition.

Aaron left an effective legacy as he labored with Moses. He accepted his secondary role, and did the work that was asked of him with courage and gusto. In our vocations, we should look for "significant others" who can share our goals and vision for the task. Sometimes we will lead; most often we will find ourselves supporting the efforts of other people. Until we know how to support, we will not be ready to lead.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about work The World Of Work. See also the key passage note at 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12.

**STRENGTH IN WEAKNESS**

MICHAEL R. LYLES

(Exodus 4:11)

**M**any people have thought, “If only I could change this one thing, my life would be so different, so much more useful.”

Not long ago, a man came for help after his father was admitted to the hospital for a psychosis. His problem? He feared becoming like his father and devastating his family. Depressed about the future, he believed that he had his father’s genes and, therefore, the same fate. Another man came, worried about his father’s Alzheimer’s disease. He wondered if he should marry or have children because of his probability for contracting the disease.

Both of these patients felt despair over these genetic issues. They were ready to give up on life. A sense of stigma colored their ability to see beyond what they believed were predetermined genetic problems.

Every person can identify something that they wish could be different in their family, personality, or physical or emotional makeup. Many people wrestle with congenital or genetic problems about which they have no choice. They may have a physical disability such as cerebral palsy, paralysis, or blindness. Others may suffer with a cognitive disability such as dyslexia or a neurological problem like Huntington’s disease. Still others recognize that an issue with a parent, such as alcoholism or a manic-depressive illness, may also affect them.

People commonly wish to change something in their genetic makeup or inherent abilities. Even some of the most influential Bible characters struggled with this concern. For example, Moses wished for more eloquent speech; the apostle Paul struggled with a thorn in the flesh. In both cases, God took these men in their weakness and used them to do great things.

When God chose Moses to carry His message to Pharaoh, Moses

was aware of a disability. He focused on his slowness of speech and decided that his disability would eliminate him from carrying out God's plan (Ex. 4:10). God promised that He would help Moses to speak and would teach him what to say. When Moses still felt inadequate to do what God was asking, God provided more help through Moses' brother Aaron. God promised, "I will be with your mouth and with his mouth, and I will teach you what you shall do" (Ex. 4:15).

Paul's thorn in the flesh was a disability that caused him pain and distress (2 Cor. 12:7-10). He pleaded with God repeatedly to take it away, but God chose not to. Paul was certainly engaged in doing the Lord's will and could have benefited from having his thorn removed. But God chose otherwise. Paul could have been bitter. Instead, he learned that because of Christ, "when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Cor. 12:10). Paul learned that it took faith to believe God was in control and to trust Him in spite of the infirmity. God restores and renews (2 Cor. 5:17); at times, however, He gives more grace for endurance. "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9). What appears to be defeat becomes victory: "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us" (2 Cor. 4:7).

God chose to use both Paul and Moses for His purposes. He also chose not to change or heal them; instead, He asked them to serve Him in their weaknesses for His glory!

Everyone has at least one major challenge to deal with in life, something that cannot be changed. We can choose to focus on the problem and our powerlessness, or we can focus on who God is and what He wants for our lives. Although we are painfully aware of our weakness, we often forget that others also struggle. One patient complained about her best friend whom she thought was perfect. This friend always looked perfect and seemed to live the perfect life. As this woman left the office, she met the next patient in the waiting room-her best friend.

**PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

1. We are not alone, no matter what the problem. “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man” (1 Cor. 10:13).

2. God loves us and promises to be with us. He cares about our situation, even if He doesn’t change it. “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble” (James 4:6).

3. God desires that we know Him. As we remember who He is and His love for us, we can avoid living in despair. “Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice! Have mercy also upon me, and answer me. When You said, ‘Seek My face,’ my heart said to You, ‘Your face, LORD, I will seek’” (Ps. 27:7, 8).

4. When we come to the end of our own resources, God’s work of grace in our lives will be more clearly evident. “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Gal. 2:20).

5. Instead of focusing on weaknesses, focus on what God has given us in Christ. God knows our circumstances and gives us His strength. “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God” (Phil. 4:6).

Remember, God is always at work. He wants to work in and through us-just as we are.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about genetic issues include:

• Psalm 139

• Isaiah 35

- Matthew 11:4, 5
- 1 Corinthians 15:50-57
- James 5:13-18

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on genetic issues at Isaiah 35:1-6. See also the personality profile of The Blind Man: Revealing God's Glory.

**FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH PHARAOH**

**5** Afterward Moses and Aaron went in and told Pharaoh, “Thus says the LORD God of Israel: ‘Let My people go, that they may hold a feast to Me in the wilderness.’ ”

2 And Pharaoh said, “Who *is* the LORD, that I should obey His voice to let
Israel go? I do not know the LORD, nor will I let Israel go.”

3 So they said, “The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Please, let us go
three days’ journey into the desert and sacrifice to the LORD our God, lest He
fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword.”

4 Then the king of Egypt said to them, “Moses and Aaron, why do you take
the people from their work? Get *back* to your labor.” 5 And Pharaoh said,
“Look, the people of the land *are* many now, and you make them rest from
their labor!”

6 So the same day Pharaoh commanded the taskmasters of the people and
their officers, saying, 7 “You shall no longer give the people straw to make
brick as before. Let them go and gather straw for themselves. 8 And you shall
lay on them the quota of bricks which they made before. You shall not reduce
it. For they are idle; therefore they cry out, saying, ‘Let us go *and* sacrifice to
our God.’ 9 Let more work be laid on the men, that they may labor in it, and
let them not regard false words.”

10 And the taskmasters of the people and their officers went out and spoke
to the people, saying, “Thus says Pharaoh: ‘I will not give you straw. 11 Go,
get yourselves straw where you can find it; yet none of your work will be
reduced.’ ” 12 So the people were scattered abroad throughout all the land of
Egypt to gather stubble instead of straw. 13 And the taskmasters forced *them*
to hurry, saying, “Fulfill your work, *your* daily quota, as when there was
straw.” 14 Also the officers of the children of Israel, whom Pharaoh’s
taskmasters had set over them, were beaten *and* were asked, “Why have you
not fulfilled your task in making brick both yesterday and today, as before?”

15 Then the officers of the children of Israel came and cried out to Pharaoh,
saying, “Why are you dealing thus with your servants? 16 There is no straw

given to your servants, and they say to us, ‘Make brick!’ And indeed your servants *are* beaten, but the fault *is* in your *own* people.”

17But he said, “You *are* idle! Idle! Therefore you say, ‘Let us go *and* sacrifice to the LORD.’ 18Therefore go now *and* work; for no straw shall be given you, yet you shall deliver the quota of bricks.” 19And the officers of the children of Israel saw *that* they *were* in trouble after it was said, “You shall not reduce *any* bricks from your daily quota.”

20Then, as they came out from Pharaoh, they met Moses and Aaron who stood there to meet them. 21And they said to them, “Let the LORD look on you and judge, because you have made us abhorrent in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to kill us.”

## ISRAEL’S DELIVERANCE ASSURED

22So Moses returned to the LORD and said, “Lord, why have You brought trouble on this people? Why *is* it You have sent me? 23For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has done evil to this people; neither have You delivered Your people at all.”

**6** Then the LORD said to Moses, “Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh. For with a strong hand he will let them go, and with a strong hand he will drive them out of his land.”

2 And God spoke to Moses and said to him: “I *am* the LORD. 3 I appeared to
Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but *by* My name LORD[a] I
was not known to them. 4 I have also established My covenant with them, to
give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, in which they
were strangers. 5 And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel
whom the Egyptians keep in bondage, and I have remembered My covenant.
6 Therefore say to the children of Israel: ‘I *am* the LORD; I will bring you out
from under the burdens of the Egyptians, I will rescue you from their
bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great
judgments. 7 I will take you as My people, and I will be your God. Then you
shall know that I *am* the LORD your God who brings you out from under the
burdens of the Egyptians. 8 And I will bring you into the land which I swore
to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and I will give it to you *as* a heritage: I
*am* the LORD.’ ” 9 So Moses spoke thus to the children of Israel; but they did
not heed Moses, because of anguish of spirit and cruel bondage.

> “I will take you as My people, and I will be your God.”
> EXODUS 6:7

10 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 11 “Go in, tell Pharaoh king of
Egypt to let the children of Israel go out of his land.”

12 And Moses spoke before the LORD, saying, “The children of Israel have
not heeded me. How then shall Pharaoh heed me, for I *am* of uncircumcised
lips?”

13 Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, and gave them a command
for the children of Israel and for Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring the children
of Israel out of the land of Egypt.

### THE FAMILY OF MOSES AND AARON

14 These *are* the heads of their fathers’ houses: The sons of Reuben, the
firstborn of Israel, *were* Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi. These are the

families of Reuben. [15]And the sons of Simeon *were* Jemuel,[a] Jamin, Ohad, Jachin, Zohar, and Shaul the son of a Canaanite woman. These *are* the families of Simeon. [16]These *are* the names of the sons of Levi according to their generations: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. And the years of the life of Levi *were* one hundred and thirty-seven. [17]The sons of Gershon *were* Libni and Shimi according to their families. [18]And the sons of Kohath *were* Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel. And the years of the life of Kohath *were* one hundred and thirty-three. [19]The sons of Merari *were* Mahli and Mushi. These *are* the families of Levi according to their generations.

[20]Now Amram took for himself Jochebed, his father's sister, as wife; and she bore him Aaron and Moses. And the years of the life of Amram *were* one hundred and thirty-seven. [21]The sons of Izhar *were* Korah, Nepheg, and Zichri. [22]And the sons of Uzziel *were* Mishael, Elzaphan, and Zithri. [23]Aaron took to himself Elisheba, daughter of Amminadab, sister of Nahshon, as wife; and she bore him Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. [24]And the sons of Korah *were* Assir, Elkanah, and Abiasaph. These are the families of the Korahites. [25]Eleazar, Aaron's son, took for himself one of the daughters of Putiel as wife; and she bore him Phinehas. These *are* the heads of the fathers' houses of the Levites according to their families.

[26]These *are the same* Aaron and Moses to whom the LORD said, "Bring out the children of Israel from the land of Egypt according to their armies." [27]These *are* the ones who spoke to Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring out the children of Israel from Egypt. These *are the same* Moses and Aaron.

## AARON IS MOSES' SPOKESMAN

[28]And it came to pass, on the day the LORD spoke to Moses in the land of Egypt, [29]that the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "I *am* the LORD. Speak to Pharaoh king of Egypt all that I say to you."

[30]But Moses said before the LORD, "Behold, I *am* of uncircumcised lips, and how shall Pharaoh heed me?"

7 So the LORD said to Moses: “See, I have made you *as* God to Pharaoh, and
Aaron your brother shall be your prophet. 2You shall speak all that I
command you. And Aaron your brother shall tell Pharaoh to send the children
of Israel out of his land. 3And I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and multiply My
signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt. 4But Pharaoh will not heed you,
so that I may lay My hand on Egypt and bring My armies *and* My people, the
children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments. 5And the
Egyptians shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I stretch out My hand on
Egypt and bring out the children of Israel from among them.”

6Then Moses and Aaron did *so;* just as the LORD commanded them, so they
did. 7And Moses *was* eighty years old and Aaron eighty-three years old when
they spoke to Pharaoh.

## AARON’S MIRACULOUS ROD

8Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, 9“When Pharaoh
speaks to you, saying, ‘Show a miracle for yourselves,’ then you shall say to
Aaron, ‘Take your rod and cast *it* before Pharaoh, *and* let it become a
serpent.’ ” 10So Moses and Aaron went in to Pharaoh, and they did so, just as
the LORD commanded. And Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh and
before his servants, and it became a serpent.

11But Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers; so the magicians
of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments. 12For every
man threw down his rod, and they became serpents. But Aaron’s rod
swallowed up their rods. 13And Pharaoh’s heart grew hard, and he did not
heed them, as the LORD had said.

## THE FIRST PLAGUE: WATERS BECOME BLOOD

14So the LORD said to Moses: “Pharaoh’s heart *is* hard; he refuses to let the
people go. 15Go to Pharaoh in the morning, when he goes out to the water,
and you shall stand by the river’s bank to meet him; and the rod which was
turned to a serpent you shall take in your hand. 16And you shall say to him,
‘The LORD God of the Hebrews has sent me to you, saying, “Let My people
go, that they may serve Me in the wilderness”; but indeed, until now you

would not hear! [17]Thus says the LORD: “By this you shall know that I *am* the LORD.

Behold, I will strike the waters which *are* in the river with the rod that *is* in my hand, and they shall be turned to blood. [18]And the fish that *are* in the river shall die, the river shall stink, and the Egyptians will loathe to drink the water of the river.” ’ ”

[19]Then the LORD spoke to Moses, “Say to Aaron, ‘Take your rod and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt, over their streams, over their rivers, over their ponds, and over all their pools of water, that they may become blood. And there shall be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in *buckets of* wood and *pitchers of* stone.’ ” [20]And Moses and Aaron did so, just as the LORD commanded. So he lifted up the rod and struck the waters that *were* in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants. And all the waters that *were* in the river were turned to blood. [21]The fish that *were* in the river died, the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink the water of the river. So there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt.

[22]Then the magicians of Egypt did so with their enchantments; and Pharaoh’s heart grew hard, and he did not heed them, as the LORD had said. [23]And Pharaoh turned and went into his house. Neither was his heart moved by this. [24]So all the Egyptians dug all around the river for water to drink, because they could not drink the water of the river. [25]And seven days passed after the LORD had struck the river.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Catch the Vision** *(7:2)* It’s not enough to be *called* a leader-you must *act* like a leader if you expect people to follow you. That’s the challenge Moses and Aaron faced as they prepared to meet with Pharaoh and to convince the Israelites. God had already authorized them to speak on His behalf. Now it was up to them to communicate

that authority. A good leader must be able to articulate the vision, communicate the message, and express inner passion so others can envision the goal and strive for it. **Topic: Work**

## THE SECOND PLAGUE: FROGS

**8** And the LORD spoke to Moses, “Go to Pharaoh and say to him, ‘Thus says
the LORD: “Let My people go, that they may serve Me. 2But if you refuse
to let *them* go, behold, I will smite all your territory with frogs. 3So the river
shall bring forth frogs abundantly, which shall go up and come into your
house, into your bedroom, on your bed, into the houses of your servants, on
your people, into your ovens, and into your kneading bowls. 4And the frogs
shall come up on you, on your people, and on all your servants.” ’ ”

5Then the LORD spoke to Moses, “Say to Aaron, ‘Stretch out your hand
with your rod over the streams, over the rivers, and over the ponds, and cause
frogs to come up on the land of Egypt.’ ” 6So Aaron stretched out his hand
over the waters of Egypt, and the frogs came up and covered the land of
Egypt. 7And the magicians did so with their enchantments, and brought up
frogs on the land of Egypt.

8Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, “Entreat the LORD
that He may take away the frogs from me and from my people; and I will let
the people go, that they may sacrifice to the LORD.”

9And Moses said to Pharaoh, “Accept the honor of saying when I shall
intercede for you, for your servants, and for your people, to destroy the frogs
from you and your houses, *that* they may remain in the river only.”

10So he said, “Tomorrow.” And he said, “*Let it be* according to your word,
that you may know that *there is* no one like the LORD our God. 11And the
frogs shall depart from you, from your houses, from your servants, and from
your people. They shall remain in the river only.”

12Then Moses and Aaron went out from Pharaoh. And Moses cried out to
the LORD concerning the frogs which He had brought against Pharaoh. 13So
the LORD did according to the word of Moses. And the frogs died out of the
houses, out of the courtyards, and out of the fields. 14They gathered them
together in heaps, and the land stank. 15But when Pharaoh saw that there was
relief, he hardened his heart and did not heed them, as the LORD had said.

## THE THIRD PLAGUE: LICE

16 So the LORD said to Moses, “Say to Aaron, ‘Stretch out your rod, and
strike the dust of the land, so that it may become lice throughout all the land
of Egypt.’ ” 17 And they did so. For Aaron stretched out his hand with his rod
and struck the dust of the earth, and it became lice on man and beast. All the
dust of the land became lice throughout all the land of Egypt.

18 Now the magicians so worked with their enchantments to bring forth
lice, but they could not. So there were lice on man and beast. 19 Then the
magicians said to Pharaoh, “This *is* the finger of God.” But Pharaoh’s heart
grew hard, and he did not heed them, just as the LORD had said.

## THE FOURTH PLAGUE: FLIES

20 And the LORD said to Moses, “Rise early in the morning and stand before
Pharaoh as he comes out to the water. Then say to him, ‘Thus says the LORD:
“Let My people go, that they may serve Me. 21 Or else, if you will not let My
people go, behold, I will send swarms *of flies* on you and your servants, on
your people and into your houses. The houses of the Egyptians shall be full of
swarms *of flies*, and also the ground on which they *stand*. 22 And in that day I
will set apart the land of Goshen, in which My people dwell, that no swarms
*of flies* shall be there, in order that you may know that I *am* the LORD in the
midst of the land. 23 I will make a difference[a] between My people and your
people. Tomorrow this sign shall be.” ’ ” 24 And the LORD did so. Thick
swarms *of flies* came into the house of Pharaoh, *into* his servants’ houses, and
into all the land of Egypt. The land was corrupted because of the swarms *of
flies.*

25 Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, “Go, sacrifice to
your God in the land.”

26 And Moses said, “It is not right to do so, for we would be sacrificing the
abomination of the Egyptians to the LORD our God. If we sacrifice the
abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, then will they not stone us?
27 We will go three days’ journey into the wilderness and sacrifice to the
LORD our God as He will command us.”

28 So Pharaoh said, “I will let you go, that you may sacrifice to the LORD

your God in the wilderness; only you shall not go very far away. Intercede for me.”

29Then Moses said, “Indeed I am going out from you, and I will entreat the LORD, that the swarms *of flies* may depart tomorrow from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people. But let Pharaoh not deal deceitfully anymore in not letting the people go to sacrifice to the LORD.”

30So Moses went out from Pharaoh and entreated the LORD. 31And the LORD did according to the word of Moses; He removed the swarms *of flies* from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people. Not one remained. 32But Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also; neither would he let the people go.

## THE FIFTH PLAGUE: LIVESTOCK DISEASED

**9** Then the LORD said to Moses, “Go in to Pharaoh and tell him, ‘Thus says
the LORD God of the Hebrews: “Let My people go, that they may serve
Me. 2For if you refuse to let *them* go, and still hold them, 3behold, the hand of
the LORD will be on your cattle in the field, on the horses, on the donkeys, on
the camels, on the oxen, and on the sheep-a very severe pestilence. 4And the
LORD will make a difference between the livestock of Israel and the livestock
of Egypt. So nothing shall die of all *that* belongs to the children of Israel.” ’ ”
5Then the LORD appointed a set time, saying, “Tomorrow the LORD will do
this thing in the land.”

6So the LORD did this thing on the next day, and all the livestock of Egypt
died; but of the livestock of the children of Israel, not one died. 7Then
Pharaoh sent, and indeed, not even one of the livestock of the Israelites was
dead. But the heart of Pharaoh became hard, and he did not let the people go.

## THE SIXTH PLAGUE: BOILS

8So the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, “Take for yourselves handfuls of
ashes from a furnace, and let Moses scatter it toward the heavens in the sight
of Pharaoh. 9And it will become fine dust in all the land of Egypt, and it will
cause boils that break out in sores on man and beast throughout all the land of
Egypt.” 10Then they took ashes from the furnace and stood before Pharaoh,
and Moses scattered *them* toward heaven. And *they* caused boils that break
out in sores on man and beast. 11And the magicians could not stand before
Moses because of the boils, for the boils were on the magicians and on all the
Egyptians. 12But the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh; and he did not
heed them, just as the LORD had spoken to Moses.

## THE SEVENTH PLAGUE: HAIL

13Then the LORD said to Moses, “Rise early in the morning and stand
before Pharaoh, and say to him, ‘Thus says the LORD God of the He-brews:
“Let My people go, that they may serve Me, 14for at this time I will send all
My plagues to your very heart, and on your servants and on your people, that

you may know that *there is* none like Me in all the earth. [15]Now if I had stretched out My hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, then you would have been cut off from the earth. [16]But indeed for this *purpose* I have raised you up, that I may show My power *in* you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth. [17]As yet you exalt yourself against My people in that you will not let them go. [18]Behold, tomorrow about this time I will cause very heavy hail to rain down, such as has not been in Egypt since its founding until now. [19]Therefore send now *and* gather your livestock and all that you have in the field, for the hail shall come down on every man and every animal which is found in the field and is not brought home; and they shall die." ' "

[20]He who feared the word of the LORD among the servants of Pharaoh made his servants and his livestock flee to the houses. [21]But he who did not regard the word of the LORD left his servants and his livestock in the field.

[22]Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward heaven, that there may be hail in all the land of Egypt-on man, on beast, and on every herb of the field, throughout the land of Egypt." [23]And Moses stretched out his rod toward heaven; and the LORD sent thunder and hail, and fire darted to the ground. And the LORD rained hail on the land of Egypt. [24]So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, so very heavy that there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation. [25]And the hail struck throughout the whole land of Egypt, all that *was* in the field, both man and beast; and the hail struck every herb of the field and broke every tree of the field. [26]Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel *were,* there was no hail.

[27]And Pharaoh sent and called for Moses and Aaron, and said to them, "I have sinned this time. The LORD *is* righteous, and my people and I *are* wicked. [28]Entreat the LORD, that there may be no *more* mighty thundering and hail, for *it is* enough. I will let you go, and you shall stay no longer."

[29]So Moses said to him, "As soon as I have gone out of the city, I will spread out my hands to the LORD; the thunder will cease, and there will be no more hail, that you may know that the earth *is* the LORD's. [30]But as for you and your servants, I know that you will not yet fear the LORD God."

[31]Now the flax and the barley were struck, for the barley *was* in the head

and the flax *was* in bud. [32]But the wheat and the spelt were not struck, for they *are* late crops.

[33]So Moses went out of the city from Pharaoh and spread out his hands to the LORD; then the thunder and the hail ceased, and the rain was not poured on the earth. [34]And when Pharaoh saw that the rain, the hail, and the thunder had ceased, he sinned yet more; and he hardened his heart, he and his servants. [35]So the heart of Pharaoh was hard; neither would he let the children of Israel go, as the LORD had spoken by Moses.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Don't Fight God** *(9:12)* If God "hardened" Pharaoh's heart, was the hapless leader just a pawn in God's plan? Not at all! He was the ruler of Egypt. God did not take control of Pharaoh's will and force his decisions. This man was responsible for his own actions. As God appealed to him to release the Israelites, Pharaoh became even more determined to keep them in bondage. What resulted was a contest of wills-Pharaoh's against God's. Eventually God won, and Pharaoh's will was broken. Fighting against God is a losing proposition. It will only exhaust you, deplete your energies, and mess up your life.
**Topic: Attitudes**

**THE EIGHTH PLAGUE: LOCUSTS**

**10** Now the LORD said to Moses, “Go in to Pharaoh; for I have hardened his
heart and the hearts of his servants, that I may show these signs of Mine
before him, 2and that you may tell in the hearing of your son and your son’s
son the mighty things I have done in Egypt, and My signs which I have done
among them, that you may know that I *am* the LORD.”

3So Moses and Aaron came in to Pharaoh and said to him, “Thus says the
LORD God of the Hebrews: ‘How long will you refuse to humble yourself
before Me? Let My people go, that they may serve Me. 4Or else, if you refuse
to let My people go, behold, tomorrow I will bring locusts into your territory.
5And they shall cover the face of the earth, so that no one will be able to see
the earth; and they shall eat the residue of what is left, which remains to you
from the hail, and they shall eat every tree which grows up for you out of the
field. 6They shall fill your houses, the houses of all your servants, and the
houses of all the Egyptians-which neither your fathers nor your fathers’
fathers have seen, since the day that they were on the earth to this day.’ ” And
he turned and went out from Pharaoh.

7Then Pharaoh’s servants said to him, “How long shall this man be a snare
to us? Let the men go, that they may serve the LORD their God. Do you not
yet know that Egypt is destroyed?”

8So Moses and Aaron were brought again to Pharaoh, and he said to them,
“Go, serve the LORD your God. Who *are* the ones that are going?”

9And Moses said, “We will go with our young and our old; with our sons
and our daughters, with our flocks and our herds we will go, for we must hold
a feast to the LORD.”

10Then he said to them, “The LORD had better be with you when I let you
and your little ones go! Beware, for evil is ahead of you.

11Not so! Go now, you *who are* men, and serve the LORD, for that is what
you desired.” And they were driven out from Pharaoh’s presence.

12Then the LORD said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand over the land of
Egypt for the locusts, that they may come upon the land of Egypt, and eat

every herb of the land-all that the hail has left." [13]So Moses stretched out his rod over the land of Egypt, and the LORD brought an east wind on the land all that day and all *that* night. When it was morning, the east wind brought the locusts. [14]And the locusts went up over all the land of Egypt and rested on all the territory of Egypt. *They were* very severe; previously there had been no such locusts as they, nor shall there be such after them. [15]For they covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened; and they ate every herb of the land and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left. So there remained nothing green on the trees or on the plants of the field throughout all the land of Egypt.

[16]Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron in haste, and said, "I have sinned against the LORD your God and against you. [17]Now therefore, please forgive my sin only this once, and entreat the LORD your God, that He may take away from me this death only." [18]So he went out from Pharaoh and entreated the LORD. [19]And the LORD turned a very strong west wind, which took the locusts away and blew them into the Red Sea. There remained not one locust in all the territory of Egypt. [20]But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the children of Israel go.

**THE NINTH PLAGUE: DARKNESS**

[21]Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, darkness *which* may even be felt." [22]So Moses stretched out his hand toward heaven, and there was thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days. [23]They did not see one another; nor did anyone rise from his place for three days. But all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.

[24]Then Pharaoh called to Moses and said, "Go, serve the LORD; only let your flocks and your herds be kept back. Let your little ones also go with you."

[25]But Moses said, "You must also give us sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God. [26]Our livestock also shall go with us; not a hoof shall be left behind. For we must take some of them to serve the LORD our God, and even we do not know with what we must serve the

LORD until we arrive there.”

27 But the LORD hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he would not let them go.
28 Then Pharaoh said to him, “Get away from me! Take heed to yourself and
see my face no more! For in the day you see my face you shall die!”

29 So Moses said, “You have spoken well. I will never see your face again.”

## DEATH OF THE FIRSTBORN ANNOUNCED

**11** And the LORD said to Moses, “I will bring one more plague on Pharaoh
and on Egypt. Afterward he will let you go from here. When he lets *you*
go, he will surely drive you out of here altogether. 2Speak now in the hearing
of the people, and let every man ask from his neighbor and every woman
from her neighbor, articles of silver and articles of gold.” 3And the LORD
gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians. Moreover the man Moses
*was* very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh’s servants and in
the sight of the people.

4Then Moses said, “Thus says the LORD: ‘About midnight I will go out into
the midst of Egypt; 5and all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from
the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the
female servant who *is* behind the hand-mill, and all the firstborn of the
animals. 6Then there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt,
such as was not like it *before,* nor shall be like it again. 7But against none of
the children of Israel shall a dog move its tongue, against man or beast, that
you may know that the LORD does make a difference between the Egyptians
and Israel.’ 8And all these your servants shall come down to me and bow
down to me, saying, ‘Get out, and all the people who follow you!’ After that I
will go out.” Then he went out from Pharaoh in great anger.

9But the LORD said to Moses, “Pharaoh will not heed you, so that My
wonders may be multiplied in the land of Egypt.” 10So Moses and Aaron did
all these wonders before Pharaoh; and the LORD hardened Pharaoh’s heart,
and he did not let the children of Israel go out of his land.

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neighbor, articles of silver and articles of gold.” 3And the LORD gave the
people favor in the sight of the Egyptians. Moreover the man Moses *was* very

great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh's servants and in the sight of the people.

[4]Then Moses said, "Thus says the LORD: 'About midnight I will go out into the midst of Egypt; [5]and all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the female servant who *is* behind the hand-mill, and all the firstborn of the animals. [6]Then there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as was not like it *before,* nor shall be like it again. [7]But against none of the children of Israel shall a dog move its tongue, against man or beast, that you may know that the LORD does make a difference between the Egyptians and Israel.' [8]And all these your servants shall come down to me and bow down to me, saying, 'Get out, and all the people who follow you!' After that I will go out." Then he went out from Pharaoh in great anger.

[9]But the LORD said to Moses, "Pharaoh will not heed you, so that My wonders may be multiplied in the land of Egypt." [10]So Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh; and the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the children of Israel go out of his land.

**THE PASSOVER INSTITUTED**

**12** Now the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying,
2 "This month *shall be* your beginning of months; it *shall be* the first
month of the year to you. 3 Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying: 'On
the tenth of this month every man shall take for himself a lamb, according to
the house of *his* father, a lamb for a household. 4 And if the household is too
small for the lamb, let him and his neighbor next to his house take *it*
according to the number of the persons; according to each man's need you
shall make your count for the lamb. 5 Your lamb shall be without blemish, a
male of the first year. You may take *it* from the sheep or from the goats.
6 Now you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the
whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight. 7 And
they shall take *some* of the blood and put *it* on the two doorposts and on the
lintel of the houses where they eat it. 8 Then they shall eat the flesh on that
night; roasted in fire, with unleavened bread *and* with bitter *herbs* they shall
eat it. 9 Do not eat it raw, nor boiled at all with water, but roasted in fire-its
head with its legs and its entrails. 10 You shall let none of it remain until
morning, and what remains of it until morning you shall burn with fire. 11 And
thus you shall eat it: *with* a belt on your waist, your sandals on your feet, and
your staff in your hand. So you shall eat it in haste. It *is* the LORD's Passover.

12 'For I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike all
the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the
gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I *am* the LORD. 13 Now the blood shall
be a sign for you on the houses where you *are.* And when I see the blood, I
will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy *you* when I
strike the land of Egypt.

14 'So this day shall be to you a memorial; and you shall keep it as a feast to
the LORD throughout your generations. You shall keep it as a feast by an
everlasting ordinance. 15 Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the
first day you shall remove leaven from your houses. For whoever eats
leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be
cut off from Israel. 16 On the first day *there shall be* a holy convocation, and

on the seventh day there shall be a holy convocation for you. No manner of work shall be done on them; but *that* which everyone must eat-that only may be prepared by you. [17]So you shall observe *the Feast of* Unleavened Bread, for on this same day I will have brought your armies out of the land of Egypt. Therefore you shall observe this day throughout your generations as an everlasting ordinance. [18]In the first *month,* on the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread, until the twenty-first day of the month at evening. [19]For seven days no leaven shall be found in your houses, since whoever eats what is leavened, that same person shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether *he is* a stranger or a native of the land. [20]You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your dwellings you shall eat unleavened bread.' "

[21]Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel and said to them, "Pick out and take lambs for yourselves according to your families, and kill the Passover *lamb.* [22]And you shall take a bunch of hyssop, dip *it* in the blood that *is* in the basin, and strike the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood that *is* in the basin. And none of you shall go out of the door of his house until morning. [23]For the LORD will pass through to strike the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the LORD will pass over the door and not allow the destroyer to come into your houses to strike *you.* [24]And you shall observe this thing as an ordinance for you and your sons forever. [25]It will come to pass when you come to the land which the LORD will give you, just as He promised, that you shall keep this service. [26]And it shall be, when your children say to you, 'What do you mean by this service?' [27]that you shall say, 'It *is* the Passover sacrifice of the LORD, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt when He struck the Egyptians and delivered our households.' " So the people bowed their heads and worshiped. [28]Then the children of Israel went away and did *so;* just as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron, so they did.

## THE TENTH PLAGUE: DEATH OF THE FIRSTBORN

[29]And it came to pass at midnight that the LORD struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who *was* in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of

livestock. [30]So Pharaoh rose in the night, he, all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt, for *there was* not a house where *there was* not one dead.

**THE EXODUS**

[31]Then he called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, "Rise, go out from among my people, both you and the children of Israel. And go, serve the LORD as you have said. [32]Also take your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and be gone; and bless me also."

[33]And the Egyptians urged the people, that they might send them out of the land in haste. For they said, "We *shall* all *be* dead." [34]So the people took their dough before it was leavened, having their kneading bowls bound up in their clothes on their shoulders. [35]Now the children of Israel had done according to the word of Moses, and they had asked from the Egyptians articles of silver, articles of gold, and clothing. [36]And the LORD had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they granted them *what they requested.* Thus they plundered the Egyptians.

[37]Then the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides children. [38]A mixed multitude went up with them also, and flocks and herds-a great deal of livestock. [39]And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they had brought out of Egypt; for it was not leavened, because they were driven out of Egypt and could not wait, nor had they prepared provisions for themselves.

[40]Now the sojourn of the children of Israel who lived in Egypt[a] *was* four hundred and thirty years. [41]And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years-on that very same day-it came to pass that all the armies of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt. [42]It *is* a night of solemn observance to the LORD for bringing them out of the land of Egypt. This *is* that night of the LORD, a solemn observance for all the children of Israel throughout their generations.

**PASSOVER REGULATIONS**

[43]And the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "This *is* the ordinance of the

Passover: No foreigner shall eat it. [44]But every man's servant who is bought for money, when you have circumcised him, then he may eat it. [45]A sojourner and a hired servant shall not eat it. [46]In one house it shall be eaten; you shall not carry any of the flesh outside the house, nor shall you break one of its bones. [47]All the congregation of Israel shall keep it.[48]And when a stranger dwells with you *and wants* to keep the Passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as a native of the land. For no uncircumcised person shall eat it.[49]One law shall be for the native-born and for the stranger who dwells among you."

[50]Thus all the children of Israel did; as the LORD commanded Moses and Aaron, so they did. [51]And it came to pass, on that very same day, that the LORD brought the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt according to their armies.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Truth or Consequences?** *(12:3)* In this final plague, God required the Israelites to apply the blood of a sacrificial lamb to the doorposts of their houses. "When I see the blood, I will pass over you," God promised (12:13). This placement of blood between God and man pictures the blood of Christ's sacrifice on the Cross, which pays for believers' sins and causes God's wrath to pass over them (Heb. 9:11-28). Those who do not respond to God's truth will face the tragic consequences of their unbelief. **Topic: Belief**

## THE FIRSTBORN CONSECRATED

**13** Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, [2]"Consecrate to Me all the firstborn, whatever opens the womb among the children of Israel, *both* of man and beast; it is Mine."

## THE FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD

[3]And Moses said to the people: "Remember this day in which you went out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the LORD brought you out of this *place.* No leavened bread shall be eaten. [4]On this day you are going out, in the month Abib. [5]And it shall be, when the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, which He swore to your fathers to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey, that you shall keep this service in this month. [6]Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day *there shall be* a feast to the LORD. [7]Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days. And no leavened bread shall be seen among you, nor shall leaven be seen among you in all your quarters. [8]And you shall tell your son in that day, saying, '*This is done* because of what the LORD did for me when I came up from Egypt.' [9]It shall be as a sign to you on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes, that the LORD's law may be in your mouth; for with a strong hand the LORD has brought you out of Egypt. [10]You shall therefore keep this ordinance in its season from year to year.

## THE LAW OF THE FIRSTBORN

[11]"And it shall be, when the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites, as He swore to you and your fathers, and gives it to you, [12]that you shall set apart to the LORD all that open the womb, that is, every firstborn that comes from an animal which you have; the males *shall be* the LORD's. [13]But every firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb; and if you will not redeem *it,* then you shall break its neck. And all the firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem. [14]So it shall be, when your son asks you in time to come, saying, 'What *is* this?' that you shall say to him, 'By strength of hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, out of the house of

bondage. [15]And it came to pass, when Pharaoh was stubborn about letting us go, that the LORD killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of beast. Therefore I sacrifice to the LORD all males that open the womb, but all the firstborn of my sons I redeem.' [16]It shall be as a sign on your hand and as frontlets between your eyes, for by strength of hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt."

**THE WILDERNESS WAY**

[17]Then it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God did not lead them *by* way of the land of the Philistines, although that *was* near; for God said, "Lest perhaps the people change their minds when they see war, and return to Egypt." [18]So God led the people around *by* way of the wilderness of the Red Sea. And the children of Israel went up in orderly ranks out of the land of Egypt.

[19]And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, for he had placed the children of Israel under solemn oath, saying, "God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here with you."[a]

[20]So they took their journey from Succoth and camped in Etham at the edge of the wilderness. [21]And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and night. [22]He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day or the pillar of fire by night *from* before the people.

## THE RED SEA CROSSING

**14** Now the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: [2]"Speak to the children of Israel, that they turn and camp before Pi Hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, opposite Baal Zephon; you shall camp before it by the sea. [3]For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, 'They *are* bewildered by the land; the wilderness has closed them in.' [4]Then I will harden Pharaoh's heart, so that he will pursue them; and I will gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army, that the Egyptians may know that I *am* the LORD." And they did so.

[5]Now it was told the king of Egypt that the people had fled, and the heart of Pharaoh and his servants was turned against the people; and they said, "Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us?" [6]So he made ready his chariot and took his people with him. [7]Also, he took six hundred choice chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt with captains over every one of them. [8]And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued the children of Israel; and the children of Israel went out with boldness. [9]So the Egyptians pursued them, all the horses *and* chariots of Pharaoh, his horsemen and his army, and overtook them camping by the sea beside Pi Hahiroth, before Baal Zephon.

[10]And when Pharaoh drew near, the children of Israel lifted their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians marched after them. So they were very afraid, and the children of Israel cried out to the LORD. [11]Then they said to Moses, "Because *there were* no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you so dealt with us, to bring us up out of Egypt? [12]*Is* this not the word that we told you in Egypt, saying, 'Let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians'? For *it would have been* better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness."

[13]And Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever. [14]The LORD will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace."

[15]And the LORD said to Moses, "Why do you cry to Me? Tell the children of Israel to go forward. [16]But lift up your rod, and stretch out your hand over

the sea and divide it. And the children of Israel shall go on dry *ground* through the midst of the sea. [17]And I indeed will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them. So I will gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army, his chariots, and his horsemen. [18]Then the Egyptians shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I have gained honor for Myself over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen."

[19]And the Angel of God, who went before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud went from before them and stood behind them. [20]So it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel. Thus it was a cloud and darkness *to the one*, and it gave light by night *to the other*, so that the one did not come near the other all that night.

[21]Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD caused the sea to go *back* by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea into dry *land*, and the waters were divided. [22]So the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea on the dry *ground*, and the waters *were* a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. [23]And the Egyptians pursued and went after them into the midst of the sea, all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen.

[24]Now it came to pass, in the morning watch, that the LORD looked down upon the army of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and cloud, and He troubled the army of the Egyptians. [25]And He took off[a] their chariot wheels, so that they drove them with difficulty; and the Egyptians said, "Let us flee from the face of Israel, for the LORD fights for them against the Egyptians."

[26]Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the waters may come back upon the Egyptians, on their chariots, and on their horsemen." [27]And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and when the morning appeared, the sea returned to its full depth, while the Egyptians were fleeing into it. So the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. [28]Then the waters returned and covered the chariots, the horsemen, *and* all the army of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them. Not so much as one of them remained. [29]But the children of Israel had walked on dry *land* in the midst of the sea, and the waters *were* a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.

30 So the LORD saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians, and
Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. 31 Thus Israel saw the great
work which the LORD had done in Egypt; so the people feared the LORD, and
believed the LORD and His servant Moses.

"The LORD will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace."
EXODUS 14:14

## SOUL NOTE

**Panic or Power** *(14:10)* The Israelites found themselves trapped between Pharaoh's army and the waters of the Red Sea. In panic, they accused Moses of leading them to their deaths (14:11, 12). By this time, Moses had seen enough of the power of God to respond in confidence. He told the frightened Israelites: "Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD" (14:13). Then God miraculously parted the waters (14:21, 22). What unyielding obstacles are you facing? Don't panic. Instead, turn to God and trust in His power to do what seems impossible. **Topic: Worry**

**THE SONG OF MOSES**

**15** Then Moses and the children of Israel sang this song to the LORD, and spoke, saying:

> "The LORD is my strength and song . . . and I will praise Him."
> EXODUS 15:2

"I will sing to the LORD,
For He has triumphed gloriously!
The horse and its rider
He has thrown into the sea!
2 The LORD *is* my strength and song,
And He has become my salvation;
He *is* my God, and I will praise Him;
My father's God, and I will exalt Him.
3 The LORD *is* a man of war;
The LORD *is* His name.
4 Pharaoh's chariots and his army He has cast into the sea;
His chosen captains also are drowned in the Red Sea.
5 The depths have covered them;
They sank to the bottom like a stone.
6 "Your right hand, O LORD, has become glorious in power;
Your right hand, O LORD, has dashed the enemy in pieces.
7 And in the greatness of Your excellence
You have overthrown those who rose against You;
You sent forth Your wrath;
It consumed them like stubble.
8 And with the blast of Your nostrils
The waters were gathered together;
The floods stood upright like a heap;
The depths congealed in the heart of the sea.
9 The enemy said, 'I will pursue,
I will overtake,

I will divide the spoil;
My desire shall be satisfied on them.
I will draw my sword,
My hand shall destroy them.’
10 You blew with Your wind,
The sea covered them;
They sank like lead in the mighty waters.
11 “Who *is* like You, O LORD, among the gods?
Who *is* like You, glorious in holiness,
Fearful in praises, doing wonders?
12 You stretched out Your right hand;
The earth swallowed them.
13 You in Your mercy have led forth
The people whom You have redeemed;
You have guided *them* in Your strength
To Your holy habitation.
14 “The people will hear *and* be afraid;
Sorrow will take hold of the inhabitants of Philistia.
15 Then the chiefs of Edom will be dismayed;
The mighty men of Moab,
Trembling will take hold of them;
All the inhabitants of Canaan will melt away.
16 Fear and dread will fall on them;
By the greatness of Your arm
They will be *as* still as a stone,
Till Your people pass over, O LORD,
Till the people pass over
Whom You have purchased.
17 You will bring them in and plant them
In the mountain of Your inheritance,
*In* the place, O LORD, *which* You have made
For Your own dwelling,
The sanctuary, O LORD, *which* Your hands have established.
18 “The LORD shall reign forever and ever.”
19For the horses of Pharaoh went with his chariots and his horsemen into

the sea, and the LORD brought back the waters of the sea upon them. But the children of Israel went on dry *land* in the midst of the sea.

**THE SONG OF MIRIAM**

[20]Then Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took the timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. [21]And Miriam answered them:

"Sing to the LORD,
For He has triumphed gloriously!
The horse and its rider
He has thrown into the sea!"

**BITTER WATERS MADE SWEET**

[22]So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea; then they went out into the Wilderness of Shur. And they went three days in the wilderness and found no water. [23]Now when they came to Marah, they could not drink the waters of Marah, for they *were* bitter. Therefore the name of it was called Marah.[a] [24]And the people complained against Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?" [25]So he cried out to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a tree. When he cast *it* into the waters, the waters were made sweet.

There He made a statute and an ordinance for them, and there He tested them, [26]and said, "If you diligently heed the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I *am* the LORD who heals you."

[27]Then they came to Elim, where there *were* twelve wells of water and seventy palm trees; so they camped there by the waters.

**SOUL NOTE**

**A New Song** *(15:1)* Moses and the Israelites took time to praise and worship God for miraculous deliverance. They sang (15:1) and danced (15:20). The focus of their praise was on God. "I will sing to the LORD, for He has triumphed gloriously! . . . The LORD is my strength and song," they sang (15:1, 2). Worship may take many expressions, but it must focus on God. Genuine praise pleases Him. In your praise and worship, focus on God. **Topic: Praise and Worship**

**SOUL NOTE**

**The Single Life** *(15:20)* Is being single better than being married? Or is it the other way around? It is true that single people have freedom to serve God in any capacity, without concern over spouses or children (1 Cor. 7). Miriam, most likely a single woman, played a significant role in the spiritual life of Israel, and she is the first woman to be called a "prophetess." Singleness never denotes inferiority-God has special work for all of His people whether they are single or married. **Topic: Singleness**

**BREAD FROM HEAVEN**

**16** And they journeyed from Elim, and all the congregation of the children
of Israel came to the Wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and
Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they departed from the
land of Egypt. 2Then the whole congregation of the children of Israel
complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. 3And the children of
Israel said to them, "Oh, that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land
of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat *and* when we ate bread to the full!
For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly
with hunger."

4Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for
you. And the people shall go out and gather a certain quota every day, that I
may test them, whether they will walk in My law or not. 5And it shall be on
the sixth day that they shall prepare what they bring in, and it shall be twice
as much as they gather daily."

6Then Moses and Aaron said to all the children of Israel, "At evening you
shall know that the LORD has brought you out of the land of Egypt. 7And in
the morning you shall see the glory of the LORD; for He hears your
complaints against the LORD. But what *are* we, that you complain against
us?" 8Also Moses said, "*This shall be seen* when the LORD gives you meat to
eat in the evening, and in the morning bread to the full; for the LORD hears
your complaints which you make against Him. And what *are* we? Your
complaints *are* not against us but against the LORD."

9Then Moses spoke to Aaron, "Say to all the congregation of the children
of Israel, 'Come near before the LORD, for He has heard your complaints.' "
10Now it came to pass, as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the
children of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the
glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud.

11And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 12"I have heard the complaints of
the children of Israel. Speak to them, saying, 'At twilight you shall eat meat,
and in the morning you shall be filled with bread. And you shall know that I
*am* the LORD your God.' "

13So it was that quails came up at evening and covered the camp, and in
the morning the dew lay all around the camp. 14And when the layer of dew
lifted, there, on the surface of the wilderness, was a small round substance, *as*
fine as frost on the ground. 15So when the children of Israel saw *it*, they said
to one another, “What is it?” For they did not know what it *was*.

And Moses said to them, “This *is* the bread which the LORD has given you
to eat. 16This is the thing which the LORD has commanded: ‘Let every man
gather it according to each one’s need, one omer for each person, *according*
*to the* number of persons; let every man take for *those* who *are* in his tent.’ ”

17Then the children of Israel did so and gathered, some more, some less.
18So when they measured *it* by omers, he who gathered much had nothing left
over, and he who gathered little had no lack. Every man had gathered
according to each one’s need. 19And Moses said, “Let no one leave any of it
till morning.” 20Notwithstanding they did not heed Moses. But some of them
left part of it until morning, and it bred worms and stank.

And Moses was angry with them. 21So they gathered it every morning,
every man according to his need. And when the sun became hot, it melted.

22And so it was, on the sixth day, *that* they gathered twice as much bread,
two omers for each one. And all the rulers of the congregation came and told
Moses. 23Then he said to them, “This *is what* the LORD has said: ‘Tomorrow
*is* a Sabbath rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD. Bake what you will bake *today*,
and boil what you will boil; and lay up for yourselves all that remains, to be
kept until morning.’ ” 24So they laid it up till morning, as Moses commanded;
and it did not stink, nor were there any worms in it. 25Then Moses said, “Eat
that today, for today *is* a Sabbath to the LORD; today you will not find it in the
field. 26Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, the Sabbath, there
will be none.”

27Now it happened *that some* of the people went out on the seventh day to
gather, but they found none. 28And the LORD said to Moses, “How long do
you refuse to keep My commandments and My laws? 29See! For the LORD
has given you the Sabbath; therefore He gives you on the sixth day bread for
two days. Let every man remain in his place; let no man go out of his place
on the seventh day.” 30So the people rested on the seventh day.

31 And the house of Israel called its name Manna.[a] And it *was* like white
coriander seed, and the taste of it *was* like wafers *made* with honey.

32 Then Moses said, "This *is* the thing which the LORD has commanded:
'Fill an omer with it, to be kept for your generations, that they may see the
bread with which I fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you out of the
land of Egypt.' " 33 And Moses said to Aaron, "Take a pot and put an omer of
manna in it, and lay it up before the LORD, to be kept for your generations."
34 As the LORD commanded Moses, so Aaron laid it up before the Testimony,
to be kept. 35 And the children of Israel ate manna forty years, until they came
to an inhabited land; they ate manna until they came to the border of the land
of Canaan. 36 Now an omer *is* one-tenth of an ephah.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Lost in the Desert** *(16:1-3)* Wandering in the vast Sinai wilderness, the Israelites soon forgot God's miraculous power and began to complain about their lack of food and water. Although they had witnessed God's power, they still moaned at their inconveniences. Their problem wasn't the wilderness; it was their attitude. "Your complaints are not against us but against the LORD," Moses and Aaron reminded them (16:8). "Wilderness" experiences will make or break a person. The difference is in the attitude. **Topic: Attitudes**

**SOUL NOTE**

**The Rest of the Story** *(16:23)* God gave His people a day of rest, a

day when they were not supposed to work. But everyone had to work hard in preparation on the day before, in order to be able to rest completely on the Sabbath. To take full advantage of our day of rest and worship, we too need to prepare ahead of time. That way, we won't need to run to the store or finish a work project. We need to be organized enough to be ready to rest and focus on God on Sundays.
**Topic: Work**

## WATER FROM THE ROCK

**17** Then all the congregation of the children of Israel set out on their
journey from the Wilderness of Sin, according to the commandment of
the LORD, and camped in Rephidim; but *there was* no water for the people to
drink. 2Therefore the people contended with Moses, and said, "Give us water,
that we may drink."

So Moses said to them, "Why do you contend with me? Why do you tempt
the LORD?"

3And the people thirsted there for water, and the people complained against
Moses, and said, "Why *is* it you have brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us
and our children and our livestock with thirst?"

4So Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, "What shall I do with this
people? They are almost ready to stone me!"

5And the LORD said to Moses, "Go on before the people, and take with you
some of the elders of Israel. Also take in your hand your rod with which you
struck the river, and go. 6Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock in
Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the
people may drink."

And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. 7So he called the
name of the place Massah[a] and Meribah,[b] because of the contention of the
children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD, saying, "Is the LORD
among us or not?"

## VICTORY OVER THE AMALEKITES

8Now Amalek came and fought with Israel in Rephidim. 9And Moses said
to Joshua, "Choose us some men and go out, fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I
will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand." 10So Joshua
did as Moses said to him, and fought with Amalek. And Moses, Aaron, and
Hur went up to the top of the hill. 11And so it was, when Moses held up his
hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Ama-lek
prevailed. 12But Moses' hands *became* heavy; so they took a stone and put *it*
under him, and he sat on it. And Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on

one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. [13]So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.

[14]Then the LORD said to Moses, “Write this *for* a memorial in the book and recount *it* in the hearing of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.” [15]And Moses built an altar and called its name, The-LORD-Is-My-Banner;[a] [16]for he said, “Because the LORD has sworn: the LORD *will have* war with Amalek from generation to generation.”

**SOUL NOTE**

**Look Again** *(17:7)* The Israelites lived by sight and not by faith. Even though God provided daily miracles of food and water in the Sinai wilderness, the people complained and doubted His continued goodness toward them. The world says, “Show me, and I’ll believe it.” God says, “Believe it, and I will show you.” If you are in a wilderness of testing or a valley of doubt, don’t question God’s love because He is not answering you the way you want. Instead, look around and recognize what God is doing for you. **Topic: Doubt**

**JETHRO'S ADVICE**

**18** And Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, heard of all that
God had done for Moses and for Israel His people-that the LORD had
brought Israel out of Egypt. 2Then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took
Zipporah, Moses' wife, after he had sent her back, 3with her two sons, of
whom the name of one *was* Gershom (for he said, "I have been a stranger in a
foreign land")[a] 4and the name of the other *was* Eliezer[a] (for *he said,* "The
God of my father *was* my help, and delivered me from the sword of
Pharaoh"); 5and Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, came with his sons and his
wife to Moses in the wilderness, where he was encamped at the mountain of
God. 6Now he had said to Moses, "I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to
you with your wife and her two sons with her."

7So Moses went out to meet his father-in-law, bowed down, and kissed
him. And they asked each other about *their* well-being, and they went into the
tent. 8And Moses told his father-in-law all that the LORD had done to Pharaoh
and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, all the hardship that had come upon
them on the way, and *how* the LORD had delivered them. 9Then Jethro
rejoiced for all the good which the LORD had done for Israel, whom He had
delivered out of the hand of the Egyptians. 10And Jethro said, "Blessed *be* the
LORD, who has delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the
hand of Pharaoh, *and* who has delivered the people from under the hand of
the Egyptians. 11Now I know that the LORD *is* greater than all the gods; for in
the very thing in which they behaved proudly, *He was* above them." 12Then
Jethro, Moses' father- in-law, took[a] a burnt offering and *other* sacrifices *to
offer* to God. And Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat bread with
Moses' father-in-law before God.

13And so it was, on the next day, that Moses sat to judge the people; and
the people stood before Moses from morning until evening. 14So when
Moses' father-in-law saw all that he did for the people, he said, "What *is* this
thing that you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit, and all the
people stand before you from morning until evening?"

15And Moses said to his father-in-law, "Because the people come to me to

inquire of God. [16]When they have a difficulty, they come to me, and I judge between one and another; and I make known the statutes of God and His laws."

[17]So Moses' father-in-law said to him, "The thing that you do *is* not good. [18]Both you and these people who *are* with you will surely wear yourselves out. For this thing *is* too much for you; you are not able to perform it by yourself. [19]Listen now to my voice; I will give you counsel, and God will be with you: Stand before God for the people, so that you may bring the difficulties to God. [20]And you shall teach them the statutes and the laws, and show them the way in which they must walk and the work they must do. [21]Moreover you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place *such* over them *to be* rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. [22]And let them judge the people at all times. Then it will be *that* every great matter they shall bring to you, but every small matter they themselves shall judge. So it will be easier for you, for they will bear *the burden* with you. [23]If you do this thing, and God *so* commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all this people will also go to their place in peace."

[24]So Moses heeded the voice of his father-in-law and did all that he had said. [25]And Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people: rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. [26]So they judged the people at all times; the hard cases they brought to Moses, but they judged every small case themselves.

[27]Then Moses let his father-in-law depart, and he went his way to his own land.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# JETHRO: A FRIEND IN NEED

**(EXODUS 18:17, 18)**

When we are stressed, a powerful asset can be the blessing of someone a little older, a wiser voice of experience, to help us handle the pressure. In that person's wisdom is our relief.

Moses discovered a mentor when he needed one most-*after* he led the Israelites out of Egyptian captivity. Confronting Pharaoh, it seems, was easier than trying to lead the millions of Israelites to the Promised Land. To avoid being overwhelmed by this task, Moses needed wise and seasoned counsel. He received it from Jethro, his father-in-law.

Jethro joined Moses in the wilderness with Moses' wife and sons as the Israelites traveled toward the Promised Land. Jethro rejoiced in all that God had done, and the deliverance story strengthened his own faith. But Jethro also saw his son-in-law burning the candle at both ends. He saw the dysfunctional judging process that Moses attempted to shoulder alone, and he suggested a better way. He encouraged Moses to delegate the judging of some of the minor disputes to godly men who were able to know the people and deal intimately with their needs. Moses then became more like a supreme court, dealing only with the legal issues that affected the entire nation.

Jethro demonstrated that those outside a situation can bring valuable perspective to those who may be overwhelmed in it. Fresh eyes can often see the obvious way out that tired eyes have overlooked. Jethro showed Moses where he could get the help he desperately needed. God had provided plenty of wise leaders all around Moses, but Moses needed help to see them.

At different times, God sends us mentors, guides, helpers, and burden-bearers. They can assist us in performing the tasks that God sets before us. Before you burn out, look around for those helpers

whom God may have sent your way.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Overcoming Burnout. See also the key passage note at Matthew 11:28-30.

**ISRAEL AT MOUNT SINAI**

**19** In the third month after the children of Israel had gone out of the land of
Egypt, on the same day, they came *to* the Wilderness of Sinai. 2For they
had departed from Rephidim, had come *to* the Wilderness of Sinai, and
camped in the wilderness. So Israel camped there before the mountain.

3And Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the
mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the
children of Israel: 4'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and *how* I
bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. 5Now therefore, if you
will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special
treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth *is* Mine. 6And you shall be
to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These *are* the words which
you shall speak to the children of Israel."

7So Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before
them all these words which the LORD commanded him. 8Then all the people
answered together and said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do." So
Moses brought back the words of the people to the LORD. 9And the LORD said
to Moses, "Behold, I come to you in the thick cloud, that the people may hear
when I speak with you, and believe you forever."

So Moses told the words of the people to the LORD.

10Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them
today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes. 11And let them be ready
for the third day. For on the third day the LORD will come down upon Mount
Sinai in the sight of all the people. 12You shall set bounds for the people all
around, saying, 'Take heed to yourselves *that* you do *not* go up to the
mountain or touch its base. Whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put
to death. 13Not a hand shall touch him, but he shall surely be stoned or shot
*with an arrow;* whether man or beast, he shall not live.' When the trumpet
sounds long, they shall come near the mountain."

14So Moses went down from the mountain to the people and sanctified the
people, and they washed their clothes. 15And he said to the people, "Be ready
for the third day; do not come near *your* wives."

16 Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were
thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound
of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who *were* in the camp
trembled. 17 And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God,
and they stood at the foot of the mountain. 18 Now Mount Sinai *was*
completely in smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire. Its smoke
ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain[a] quaked
greatly. 19 And when the blast of the trumpet sounded long and became louder
and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by voice. 20 Then the LORD
came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mountain. And the LORD
called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up.

21 And the LORD said to Moses, "Go down and warn the people, lest they
break through to gaze at the LORD, and many of them perish. 22 Also let the
priests who come near the LORD consecrate themselves, lest the LORD break
out against them."

23 But Moses said to the LORD, "The people cannot come up to Mount
Sinai; for You warned us, saying, 'Set bounds around the mountain and
consecrate it.' "

24 Then the LORD said to him, "Away! Get down and then come up, you
and Aaron with you. But do not let the priests and the people break through
to come up to the LORD, lest He break out against them." 25 So Moses went
down to the people and spoke to them.

**THE TEN COMMANDMENTS**

**20** And God spoke all these words, saying:

2 “I *am* the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out
of the house of bondage.
3 “You shall have no other gods before Me.
4 “You shall not make for yourself a carved image-any likeness *of anything*
that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the
water under the earth; 5you shall not bow down to them nor serve them.
For I, the LORD your God, *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the
fathers upon the children to the third and fourth *generations* of those
who hate Me, 6but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me
and keep My commandments.
7 “You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD
will not hold *him* guiltless who takes His name in vain.
8 “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9Six days you shall labor
and do all your work, 10but the seventh day *is* the Sabbath of the LORD
your God. *In it* you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your
daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your
cattle, nor your stranger who *is* within your gates. 11For *in* six days the
LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that *is* in them,
and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day
and hallowed it.
12 “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon
the land which the LORD your God is giving you.
13 “You shall not murder.
14 “You shall not commit adultery.
15 “You shall not steal.
16 “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
17 “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your
neighbor’s wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox,
nor his donkey, nor anything that *is* your neighbor’s.”

## THE PEOPLE AFRAID OF GOD'S PRESENCE

18 Now all the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the
sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw *it*,
they trembled and stood afar off. 19 Then they said to Moses, "You speak with
us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die."

20 And Moses said to the people, "Do not fear; for God has come to test
you, and that His fear may be before you, so that you may not sin." 21 So the
people stood afar off, but Moses drew near the thick darkness where God
*was*.

## THE LAW OF THE ALTAR

22 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the children of
Israel: 'You have seen that I have talked with you from heaven. 23 You shall
not make *anything to be* with Me-gods of silver or gods of gold you shall not
make for yourselves. 24 An altar of earth you shall make for Me, and you shall
sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, your sheep and
your oxen. In every place where I record My name I will come to you, and I
will bless you. 25 And if you make Me an altar of stone, you shall not build it
of hewn stone; for if you use your tool on it, you have profaned it. 26 Nor shall
you go up by steps to My altar, that your nakedness may not be exposed on
it.'

### SOUL NOTE

**His Alone** *(20:5)* God gets jealous? Yes, but this is a different kind of jealousy than what we experience. God's jealousy is perfect, for He wants us to be exclusively His. When people break this commandment-when they turn to other gods-God wants them back. He doesn't want to share our affections with anyone or anything else. How fortunate for us that He is a jealous God, showing mercy to the

multitudes of those who love and obey Him. **Topic: Jealousy**

# SETTING HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

HENRY CLOUD AND JOHN TOWNSEND

(Exodus 20:1-17)

**M**any people struggle with relationships in which there is irresponsibility, hurt, or control. They don't know how to handle conflict or even their own responsibilities. Fortunately, God has provided people with a great deal of teaching on how to order our lives with the help of boundaries.

Boundaries are simply defined as property lines. Just as a fence shows where one yard ends and another begins, a boundary indicates what belongs to us and what belongs to others. Whenever we encounter words in the Bible like truth, righteousness, justice, honesty, integrity, and holiness, we should pay attention. They describe some aspect of boundaries for God's people.

Boundaries are a tool that God uses to serve three of His most important values: Love, Responsibility, and Freedom.

## BOUNDARIES PROMOTE LOVE

God is the essence of love (1 John 4:16). God's boundaries are very clear between what He loves and what He cannot abide. For example, God loves righteousness and justice (Ps. 33:5), His people (2 Chr.

2:11), and the world (John 3:16). At the same time, He sets boundaries on His love and actually hates certain things (Prov. 6:16-19; Zech. 8:17).

God enacts boundaries with His people to promote a loving relationship. He provides structures that teach people how to love and follow Him. God gave the Ten Commandments for people's well-being (Ex. 20:1-17). He uses boundaries to make life safe enough for us to return His love.

Likewise, we are to use boundaries to promote love and connection with others. When people live within their God-ordained boundaries, they can be safe and trusting with each other. As we walk in truth and righteousness, and require that of others, love flourishes.

## BOUNDARIES DEFINE RESPONSIBILITY

Boundaries help people clarify how to take responsibility for their lives before God. They also help people understand the extent and limits of their responsibilities to others.

God is clear about His purposes and tasks. He creates and maintains the universe (Gen. 1:1; Col. 1:17), seeks and saves the lost (Luke 19:10), and keeps His promises (Num. 23:19). He also knows what is *not* His responsibility. He is not responsible for evil (Job 34:10), confusion (1 Cor. 14:33), or temptation (James 1:13).

We also are to take responsibility over our lives by setting boundaries to, for example, guard our hearts (Prov. 4:23), take up our crosses (Luke 9:23), be good stewards (Matt. 25:14-30), and grow the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22, 23).

Boundaries help us to know our responsibilities to others. We are to love others, but without rescuing or enabling them (Lev. 19:15; Prov. 19:19; 2 Thess. 3:10). We are to know when to protect ourselves from the sin or immaturity of others (Prov. 22:3; Matt. 7:6)

and when to turn the other cheek (Matt. 5:39). We are to confront and provide consequences for those who are hurtful or irresponsible (Matt. 18:15-17; 1 Cor. 5:1-5). Boundaries help us to become a conduit for God's truth, justice, and discipline. When clear boundaries are not kept, relationships can deteriorate in destructive ways.

**BOUNDARIES PROTECT FREEDOM**

Boundaries preserve the freedom to choose God's paths. We can only truly love God and others when we are free.

God uses boundaries to establish His freedom, His independence. No one instructs Him (Is. 40:13, 14). He makes choices because He knows they are the right choices. He is free to say no to our requests (2 Cor. 12:7-10).

Boundaries protect our freedom with other people. We can freely choose to submit our lives to God, no matter what others say (Josh. 24:15). We can choose our paths and have personal preferences and opinions. Freedom has consequences, however. We are free to move away from God, as well as toward Him. Boundaries give us freedom, but we need to use our freedom to look forward to the path He has for us, instead of back at the old ways.

**DEVELOPING HEALTHY BOUNDARIES**

Perhaps we have found that love does not flow freely from us to God or to another person. Perhaps we are taking responsibility for someone else's feelings. Or we suffer from a lack of freedom in our choices-being controlled by our own conflicts or someone else's manipulation. Following are some suggestions for developing boundaries:

• Become aware of areas of your life that show boundary problems and explore the roots of those conflicts.

• Meet regularly with caring people who will tell the truth, say no, and help you set limits.

• Take ownership of the problem rather than blaming others.

• Give and receive forgiveness.

• Risk telling the truth to God and to safe people in your life.

• Set limits and establish consequences with those who are irresponsible or controlling.

• Learn to give freely to those who legitimately need our help.

God knows these issues and has provided a solution through biblical boundaries. We can take Him at His word and begin to develop the ability to form our boundaries and stand firm within them.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of boundaries include:

- Exodus 18:13-24
- Proverbs 10:18
- Matthew 5:37; 7:6; 18:15-20
- 2 Corinthians 9:6, 7
- Galatians 5:1-23; 6:1-7
- Ephesians 4:25

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on boundaries at 2 Corinthians 6:14. See also the personality profile of Lot's Blurred Boundaries.

## THE LAW CONCERNING SERVANTS

**21** “Now these *are* the judgments which you shall set before them: [2]If you buy a Hebrew servant, he shall serve six years; and in the seventh he shall go out free and pay nothing. [3]If he comes in by himself, he shall go out by himself; if he *comes in* married, then his wife shall go out with him. [4]If his master has given him a wife, and she has borne him sons or daughters, the wife and her children shall be her master’s, and he shall go out by himself. [5]But if the servant plainly says, ‘I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free,’ [6]then his master shall bring him to the judges. He shall also bring him to the door, or to the doorpost, and his master shall pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall serve him forever.

[7]“And if a man sells his daughter to be a female slave, she shall not go out as the male slaves do. [8]If she does not please her master, who has betrothed her to himself, then he shall let her be redeemed. He shall have no right to sell her to a foreign people, since he has dealt deceitfully with her. [9]And if he has betrothed her to his son, he shall deal with her according to the custom of daughters. [10]If he takes another *wife,* he shall not diminish her food, her clothing, and her marriage rights. [11]And if he does not do these three for her, then she shall go out free, without *paying* money.

## THE LAW CONCERNING VIOLENCE

[12]“He who strikes a man so that he dies shall surely be put to death. [13]However, if he did not lie in wait, but God delivered *him* into his hand, then I will appoint for you a place where he may flee.

[14]“But if a man acts with premeditation against his neighbor, to kill him by treachery, you shall take him from My altar, that he may die.

[15]“And he who strikes his father or his mother shall surely be put to death.

[16]“He who kidnaps a man and sells him, or if he is found in his hand, shall surely be put to death.

[17]“And he who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death.

[18]“If men contend with each other, and one strikes the other with a stone or

with *his* fist, and he does not die but is confined to *his* bed, [19]if he rises again and walks about outside with his staff, then he who struck *him* shall be acquitted. He shall only pay *for* the loss of his time, and shall provide *for him* to be thoroughly healed.

[20]"And if a man beats his male or female servant with a rod, so that he dies under his hand, he shall surely be punished. [21]Notwithstanding, if he remains alive a day or two, he shall not be punished; for he *is* his property.

[22]"If men fight, and hurt a woman with child, so that she gives birth prematurely, yet no harm follows, he shall surely be punished accordingly as the woman's husband imposes on him; and he shall pay as the judges *determine.* [23]But if *any* harm follows, then you shall give life for life, [24]eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, [25]burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.

[26]"If a man strikes the eye of his male or female servant, and destroys it, he shall let him go free for the sake of his eye. [27]And if he knocks out the tooth of his male or female servant, he shall let him go free for the sake of his tooth.

## ANIMAL CONTROL LAWS

[28]"If an ox gores a man or a woman to death, then the ox shall surely be stoned, and its flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox *shall be* acquitted. [29]But if the ox tended to thrust with its horn in times past, and it has been made known to his owner, and he has not kept it confined, so that it has killed a man or a woman, the ox shall be stoned and its owner also shall be put to death. [30]If there is imposed on him a sum of money, then he shall pay to redeem his life, whatever is imposed on him. [31]Whether it has gored a son or gored a daughter, according to this judgment it shall be done to him. [32]If the ox gores a male or female servant, he shall give to their master thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be stoned.

[33]"And if a man opens a pit, or if a man digs a pit and does not cover it, and an ox or a donkey falls in it, [34]the owner of the pit shall make *it* good; he shall give money to their owner, but the dead *animal* shall be his.

35 “If one man’s ox hurts another’s, so that it dies, then they shall sell the
live ox and divide the money from it; and the dead *ox* they shall also divide.
36 Or if it was known that the ox tended to thrust in time past, and its owner
has not kept it confined, he shall surely pay ox for ox, and the dead animal
shall be his own.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Choosing Life** *(21:22)* What kindness God shows! The list of laws in Exodus 21:1-32 provide an important statement of human rights. This verse shows God’s protection of the most defenseless people on the planet-children in the womb. Even causing a premature but otherwise healthy birth was a punishable offense. If either the mother or the baby was harmed or killed, punishment was served by a strict proportionality: life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth. God is the champion of life, and has always protected women, children, and the weakest members of society. **Topic: Abortion**

**RESPONSIBILITY FOR PROPERTY**

**22** “If a man steals an ox or a sheep, and slaughters it or sells it, he shall
restore five oxen for an ox and four sheep for a sheep. 2If the thief is
found breaking in, and he is struck so that he dies, *there shall be* no guilt for
his bloodshed. 3If the sun has risen on him, *there shall be* guilt for his
bloodshed. He should make full restitution; if he has nothing, then he shall be
sold for his theft. 4If the theft is certainly found alive in his hand, whether it is
an ox or donkey or sheep, he shall restore double.

5“If a man causes a field or vineyard to be grazed, and lets loose his
animal, and it feeds in another man’s field, he shall make restitution from the
best of his own field and the best of his own vineyard.

6“If fire breaks out and catches in thorns, so that stacked grain, standing
grain, or the field is consumed, he who kindled the fire shall surely make
restitution.

7“If a man delivers to his neighbor money or articles to keep, and it is
stolen out of the man’s house, if the thief is found, he shall pay double. 8If the
thief is not found, then the master of the house shall be brought to the judges
*to see* whether he has put his hand into his neighbor’s goods.

9“For any kind of trespass, *whether it concerns* an ox, a donkey, a sheep, or
clothing, *or* for any kind of lost thing which *another* claims to be his, the
cause of both parties shall come before the judges; *and* whomever the judges
condemn shall pay double to his neighbor. 10If a man delivers to his neighbor
a donkey, an ox, a sheep, or any animal to keep, and it dies, is hurt, or driven
away, no one seeing *it*, 11*then* an oath of the LORD shall be between them
both, that he has not put his hand into his neighbor’s goods; and the owner of
it shall accept *that*, and he shall not make *it* good. 12But if, in fact, it is stolen
from him, he shall make restitution to the owner of it. 13If it is torn to pieces
*by a beast*, *then* he shall bring it as evidence, *and* he shall not make good
what was torn.

14“And if a man borrows *anything* from his neighbor, and it becomes
injured or dies, the owner of it not *being* with it, he shall surely make *it* good.
15If its owner *was* with it, he shall not make *it* good; if it *was* hired, it came

for its hire.

## MORAL AND CEREMONIAL PRINCIPLES

16 "If a man entices a virgin who is not betrothed, and lies with her, he shall surely pay the bride-price for her *to be* his wife. 17 If her father utterly refuses to give her to him, he shall pay money according to the bride-price of virgins.

18 "You shall not permit a sorceress to live.

19 "Whoever lies with an animal shall surely be put to death.

20 "He who sacrifices to *any* god, except to the LORD only, he shall be utterly destroyed.

21 "You shall neither mistreat a stranger nor oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

22 "You shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child. 23 If you afflict them in any way, *and* they cry at all to Me, I will surely hear their cry; 24 and My wrath will become hot, and I will kill you with the sword; your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless.

25 "If you lend money to *any of* My people *who are* poor among you, you shall not be like a moneylender to him; you shall not charge him interest. 26 If you ever take your neighbor's garment as a pledge, you shall return it to him before the sun goes down. 27 For that *is* his only covering, it *is* his garment for his skin.

What will he sleep in? And it will be that when he cries to Me, I will hear, for I *am* gracious.

28 "You shall not revile God, nor curse a ruler of your people.

29 "You shall not delay *to offer* the first of your ripe produce and your juices. The firstborn of your sons you shall give to Me. 30 Likewise you shall do with your oxen *and* your sheep. It shall be with its mother seven days; on the eighth day you shall give it to Me.

31 "And you shall be holy men to Me: you shall not eat meat torn *by beasts* in the field; you shall throw it to the dogs.

## JUSTICE FOR ALL

**23** “You shall not circulate a false report. Do not put your hand with the
wicked to be an unrighteous witness. 2You shall not follow a crowd to
do evil; nor shall you testify in a dispute so as to turn aside after many to
pervert *justice.* 3You shall not show partiality to a poor man in his dispute.

4“If you meet your enemy’s ox or his donkey going astray, you shall surely
bring it back to him again. 5If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying
under its burden, and you would refrain from helping it, you shall surely help
him with it.

6“You shall not pervert the judgment of your poor in his dispute. 7Keep
yourself far from a false matter; do not kill the innocent and righteous. For I
will not justify the wicked. 8And you shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds
the discerning and perverts the words of the righteous.

9“Also you shall not oppress a stranger, for you know the heart of a
stranger, because you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

## THE LAW OF SABBATHS

10“Six years you shall sow your land and gather in its produce, 11but the
seventh *year* you shall let it rest and lie fallow, that the poor of your people
may eat; and what they leave, the beasts of the field may eat. In like manner
you shall do with your vineyard *and* your olive grove. 12Six days you shall do
your work, and on the seventh day you shall rest, that your ox and your
donkey may rest, and the son of your female servant and the stranger may be
refreshed.

13“And in all that I have said to you, be circumspect and make no mention
of the name of other gods, nor let it be heard from your mouth.

## THREE ANNUAL FEASTS

14“Three times you shall keep a feast to Me in the year: 15You shall keep
the Feast of Unleavened Bread (you shall eat unleavened bread seven days, as
I commanded you, at the time appointed in the month of Abib, for in it you
came out of Egypt; none shall appear before Me empty); 16and the Feast of

Harvest, the firstfruits of your labors which you have sown in the field; and the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you have gathered in *the fruit of* your labors from the field.

17 "Three times in the year all your males shall appear before the Lord GOD.[a]

18 "You shall not offer the blood of My sacrifice with leavened bread; nor shall the fat of My sacrifice remain until morning. 19 The first of the firstfruits of your land you shall bring into the house of the LORD your God. You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk.

**THE ANGEL AND THE PROMISES**

20 "Behold, I send an Angel before you to keep you in the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared. 21 Beware of Him and obey His voice; do not provoke Him, for He will not pardon your transgressions; for My name *is* in Him. 22 But if you indeed obey His voice and do all that I speak, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries. 23 For My Angel will go before you and bring you in to the Amorites and the Hittites and the Perizzites and the Canaanites and the Hivites and the Jebusites; and I will cut them off. 24 You shall not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do according to their works; but you shall utterly overthrow them and completely break down their *sacred* pillars.

25 "So you shall serve the LORD your God, and He will bless your bread and your water. And I will take sickness away from the midst of you. 26 No one shall suffer miscarriage or be barren in your land; I will fulfill the number of your days.

27 "I will send My fear before you, I will cause confusion among all the people to whom you come, and will make all your enemies turn *their* backs to you. 28 And I will send hornets before you, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite from before you. 29 I will not drive them out from before you in one year, lest the land become desolate and the beasts of the field become too numerous for you. 30 Little by little I will drive them out from before you, until you have increased, and you inherit the land. 31 And I will set your bounds from the Red Sea to the sea, Philistia, and from the

desert to the River.[a] For I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand, and you shall drive them out before you. [32]You shall make no covenant with them, nor with their gods. [33]They shall not dwell in your land, lest they make you sin against Me. For *if* you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you.”

## ISRAEL AFFIRMS THE COVENANT

**24** Now He said to Moses, “Come up to the LORD, you and Aaron, Nadab
and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and worship from afar.
2And Moses alone shall come near the LORD, but they shall not come near;
nor shall the people go up with him.”

> ”All that the LORD has said we will do, and be obedient.”
> EXODUS 24:7

3 So Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD and all the
judgments. And all the people answered with one voice and said, “All the
words which the LORD has said we will do.” 4And Moses wrote all the words
of the LORD. And he rose early in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of
the mountain, and twelve pillars according to the twelve tribes of Israel.
5Then he sent young men of the children of Israel, who offered burnt
offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the LORD. 6And Moses
took half the blood and put *it* in basins, and half the blood he sprinkled on the
altar. 7Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the
people. And they said, “All that the LORD has said we will do, and be
obedient.” 8And Moses took the blood, sprinkled *it* on the people, and said,
“This is the blood of the covenant which the LORD has made with you
according to all these words.”

### ON THE MOUNTAIN WITH GOD

9Then Moses went up, also Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the
elders of Israel, 10and they saw the God of Israel. And *there was* under His
feet as it were a paved work of sapphire stone, and it was like the very
heavens in *its* clarity. 11But on the nobles of the children of Israel He did not
lay His hand. So they saw God, and they ate and drank.

12Then the LORD said to Moses, “Come up to Me on the mountain and be
there; and I will give you tablets of stone, and the law and commandments
which I have written, that you may teach them.”

13So Moses arose with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up to the

mountain of God. [14]And he said to the elders, “Wait here for us until we come back to you. Indeed, Aaron and Hur *are* with you. If any man has a difficulty, let him go to them.” [15]Then Moses went up into the mountain, and a cloud covered the mountain.

[16]Now the glory of the LORD rested on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days. And on the seventh day He called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud. [17]The sight of the glory of the LORD *was* like a consuming fire on the top of the mountain in the eyes of the children of Israel. [18]So Moses went into the midst of the cloud and went up into the mountain. And Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Meeting with God** *(24:12)* As the leaders of Israel assembled at Mount Sinai to worship God, only Moses was permitted to “come near” the Lord (24:2). The others had to worship God “from afar” (24:1). We will not go up onto Mount Sinai as Moses did, but every day we can come near to God through worship and prayer. Because of Christ, we can “come boldly to the throne of grace” (Heb. 4:16). The closer we draw to God’s presence, the more clearly we will hear His voice, and the more our lives will be transformed. **Topic: Praise and Worship**

## OFFERINGS FOR THE SANCTUARY

**25** Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: [2]"Speak to the children of Israel, that they bring Me an offering. From everyone who gives it willingly with his heart you shall take My offering. [3]And this *is* the offering which you shall take from them: gold, silver, and bronze; [4]blue, purple, and scarlet *thread,* fine linen, and goats' *hair;* [5]ram skins dyed red, badger skins, and acacia wood; [6]oil for the light, and spices for the anointing oil and for the sweet incense; [7]onyx stones, and stones to be set in the ephod and in the breastplate. [8]And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them. [9]According to all that I show you, *that is,* the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make *it.*

## THE ARK OF THE TESTIMONY

[10]"And they shall make an ark of acacia wood; two and a half cubits *shall be* its length, a cubit and a half its width, and a cubit and a half its height. [11]And you shall overlay it with pure gold, inside and out you shall overlay it, and shall make on it a molding of gold all around. [12]You shall cast four rings of gold for it, and put *them* in its four corners; two rings *shall be* on one side, and two rings on the other side. [13]And you shall make poles *of* acacia wood, and overlay them with gold. [14]You shall put the poles into the rings on the sides of the ark, that the ark may be carried by them. [15]The poles shall be in the rings of the ark; they shall not be taken from it. [16]And you shall put into the ark the Testimony which I will give you.

[17]"You shall make a mercy seat of pure gold; two and a half cubits *shall be* its length and a cubit and a half its width. [18]And you shall make two cherubim of gold; of hammered work you shall make them at the two ends of the mercy seat. [19]Make one cherub at one end, and the other cherub at the other end; you shall make the cherubim at the two ends of it *of one piece* with the mercy seat. [20]And the cherubim shall stretch out *their* wings above, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and they shall face one another; the faces of the cherubim *shall be* toward the mercy seat. [21]You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the Testimony that I

will give you. [22]And there I will meet with you, and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which *are* on the ark of the Testimony, about everything which I will give you in commandment to the children of Israel.

**THE TABLE FOR THE SHOWBREAD**

[23]"You shall also make a table of acacia wood; two cubits *shall be* its length, a cubit its width, and a cubit and a half its height. [24]And you shall overlay it with pure gold, and make a molding of gold all around. [25]You shall make for it a frame of a handbreadth all around, and you shall make a gold molding for the frame all around. [26]And you shall make for it four rings of gold, and put the rings on the four corners that *are* at its four legs. [27]The rings shall be close to the frame, as holders for the poles to bear the table. [28]And you shall make the poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold, that the table may be carried with them. [29]You shall make its dishes, its pans, its pitchers, and its bowls for pouring. You shall make them of pure gold. [30]And you shall set the showbread on the table before Me always.

**THE GOLD LAMPSTAND**

[31]"You shall also make a lampstand of pure gold; the lampstand shall be of hammered work. Its shaft, its branches, its bowls, its *ornamental* knobs, and flowers shall be *of one piece*. [32]And six branches shall come out of its sides: three branches of the lampstand out of one side, and three branches of the lampstand out of the other side. [33]Three bowls *shall be* made like almond *blossoms* on one branch, *with* an *ornamental* knob and a flower, and three bowls made like almond *blossoms* on the other branch, *with* an *ornamental* knob and a flower-and so for the six branches that come out of the lampstand. [34]On the lamp-stand itself four bowls *shall be* made like almond *blossoms, each with* its *ornamental* knob and flower. [35]And *there shall be* a knob under the *first* two branches of the same, a knob under the *second* two branches of the same, and a knob under the *third* two branches of the same, according to the six branches that extend from the lampstand. [36]Their knobs and their branches *shall be of one piece;* all of it *shall be* one hammered piece of pure gold. [37]You shall make seven lamps for it, and they shall arrange its lamps so

that they give light in front of it. [38]And its wick-trimmers and their trays *shall be* of pure gold. [39]It shall be made of a talent of pure gold, with all these utensils. [40]And see to it that you make *them* according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Together** *(25:1-9)* Worship modes were not arbitrary in ancient Israel. The proper patterns and procedures of worship were clearly defined by God, as were the explicit details of the worship center called the tabernacle. The construction and financing of the tabernacle involved the entire community. As believers build a church through planning, giving, and serving, they gain a sense of ownership and participation in God's house. Worshiping together as a community of believers shows what it means to be part of the family of God. **Topic: Praise and Worship**

**THE TABERNACLE**

**26** “Moreover you shall make the tabernacle *with* ten curtains *of* fine woven
linen and blue, purple, and scarlet *thread;* with artistic designs of
cherubim you shall weave them. 2The length of each curtain *shall be* twenty-
eight cubits, and the width of each curtain four cubits. And every one of the
curtains shall have the same measurements. 3Five curtains shall be coupled to
one another, and *the other* five curtains *shall be* coupled to one another. 4And
you shall make loops of blue *yarn* on the edge of the curtain on the selvedge
of *one* set, and likewise you shall do on the outer edge of *the other* curtain of
the second set. 5Fifty loops you shall make in the one curtain, and fifty loops
you shall make on the edge of the curtain that *is* on the end of the second set,
that the loops may be clasped to one another. 6And you shall make fifty
clasps of gold, and couple the curtains together with the clasps, so that it may
be one tabernacle.

7“You shall also make curtains of goats’ *hair*, to be a tent over the
tabernacle. You shall make eleven curtains. 8The length of each curtain *shall
be* thirty cubits, and the width of each curtain four cubits; and the eleven
curtains shall all have the same measurements. 9And you shall couple five
curtains by themselves and six curtains by themselves, and you shall double
over the sixth curtain at the forefront of the tent. 10You shall make fifty loops
on the edge of the curtain that is outermost in *one* set, and fifty loops on the
edge of the curtain of the second set. 11And you shall make fifty bronze
clasps, put the clasps into the loops, and couple the tent together, that it may
be one. 12The remnant that remains of the curtains of the tent, the half curtain
that remains, shall hang over the back of the tabernacle. 13And a cubit on one
side and a cubit on the other side, of what remains of the length of the
curtains of the tent, shall hang over the sides of the tabernacle, on this side
and on that side, to cover it.

14“You shall also make a covering of ram skins dyed red for the tent, and a
covering of badger skins above that.

15“And for the tabernacle you shall make the boards of acacia wood,
standing upright. 16Ten cubits *shall be* the length of a board, and a cubit and a

half *shall be* the width of each board. [17]Two tenons *shall be* in each board for binding one to another. Thus you shall make for all the boards of the tabernacle. [18]And you shall make the boards for the tabernacle, twenty boards for the south side. [19]You shall make forty sockets of silver under the twenty boards: two sockets under each of the boards for its two tenons. [20]And for the second side of the tabernacle, the north side, *there shall be* twenty boards [21]and their forty sockets of silver: two sockets under each of the boards. [22]For the far side of the tabernacle, westward, you shall make six boards. [23]And you shall also make two boards for the two back corners of the tabernacle. [24]They shall be coupled together at the bottom and they shall be coupled together at the top by one ring. Thus it shall be for both of them. They shall be for the two corners. [25]So there shall be eight boards with their sockets of silver-sixteen sockets-two sockets under each of the boards.

[26]"And you shall make bars of acacia wood: five for the boards on one side of the tabernacle, [27]five bars for the boards on the other side of the tabernacle, and five bars for the boards of the side of the tabernacle, for the far side westward. [28]The middle bar shall pass through the midst of the boards from end to end. [29]You shall overlay the boards with gold, make their rings of gold *as* holders for the bars, and overlay the bars with gold. [30]And you shall raise up the tabernacle according to its pattern which you were shown on the mountain.

[31]"You shall make a veil woven of blue, purple, and scarlet *thread*, and fine woven linen. It shall be woven with an artistic design of cherubim. [32]You shall hang it upon the four pillars of acacia *wood* overlaid with gold. Their hooks *shall be* gold, upon four sockets of silver. [33]And you shall hang the veil from the clasps. Then you shall bring the ark of the Testimony in there, behind the veil. The veil shall be a divider for you between the holy *place* and the Most Holy. [34]You shall put the mercy seat upon the ark of the Testimony in the Most Holy. [35]You shall set the table outside the veil, and the lampstand across from the table on the side of the tabernacle toward the south; and you shall put the table on the north side.

[36]"You shall make a screen for the door of the tabernacle, *woven of* blue, purple, and scarlet *thread*, and fine woven linen, made by a weaver. [37]And

you shall make for the screen five pillars of acacia *wood*, and overlay them with gold; their hooks *shall be* gold, and you shall cast five sockets of bronze for them.

## THE ALTAR OF BURNT OFFERING

**27** “You shall make an altar of acacia wood, five cubits long and five cubits
wide-the altar shall be square-and its height *shall be* three cubits. 2You
shall make its horns on its four corners; its horns shall be of one piece with it.
And you shall overlay it with bronze. 3Also you shall make its pans to receive
its ashes, and its shovels and its basins and its forks and its firepans; you shall
make all its utensils of bronze. 4You shall make a grate for it, a network of
bronze; and on the network you shall make four bronze rings at its four
corners. 5You shall put it under the rim of the altar beneath, that the network
may be midway up the altar. 6And you shall make poles for the altar, poles of
acacia wood, and overlay them with bronze. 7The poles shall be put in the
rings, and the poles shall be on the two sides of the altar to bear it. 8You shall
make it hollow with boards; as it was shown you on the mountain, so shall
they make *it.*

## THE COURT OF THE TABERNACLE

9“You shall also make the court of the tabernacle. For the south side *there
shall be* hangings for the court *made of* fine woven linen, one hundred cubits
long for one side. 10And its twenty pillars and their twenty sockets *shall be*
bronze. The hooks of the pillars and their bands *shall be* silver. 11Likewise
along the length of the north side *there shall be* hangings one hundred *cubits*
long, with its twenty pillars and their twenty sockets of bronze, and the hooks
of the pillars and their bands of silver.

12“And along the width of the court on the west side *shall be* hangings of
fifty cubits, with their ten pillars and their ten sockets. 13The width of the
court on the east side *shall be* fifty cubits. 14The hangings on *one* side *of the
gate shall be* fifteen cubits, *with* their three pillars and their three sockets.
15And on the other side *shall be* hangings of fifteen *cubits, with* their three
pillars and their three sockets.

16“For the gate of the court *there shall be* a screen twenty cubits long,
*woven of* blue, purple, and scarlet *thread,* and fine woven linen, made by a
weaver. It *shall have* four pillars and four sockets. 17All the pillars around the

court shall have bands of silver; their hooks *shall be* of silver and their sockets of bronze. [18]The length of the court *shall be* one hundred cubits, the width fifty throughout, and the height five cubits, *made of* fine woven linen, and its sockets of bronze. [19]All the utensils of the tabernacle for all its service, all its pegs, and all the pegs of the court, *shall be* of bronze.

**THE CARE OF THE LAMPSTAND**

[20]"And you shall command the children of Israel that they bring you pure oil of pressed olives for the light, to cause the lamp to burn continually. [21]In the tabernacle of meeting, outside the veil which *is* before the Testimony, Aaron and his sons shall tend it from evening until morning before the LORD. *It shall be* a statute forever to their generations on behalf of the children of Israel.

## GARMENTS FOR THE PRIESTHOOD

**28** “Now take Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the
children of Israel, that he may minister to Me as priest, Aaron *and*
Aaron’s sons: Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. 2And you shall make holy
garments for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty. 3So you shall
speak to all *who are* gifted artisans, whom I have filled with the spirit of
wisdom, that they may make Aaron’s garments, to consecrate him, that he
may minister to Me as priest. 4And these *are* the garments which they shall
make: a breastplate, an ephod,[a] a robe, a skillfully woven tunic, a turban, and
a sash. So they shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother and his
sons, that he may minister to Me as priest.

## THE EPHOD

5“They shall take the gold, blue, purple, and scarlet *thread*, and the fine
linen, 6and they shall make the ephod of gold, blue, purple, *and* scarlet
*thread*, and fine woven linen, artistically worked. 7It shall have two shoulder
straps joined at its two edges, and *so* it shall be joined together. 8And the
intricately woven band of the ephod, which *is* on it, shall be of the same
workmanship, *made of* gold, blue, purple, and scarlet *thread*, and fine woven
linen.

9“Then you shall take two onyx stones and engrave on them the names of
the sons of Israel: 10six of their names on one stone and six names on the
other stone, in order of their birth. 11With the work of an engraver in stone,
*like* the engravings of a signet, you shall engrave the two stones with the
names of the sons of Israel. You shall set them in settings of gold. 12And you
shall put the two stones on the shoulders of the ephod *as* memorial stones for
the sons of Israel. So Aaron shall bear their names before the LORD on his
two shoulders as a memorial. 13You shall also make settings of gold, 14and
you shall make two chains of pure gold like braided cords, and fasten the
braided chains to the settings.

## THE BREASTPLATE

15 “You shall make the breastplate of judgment. Artistically woven
according to the workmanship of the ephod you shall make it: of gold, blue,
purple, and scarlet *thread,* and fine woven linen, you shall make it. 16 It shall
be doubled into a square: a span *shall be* its length, and a span *shall be* its
width. 17 And you shall put settings of stones in it, four rows of stones: *The
first* row *shall be* a sardius, a topaz, and an emerald; *this shall be* the first
row; 18 the second row *shall be* a turquoise, a sapphire, and a diamond; 19 the
third row, a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst; 20 and the fourth row, a beryl,
an onyx, and a jasper. They shall be set in gold settings. 21 And the stones
shall have the names of the sons of Israel, twelve according to their names,
*like* the engravings of a signet, each one with its own name; they shall be
according to the twelve tribes.

22 “You shall make chains for the breastplate at the end, like braided cords
of pure gold. 23 And you shall make two rings of gold for the breastplate, and
put the two rings on the two ends of the breastplate. 24 Then you shall put the
two braided *chains* of gold in the two rings which are on the ends of the
breastplate; 25 and the *other* two ends of the two braided *chains* you shall
fasten to the two settings, and put them on the shoulder straps of the ephod in
the front.

26 “You shall make two rings of gold, and put them on the two ends of the
breastplate, on the edge of it, which is on the inner side of the ephod. 27 And
two *other* rings of gold you shall make, and put them on the two shoulder
straps, underneath the ephod toward its front, right at the seam above the
intricately woven band of the ephod. 28 They shall bind the breastplate by
means of its rings to the rings of the ephod, using a blue cord, so that it is
above the intricately woven band of the ephod, and so that the breastplate
does not come loose from the ephod.

29 “So Aaron shall bear the names of the sons of Israel on the breastplate of
judgment over his heart, when he goes into the holy *place,* as a memorial
before the LORD continually. 30 And you shall put in the breastplate of
judgment the Urim and the Thummim,[a] and they shall be over Aaron’s heart
when he goes in before the LORD. So Aaron shall bear the judgment of the
children of Israel over his heart before the LORD continually.

**OTHER PRIESTLY GARMENTS**

31 “You shall make the robe of the ephod all of blue. 32 There shall be an
opening for his head in the middle of it; it shall have a woven binding all
around its opening, like the opening in a coat of mail, so that it does not tear.
33 And upon its hem you shall make pomegranates of blue, purple, and scarlet,
all around its hem, and bells of gold between them all around: 34 a golden bell
and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate, upon the hem of the
robe all around. 35 And it shall be upon Aaron when he ministers, and its
sound will be heard when he goes into the holy *place* before the LORD and
when he comes out, that he may not die.

36 “You shall also make a plate of pure gold and engrave on it, *like* the
engraving of a signet:

HOLINESS TO THE LORD.

37 And you shall put it on a blue cord, that it may be on the turban; it shall be
on the front of the turban. 38 So it shall be on Aaron’s forehead, that Aaron
may bear the iniquity of the holy things which the children of Israel hallow in
all their holy gifts; and it shall always be on his forehead, that they may be
accepted before the LORD.

39 “You shall skillfully weave the tunic of fine linen *thread*, you shall make
the turban of fine linen, and you shall make the sash of woven work.

40 “For Aaron’s sons you shall make tunics, and you shall make sashes for
them. And you shall make hats for them, for glory and beauty. 41 So you shall
put them on Aaron your brother and on his sons with him. You shall anoint
them, consecrate them, and sanctify them, that they may minister to Me as
priests. 42 And you shall make for them linen trousers to cover their
nakedness; they shall reach from the waist to the thighs. 43 They shall be on
Aaron and on his sons when they come into the tabernacle of meeting, or
when they come near the altar to minister in the holy *place*, that they do not
incur iniquity and die. *It shall be* a statute forever to him and his descendants
after him.

## AARON AND HIS SONS CONSECRATED

**29** “And this is what you shall do to them to hallow them for ministering to
Me as priests: Take one young bull and two rams without blemish, 2and
unleavened bread, unleavened cakes mixed with oil, and unleavened wafers
anointed with oil (you shall make them of wheat flour). 3You shall put them
in one basket and bring them in the basket, with the bull and the two rams.

4“And Aaron and his sons you shall bring to the door of the tabernacle of
meeting, and you shall wash them with water. 5Then you shall take the
garments, put the tunic on Aaron, and the robe of the ephod, the ephod, and
the breastplate, and gird him with the intricately woven band of the ephod.
6You shall put the turban on his head, and put the holy crown on the turban.
7And you shall take the anointing oil, pour *it* on his head, and anoint him.
8Then you shall bring his sons and put tunics on them. 9And you shall gird
them with sashes, Aaron and his sons, and put the hats on them. The
priesthood shall be theirs for a perpetual statute. So you shall consecrate
Aaron and his sons.

10“You shall also have the bull brought before the tabernacle of meeting,
and Aaron and his sons shall put their hands on the head of the bull. 11Then
you shall kill the bull before the LORD, *by* the door of the tabernacle of
meeting. 12You shall take *some* of the blood of the bull and put *it* on the
horns of the altar with your finger, and pour all the blood beside the base of
the altar. 13And you shall take all the fat that covers the entrails, the fatty lobe
*attached* to the liver, and the two kidneys and the fat that *is* on them, and
burn *them* on the altar. 14But the flesh of the bull, with its skin and its offal,
you shall burn with fire outside the camp. It *is* a sin offering.

15“You shall also take one ram, and Aaron and his sons shall put their
hands on the head of the ram; 16and you shall kill the ram, and you shall take
its blood and sprinkle *it* all around on the altar. 17Then you shall cut the ram
in pieces, wash its entrails and its legs, and put *them* with its pieces and with
its head. 18And you shall burn the whole ram on the altar. It *is* a burnt
offering to the LORD; it *is* a sweet aroma, an offering made by fire to the
LORD.

19 “You shall also take the other ram, and Aaron and his sons shall put their
hands on the head of the ram. 20 Then you shall kill the ram, and take some of
its blood and put *it* on the tip of the right ear of Aaron and on the tip of the
right ear of his sons, on the thumb of their right hand and on the big toe of
their right foot, and sprinkle the blood all around on the altar. 21 And you shall
take some of the blood that is on the altar, and some of the anointing oil, and
sprinkle *it* on Aaron and on his garments, on his sons and on the garments of
his sons with him; and he and his garments shall be hallowed, and his sons
and his sons’ garments with him.

22 “Also you shall take the fat of the ram, the fat tail, the fat that covers the
entrails, the fatty lobe *attached to* the liver, the two kidneys and the fat on
them, the right thigh (for it *is* a ram of consecration), 23 one loaf of bread, one
cake *made with* oil, and one wafer from the basket of the unleavened bread
that *is* before the LORD; 24 and you shall put all these in the hands of Aaron
and in the hands of his sons, and you shall wave them *as* a wave offering
before the LORD. 25 You shall receive them back from their hands and burn
*them* on the altar as a burnt offering, as a sweet aroma before the LORD. It *is*
an offering made by fire to the LORD.

26 “Then you shall take the breast of the ram of Aaron’s consecration and
wave it *as* a wave offering before the LORD; and it shall be your portion.
27 And from the ram of the consecration you shall consecrate the breast of the
wave offering which is waved, and the thigh of the heave offering which is
raised, of *that* which *is* for Aaron and of *that* which is for his sons. 28 It shall
be from the children of Israel *for* Aaron and his sons by a statute forever. For
it is a heave offering; it shall be a heave offering from the children of Israel
from the sacrifices of their peace offerings, *that is,* their heave offering to the
LORD.

29 “And the holy garments of Aaron shall be his sons’ after him, to be
anointed in them and to be consecrated in them. 30 That son who becomes
priest in his place shall put them on for seven days, when he enters the
tabernacle of meeting to minister in the holy *place.*

31 “And you shall take the ram of the consecration and boil its flesh in the
holy place. 32 Then Aaron and his sons shall eat the flesh of the ram, and the

bread that *is* in the basket, *by* the door of the tabernacle of meeting. [33]They shall eat those things with which the atonement was made, to consecrate *and* to sanctify them; but an outsider shall not eat *them,* because they *are* holy. [34]And if any of the flesh of the consecration offerings, or of the bread, remains until the morning, then you shall burn the remainder with fire. It shall not be eaten, because it *is* holy.

[35]"Thus you shall do to Aaron and his sons, according to all that I have commanded you. Seven days you shall consecrate them. [36]And you shall offer a bull every day *as* a sin offering for atonement. You shall cleanse the altar when you make atonement for it, and you shall anoint it to sanctify it. [37]Seven days you shall make atonement for the altar and sanctify it. And the altar shall be most holy. Whatever touches the altar must be holy.[a]

**THE DAILY OFFERINGS**

[38]"Now this *is* what you shall offer on the altar: two lambs of the first year, day by day continually. [39]One lamb you shall offer in the morning, and the other lamb you shall offer at twilight. [40]With the one lamb shall be one-tenth *of an ephah* of flour mixed with one-fourth of a hin of pressed oil, and one-fourth of a hin of wine *as* a drink offering. [41]And the other lamb you shall offer at twilight; and you shall offer with it the grain offering and the drink offering, as in the morning, for a sweet aroma, an offering made by fire to the LORD. [42]*This shall be* a continual burnt offering throughout your generations *at* the door of the tabernacle of meeting before the LORD, where I will meet you to speak with you. [43]And there I will meet with the children of Israel, and *the tabernacle* shall be sanctified by My glory. [44]So I will consecrate the tabernacle of meeting and the altar. I will also consecrate both Aaron and his sons to minister to Me as priests. [45]I will dwell among the children of Israel and will be their God. [46]And they shall know that I *am* the LORD their God, who brought them up out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them. I *am* the LORD their God.

## THE ALTAR OF INCENSE

**30** "You shall make an altar to burn incense on; you shall make it of acacia
wood. 2A cubit *shall be* its length and a cubit its width-it shall be square-
and two cubits *shall be* its height. Its horns *shall be* of one piece with it. 3And
you shall overlay its top, its sides all around, and its horns with pure gold;
and you shall make for it a molding of gold all around. 4Two gold rings you
shall make for it, under the molding on both its sides. You shall place *them*
on its two sides, and they will be holders for the poles with which to bear it.
5You shall make the poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold. 6And
you shall put it before the veil that *is* before the ark of the Testimony, before
the mercy seat that *is* over the Testimony, where I will meet with you.

7"Aaron shall burn on it sweet incense every morning; when he tends the
lamps, he shall burn incense on it. 8And when Aaron lights the lamps at
twilight, he shall burn incense on it, a perpetual incense before the LORD
throughout your generations. 9You shall not offer strange incense on it, or a
burnt offering, or a grain offering; nor shall you pour a drink offering on it.
10And Aaron shall make atonement upon its horns once a year with the blood
of the sin offering of atonement; once a year he shall make atonement upon it
throughout your generations. It *is* most holy to the LORD."

## THE RANSOM MONEY

11Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 12"When you take the census of
the children of Israel for their number, then every man shall give a ransom for
himself to the LORD, when you number them, that there may be no plague
among them when *you* number them. 13This is what everyone among those
who are numbered shall give: half a shekel according to the shekel of the
sanctuary (a shekel *is* twenty gerahs). The half-shekel *shall be* an offering to
the LORD. 14Everyone included among those who are numbered, from twenty
years old and above, shall give an offering to the LORD. 15The rich shall not
give more and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel, when *you* give
an offering to the LORD, to make atonement for yourselves. 16And you shall
take the atonement money of the children of Israel, and shall appoint it for the
service of the tabernacle of meeting, that it may be a memorial for the

children of Israel before the LORD, to make atonement for yourselves.”

## THE BRONZE LAVER

17 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 18 “You shall also make a laver of
bronze, with its base also of bronze, for washing. You shall put it between the
tabernacle of meeting and the altar. And you shall put water in it, 19 for Aaron
and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet in water from it. 20 When
they go into the tabernacle of meeting, or when they come near the altar to
minister, to burn an offering made by fire to the LORD, they shall wash with
water, lest they die. 21 So they shall wash their hands and their feet, lest they
die. And it shall be a statute forever to them-to him and his descendants
throughout their generations.”

## THE HOLY ANOINTING OIL

22 Moreover the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 23 “Also take for yourself
quality spices-five hundred *shekels* of liquid myrrh, half as much sweet-
smelling cinnamon (two hundred and fifty *shekels*), two hundred and fifty
*shekels* of sweet-smelling cane, 24 five hundred *shekels* of cassia, according to
the shekel of the sanctuary, and a hin of olive oil. 25 And you shall make from
these a holy anointing oil, an ointment compounded according to the art of
the perfumer. It shall be a holy anointing oil. 26 With it you shall anoint the
tabernacle of meeting and the ark of the Testimony; 27 the table and all its
utensils, the lampstand and its utensils, and the altar of incense; 28 the altar of
burnt offering with all its utensils, and the laver and its base. 29 You shall
consecrate them, that they may be most holy; whatever touches them must be
holy.[a] 30 And you shall anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them, that
*they* may minister to Me as priests.

31 “And you shall speak to the children of Israel, saying: ‘This shall be a
holy anointing oil to Me throughout your generations. 32 It shall not be poured
on man’s flesh; nor shall you make *any other* like it, according to its
composition. It *is* holy, *and* it shall be holy to you. 33 Whoever compounds
*any* like it, or whoever puts *any* of it on an outsider, shall be cut off from his
people.’ ”

**THE INCENSE**

34 And the LORD said to Moses: “Take sweet spices, stacte and onycha and
galbanum, and pure frankincense with *these* sweet spices; there shall be equal
amounts of each. 35 You shall make of these an incense, a compound
according to the art of the perfumer, salted, pure, *and* holy. 36 And you shall
beat *some* of it very fine, and put some of it before the Testimony in the
tabernacle of meeting where I will meet with you. It shall be most holy to
you. 37 But *as for* the incense which you shall make, you shall not make any
for yourselves, according to its composition. It shall be to you holy for the
LORD. 38 Whoever makes *any* like it, to smell it, he shall be cut off from his
people.”

**SOUL NOTE**

**A Gentle Reminder** *(30:1)* The altar of incense was a visible reminder of the importance of daily prayer. Located inside the tabernacle itself (40:26, 27), it was much smaller than the altar of burnt offering, which was inside the courtyard by the main entrance. Priests burned sweet-smelling incense on the altar of incense daily to represent the prayers of God’s people. The sweet aroma of the incense wafting to heaven symbolized God’s pleasure with His people’s prayers. What reminds you to pray and worship daily?
**Topic: Prayer**

## ARTISANS FOR BUILDING THE TABERNACLE

**31** Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: [2]"See, I have called by name
Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. [3]And I have
filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge,
and in all *manner of* workmanship, [4]to design artistic works, to work in gold,
in silver, in bronze, [5]in cutting jewels for setting, in carving wood, and to
work in all *manner of* workmanship.

[6]"And I, indeed I, have appointed with him Aholiab the son of Ahisamach,
of the tribe of Dan; and I have put wisdom in the hearts of all the gifted
artisans, that they may make all that I have commanded you: [7]the tabernacle
of meeting, the ark of the Testimony and the mercy seat that *is* on it, and all
the furniture of the tabernacle- [8]the table and its utensils, the pure *gold*
lampstand with all its utensils, the altar of incense, [9]the altar of burnt offering
with all its utensils, and the laver and its base- [10]the garments of ministry,[a]
the holy garments for Aaron the priest and the garments of his sons, to
minister as priests, [11]and the anointing oil and sweet incense for the holy
*place.* According to all that I have commanded you they shall do."

## THE SABBATH LAW

[12]And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, [13]"Speak also to the children of
Israel, saying: 'Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it *is* a sign between
Me and you throughout your generations, that *you* may know that I *am* the
LORD who sanctifies you. [14]You shall keep the Sabbath, therefore, for *it is*
holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for
whoever does *any* work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his
people. [15]Work shall be done for six days, but the seventh *is* the Sabbath of
rest, holy to the LORD. Whoever does *any* work on the Sabbath day, he shall
surely be put to death. [16]Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the
Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations *as* a perpetual
covenant. [17]It *is* a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever; for *in*
six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He
rested and was refreshed.' "

> “Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you.”
> EXODUS 31:13

18 And when He had made an end of speaking with him on Mount Sinai, He gave Moses two tablets of the Testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God.

**THE GOLD CALF**

**32** Now when the people saw that Moses delayed coming down from the
mountain, the people gathered together to Aaron, and said to him,
"Come, make us gods that shall go before us; for *as for* this Moses, the man
who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has
become of him."

2 And Aaron said to them, "Break off the golden earrings which *are* in the
ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring *them* to me."
3 So all the people broke off the golden earrings which *were* in their ears, and
brought *them* to Aaron. 4 And he received *the gold* from their hand, and he
fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made a molded calf.

Then they said, "This *is* your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the
land of Egypt!"

5 So when Aaron saw *it*, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a
proclamation and said, "Tomorrow *is* a feast to the LORD." 6 Then they rose
early on the next day, offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings;
and the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.

7 And the LORD said to Moses, "Go, get down! For your people whom you
brought out of the land of Egypt have corrupted *themselves*. 8 They have
turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them. They have
made themselves a molded calf, and worshiped it and sacrificed to it, and
said, 'This *is* your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!' "
9 And the LORD said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and indeed it *is* a
stiff-necked people! 10 Now therefore, let Me alone, that My wrath may burn
hot against them and I may consume them. And I will make of you a great
nation."

11 Then Moses pleaded with the LORD his God, and said: "LORD, why does
Your wrath burn hot against Your people whom You have brought out of the
land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? 12 Why should the
Egyptians speak, and say, 'He brought them out to harm them, to kill them in
the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth'? Turn from
Your fierce wrath, and relent from this harm to Your people. 13 Remember

Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants, to whom You swore by Your own self, and said to them, ‘I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven; and all this land that I have spoken of I give to your descendants, and they shall inherit *it* forever.’ ”[a] 14So the LORD relented from the harm which He said He would do to His people.

15And Moses turned and went down from the mountain, and the two tablets of the Testimony *were* in his hand. The tablets *were* written on both sides; on the one *side* and on the other they were written. 16Now the tablets *were* the work of God, and the writing *was* the writing of God engraved on the tablets.

17And when Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said to Moses, “*There is* a noise of war in the camp.”

18But he said:

> “*It is* not the noise of the shout of victory,
> Nor the noise of the cry of defeat,
> *But* the sound of singing I hear.”

19So it was, as soon as he came near the camp, that he saw the calf *and* the dancing. So Moses’ anger became hot, and he cast the tab lets out of his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain. 20Then he took the calf which they had made, burned *it* in the fire, and ground *it* to powder; and he scattered *it* on the water and made the children of Israel drink *it.* 21And Moses said to Aaron, “What did this people do to you that you have brought *so* great a sin upon them?”

22So Aaron said, “Do not let the anger of my lord become hot. You know the people, that they *are set* on evil. 23For they said to me, ‘Make us gods that shall go before us; *as for* this Moses, the man who brought us out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.’ 24And I said to them, ‘Whoever has any gold, let them break *it* off.’ So they gave *it* to me, and I cast it into the fire, and this calf came out.”

25Now when Moses saw that the people *were* unrestrained (for Aaron had not restrained them, to *their* shame among their enemies), 26then Moses stood

in the entrance of the camp, and said, “Whoever *is* on the LORD’s side-*come* to me!” And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together to him. [27]And he said to them, “Thus says the LORD God of Israel: ‘Let every man put his sword on his side, and go in and out from entrance to entrance throughout the camp, and let every man kill his brother, every man his companion, and every man his neighbor.’ ” [28]So the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses. And about three thousand men of the people fell that day. [29]Then Moses said, “Consecrate yourselves today to the LORD, that He may bestow on you a blessing this day, for every man has opposed his son and his brother.”

[30] Now it came to pass on the next day that Moses said to the people, “You have committed a great sin. So now I will go up to the LORD; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin.” [31]Then Moses returned to the LORD and said, “Oh, these people have committed a great sin, and have made for themselves a god of gold! [32]Yet now, if You will forgive their sin-but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written.”

[33]And the LORD said to Moses, “Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book. [34]Now therefore, go, lead the people to *the place* of which I have spoken to you. Behold, My Angel shall go before you. Nevertheless, in the day when I visit for punishment, I will visit punishment upon them for their sin.”

[35]So the LORD plagued the people because of what they did with the calf which Aaron made.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Hot Anger** *(32:19)* The Israelites had thrown off all restraint and were reveling in the vilest sin while Moses was talking with God on the mountain. When Moses heard and saw what they had done, he smashed the tablets of the Ten Commandments, burned the golden

calf, ground it to powder, and made the people consume it. Jesus also showed anger when He cleansed the temple (John 2:13-17). Some evil situations justify righteous, “hot anger” as a wake-up call for sinners. **Topic: Anger**

**SOUL NOTE**

**Forgiven** *(32:32)* Forgiveness is given to those who repent. The people had sinned greatly against God, and Moses pleaded with God to forgive them. Moses was even willing to take their punishment for them. But God’s loving and just response was: “Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book” (32:33). God would punish the guilty ones. God is always ready to forgive those who recognize their sin and come to Him in repentance. Those who are guilty and unrepentant, however, will be punished. **Topic: Forgiveness**

## THE COMMAND TO LEAVE SINAI

**33** Then the LORD said to Moses, “Depart *and* go up from here, you and the
people whom you have brought out of the land of Egypt, to the land of
which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, ‘To your descendants I
will give it.’ 2And I will send *My* Angel before you, and I will drive out the
Canaanite and the Amorite and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Hivite
and the Jebusite. 3*Go up* to a land flowing with milk and honey; for I will not
go up in your midst, lest I consume you on the way, for you *are* a stiff-
necked people.”

4And when the people heard this bad news, they mourned, and no one put
on his ornaments. 5For the LORD had said to Moses, “Say to the children of
Israel, ‘You *are* a stiff-necked people. I could come up into your midst in one
moment and consume you. Now therefore, take off your ornaments, that I
may know what to do to you.’ ” 6So the children of Israel stripped themselves
of their ornaments by Mount Horeb.

## MOSES MEETS WITH THE LORD

7Moses took his tent and pitched it outside the camp, far from the camp,
and called it the tabernacle of meeting. And it came to pass *that* everyone
who sought the LORD went out to the tabernacle of meeting which *was*
outside the camp. 8So it was, whenever Moses went out to the tabernacle, *that*
all the people rose, and each man stood *at* his tent door and watched Moses
until he had gone into the tabernacle. 9And it came to pass, when Moses
entered the tabernacle, that the pillar of cloud descended and stood *at* the
door of the tabernacle, and *the LORD* talked with Moses. 10All the people saw
the pillar of cloud standing *at* the tabernacle door, and all the people rose and
worshiped, each man *in* his tent door. 11So the LORD spoke to Moses face to
face, as a man speaks to his friend. And he would return to the camp, but his
servant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, did not depart from the
tabernacle.

## THE PROMISE OF GOD’S PRESENCE

12Then Moses said to the LORD, “See, You say to me, ‘Bring up this

people.’ But You have not let me know whom You will send with me. Yet You have said, ‘I know you by name, and you have also found grace in My sight.’ 13Now therefore, I pray, if I have found grace in Your sight, show me now Your way, that I may know You and that I may find grace in Your sight. And consider that this nation *is* Your people.”

14And He said, “My Presence will go *with you*, and I will give you rest.”

15Then he said to Him, “If Your Presence does not go *with us,* do not bring us up from here. 16For how then will it be known that Your people and I have found grace in Your sight, except You go with us? So we shall be separate, Your people and I, from all the people who *are* upon the face of the earth.”

17So the LORD said to Moses, “I will also do this thing that you have spoken; for you have found grace in My sight, and I know you by name.”

18 And he said, “Please, show me Your glory.”

19 Then He said, “I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” 20But He said, “You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live.” 21And the LORD said, “Here is a place by Me, and you shall stand on the rock. 22So it shall be, while My glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand while I pass by. 23Then I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back; but My face shall not be seen.”

**SOUL NOTE**

**Face to Face** *(33:11)* Moses enjoyed an amazing relationship with God. In fact, God spoke to Moses “face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.” God wants to know His obedient servants that deeply. He wants to communicate with us as easily as we speak to our friends. Jesus said, “I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from

My Father I have made known to you" ( John 15:15). We can know God that deeply if we commit ourselves to love, serve, and obey Him.
**Topic: Knowing God**

## MOSES MAKES NEW TABLETS

**34** And the LORD said to Moses, “Cut two tablets of stone like the first *ones*,
and I will write on *these* tablets the words that were on the first tablets
which you broke. 2So be ready in the morning, and come up in the morning
to Mount Sinai, and present yourself to Me there on the top of the mountain.
3And no man shall come up with you, and let no man be seen throughout all
the mountain; let neither flocks nor herds feed before that mountain.”

4So he cut two tablets of stone like the first *ones.* Then Moses rose early in
the morning and went up Mount Sinai, as the LORD had commanded him; and
he took in his hand the two tablets of stone.

5Now the LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and
proclaimed the name of the LORD. 6And the LORD passed before him and
proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering,
and abounding in goodness and truth, 7keeping mercy for thousands,
forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing *the guilty*,
visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children’s
children to the third and the fourth generation.”

8So Moses made haste and bowed his head toward the earth, and
worshiped. 9Then he said, “If now I have found grace in Your sight, O Lord,
let my Lord, I pray, go among us, even though we *are* a stiff-necked people;
and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us as Your inheritance.”

## THE COVENANT RENEWED

10And He said: “Behold, I make a covenant. Before all your people I will
do marvels such as have not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation; and
all the people among whom you *are* shall see the work of the LORD. For it *is*
an awesome thing that I will do with you. 11Observe what I command you
this day. Behold, I am driving out from before you the Amorite and the
Canaanite and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite.
12Take heed to yourself, lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the
land where you are going, lest it be a snare in your midst. 13But you shall
destroy their altars, break their *sacred* pillars, and cut down their wooden

images [14](for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name *is* Jealous, *is* a jealous God), [15]lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they play the harlot with their gods and make sacrifice to their gods, and *one of them* invites you and you eat of his sacrifice, [16]and you take of his daughters for your sons, and his daughters play the harlot with their gods and make your sons play the harlot with their gods.

[17]"You shall make no molded gods for yourselves.

[18]"The Feast of Unleavened Bread you shall keep. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, in the appointed time of the month of Abib; for in the month of Abib you came out from Egypt.

[19]"All that open the womb *are* Mine, and every male firstborn among your livestock, *whether* ox or sheep. [20]But the firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb. And if you will not redeem *him,* then you shall break his neck. All the firstborn of your sons you shall redeem.

"And none shall appear before Me empty-handed.

[21]"Six days you shall work, but on the seventh day you shall rest; in plowing time and in harvest you shall rest.

[22]"And you shall observe the Feast of Weeks, of the firstfruits of wheat harvest, and the Feast of Ingathering at the year's end.

[23]"Three times in the year all your men shall appear before the Lord, the LORD God of Israel. [24]For I will cast out the nations before you and enlarge your borders; neither will any man covet your land when you go up to appear before the LORD your God three times in the year.

[25]"You shall not offer the blood of My sacrifice with leaven, nor shall the sacrifice of the Feast of the Passover be left until morning.

[26]"The first of the firstfruits of your land you shall bring to the house of the LORD your God. You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk."

[27]Then the LORD said to Moses, "Write these words, for according to the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel." [28]So he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he neither ate bread nor drank water. And He wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the

Ten Commandments.[a]

> “Before all your people I will do marvels such as have not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation; and all the people among whom you are shall see the work of the LORD. For it is an awesome thing that I will do with you.”
> EXODUS 34:10

**THE SHINING FACE OF MOSES**

[29]Now it was so, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai (and the two tablets of the Testimony *were* in Moses’ hand when he came down from the mountain), that Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone while he talked with Him. [30]So when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him. [31]Then Moses called to them, and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned to him; and Moses talked with them. [32]Afterward all the children of Israel came near, and he gave them as commandments all that the LORD had spoken with him on Mount Sinai. [33]And when Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil on his face. [34]But whenever Moses went in before the LORD to speak with Him, he would take the veil off until he came out; and he would come out and speak to the children of Israel whatever he had been commanded. [35]And whenever the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses’ face shone, then Moses would put the veil on his face again, until he went in to speak with Him.

## SABBATH REGULATIONS

**35** Then Moses gathered all the congregation of the children of Israel
together, and said to them, “These *are* the words which the LORD has
commanded *you* to do: 2Work shall be done for six days, but the seventh day
shall be a holy day for you, a Sabbath of rest to the LORD. Whoever does any
work on it shall be put to death. 3You shall kindle no fire throughout your
dwellings on the Sabbath day.”

## OFFERINGS FOR THE TABERNACLE

4And Moses spoke to all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying,
“This *is* the thing which the LORD commanded, saying: 5‘Take from among
you an offering to the LORD. Whoever *is* of a willing heart, let him bring it as
an offering to the LORD: gold, silver, and bronze; 6blue, purple, and scarlet
*thread,* fine linen, and goats’ *hair;* 7ram skins dyed red, badger skins, and
acacia wood; 8oil for the light, and spices for the anointing oil and for the
sweet incense; 9onyx stones, and stones to be set in the ephod and in the
breastplate.

## ARTICLES OF THE TABERNACLE

10‘All *who are* gifted artisans among you shall come and make all that the
LORD has commanded: 11the tabernacle, its tent, its covering, its clasps, its
boards, its bars, its pillars, and its sockets; 12the ark and its poles, *with* the
mercy seat, and the veil of the covering; 13the table and its poles, all its
utensils, and the showbread; 14also the lampstand for the light, its utensils, its
lamps, and the oil for the 15the incense altar, its poles, the anointing oil, the
sweet incense, and the screen for light; the door at the entrance of the
tabernacle; 16the altar of burnt offering with its bronze grating, its poles, all
its utensils, *and* the laver and its base; 17the hangings of the court, its pillars,
their sockets, and the screen for the gate of the court; 18the pegs of the
tabernacle, the pegs of the court, and their cords; 19the garments of ministry,[a]
for ministering in the holy *place*-the holy garments for Aaron the priest and
the garments of his sons, to minister as priests.’ ”

## THE TABERNACLE OFFERINGS PRESENTED

[20]And all the congregation of the children of Israel departed from the presence of Moses. [21]Then everyone came whose heart was stirred, and everyone whose spirit was willing, *and* they brought the LORD's offering for the work of the tabernacle of meeting, for all its service, and for the holy garments. [22]They came, both men and women, as many as had a willing heart, *and* brought earrings and nose rings, rings and necklaces, all jewelry of gold, that is, every man who *made* an offering of gold to the LORD. [23]And every man, with whom was found blue, purple, and scarlet *thread*, fine linen, goats' *hair*, red skins of rams, and badger skins, brought *them.* [24]Everyone who offered an offering of silver or bronze brought the LORD's offering. And everyone with whom was found acacia wood for any work of the service, brought *it.* [25]All the women *who were* gifted artisans spun yarn with their hands, and brought what they had spun, of blue, purple, *and* scarlet, and fine linen. [26]And all the women whose hearts stirred with wisdom spun yarn of goats' *hair*. [27]The rulers brought onyx stones, and the stones to be set in the ephod and in the breastplate, [28]and spices and oil for the light, for the anointing oil, and for the sweet incense. [29]The children of Israel brought a freewill offering to the LORD, all the men and women whose hearts were willing to bring *material* for all kinds of work which the LORD, by the hand of Moses, had commanded to be done.

## THE ARTISANS CALLED BY GOD

[30]And Moses said to the children of Israel, "See, the LORD has called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah; [31]and He has filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom and understanding, in knowledge and all manner of workmanship, [32]to design artistic works, to work in gold and silver and bronze, [33]in cutting jewels for setting, in carving wood, and to work in all manner of artistic workmanship.

[34]"And He has put in his heart the ability to teach, *in* him and Aholiab the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan. [35]He has filled them with skill to do all manner of work of the engraver and the designer and the tapestry maker, in blue, purple, and scarlet *thread,* and fine linen, and of the weaver-those who do every work and those who design artistic works.

**36** “And Bezalel and Aholiab, and every gifted artisan in whom the LORD has put wisdom and understanding, to know how to do all manner of work for the service of the sanctuary, shall do according to all that the LORD has commanded.”

**THE PEOPLE GIVE MORE THAN ENOUGH**

2 Then Moses called Bezalel and Aholiab, and every gifted artisan in whose heart the LORD had put wisdom, everyone whose heart was stirred, to come and do the work. 3 And they received from Moses all the offering which the children of Israel had brought for the work of the service of making the sanctuary. So they continued bringing to him freewill offerings every morning. 4 Then all the craftsmen who were doing all the work of the sanctuary came, each from the work he was doing, 5 and they spoke to Moses, saying, “The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work which the LORD commanded *us* to do.”

6 So Moses gave a commandment, and they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, “Let neither man nor woman do any more work for the offering of the sanctuary.” And the people were restrained from bringing, 7 for the material they had was sufficient for all the work to be done-indeed too much.

**BUILDING THE TABERNACLE**

8 Then all the gifted artisans among them who worked on the tabernacle made ten curtains woven of fine linen, and of blue, purple, and scarlet *thread; with* artistic designs of cherubim they made them. 9 The length of each curtain *was* twenty-eight cubits, and the width of each curtain four cubits; the curtains *were* all the same size. 10 And he coupled five curtains to one another, and *the other* five curtains he coupled to one another. 11 He made loops of blue *yarn* on the edge of the curtain on the selvedge of one set; likewise he did on the outer edge of *the other* curtain of the second set. 12 Fifty loops he made on one curtain, and fifty loops he made on the edge of the curtain on the end of the second set; the loops held one *curtain* to another. 13 And he made fifty clasps of gold, and coupled the curtains to one another with the clasps, that it might be one tabernacle.

[14]He made curtains of goats' *hair* for the tent over the tabernacle; he made eleven curtains. [15]The length of each curtain *was* thirty cubits, and the width of each curtain four cubits; the eleven curtains *were* the same size. [16]He coupled five curtains by themselves and six curtains by themselves. [17]And he made fifty loops on the edge of the curtain that is outermost in one set, and fifty loops he made on the edge of the curtain of the second set. [18]He also made fifty bronze clasps to couple the tent together, that it might be one. [19]Then he made a covering for the tent of ram skins dyed red, and a covering of badger skins above *that.*

[20]For the tabernacle he made boards of acacia wood, standing upright. [21]The length of each board *was* ten cubits, and the width of each board a cubit and a half. [22]Each board had two tenons for binding one to another.

Thus he made for all the boards of the tabernacle. [23]And he made boards for the tabernacle, twenty boards for the south side. [24]Forty sockets of silver he made to go under the twenty boards: two sockets under each of the boards for its two tenons. [25]And for the other side of the tabernacle, the north side, he made twenty boards [26]and their forty sockets of silver: two sockets under each of the boards. [27]For the west side of the tabernacle he made six boards. [28]He also made two boards for the two back corners of the tabernacle. [29]And they were coupled at the bottom and coupled together at the top by one ring. Thus he made both of them for the two corners. [30]So there were eight boards and their sockets-sixteen sockets of silver-two sockets under each of the boards.

[31]And he made bars of acacia wood: five for the boards on one side of the tabernacle, [32]five bars for the boards on the other side of the tabernacle, and five bars for the boards of the tabernacle on the far side westward. [33]And he made the middle bar to pass through the boards from one end to the other. [34]He overlaid the boards with gold, made their rings of gold *to be* holders for the bars, and overlaid the bars with gold.

[35]And he made a veil of blue, purple, and scarlet *thread,* and fine woven linen; it was worked *with* an artistic design of cherubim. [36]He made for it four pillars of acacia *wood,* and overlaid them with gold, with their hooks of gold; and he cast four sockets of silver for them.

[37]He also made a screen for the tabernacle door, of blue, purple, and scarlet *thread,* and fine woven linen, made by a weaver, [38]and its five pillars with their hooks. And he overlaid their capitals and their rings with gold, but their five sockets *were* bronze.

**SOUL NOTE**

**On the Job** *(36:1)* How can the Holy Spirit be present in your work? Whatever job you have, you can work as though God were your employer. Bezalel and Aholiab were gifted by God. The trained men and women who worked to build the tabernacle had been gifted and motivated by the Holy Spirit. Their finished product shows that excellence was their hallmark. Together, this team modeled the Spirit's presence in their work-for they worked hard and with excellence. In any work you do, let God shine through every aspect of it. **Topic: Work**

## MAKING THE ARK OF THE TESTIMONY

**37** Then Bezalel made the ark of acacia wood; two and a half cubits *was* its
length, a cubit and a half its width, and a cubit and a half its height. [2]He
overlaid it with pure gold inside and outside, and made a molding of gold all
around it. [3]And he cast for it four rings of gold *to be set* in its four corners:
two rings on one side, and two rings on the other side of it. [4]He made poles of
acacia wood, and overlaid them with gold. [5]And he put the poles into the
rings at the sides of the ark, to bear the ark. [6]He also made the mercy seat of
pure gold; two and a half cubits *was* its length and a cubit and a half its
width. [7]He made two cherubim of beaten gold; he made them of one piece at
the two ends of the mercy seat: [8]one cherub at one end on this side, and the
other cherub at the *other* end on that side. He made the cherubim at the two
ends *of one piece* with the mercy seat. [9]The cherubim spread out *their* wings
above, *and* covered the mercy seat with their wings. They faced one another;
the faces of the cherubim were toward the mercy seat.

## MAKING THE TABLE FOR THE SHOWBREAD

[10]He made the table of acacia wood; two cubits *was* its length, a cubit its
width, and a cubit and a half its height. [11]And he overlaid it with pure gold,
and made a molding of gold all around it. [12]Also he made a frame of a
handbreadth all around it, and made a molding of gold for the frame all
around it. [13]And he cast for it four rings of gold, and put the rings on the four
corners that *were* at its four legs. [14]The rings were close to the frame, as
holders for the poles to bear the table. [15]And he made the poles of acacia
wood to bear the table, and overlaid them with gold. [16]He made of pure gold
the utensils which were on the table: its dishes, its cups, its bowls, and its
pitchers for pouring.

## MAKING THE GOLD LAMPSTAND

[17]He also made the lampstand of pure gold; of hammered work he made
the lampstand. Its shaft, its branches, its bowls, its *ornamental* knobs, and its
flowers were of the same piece. [18]And six branches came out of its sides:

three branches of the lampstand out of one side, and three branches of the lampstand out of the other side. [19]There were three bowls made like almond *blossoms* on one branch, with an *ornamental* knob and a flower, and three bowls made like almond *blossoms* on the other branch, with an *ornamental* knob and a flower-and so for the six branches coming out of the lampstand. [20]And on the lampstand itself *were* four bowls made like almond *blossoms, each with* its *ornamental* knob and flower. [21]*There was* a knob under the *first* two branches of the same, a knob under the *second* two branches of the same, and a knob under the *third* two branches of the same, according to the six branches extending from it. [22]Their knobs and their branches were of one piece; all of it *was* one hammered piece of pure gold. [23]And he made its seven lamps, its wick-trimmers, and its trays of pure gold. [24]Of a talent of pure gold he made it, with all its utensils.

**MAKING THE ALTAR OF INCENSE**

[25]He made the incense altar of acacia wood. Its length *was* a cubit and its width a cubit-*it was* square-and two cubits *was* its height. Its horns were *of one piece* with it. [26]And he overlaid it with pure gold: its top, its sides all around, and its horns. He also made for it a molding of gold all around it. [27]He made two rings of gold for it under its molding, by its two corners on both sides, as holders for the poles with which to bear it. [28]And he made the poles of acacia wood, and overlaid them with gold.

**MAKING THE ANOINTING OIL AND THE INCENSE**

[29]He also made the holy anointing oil and the pure incense of sweet spices, according to the work of the perfumer.

## MAKING THE ALTAR OF BURNT OFFERING

**38** He made the altar of burnt offering of acacia wood; five cubits *was* its
length and five cubits its width-*it was* square-and its height *was* three
cubits. [2]He made its horns on its four corners; the horns were *of one piece*
with it. And he overlaid it with bronze. [3]He made all the utensils for the altar:
the pans, the shovels, the basins, the forks, and the fire-pans; all its utensils
he made of bronze. [4]And he made a grate of bronze network for the altar,
under its rim, midway from the bottom. [5]He cast four rings for the four
corners of the bronze grating, *as* holders for the poles. [6]And he made the
poles of acacia wood, and overlaid them with bronze. [7]Then he put the poles
into the rings on the sides of the altar, with which to bear it. He made the altar
hollow with boards.

## MAKING THE BRONZE LAVER

[8]He made the laver of bronze and its base of bronze, from the bronze
mirrors of the serving women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle of
meeting.

## MAKING THE COURT OF THE TABERNACLE

[9]Then he made the court on the south side; the hangings of the court *were*
*of* fine woven linen, one hundred cubits long. [10]There *were* twenty pillars for
them, with twenty bronze sockets. The hooks of the pillars and their bands
*were* silver. [11]On the north side *the hangings were* one hundred cubits *long*,
with twenty pillars and their twenty bronze sockets. The hooks of the pillars
and their bands *were* silver. [12]And on the west side *there were* hangings of
fifty cubits, with ten pillars and their ten sockets. The hooks of the pillars and
their bands *were* silver. [13]For the east side *the hangings were* fifty cubits.
[14]The hangings of one side *of the gate were* fifteen cubits *long*, *with* their
three pillars and their three sockets, [15]and the same for the other side of the
court gate; on this side and that *were* hangings of fifteen cubits, *with* their
three pillars and their three sockets. [16]All the hangings of the court all around
*were of* fine woven linen. [17]The sockets for the pillars *were* bronze, the hooks

of the pillars and their bands *were* silver, and the overlay of their capitals *was* silver; and all the pillars of the court had bands of silver. [18]The screen for the gate of the court *was* woven of blue, purple, and scarlet *thread*, and of fine woven linen. The length *was* twenty cubits, and the height along its width *was* five cubits, corresponding to the hangings of the court. [19]And *there were* four pillars *with* their four sockets of bronze; their hooks *were* silver, and the overlay of their capitals and their bands *was* silver. [20]All the pegs of the tabernacle, and of the court all around, *were* bronze.

## MATERIALS OF THE TABERNACLE

[21]This is the inventory of the tabernacle, the tabernacle of the Testimony, which was counted according to the commandment of Moses, for the service of the Levites, by the hand of Ithamar, son of Aaron the priest.

[22]Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, made all that the LORD had commanded Moses. [23]And with him *was* Aholiab the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, an engraver and designer, a weaver of blue, purple, and scarlet *thread*, and of fine linen.

[24]All the gold that was used in all the work of the holy *place*, that is, the gold of the offering, was twenty-nine talents and seven hundred and thirty shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary. [25]And the silver from those who were numbered of the congregation *was* one hundred talents and one thousand seven hundred and seventy-five shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary: [26]a bekah for each man (*that is,* half a shekel, according to the shekel of the sanctuary), for everyone included in the numbering from twenty years old and above, for six hundred and three thousand, five hundred and fifty *men.* [27]And from the hundred talents of silver were cast the sockets of the sanctuary and the bases of the veil: one hundred sockets from the hundred talents, one talent for each socket. [28]Then from the one thousand seven hundred and seventy-five *shekels* he made hooks for the pillars, overlaid their capitals, and made bands for them.

[29]The offering of bronze *was* seventy talents and two thousand four hundred shekels. [30]And with it he made the sockets for the door of the tabernacle of meeting, the bronze altar, the bronze grating for it, and all the

utensils for the altar, [31]the sockets for the court all around, the bases for the court gate, all the pegs for the tabernacle, and all the pegs for the court all around.

## MAKING THE GARMENTS OF THE PRIESTHOOD

**39** Of the blue, purple, and scarlet *thread* they made garments of ministry,[a] for ministering in the holy *place,* and made the holy garments for Aaron, as the LORD had commanded Moses.

## MAKING THE EPHOD

[2]He made the ephod of gold, blue, purple, and scarlet *thread,* and of fine woven linen. [3]And they beat the gold into thin sheets and cut *it into* threads, to work *it* in *with* the blue, purple, and scarlet *thread,* and the fine linen, *into* artistic designs. [4]They made shoulder straps for it to couple *it* together; it was coupled together at its two edges. [5]And the intricately woven band of his ephod that *was* on it *was* of the same workmanship, *woven of* gold, blue, purple, and scarlet *thread,* and of fine woven linen, as the LORD had commanded Moses.

[6]And they set onyx stones, enclosed in settings of gold; they were engraved, as signets are engraved, with the names of the sons of Israel. [7]He put them on the shoulders of the ephod *as* memorial stones for the sons of Israel, as the LORD had commanded Moses.

## MAKING THE BREASTPLATE

[8]And he made the breastplate, artistically woven like the workmanship of the ephod, of gold, blue, purple, and scarlet *thread,* and of fine woven linen. [9]They made the breastplate square by doubling it; a span *was* its length and a span its width when doubled. [10]And they set in it four rows of stones: a row with a sardius, a topaz, and an emerald was the first row; [11]the second row, a turquoise, a sapphire, and a diamond; [12]the third row, a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst; [13]the fourth row, a beryl, an onyx, and a jasper. *They were* enclosed in settings of gold in their mountings. [14]*There were* twelve stones according to the names of the sons of Israel: according to their names, *engraved like* a signet, each one with its own name according to the twelve tribes. [15]And they made chains for the breastplate at the ends, like braided cords of pure gold. [16]They also made two settings of gold and two gold rings,

and put the two rings on the two ends of the breastplate. [17]And they put the two braided *chains* of gold in the two rings on the ends of the breastplate. [18]The two ends of the two braided *chains* they fastened in the two settings, and put them on the shoulder straps of the ephod in the front. [19]And they made two rings of gold and put *them* on the two ends of the breastplate, on the edge of it, which *was* on the inward side of the ephod. [20]They made two *other* gold rings and put them on the two shoulder straps, underneath the ephod toward its front, right at the seam above the intricately woven band of the ephod. [21]And they bound the breastplate by means of its rings to the rings of the ephod with a blue cord, so that it would be above the intricately woven band of the ephod, and that the breastplate would not come loose from the ephod, as the LORD had commanded Moses.

**MAKING THE OTHER PRIESTLY GARMENTS**

[22]He made the robe of the ephod of woven work, all of blue. [23]And *there was* an opening in the middle of the robe, like the opening in a coat of mail, *with* a woven binding all around the opening, so that it would not tear. [24]They made on the hem of the robe pomegranates of blue, purple, and scarlet, and of fine woven *linen.* [25]And they made bells of pure gold, and put the bells between the pomegranates on the hem of the robe all around between the pomegranates: [26]a bell and a pomegranate, a bell and a pomegranate, all around the hem of the robe to minister in, as the LORD had commanded Moses.

[27]They made tunics, artistically woven of fine linen, for Aaron and his sons, [28]a turban of fine linen, exquisite hats of fine linen, short trousers of fine woven linen, [29]and a sash of fine woven linen with blue, purple, and scarlet *thread,* made by a weaver, as the LORD had commanded Moses.

[30]Then they made the plate of the holy crown of pure gold, and wrote on it an inscription *like* the engraving of a signet:

HOLINESS TO THE LORD.

[31]And they tied to it a blue cord, to fasten *it* above on the turban, as the LORD had commanded Moses.

**THE WORK COMPLETED**

[32]Thus all the work of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting was finished. And the children of Israel did according to all that the LORD had commanded Moses; so they did. [33]And they brought the tabernacle to Moses, the tent and all its furnishings: its clasps, its boards, its bars, its pillars, and its sockets; [34]the covering of ram skins dyed red, the covering of badger skins, and the veil of the covering; [35]the ark of the Testimony with its poles, and the mercy seat; [36]the table, all its utensils, and the showbread; [37]the pure *gold* lampstand with its lamps (the lamps set in order), all its utensils, and the oil for light; [38]the gold altar, the anointing oil, and the sweet incense; the screen for the tabernacle door; [39]the bronze altar, its grate of bronze, its poles, and all its utensils; the laver with its base; [40]the hangings of the court, its pillars and its sockets, the screen for the court gate, its cords, and its pegs; all the utensils for the service of the tabernacle, for the tent of meeting; [41]and the garments of ministry,[a] to minister in the holy *place:* the holy garments for Aaron the priest, and his sons' garments, to minister as priests.

[42]According to all that the LORD had commanded Moses, so the children of Israel did all the work. [43]Then Moses looked over all the work, and indeed they had done it; as the LORD had commanded, just so they had done it. And Moses blessed them.

## THE TABERNACLE ERECTED AND ARRANGED

**40** Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: [2]"On the first day of the first month you shall set up the tabernacle of the tent of meeting. [3]You shall put in it the ark of the Testimony, and partition off the ark with the veil. [4]You shall bring in the table and arrange the things that are to be set in order on it; and you shall bring in the lampstand and light its lamps. [5]You shall also set the altar of gold for the incense before the ark of the Testimony, and put up the screen for the door of the tabernacle. [6]Then you shall set the altar of the burnt offering before the door of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting. [7]And you shall set the laver between the tabernacle of meeting and the altar, and put water in it. [8]You shall set up the court all around, and hang up the screen at the court gate.

[9]"And you shall take the anointing oil, and anoint the tabernacle and all that *is* in it; and you shall hallow it and all its utensils, and it shall be holy. [10]You shall anoint the altar of the burnt offering and all its utensils, and consecrate the altar. The altar shall be most holy. [11]And you shall anoint the laver and its base, and consecrate it.

[12]"Then you shall bring Aaron and his sons to the door of the tabernacle of meeting and wash them with water. [13]You shall put the holy garments on Aaron, and anoint him and consecrate him, that he may minister to Me as priest. [14]And you shall bring his sons and clothe them with tunics. [15]You shall anoint them, as you anointed their father, that they may minister to Me as priests; for their anointing shall surely be an everlasting priesthood throughout their generations."

[16]Thus Moses did; according to all that the LORD had commanded him, so he did.

[17]And it came to pass in the first month of the second year, on the first *day* of the month, *that* the tabernacle was raised up. [18]So Moses raised up the tabernacle, fastened its sockets, set up its boards, put in its bars, and raised up its pillars. [19]And he spread out the tent over the tabernacle and put the covering of the tent on top of it, as the LORD had commanded Moses. [20]He took the Testimony and put *it* into the ark, inserted the poles through the rings

of the ark, and put the mercy seat on top of the ark. [21]And he brought the ark into the tabernacle, hung up the veil of the covering, and partitioned off the ark of the Testimony, as the LORD had commanded Moses.

[22]He put the table in the tabernacle of meeting, on the north side of the tabernacle, outside the veil; [23]and he set the bread in order upon it before the LORD, as the LORD had commanded Moses. [24]He put the lampstand in the tabernacle of meeting, across from the table, on the south side of the tabernacle; [25]and he lit the lamps before the LORD, as the LORD had commanded Moses. [26]He put the gold altar in the tabernacle of meeting in front of the veil; [27]and he burned sweet incense on it, as the LORD had commanded Moses. [28]He hung up the screen *at* the door of the tabernacle. [29]And he put the altar of burnt offering *before* the door of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting, and offered upon it the burnt offering and the grain offering, as the LORD had commanded Moses. [30]He set the laver between the tabernacle of meeting and the altar, and put water there for washing; [31]and Moses, Aaron, and his sons would wash their hands and their feet *with water* from it. [32]Whenever they went into the tabernacle of meeting, and when they came near the altar, they washed, as the LORD had commanded Moses. [33]And he raised up the court all around the tabernacle and the altar, and hung up the screen of the court gate. So Moses finished the work.

## THE CLOUD AND THE GLORY

[34]Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. [35]And Moses was not able to enter the tabernacle of meeting, because the cloud rested above it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. [36]Whenever the cloud was taken up from above the tabernacle, the children of Israel would go onward in all their journeys. [37]But if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not journey till the day that it was taken up. [38]For the cloud of the LORD *was* above the tabernacle by day, and fire was over it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys.

## SOUL NOTE

**Glory Be!** *(40:34)* The cloud and the glory represented God's presence with His people. "The glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle" upon its completion, signifying His pleasure with the home that the people had built according to His instructions. Thousands of years later, God's glory again entered the temple in Jesus Christ. That glory is present in Christians' lives through the Holy Spirit. Believers are temples of the Holy Spirit filled with God's glorious presence (1 Cor. 6:19). God promises to be in us and to guide us, even as He guided the Israelites across the vast wilderness to the Promised Land. **Topic: God's Promises**

# Leviticus



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# Leviticus

At times we all stand before God with stained souls, uncomfortably aware of our sin. Some run away and hide from God, as Adam did. Others yield to the redemptive work of God and experience forgiveness and cleansing.

Leviticus is a book about holiness. Written by Moses, Leviticus explains how to live God's way and spells out the sacrifices for sin that the Israelites had to make. If you were a Hebrew, you had to offer a sacrifice-killing an animal by slitting its throat-knowing that your sin had caused that animal to die. This act made God's people take sin seriously. While the concept of sacrifice may seem harsh to us today, it was meant to point to the ultimate sacrifice-the atoning death of Jesus on the Cross. There, He died as the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

The book calls God's people to holiness (Lev. 11:44, 45; 19:2; see also 1 Pet. 1:15, 16). The purity of God stands in marked contrast to the sinful nature of human beings. We are created "in His image," but we are not by nature what He is. Because of Christ-His death and resurrection that atone for our sins-we can become holy by allowing God to form His perfect life in us. After we trust Christ for salvation, if we continually confess our sins and thankfully invite His redemptive work to be formed in us, we are called "holy."

**SOUL CONCERNS IN**

## LEVITICUS

LEGALISM (CH. 11)

KNOWING GOD (26:9-13)

## THE BURNT OFFERING

**1** Now the LORD called to Moses, and spoke to him from the tabernacle of
meeting, saying, 2"Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When
any one of you brings an offering to the LORD, you shall bring your offering
of the livestock-of the herd and of the flock.

3'If his offering *is* a burnt sacrifice of the herd, let him offer a male without
blemish; he shall offer it of his own free will at the door of the tabernacle of
meeting before the LORD. 4Then he shall put his hand on the head of the burnt
offering, and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him.
5He shall kill the bull before the LORD; and the priests, Aaron's sons, shall
bring the blood and sprinkle the blood all around on the altar that *is by* the
door of the tabernacle of meeting. 6And he shall skin the burnt offering and
cut it into its pieces. 7The sons of Aaron the priest shall put fire on the altar,
and lay the wood in order on the fire. 8Then the priests, Aaron's sons, shall
lay the parts, the head, and the fat in order on the wood that *is* on the fire
upon the altar; 9but he shall wash its entrails and its legs with water. And the
priest shall burn all on the altar as a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire,
a sweet aroma to the LORD.

10'If his offering *is* of the flocks-of the sheep or of the goats-as a burnt
sacrifice, he shall bring a male without blemish. 11He shall kill it on the north
side of the altar before the LORD; and the priests, Aaron's sons, shall sprinkle
its blood all around on the altar. 12And he shall cut it into its pieces, with its
head and its fat; and the priest shall lay them in order on the wood that *is* on
the fire upon the altar; 13but he shall wash the entrails and the legs with
water. Then the priest shall bring *it* all and burn *it* on the altar; it *is* a burnt
sacrifice, an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the LORD.

14'And if the burnt sacrifice of his offering to the LORD *is* of birds, then he
shall bring his offering of turtledoves or young pigeons. 15The priest shall
bring it to the altar, wring off its head, and burn *it* on the altar; its blood shall
be drained out at the side of the altar. 16And he shall remove its crop with its
feathers and cast it beside the altar on the east side, into the place for ashes.
17Then he shall split it at its wings, *but* shall not divide *it* completely; and the

priest shall burn it on the altar, on the wood that *is* on the fire. It *is* a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the LORD.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Serious Business** *(1:4, 5)* Many people regard sin rather casually, but that was difficult for the ancient Israelites. They had to bring a special animal, place a hand on its head, and then kill it as an atonement for their sin. Every bleeding sacrifice was an immediate reminder that sin stood between them and God. These sacrifices also pointed to the sacrificial death of one far more precious-the perfect Son of God, Jesus Christ. His death paid, once for all, the total penalty for our sin. Also, it reminds us of the seriousness of sin. Sin is costly, but Jesus paid the price. **Topic: Sin**

**THE GRAIN OFFERING**

**2** ‘When anyone offers a grain offering to the LORD, his offering shall be *of* fine flour. And he shall pour oil on it, and put frankincense on it. [2]He shall bring it to Aaron’s sons, the priests, one of whom shall take from it his handful of fine flour and oil with all the frankincense. And the priest shall burn *it as* a memorial on the altar, an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the LORD. [3]The rest of the grain offering *shall be* Aaron’s and his sons’. *It is* most holy of the offerings to the LORD made by fire.

[4]‘And if you bring as an offering a grain offering baked in the oven, *it shall be* unleavened cakes of fine flour mixed with oil, or unleavened wafers anointed with oil. [5]But if your offering *is* a grain offering *baked* in a pan, *it shall be of* fine flour, unleavened, mixed with oil. [6]You shall break it in pieces and pour oil on it; it *is* a grain offering.

[7]‘If your offering *is* a grain offering *baked* in a covered pan, it shall be made *of* fine flour with oil. [8]You shall bring the grain offering that is made of these things to the LORD. And when it is presented to the priest, he shall bring it to the altar. [9]Then the priest shall take from the grain offering a memorial portion, and burn *it* on the altar. *It is* an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the LORD. [10]And what is left of the grain offering *shall be* Aaron’s and his sons’. *It is* most holy of the offerings to the LORD made by fire.

[11]‘No grain offering which you bring to the LORD shall be made with leaven, for you shall burn no leaven nor any honey in any offering to the LORD made by fire. [12]As for the offering of the firstfruits, you shall offer them to the LORD, but they shall not be burned on the altar for a sweet aroma. [13]And every offering of your grain offering you shall season with salt; you shall not allow the salt of the covenant of your God to be lacking from your grain offering. With all your offerings you shall offer salt.

[14]‘If you offer a grain offering of your first-fruits to the LORD, you shall offer for the grain offering of your firstfruits green heads of grain roasted on the fire, grain beaten from full heads. [15]And you shall put oil on it, and lay frankincense on it. It *is* a grain offering. [16]Then the priest shall burn the memorial portion: *part* of its beaten grain and *part* of its oil, with all the

frankincense, as an offering made by fire to the LORD.

## THE PEACE OFFERING

**3** ‘When his offering *is* a sacrifice of a peace offering, if he offers *it* of the herd, whether male or female, he shall offer it without blemish before the LORD. 2And he shall lay his hand on the head of his offering, and kill it *at* the door of the tabernacle of meeting; and Aaron’s sons, the priests, shall sprinkle the blood all around on the altar. 3Then he shall offer from the sacrifice of the peace offering an offering made by fire to the LORD. The fat that covers the entrails and all the fat that *is* on the entrails, 4the two kidneys and the fat that *is* on them by the flanks, and the fatty lobe *attached* to the liver above the kidneys, he shall remove; 5and Aaron’s sons shall burn it on the altar upon the burnt sacrifice, which *is* on the wood that *is* on the fire, *as* an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the LORD.

6‘If his offering as a sacrifice of a peace offering to the LORD *is* of the flock, *whether* male or female, he shall offer it without blemish. 7If he offers a lamb as his offering, then he shall offer it before the LORD. 8And he shall lay his hand on the head of his offering, and kill it before the tabernacle of meeting; and Aaron’s sons shall sprinkle its blood all around on the altar.

9‘Then he shall offer from the sacrifice of the peace offering, as an offering made by fire to the LORD, its fat *and* the whole fat tail which he shall remove close to the backbone. And the fat that covers the entrails and all the fat that *is* on the entrails, 10the two kidneys and the fat that *is* on them by the flanks, and the fatty lobe *attached* to the liver above the kidneys, he shall remove; 11and the priest shall burn *them* on the altar *as* food, an offering made by fire to the LORD.

12‘And if his offering *is* a goat, then he shall offer it before the LORD. 13He shall lay his hand on its head and kill it before the tabernacle of meeting; and the sons of Aaron shall sprinkle its blood all around on the altar. 14Then he shall offer from it his offering, as an offering made by fire to the LORD. The fat that covers the entrails and all the fat that *is* on the entrails, 15the two kidneys and the fat that *is* on them by the flanks, and the fatty lobe *attached* to the liver above the kidneys, he shall remove; 16and the priest shall burn them on the altar *as* food, an offering made by fire for a sweet aroma; all the

fat *is* the LORD's.

17 ‘*This shall be* a perpetual statute throughout your generations in all your dwellings: you shall eat neither fat nor blood.’ ”

## THE SIN OFFERING

**4** Now the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, [2]"Speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'If a person sins unintentionally against any of the commandments of the LORD *in anything* which ought not to be done, and does any of them, [3]if the anointed priest sins, bringing guilt on the people, then let him offer to the LORD for his sin which he has sinned a young bull without blemish as a sin offering. [4]He shall bring the bull to the door of the tabernacle of meeting before the LORD, lay his hand on the bull's head, and kill the bull before the LORD. [5]Then the anointed priest shall take some of the bull's blood and bring it to the tabernacle of meeting. [6]The priest shall dip his finger in the blood and sprinkle some of the blood seven times before the LORD, in front of the veil of the sanctuary. [7]And the priest shall put some of the blood on the horns of the altar of sweet incense before the LORD, which is in the tabernacle of meeting; and he shall pour the remaining blood of the bull at the base of the altar of the burnt offering, which is at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. [8]He shall take from it all the fat of the bull as the sin offering. The fat that covers the entrails and all the fat which *is* on the entrails, [9]the two kidneys and the fat that *is* on them by the flanks, and the fatty lobe *attached* to the liver above the kidneys, he shall remove, [10]as it was taken from the bull of the sacrifice of the peace offering; and the priest shall burn them on the altar of the burnt offering. [11]But the bull's hide and all its flesh, with its head and legs, its entrails and offal- [12]the whole bull he shall carry outside the camp to a clean place, where the ashes are poured out, and burn it on wood with fire; where the ashes are poured out it shall be burned.

[13]'Now if the whole congregation of Israel sins unintentionally, and the thing is hidden from the eyes of the assembly, and they have done *something against* any of the commandments of the LORD *in anything* which should not be done, and are guilty; [14]when the sin which they have committed becomes known, then the assembly shall offer a young bull for the sin, and bring it before the tabernacle of meeting. [15]And the elders of the congregation shall lay their hands on the head of the bull before the LORD. Then the bull shall be killed before the LORD. [16]The anointed priest shall bring some of the bull's blood to the tabernacle of meeting. [17]Then the priest shall dip his finger in the

blood and sprinkle *it* seven times before the LORD, in front of the veil. [18]And he shall put *some* of the blood on the horns of the altar which *is* before the LORD, which *is* in the tabernacle of meeting; and he shall pour the remaining blood at the base of the altar of burnt offering, which is at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. [19]He shall take all the fat from it and burn *it* on the altar. [20]And he shall do with the bull as he did with the bull as a sin offering; thus he shall do with it. So the priest shall make atonement for them, and it shall be forgiven them. [21]Then he shall carry the bull outside the camp, and burn it as he burned the first bull. It *is* a sin offering for the assembly.

[22]'When a ruler has sinned, and done *something* unintentionally *against* any of the commandments of the LORD his God *in anything* which should not be done, and is guilty, [23]or if his sin which he has committed comes to his knowledge, he shall bring as his offering a kid of the goats, a male without blemish. [24]And he shall lay his hand on the head of the goat, and kill it at the place where they kill the burnt offering before the LORD. It *is* a sin offering. [25]The priest shall take some of the blood of the sin offering with his finger, put *it* on the horns of the altar of burnt offering, and pour its blood at the base of the altar of burnt offering. [26]And he shall burn all its fat on the altar, like the fat of the sacrifice of the peace offering. So the priest shall make atonement for him concerning his sin, and it shall be forgiven him.

[27]'If anyone of the common people sins unintentionally by doing *something against* any of the commandments of the LORD *in anything* which ought not to be done, and is guilty, [28]or if his sin which he has committed comes to his knowledge, then he shall bring as his offering a kid of the goats, a female without blemish, for his sin which he has committed. [29]And he shall lay his hand on the head of the sin offering, and kill the sin offering at the place of the burnt offering. [30]Then the priest shall take *some* of its blood with his finger, put *it* on the horns of the altar of burnt offering, and pour all *the remaining* blood at the base of the altar. [31]He shall remove all its fat, as fat is removed from the sacrifice of the peace offering; and the priest shall burn it on the altar for a sweet aroma to the LORD. So the priest shall and it shall be forgiven him.

[32]'If he brings a lamb as his sin offering, he shall bring a female without

blemish. [33]Then he shall lay his hand on the head of the sin offering, and kill it as a sin offering at the place where they kill the burnt offering. [34]The priest shall take *some* of the blood of the sin offering with his finger, put *it* on the horns of the altar of burnt offering, and pour all *the remaining* blood at the base of the altar. [35]He shall remove all its fat, as the fat of the lamb is removed from the sacrifice of the peace offering. Then the priest shall burn it on the altar, according to the offerings made by fire to the LORD. So the priest shall make atonement for him, and it shall be forgiven him.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Always a Way** *(4:3)* Biblical law assumed that leaders would fail just like everybody else. By commanding a sin offering for the anointed priests (4:3) and for the rulers (4:22-26), God made it clear that their leaders were not gods. Sooner or later, these human authorities would need atonement for their sins, just like everyone else. We should not be shocked when religious and political leaders fail. No one can live above sin without God's help, and no one is beyond God's grace. There is always a way for sinners, even sinful leaders, to be forgiven.
**Topic: Sin**

**THE TRESPASS OFFERING**

**5** ‘If a person sins in hearing the utterance of an oath, and *is* a witness, whether he has seen or known *of the matter*-if he does not tell *it,* he bears guilt.

2‘Or if a person touches any unclean thing, whether *it is* the carcass of an unclean beast, or the carcass of unclean livestock, or the carcass of unclean creeping things, and he is unaware of it, he also shall be unclean and guilty. 3Or if he touches human uncleanness-whatever uncleanness with which a man may be defiled, and he is unaware of it-when he realizes *it,* then he shall be guilty.

4‘Or if a person swears, speaking thoughtlessly with *his* lips to do evil or to do good, whatever *it is* that a man may pronounce by an oath, and he is unaware of it-when he realizes *it,* then he shall be guilty in any of these *matters.*

5‘And it shall be, when he is guilty in any of these *matters,* that he shall confess that he has sinned in that *thing;* 6and he shall bring his trespass offering to the LORD for his sin which he has committed, a female from the flock, a lamb or a kid of the goats as a sin offering. So the priest shall make atonement for him concerning his sin.

7‘If he is not able to bring a lamb, then he shall bring to the LORD, for his trespass which he has committed, two turtledoves or two young pigeons: one as a sin offering and the other as a burnt offering. 8And he shall bring them to the priest, who shall offer *that* which *is* for the sin offering first, and wring off its head from its neck, but shall not divide *it* completely. 9Then he shall sprinkle *some* of the blood of the sin offering on the side of the altar, and the rest of the blood shall be drained out at the base of the altar. It *is* a sin offering. 10And he shall offer the second *as* a burnt offering according to the prescribed manner. So the priest shall make atonement on his behalf for his sin which he has committed, and it shall be forgiven him.

11‘But if he is not able to bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons, then he who sinned shall bring for his offering one-tenth of an ephah of fine flour as a sin offering. He shall put no oil on it, nor shall he put frankincense on it,

for it *is* a sin offering. [12]Then he shall bring it to the priest, and the priest shall take his handful of it as a memorial portion, and burn *it* on the altar according to the offerings made by fire to the LORD. It *is* a sin offering. [13]The priest shall make atonement for him, for his sin that he has committed in any of these matters; and it shall be forgiven him. *The rest* shall be the priest's as a grain offering.' "

**OFFERINGS WITH RESTITUTION**

[14]Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: [15]"If a person commits a trespass, and sins unintentionally in regard to the holy things of the LORD, then he shall bring to the LORD as his trespass offering a ram without blemish from the flocks, with your valuation in shekels of silver according to the shekel of the sanctuary, as a trespass offering. [16]And he shall make restitution for the harm that he has done in regard to the holy thing, and shall add one-fifth to it and give it to the priest. So the priest shall make atonement for him with the ram of the trespass offering, and it shall be forgiven him.

[17]"If a person sins, and commits any of these things which are forbidden to be done by the commandments of the LORD, though he does not know *it*, yet he is guilty and shall bear his iniquity. [18]And he shall bring to the priest a ram without blemish from the flock, with your valuation, as a trespass offering. So the priest shall make atonement for him regarding his ignorance in which he erred and did not know *it*, and it shall be forgiven him. [19]It is a trespass offering; he has certainly trespassed against the LORD."

**SOUL NOTE**

**To Tell the Truth** *(5:1)* The strictest honesty was required in telling a story under oath. To witness something and not tell the truth about it caused the person who had been a witness to bear the guilt. As when an oath is spoken in court proceedings to "tell the truth, the

whole truth, and nothing but the truth," a witness was bound to speak truthfully and not to hide or shade their meaning in any way. Telling the truth should be a way of life for God's people (Matt. 5:37).

**Topic: Communication**

**6** And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: [2]"If a person sins and commits a trespass against the LORD by lying to his neighbor about what was delivered to him for safekeeping, or about a pledge, or about a robbery, or if he has extorted from his neighbor, [3]or if he has found what was lost and lies concerning it, and swears falsely-in any one of these things that a man may do in which he sins: [4]then it shall be, because he has sinned and is guilty, that he shall restore what he has stolen, or the thing which he has extorted, or what was delivered to him for safekeeping, or the lost thing which he found, [5]or all that about which he has sworn falsely. He shall restore its full value, add one-fifth more to it, *and* give it to whomever it belongs, on the day of his trespass offering. [6]And he shall bring his trespass offering to the LORD, a ram without blemish from the flock, with your valuation, as a trespass offering, to the priest. [7]So the priest shall make atonement for him before the LORD, and he shall be forgiven for any one of these things that he may have done in which he trespasses."

### THE LAW OF THE BURNT OFFERING

[8]Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, [9]"Command Aaron and his sons, saying, 'This *is* the law of the burnt offering: The burnt offering *shall be* on the hearth upon the altar all night until morning, and the fire of the altar shall be kept burning on it. [10]And the priest shall put on his linen garment, and his linen trousers he shall put on his body, and take up the ashes of the burnt offering which the fire has consumed on the altar, and he shall put them beside the altar. [11]Then he shall take off his garments, put on other garments, and carry the ashes outside the camp to a clean place. [12]And the fire on the altar shall be kept burning on it; it shall not be put out. And the priest shall burn wood on it every morning, and lay the burnt offering in order on it; and he shall burn on it the fat of the peace offerings. [13]A fire shall always be burning on the altar; it shall never go out.

### THE LAW OF THE GRAIN OFFERING

[14]'This *is* the law of the grain offering: The sons of Aaron shall offer it on the altar before the LORD. [15]He shall take from it his handful of the fine flour of the grain offering, with its oil, and all the frankincense which *is* on the

grain offering, and shall burn *it* on the altar *for* a sweet aroma, as a memorial to the LORD. [16]And the remainder of it Aaron and his sons shall eat; with unleavened bread it shall be eaten in a holy place; in the court of the tabernacle of meeting they shall eat it. [17]It shall not be baked with leaven. I have given it *as* their portion of My offerings made by fire; it *is* most holy, like the sin offering and the trespass offering. [18]All the males among the children of Aaron may eat it. *It shall be* a statute forever in your generations concerning the offerings made by fire to the LORD. Everyone who touches them must be holy.' "[a]

[19]And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, [20]"This *is* the offering of Aaron and his sons, which they shall offer to the LORD, *beginning* on the day when he is anointed: one-tenth of an ephah of fine flour as a daily grain offering, half of it in the morning and half of it at night. [21]It shall be made in a pan with oil. *When it is* mixed, you shall bring it in. The baked pieces of the grain offering you shall offer *for* a sweet aroma to the LORD. [22]The priest from among his sons, who is anointed in his place, shall offer it. *It is* a statute forever to the LORD. It shall be wholly burned. [23]For every grain offering for the priest shall be wholly burned. It shall not be eaten."

**THE LAW OF THE SIN OFFERING**

[24]Also the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, [25]"Speak to Aaron and to his sons, saying, 'This *is* the law of the sin offering: In the place where the burnt offering is killed, the sin offering shall be killed before the LORD. It *is* most holy. [26]The priest who offers it for sin shall eat it. In a holy place it shall be eaten, in the court of the tabernacle of meeting. [27]Everyone who touches its flesh must be holy.[a] And when its blood is sprinkled on any garment, you shall wash that on which it was sprinkled, in a holy place. [28]But the earthen vessel in which it is boiled shall be broken. And if it is boiled in a bronze pot, it shall be both scoured and rinsed in water. [29]All the males among the priests may eat it. It *is* most holy. [30]But no sin offering from which *any* of the blood is brought into the tabernacle of meeting, to make atonement in the holy *place*,[a] shall be eaten. It shall be burned in the fire.

## SOUL NOTE

**Making Things Right** *(6:1-7)* It is natural to try to escape responsibility for wrongdoing, and it's easy to rationalize mistakes. The Old Testament offerings were designed so that the offender might receive God's forgiveness. But the wrongdoer also had to take responsibility for his or her behavior by making restitution to the person who had been wronged. We, too, must take responsibility for the effects of our sins on others. We need to be reconciled not only to God, but also to those whom we have wronged. Biblical law holds us responsible for our own behavior. **Topic: Forgiveness**

## THE LAW OF THE TRESPASS OFFERING

7 ‘Likewise this *is* the law of the trespass offering (it *is* most holy): 2In the
place where they kill the burnt offering they shall kill the trespass offering.
And its blood he shall sprinkle all around on the altar. 3And he shall offer
from it all its fat. The fat tail and the fat that covers the entrails, 4the two
kidneys and the fat that *is* on them by the flanks, and the fatty lobe *attached*
to the liver above the kidneys, he shall remove; 5and the priest shall burn
them on the altar *as* an offering made by fire to the LORD. It *is* a trespass
offering. 6Every male among the priests may eat it. It shall be eaten in a holy
place. It *is* most holy. 7The trespass offering *is* like the sin offering; *there is*
one law for them both: the priest who makes atonement with it shall have *it.*
8And the priest who offers anyone’s burnt offering, that priest shall have for
himself the skin of the burnt offering which he has offered. 9Also every grain
offering that is baked in the oven and all that is prepared in the covered pan,
or in a pan, shall be the priest’s who offers it. 10Every grain offering, *whether*
mixed with oil or dry, shall belong to all the sons of Aaron, to one *as much* as
the other.

## THE LAW OF PEACE OFFERINGS

11‘This *is* the law of the sacrifice of peace offerings which he shall offer to
the LORD: 12If he offers it for a thanksgiving, then he shall offer, with the
sacrifice of thanksgiving, unleavened cakes mixed with oil, unleavened
wafers anointed with oil, or cakes of blended flour mixed with oil. 13Besides
the cakes, *as* his offering he shall offer leavened bread with the sacrifice of
thanksgiving of his peace offering. 14And from it he shall offer one cake from
each offering *as* a heave offering to the LORD. It shall belong to the priest
who sprinkles the blood of the peace offering.

15‘The flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offering for thanksgiving shall be
eaten the same day it is offered. He shall not leave any of it until morning.
16But if the sacrifice of his offering *is* a vow or a voluntary offering, it shall
be eaten the same day that he offers his sacrifice; but on the next day the
remainder of it also may be eaten; 17the remainder of the flesh of the sacrifice

on the third day must be burned with fire. [18]And if *any* of the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offering is eaten at all on the third day, it shall not be accepted, nor shall it be imputed to him; it shall be an abomination *to* him who offers it, and the person who eats of it shall bear guilt.

[19]'The flesh that touches any unclean thing shall not be eaten. It shall be burned with fire. And as for the *clean* flesh, all who are clean may eat of it. [20]But the person who eats the flesh of the sacrifice of the peace offering that *belongs* to the LORD, while he is unclean, that person shall be cut off from his people. [21]Moreover the person who touches any unclean thing, *such as* human uncleanness, *an* unclean animal, or any abominable unclean thing,[a] and who eats the flesh of the sacrifice of the peace offering that *belongs* to the LORD, that person shall be cut off from his people.' "

## FAT AND BLOOD MAY NOT BE EATEN

[22]And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, [23]"Speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'You shall not eat any fat, of ox or sheep or goat. [24]And the fat of an animal that dies *naturally*, and the fat of what is torn by wild beasts, may be used in any other way; but you shall by no means eat it. [25]For whoever eats the fat of the animal of which men offer an offering made by fire to the LORD, the person who eats *it* shall be cut off from his people. [26]Moreover you shall not eat any blood in any of your dwellings, *whether* of bird or beast. [27]Whoever eats any blood, that person shall be cut off from his people.' "

## THE PORTION OF AARON AND HIS SONS

[28]Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, [29]"Speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'He who offers the sacrifice of his peace offering to the LORD shall bring his offering to the LORD from the sacrifice of his peace offering. [30]His own hands shall bring the offerings made by fire to the LORD. The fat with the breast he shall bring, that the breast may be waved *as* a wave offering before the LORD. [31]And the priest shall burn the fat on the altar, but the breast shall be Aaron's and his sons'. [32]Also the right thigh you shall give to the priest *as* a heave offering from the sacrifices of your peace offerings. [33]He among the sons of Aaron, who offers the blood of the peace offering

and the fat, shall have the right thigh for *his* part. [34]For the breast of the wave offering and the thigh of the heave offering I have taken from the children of Israel, from the sacrifices of their peace offerings, and I have given them to Aaron the priest and to his sons from the children of Israel by a statute forever.' "

[35]This *is* the consecrated portion for Aaron and his sons, from the offerings made by fire to the LORD, on the day when *Moses* presented them to minister to the LORD as priests. [36]The LORD commanded this to be given to them by the children of Israel, on the day that He anointed them, *by* a statute forever throughout their generations.

[37]This *is* the law of the burnt offering, the grain offering, the sin offering, the trespass offering, the consecrations, and the sacrifice of the peace offering, [38]which the LORD commanded Moses on Mount Sinai, on the day when He commanded the children of Israel to offer their offerings to the LORD in the Wilderness of Sinai.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Just Do It!** *(7:37, 38)* Talk is cheap. Speaking a commitment is easy, but it is another thing entirely to live out that commitment. Leviticus spells out practical ways by which God's people could express their commitments to Him. The sacrifices were inconvenient and costly, but they underlined the importance of right living. The sacrifices turned words into actions. Believers today live their faith by their actions. The New Testament expresses it like this: "Let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:18). **Topic: Love**

## AARON AND HIS SONS CONSECRATED

**8** And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: [2]"Take Aaron and his sons with
him, and the garments, the anointing oil, a bull as the sin offering, two
rams, and a basket of unleavened bread; [3]and gather all the congregation
together at the door of the tabernacle of meeting."

[4]So Moses did as the LORD commanded him. And the congregation was
gathered together at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. [5]And Moses said
to the congregation, "This *is* what the LORD commanded to be done."

[6]Then Moses brought Aaron and his sons and washed them with water.
[7]And he put the tunic on him, girded him with the sash, clothed him with the
robe, and put the ephod on him; and he girded him with the intricately woven
band of the ephod, and with it tied *the ephod* on him. [8]Then he put the
breastplate on him, and he put the Urim and the Thummim[a] in the
breastplate. [9]And he put the turban on his head. Also on the turban, on its
front, he put the golden plate, the holy crown, as the LORD had commanded
Moses.

[10]Also Moses took the anointing oil, and anointed the tabernacle and all
that *was* in it, and consecrated them. [11]He sprinkled some of it on the altar
seven times, anointed the altar and all its utensils, and the laver and its base,
to consecrate them. [12]And he poured some of the anointing oil on Aaron's
head and anointed him, to consecrate him.

[13]Then Moses brought Aaron's sons and put tunics on them, girded them
with sashes, and put hats on them, as the LORD had commanded Moses.

[14]And he brought the bull for the sin offering. Then Aaron and his sons
laid their hands on the head of the bull for the sin offering, [15]and Moses
killed *it.* Then he took the blood, and put *some* on the horns of the altar all
around with his finger, and purified the altar. And he poured the blood at the
base of the altar, and consecrated it, to make atonement for it. [16]Then he took
all the fat that *was* on the entrails, the fatty lobe *attached to* the liver, and the
two kidneys with their fat, and Moses burned *them* on the altar. [17]But the
bull, its hide, its flesh, and its offal, he burned with fire outside the camp, as

the LORD had commanded Moses.

18 Then he brought the ram as the burnt offering. And Aaron and his sons
laid their hands on the head of the ram, 19 and Moses killed *it.* Then he
sprinkled the blood all around on the altar. 20 And he cut the ram into pieces;
and Moses burned the head, the pieces, and the fat. 21 Then he washed the
entrails and the legs in water. And Moses burned the whole ram on the altar.
It *was* a burnt sacrifice for a sweet aroma, an offering made by fire to the
LORD, as the LORD had commanded Moses.

22 And he brought the second ram, the ram of consecration. Then Aaron
and his sons laid their hands on the head of the ram, 23 and Moses killed *it.*
Also he took *some* of its blood and put it on the tip of Aaron's right ear, on
the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot. 24 Then he
brought Aaron's sons. And Moses put *some* of the blood on the tips of their
right ears, on the thumbs of their right hands, and on the big toes of their right
feet. And Moses sprinkled the blood all around on the altar. 25 Then he took
the fat and the fat tail, all the fat that *was* on the entrails, the fatty lobe
*attached to* the liver, the two kidneys and their fat, and the right thigh; 26 and
from the basket of unleavened bread that was before the LORD he took one
unleavened cake, a cake of bread *anointed with* oil, and one wafer, and put
*them* on the fat and on the right thigh; 27 and he put all *these* in Aaron's hands
and in his sons' hands, and waved them *as* a wave offering before the LORD.
28 Then Moses took them from their hands and burned *them* on the altar, on
the burnt offering. They *were* consecration offerings for a sweet aroma. That
*was* an offering made by fire to the LORD. 29 And Moses took the breast and
waved it *as* a wave offering before the LORD. It was Moses' part of the ram of
consecration, as the LORD had commanded Moses.

30 Then Moses took some of the anointing oil and some of the blood which
*was* on the altar, and sprinkled *it* on Aaron, on his garments, on his sons, and
on the garments of his sons with him; and he consecrated Aaron, his
garments, his sons, and the garments of his sons with him.

31 And Moses said to Aaron and his sons, "Boil the flesh *at* the door of the
tabernacle of meeting, and eat it there with the bread that *is* in the basket of
consecration offerings, as I commanded, saying, 'Aaron and his sons shall eat

it.’ [32]What remains of the flesh and of the bread you shall burn with fire. [33]And you shall not go outside the door of the tabernacle of meeting *for* seven days, until the days of your consecration are ended. For seven days he shall consecrate you. [34]As he has done this day, *so* the LORD has commanded to do, to make atonement for you. [35]Therefore you shall stay *at* the door of the tabernacle of meeting day and night for seven days, and keep the charge of the LORD, so that you may not die; for so I have been commanded.” [36]So Aaron and his sons did all the things that the LORD had commanded by the hand of Moses.

## THE PRIESTLY MINISTRY BEGINS

**9** It came to pass on the eighth day that Moses called Aaron and his sons and
the elders of Israel. 2And he said to Aaron, “Take for yourself a young bull
as a sin offering and a ram as a burnt offering, without blemish, and offer
*them* before the LORD. 3And to the children of Israel you shall speak, saying,
‘Take a kid of the goats as a sin offering, and a calf and a lamb, *both* of the
first year, without blemish, as a burnt offering, 4also a bull and a ram as peace
offerings, to sacrifice before the LORD, and a grain offering mixed with oil;
for today the LORD will appear to you.’ ”

5So they brought what Moses commanded before the tabernacle of
meeting. And all the congregation drew near and stood before the LORD.
6Then Moses said, “This *is* the thing which the LORD commanded you to do,
and the glory of the LORD will appear to you.” 7And Moses said to Aaron,
“Go to the altar, offer your sin offering and your burnt offering, and make
atonement for yourself and for the people. Offer the offering of the people,
and make atonement for them, as the LORD commanded.”

8Aaron therefore went to the altar and killed the calf of the sin offering,
which *was* for himself. 9Then the sons of Aaron brought the blood to him.
And he dipped his finger in the blood, put *it* on the horns of the altar, and
poured the blood at the base of the altar. 10But the fat, the kidneys, and the
fatty lobe from the liver of the sin offering he burned on the altar, as the
LORD had commanded Moses. 11The flesh and the hide he burned with fire
outside the camp.

12And he killed the burnt offering; and Aaron’s sons presented to him the
blood, which he sprinkled all around on the altar. 13Then they presented the
burnt offering to him, with its pieces and head, and he burned *them* on the
altar. 14And he washed the entrails and the legs, and burned *them* with the
burnt offering on the altar.

15Then he brought the people’s offering, and took the goat, which *was* the
sin offering for the people, and killed it and offered it for sin, like the first
one. 16And he brought the burnt offering and offered it according to the
prescribed manner. 17Then he brought the grain offering, took a handful of it,

and burned *it* on the altar, besides the burnt sacrifice of the morning.

18 He also killed the bull and the ram *as* sacrifices of peace offerings, which
*were* for the people. And Aaron's sons presented to him the blood, which he
sprinkled all around on the altar, 19 and the fat from the bull and the ram-the
fatty tail, what covers *the entrails* and the kidneys, and the fatty lobe *attached
to* the liver; 20 and they put the fat on the breasts. Then he burned the fat on
the altar; 21 but the breasts and the right thigh Aaron waved *as* a wave offering
before the LORD, as Moses had commanded.

22 Then Aaron lifted his hand toward the people, blessed them, and came
down from offering the sin offering, the burnt offering, and peace offerings.
23 And Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle of meeting, and came out
and blessed the people. Then the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people,
24 and fire came out from before the LORD and consumed the burnt offering
and the fat on the altar. When all the people saw *it,* they shouted and fell on
their faces.

## THE PROFANE FIRE OF NADAB AND ABIHU

**10** Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put
fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the LORD,
which He had not commanded them. 2So fire went out from the LORD and
devoured them, and they died before the LORD. 3And Moses said to Aaron,
"This is what the LORD spoke, saying:

'By those who come near Me
I must be regarded as holy;
And before all the people
I must be glorified.' "
So Aaron held his peace.

4Then Moses called Mishael and Elzaphan, the sons of Uzziel the uncle of
Aaron, and said to them, "Come near, carry your brethren from before the
sanctuary out of the camp." 5So they went near and carried them by their
tunics out of the camp, as Moses had said.

6And Moses said to Aaron, and to Eleazar and Ithamar, his sons, "Do not
uncover your heads nor tear your clothes, lest you die, and wrath come upon
all the people. But let your brethren, the whole house of Israel, bewail the
burning which the LORD has kindled. 7You shall not go out from the door of
the tabernacle of meeting, lest you die, for the anointing oil of the LORD *is*
upon you." And they did according to the word of Moses.

## CONDUCT PRESCRIBED FOR PRIESTS

8Then the LORD spoke to Aaron, saying: 9"Do not drink wine or
intoxicating drink, you, nor your sons with you, when you go into the
tabernacle of meeting, lest you die. *It shall be* a statute forever throughout
your generations, 10that you may distinguish between holy and unholy, and
between unclean and clean, 11and that you may teach the children of Israel all
the statutes which the LORD has spoken to them by the hand of Moses."

12And Moses spoke to Aaron, and to Eleazar and Ithamar, his sons who
were left: "Take the grain offering that remains of the offerings made by fire
to the LORD, and eat it without leaven beside the altar; for it *is* most holy.

13 You shall eat it in a holy place, because it *is* your due and your sons' due,
of the sacrifices made by fire to the LORD; for so I have been commanded.
14 The breast of the wave offering and the thigh of the heave offering you
shall eat in a clean place, you, your sons, and your daughters with you; for
*they are* your due and your sons' due, *which* are given from the sacrifices of
peace offerings of the children of Israel. 15 The thigh of the heave offering and
the breast of the wave offering they shall bring with the offerings of fat made
by fire, to offer *as* a wave offering before the LORD. And it shall be yours and
your sons' with you, by a statute forever, as the LORD has commanded."

16 Then Moses made careful inquiry about the goat of the sin offering, and
there it was-burned up. And he was angry with Eleazar and Ithamar, the sons
of Aaron *who were* left, saying, 17 "Why have you not eaten the sin offering in
a holy place, since it *is* most holy, and *God* has given it to you to bear the
guilt of the congregation, to make atonement for them before the LORD?
18 See! Its blood was not brought inside the holy *place;*[a] indeed you should
have eaten it in a holy *place,* as I commanded."

19 And Aaron said to Moses, "Look, this day they have offered their sin
offering and their burnt offering before the LORD, and such things have
befallen me! *If* I had eaten the sin offering today, would it have been accepted
in the sight of the LORD?" 20 So when Moses heard *that,* he was content.

## SOUL NOTE

**Into God's Arms** *(10:1-3)* Christian parents hope to see their children grow up to follow Christ. While the Bible offers practical guidance for raising children, there are no automatic assurances, no guarantees. Aaron, the high priest and leader of Israel's worship, saw his two older sons, Nadab and Abihu, die because they violated God's laws. No one can be certain how his or her children will turn out. Even the best parents will experience parenting challenges. As with

all other aspects of life, parents must yield their children to the arms of God. **Topic: Parenting**

## FOODS PERMITTED AND FORBIDDEN

**11** Now the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying to them, [2]"Speak to the children of Israel, saying, 'These *are* the animals which you may eat among all the animals that *are* on the earth: [3]Among the animals, whatever divides the hoof, having cloven hooves *and* chewing the cud-that you may eat. [4]Nevertheless these you shall not eat among those that chew the cud or those that have cloven hooves: the camel, because it chews the cud but does not have cloven hooves, is unclean to you; [5]the rock hyrax, because it chews the cud but does not have cloven hooves, *is* unclean to you; [6]the hare, because it chews the cud but does not have cloven hooves, *is* unclean to you; [7]and the swine, though it divides the hoof, having cloven hooves, yet does not chew the cud, *is* unclean to you. [8]Their flesh you shall not eat, and their carcasses you shall not touch. They *are* unclean to you.

[9]'These you may eat of all that *are* in the water: whatever in the water has fins and scales, whether in the seas or in the rivers-that you may eat. [10]But all in the seas or in the rivers that do not have fins and scales, all that move in the water or any living thing which *is* in the water, they *are* an abomination to you. [11]They shall be an abomination to you; you shall not eat their flesh, but you shall regard their carcasses as an abomination. [12]Whatever in the water does not have fins or scales-that *shall be* an abomination to you.

[13]'And these you shall regard as an abomination among the birds; they shall not be eaten, they *are* an abomination: the eagle, the vulture, the buzzard, [14]the kite, and the falcon after its kind; [15]every raven after its kind, [16]the ostrich, the short-eared owl, the sea gull, and the hawk after its kind; [17]the little owl, the fisher owl, and the screech owl; [18]the white owl, the jackdaw, and the carrion vulture; [19]the stork, the heron after its kind, the hoopoe, and the bat.

[20]'All flying insects that creep on *all* fours *shall be* an abomination to you. [21]Yet these you may eat of every flying insect that creeps on *all* fours: those which have jointed legs above their feet with which to leap on the earth. [22]These you may eat: the locust after its kind, the destroying locust after its kind, the cricket after its kind, and the grasshopper after its kind. [23]But all

*other* flying insects which have four feet *shall be* an abomination to you.

**UNCLEAN ANIMALS**

24 ‘By these you shall become unclean; whoever touches the carcass of any
of them shall be unclean until evening; 25 whoever carries part of the carcass
of any of them shall wash his clothes and be unclean until evening: 26 *The*
*carcass* of any animal which divides the foot, but is not cloven-hoofed or
does not chew the cud, *is* unclean to you. Everyone who touches it shall be
unclean. 27 And whatever goes on its paws, among all kinds of animals that go
on *all* fours, those *are* unclean to you. Whoever touches any such carcass
shall be unclean until evening. 28 Whoever carries *any such* carcass shall wash
his clothes and be unclean until evening. It *is* unclean to you.

29 ‘These also *shall be* unclean to you among the creeping things that creep
on the earth: the mole, the mouse, and the large lizard after its kind; 30 the
gecko, the monitor lizard, the sand reptile, the sand lizard, and the
chameleon. 31 These *are* unclean to you among all that creep. Whoever
touches them when they are dead shall be unclean until evening. 32 Anything
on which *any* of them falls, when they are dead shall be unclean, whether *it is*
any item of wood or clothing or skin or sack, whatever item *it is*, in which
*any* work is done, it must be put in water. And it shall be unclean until
evening; then it shall be clean. 33 Any earthen vessel into which *any* of them
falls you shall break; and whatever *is* in it shall be unclean: 34 in such a vessel,
any edible food upon which water falls becomes unclean, and any drink that
may be drunk from it becomes unclean. 35 And everything on which *a part* of
*any such* carcass falls shall be unclean; *whether it is* an oven or cooking
stove, it shall be broken down; *for* they *are* unclean, and shall be unclean to
you. 36 Nevertheless a spring or a cistern, *in which there is* plenty of water,
shall be clean, but whatever touches any such carcass becomes unclean.
37 And if a part of *any such* carcass falls on any planting seed which is to be
sown, it *remains* clean. 38 But if water is put on the seed, and if *a part* of *any*
*such* carcass falls on it, it *becomes* unclean to you.

39 ‘And if any animal which you may eat dies, he who touches its carcass
shall be unclean until evening. 40 He who eats of its carcass shall wash his

clothes and be unclean until evening. He also who carries its carcass shall wash his clothes and be unclean until evening.

41‘And every creeping thing that creeps on the earth *shall be* an abomination. It shall not be eaten. 42Whatever crawls on its belly, whatever goes on *all* fours, or whatever has many feet among all creeping things that creep on the earth-these you shall not eat, for they *are* an abomination. 43You shall not make yourselves abominable with any creeping thing that creeps; nor shall you make yourselves unclean with them, lest you be defiled by them. 44For I *am* the LORD your God. You shall therefore consecrate yourselves, and you shall be holy; for I *am* holy. Neither shall you defile yourselves with any creeping thing that creeps on the earth. 45For I *am* the LORD who brings you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I *am* holy.

46‘This *is* the law of the animals and the birds and every living creature that moves in the waters, and of every creature that creeps on the earth, 47to distinguish between the unclean and the clean, and between the animal that may be eaten and the animal that may not be eaten.’ ”

**LEGALISM-**
**FOCUSING ON THE LAW**

DAN MITCHELL

(Leviticus 11)

**“D**o that and you’re grounded.” Parents “lay down the law” for various infractions so they can protect their children from danger and train them to do what is right. These rules, along with parents’

reaction to behavior, form the foundation and guideposts for people's adult lives. For the Israelites, the law revealed on Mount Sinai formed the foundation for their community. The purpose of this law was to show the Israelites how to be holy, just as God is holy (Lev. 11:45).

## GOD ALONE SAVES

As effective as God's law is in pointing out right and wrong, problems occur when we focus on the law alone. This leaves us frustrated and dismayed because the law cannot make us holy (Gal. 2:16; 3:10; Heb. 10:1).

The Bible is clear: Salvation is from God through faith in Christ (Rom. 5:6-8; Eph. 2:8). We cannot save ourselves by obeying the law (Gal. 3:11). Yet, for the Christian, the law continues to have some value. Our works don't save us-but they *are* a natural outgrowth of our relationship with God.

## THE TEMPTATION OF LEGALISM

Some Christians are tempted toward legalism-focusing on the law. They stress conformity to rules, believing that obedience to rules is integral to salvation. Many times, the rules on which legalists focus aren't even in the Bible, but they are set up as salvation indicators. Like the Pharisees of Jesus' day, legalists set up a fence of human-made laws to keep themselves from sinning. Jesus clearly censured the Pharisees for legalism (Matt. 23:2-4). To those who believed that they would be saved by their own works, the apostle Paul wrote that their focus on the law canceled out Christ's work on their behalf (Gal. 5:1, 2).

The opposite tendency is just as dangerous, however. Some Christians claim that their behavior has nothing to do with their Christianity. Theologians call these people "antinomians" (against law). Paul admonished such people to stop sinning and to "glorify God" with their behavior (1 Cor. 6:20).

## MAINTAINING THE BALANCE

The Bible encourages believers to balance the two extremes-the impulse to reject the law entirely, and the inclination to concentrate on works. John Calvin and Martin Luther thought much about the proper role of the law in a Christian's life. They identified three roles for the law:

- First, the law gives everyone-both believer and unbeliever-guidelines on how to order society. It shows everyone what is right and wrong.
- Second, the law drives people to Christ, by showing how evil they are-how short they have fallen of God's standard.
- Third, the law gives believers principles for living.

## FREEDOM FOR LEGALISTS

*Discussing the Rules*

The first step to freedom from legalism is to discuss the rules-both the rules enforced by others and the rules of one's own conscience. There is nothing wrong with having personal convictions and abstaining from certain activities. In fact, Christians should be self-controlled (2 Pet. 1:6) and should avoid tempting situations (Prov. 4:14, 15). Moreover, Paul encourages Christians to tolerate each other's personal convictions, so that no one may be tempted to do something against their conscience (1 Cor. 8:1-13). But we run into problems when these rules become criteria by which a group determines whether someone is saved.

Although legalism can occur in various ways, there are a number of telltale signs. Often, legalism overemphasizes appearances-like hair length, clothing, or music. Typically, every rule has a well-thought-out rationale. Usually, the rule is designed to protect people from temptation; for example, "Card-playing may tempt someone to gamble, so don't do it." Often there is an authority figure providing

interpretation and enforcement. Also, legalism cannot tolerate ambiguity, so nearly every facet of life has a rule. Taken to the extreme, legalism gets to be a test of salvation.

Legalism creates many victims. Sometimes a child affected by legalism grows up to be a rebel, refusing to accept rules in life. Legalism can also create a guilt-ridden person who constantly evaluates their life by certain strict standards. This type of person often has trouble accepting God's forgiveness.

The lives of legalists are defined by rules. They need to talk about the subtle effects of rules on them. Do the rules produce guilt? Does the law spark anger and rebellion? Discussing the rules will help legalists to identify the attitudes that are imprisoning them.

*Focusing on God*

Because legalism focuses on appearances, the antidote to legalism is focusing on God and His love. Our Lord unconditionally loves us. In fact, Christ loved us so much, He died for us when we were still His enemies (Rom. 5:6-8). Just as the prodigal son came back to his father with nothing, so we come to God with nothing-no good works, no trophies, no awards. We come to God to accept what only He can give us-salvation through His Son. Our works amount to nothing. God's grace is everything. Reminding ourselves of God's amazing gift of salvation is the best way to fight legalism.

*Living as God's Child* The Holy Spirit is in our hearts as

The Holy Spirit is in our hearts as evidence of our relationship to God (Gal. 4:5-7). The Spirit frees us from the law's condemnation and gives us the power to do what is right (Rom. 8:1-5). We are no longer slaves to the law; we are God's children (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 3:26-29). We are to live in the freedom God gives. "Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed" (John 8:36).

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of legalism include:

- 1 Corinthians 10:23-11:1
- Galatians 2:11-4:7
- Ephesians 2:8, 9
- Philippians 3:1-4:1
- Colossians 2:11-23
- Titus 2:11-14 .
- James 2:14-26

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on legalism at Romans 7:6-14. See also the personality profile of The Pharisees: Living By The Rules.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Body and Soul** *(11:44, 45)* Holiness was the basis of God's ethical requirements as well as an expression of His character. God still desires to make us "holy and without blame" (Eph. 1:4). In Old Testament times, holiness was a matter of both body and soul, and the law regulated cleanness in matters such as food and bodily discharges. The priest had a primary role in dealing with both physical and spiritual needs. Today, we generally separate the two subjects-leaving a gap between medicine and ministry, between health and religion. But God reveals the unity of the human person-both body and soul are His concern. **Topic: Health/Spirituality**

## THE RITUAL AFTER CHILDBIRTH

**12** Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, [2]"Speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'If a woman has conceived, and borne a male child, then she shall be unclean seven days; as in the days of her customary impurity she shall be unclean. [3]And on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised. [4]She shall then continue in the blood of *her* purification thirty-three days. She shall not touch any hallowed thing, nor come into the sanctuary until the days of her purification are fulfilled.

[5]'But if she bears a female child, then she shall be unclean two weeks, as in her customary impurity, and she shall continue in the blood of *her* purification sixty-six days.

[6]'When the days of her purification are fulfilled, whether for a son or a daughter, she shall bring to the priest a lamb of the first year as a burnt offering, and a young pigeon or a turtledove as a sin offering, to the door of the tabernacle of meeting. [7]Then he shall offer it before the LORD, and make atonement for her. And she shall be clean from the flow of her blood. This *is* the law for her who has borne a male or a female.

[8]'And if she is not able to bring a lamb, then she may bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons-one as a burnt offering and the other as a sin offering. So the priest shall make atonement for her, and she will be clean.' "

## THE LAW CONCERNING LEPROSY

**13** And the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: 2"When a man has on
the skin of his body a swelling, a scab, or a bright spot, and it becomes
on the skin of his body *like* a leprous[a] sore, then he shall be brought to Aaron
the priest or to one of his sons the priests. 3The priest shall examine the sore
on the skin of the body; and if the hair on the sore has turned white, and the
sore appears *to be* deeper than the skin of his body, it *is* a leprous sore. Then
the priest shall examine him, and pronounce him unclean. 4But if the bright
spot *is* white on the skin of his body, and does not appear *to be* deeper than
the skin, and its hair has not turned white, then the priest shall isolate *the one*
*who has* the sore seven days. 5And the priest shall examine him on the
seventh day; and indeed *if* the sore appears to be as it was, *and* the sore has
not spread on the skin, then the priest shall isolate him another seven days.
6Then the priest shall examine him again on the seventh day; and indeed *if*
the sore has faded, *and* the sore has not spread on the skin, then the priest
shall pronounce him clean; it *is only* a scab, and he shall wash his clothes and
be clean. 7But if the scab should at all spread over the skin, after he has been
seen by the priest for his cleansing, he shall be seen by the priest again. 8And
*if* the priest sees that the scab has indeed spread on the skin, then the priest
shall pronounce him unclean. It *is* leprosy.

9"When the leprous sore is on a person, then he shall be brought to the
priest. 10And the priest shall examine *him;* and indeed *if* the swelling on the
skin *is* white, and it has turned the hair white, and *there is* a spot of raw flesh
in the swelling, 11it *is* an old leprosy on the skin of his body. The priest shall
pronounce him unclean, and shall not isolate him, for he *is* unclean.

12"And if leprosy breaks out all over the skin, and the leprosy covers all
the skin of *the one who has* the sore, from his head to his foot, wherever the
priest looks, 13then the priest shall consider; and indeed *if* the leprosy has
covered all his body, he shall pronounce *him* clean *who has* the sore. It has all
turned white. He *is* clean. 14But when raw flesh appears on him, he shall be
unclean. 15And the priest shall examine the raw flesh and pronounce him to
be unclean; *for* the raw flesh *is* unclean. It *is* leprosy. 16Or if the raw flesh

changes and turns white again, he shall come to the priest. [17]And the priest shall examine him; and indeed *if* the sore has turned white, then the priest shall pronounce *him* clean *who has* the sore. He *is* clean.

[18]"If the body develops a boil in the skin, and it is healed, [19]and in the place of the boil there comes a white swelling or a bright spot, reddish-white, then it shall be shown to the priest; [20]and *if*, when the priest sees it, it indeed *appears* deeper than the skin, and its hair has turned white, the priest shall pronounce him unclean. It *is* a leprous sore which has broken out of the boil. [21]But if the priest examines it, and indeed *there are* no white hairs in it, and it *is* not deeper than the skin, but has faded, then the priest shall isolate him seven days; [22]and if it should at all spread over the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean. It *is* a leprous sore. [23]But if the bright spot stays in one place, *and* has not spread, it *is* the scar of the boil; and the priest shall pronounce him clean.

[24]"Or if the body receives a burn on its skin by fire, and the raw *flesh* of the burn becomes a bright spot, reddish-white or white, [25]then the priest shall examine it; and indeed *if* the hair of the bright spot has turned white, and it appears deeper than the skin, it *is* leprosy broken out in the burn. Therefore the priest shall pronounce him unclean. It *is* a leprous sore.

[26]But if the priest examines it, and indeed *there are* no white hairs in the bright spot, and it *is* not deeper than the skin, but has faded, then the priest shall isolate him seven days.

[27]And the priest shall examine him on the seventh day. If it has at all spread over the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean. It *is* a leprous sore. [28]But if the bright spot stays in one place, *and* has not spread on the skin, but has faded, it *is* a swelling from the burn. The priest shall pronounce him clean, for it *is* the scar from the burn.

[29]"If a man or woman has a sore on the head or the beard, [30]then the priest shall examine the sore; and indeed if it appears deeper than the skin, *and there is* in it thin yellow hair, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean. It *is* a scaly leprosy of the head or beard. [31]But if the priest examines the scaly sore, and indeed it does not appear deeper than the skin, and *there is* no black hair in it, then the priest shall isolate *the one who has* the scale seven days.

[32]And on the seventh day the priest shall examine the sore; and indeed *if* the scale has not spread, and there is no yellow hair in it, and the scale does not appear deeper than the skin, [33]he shall shave himself, but the scale he shall not shave. And the priest shall isolate *the one who has* the scale another seven days. [34]On the seventh day the priest shall examine the scale; and indeed *if* the scale has not spread over the skin, and does not appear deeper than the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him clean. He shall wash his clothes and be clean. [35]But if the scale should at all spread over the skin after his cleansing, [36]then the priest shall examine him; and indeed *if* the scale has spread over the skin, the priest need not seek for yellow hair. He *is* unclean. [37]But if the scale appears to be at a standstill, and there is black hair grown up in it, the scale has healed. He *is* clean, and the priest shall pronounce him clean.

[38]"If a man or a woman has bright spots on the skin of the body, *specifically* white bright spots, [39]then the priest shall look; and indeed *if* the bright spots on the skin of the body *are* dull white, it *is* a white spot *that* grows on the skin. He *is* clean.

[40]"As for the man whose hair has fallen from his head, he *is* bald, *but* he *is* clean. [41]He whose hair has fallen from his forehead, he *is* bald on the forehead, *but* he *is* clean. [42]And if there is on the bald head or bald forehead a reddish-white sore, it *is* leprosy breaking out on his bald head or his bald forehead. [43]Then the priest shall examine it; and indeed *if* the swelling of the sore *is* reddish-white on his bald head or on his bald forehead, as the appearance of leprosy on the skin of the body, [44]he is a leprous man. He *is* unclean. The priest shall surely pronounce him unclean; his sore *is* on his head.

[45]"Now the leper on whom the sore *is*, his clothes shall be torn and his head bare; and he shall cover his mustache, and cry, 'Unclean! Unclean!' [46]He shall be unclean. All the days he has the sore he shall be unclean. He *is* unclean, and he shall dwell alone; his dwelling *shall be* outside the camp.

## THE LAW CONCERNING LEPROUS GARMENTS

[47]"Also, if a garment has a leprous plague[a] in it, *whether it is* a woolen

garment or a linen garment, [48]whether *it is* in the warp or woof of linen or wool, whether in leather or in anything made of leather, [49]and if the plague is greenish or reddish in the garment or in the leather, whether in the warp or in the woof, or in anything made of leather, it *is* a leprous plague and shall be shown to the priest. [50]The priest shall examine the plague and isolate *that which has* the plague seven days. [51]And he shall examine the plague on the seventh day. If the plague has spread in the garment, either in the warp or in the woof, in the leather *or* in anything made of leather, the plague *is* an active leprosy. It *is* unclean. [52]He shall therefore burn that garment in which is the plague, whether warp or woof, in wool or in linen, or anything of leather, for it *is* an active leprosy; *the garment* shall be burned in the fire.

[53]"But if the priest examines *it*, and indeed the plague has not spread in the garment, either in the warp or in the woof, or in anything made of leather, [54]then the priest shall command that they wash *the thing* in which *is* the plague; and he shall isolate it another seven days. [55]Then the priest shall examine the plague after it has been washed; and indeed *if* the plague has not changed its color, though the plague has not spread, it *is* unclean, and you shall burn it in the fire; it continues eating away, *whether* the damage *is* outside or inside. [56]If the priest examines *it*, and indeed the plague has faded after washing it, then he shall tear it out of the garment, whether out of the warp or out of the woof, or out of the leather. [57]But if it appears again in the garment, either in the warp or in the woof, or in anything made of leather, it *is* a spreading *plague;* you shall burn with fire that in which is the plague. [58]And if you wash the garment, either warp or woof, or whatever is made of leather, if the plague has disappeared from it, then it shall be washed a second time, and shall be clean.

[59]"This *is* the law of the leprous plague in a garment of wool or linen, either in the warp or woof, or in anything made of leather, to pronounce it clean or to pronounce it unclean."

## SOUL NOTE

**Preventive Care** *(ch. 13)* God wanted His people to be healthy. The detailed laws of chapter 13 deal with detecting, examining, quarantining, cleansing, and restoring people who had leprosy, a skin disease, or another physical malady. God also gave specific instructions concerning the cleanliness of clothes and houses (13:47-59). If God cares so much about our health, then so should we.
**Topic: Health/Spirituality**

## THE RITUAL FOR CLEANSING HEALED LEPERS

**14** Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, [2]"This shall be the law of the leper for the day of his cleansing: He shall be brought to the priest. [3]And the priest shall go out of the camp, and the priest shall examine *him;* and indeed, *if* the leprosy is healed in the leper, [4]then the priest shall command to take for him who is to be cleansed two living *and* clean birds, cedar wood, scarlet, and hyssop. [5]And the priest shall command that one of the birds be killed in an earthen vessel over running water. [6]As for the living bird, he shall take it, the cedar wood and the scarlet and the hyssop, and dip them and the living bird in the blood of the bird *that was* killed over the running water. [7]And he shall sprinkle it seven times on him who is to be cleansed from the leprosy, and shall pronounce him clean, and shall let the living bird loose in the open field. [8]He who is to be cleansed shall wash his clothes, shave off all his hair, and wash himself in water, that he may be clean. After that he shall come into the camp, and shall stay outside his tent seven days. [9]But on the seventh day he shall shave all the hair off his head and his beard and his eyebrows-all his hair he shall shave off. He shall wash his clothes and wash his body in water, and he shall be clean.

[10]"And on the eighth day he shall take two male lambs without blemish, one ewe lamb of the first year without blemish, three-tenths *of an ephah* of fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering, and one log of oil. [11]Then the priest who makes *him* clean shall present the man who is to be made clean, and those things, before the LORD, *at* the door of the tabernacle of meeting. [12]And the priest shall take one male lamb and offer it as a trespass offering, and the log of oil, and wave them *as* a wave offering before the LORD. [13]Then he shall kill the lamb in the place where he kills the sin offering and the burnt offering, in a holy place; for as the sin offering *is* the priest's, so *is* the trespass offering. It *is* most holy. [14]The priest shall take *some* of the blood of the trespass offering, and the priest shall put *it* on the tip of the right ear of him who is to be cleansed, on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot. [15]And the priest shall take *some* of the log of oil, and pour *it* into the palm of his own left hand. [16]Then the priest shall dip his right finger in the oil that *is* in his left hand, and shall sprinkle some of the oil with his

finger seven times before the LORD. [17]And of the rest of the oil in his hand, the priest shall put *some* on the tip of the right ear of him who is to be cleansed, on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot, on the blood of the trespass offering. [18]The rest of the oil that *is* in the priest's hand he shall put on the head of him who is to be cleansed. So the priest shall make atonement for him before the LORD.

[19]"Then the priest shall offer the sin offering, and make atonement for him who is to be cleansed from his uncleanness. Afterward he shall kill the burnt offering. [20]And the priest shall offer the burnt offering and the grain offering on the altar. So the priest shall make atonement for him, and he shall be clean.

[21]"But if he *is* poor and cannot afford it, then he shall take one male lamb *as* a trespass offering to be waved, to make atonement for him, one-tenth *of an ephah* of fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering, a log of oil, [22]and two turtledoves or two young pigeons, such as he is able to afford: one shall be a sin offering and the other a burnt offering. [23]He shall bring them to the priest on the eighth day for his cleansing, to the door of the tabernacle of meeting, before the LORD. [24]And the priest shall take the lamb of the trespass offering and the log of oil, and the priest shall wave them *as* a wave offering before the LORD. [25]Then he shall kill the lamb of the trespass offering, and the priest shall take *some* of the blood of the trespass offering and put *it* on the tip of the right ear of him who is to be cleansed, on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot. [26]And the priest shall pour some of the oil into the palm of his own left hand. [27]Then the priest shall sprinkle with his right finger *some* of the oil that *is* in his left hand seven times before the LORD. [28]And the priest shall put *some* of the oil that *is* in his hand on the tip of the right ear of him who is to be cleansed, on the thumb of the right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot, on the place of the blood of the trespass offering. [29]The rest of the oil that *is* in the priest's hand he shall put on the head of him who is to be cleansed, to make atonement for him before the LORD. [30]And he shall offer one of the turtledoves or young pigeons, such as he can afford- [31]such as he is able to afford, the one *as* a sin offering and the other *as* a burnt offering, with the grain offering. So the priest shall make atonement for him who is to be cleansed before the LORD. [32]This *is* the law

*for one* who had a leprous sore, who cannot afford the usual cleansing."

**THE LAW CONCERNING LEPROUS HOUSES**

[33]And the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: [34]"When you have
come into the land of Canaan, which I give you as a possession, and I put the
leprous plague***a*** in a house in the land of your possession, [35]and he who owns
the house comes and tells the priest, saying, 'It seems to me that *there is*
some plague in the house,' [36]then the priest shall command that they empty
the house, before the priest goes *into it* to examine the plague, that all that *is*
in the house may not be made unclean; and afterward the priest shall go in to
examine the house. [37]And he shall examine the plague; and indeed *if* the
plague *is* on the walls of the house with ingrained streaks, greenish or
reddish, which appear to be deep in the wall, [38]then the priest shall go out of
the house, to the door of the house, and shut up the house seven days. [39]And
the priest shall come again on the seventh day and look; and indeed *if* the
plague has spread on the walls of the house, [40]then the priest shall command
that they take away the stones in which *is* the plague, and they shall cast them
into an unclean place outside the city. [41]And he shall cause the house to be
scraped inside, all around, and the dust that they scrape off they shall pour
out in an unclean place outside the city. [42]Then they shall take other stones
and put *them* in the place of *those* stones, and he shall take other mortar and
plaster the house.

[43]"Now if the plague comes back and breaks out in the house, after he has
taken away the stones, after he has scraped the house, and after it is plastered,
[44]then the priest shall come and look; and indeed *if* the plague has spread in
the house, it *is* an active leprosy in the house. It *is* unclean. [45]And he shall
break down the house, its stones, its timber, and all the plaster of the house,
and he shall carry *them* outside the city to an unclean place. [46]Moreover he
who goes into the house at all while it is shut up shall be unclean until
evening. [47]And he who lies down in the house shall wash his clothes, and he
who eats in the house shall wash his clothes.

[48]"But if the priest comes in and examines *it,* and indeed the plague has not
spread in the house after the house was plastered, then the priest shall

pronounce the house clean, because the plague is healed. [49]And he shall take, to cleanse the house, two birds, cedar wood, scarlet, and hyssop. [50]Then he shall kill one of the birds in an earthen vessel over running water; [51]and he shall take the cedar wood, the hyssop, the scarlet, and the living bird, and dip them in the blood of the slain bird and in the running water, and sprinkle the house seven times. [52]And he shall cleanse the house with the blood of the bird and the running water and the living bird, with the cedar wood, the hyssop, and the scarlet. [53]Then he shall let the living bird loose outside the city in the open field, and make atonement for the house, and it shall be clean.

[54]“This *is* the law for any leprous sore and scale, [55]for the leprosy of a garment and of a house, [56]for a swelling and a scab and a bright spot, [57]to teach when *it is* unclean and when *it is* clean. This *is* the law of leprosy.”

## THE LAW CONCERNING BODILY DISCHARGES

**15** And the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, [2]"Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When any man has a discharge from his body, his discharge *is* unclean. [3]And this shall be his uncleanness in regard to his discharge-whether his body runs with his discharge, or his body is stopped up by his discharge, it *is* his uncleanness. [4]Every bed is unclean on which he who has the discharge lies, and everything on which he sits shall be unclean. [5]And whoever touches his bed shall wash his clothes and bathe in water, and be unclean until evening. [6]He who sits on anything on which he who has the discharge sat shall wash his clothes and bathe in water, and be unclean until evening. [7]And he who touches the body of him who has the discharge shall wash his clothes and bathe in water, and be unclean until evening. [8]If he who has the discharge spits on him who is clean, then he shall wash his clothes and bathe in water, and be unclean until evening. [9]Any saddle on which he who has the discharge rides shall be unclean. [10]Whoever touches anything that was under him shall be unclean until evening. He who carries *any of* those things shall wash his clothes and bathe in water, and be unclean until evening. [11]And whomever the one who has the discharge touches, and has not rinsed his hands in water, he shall wash his clothes and bathe in water, and be unclean until evening. [12]The vessel of earth that he who has the discharge touches shall be broken, and every vessel of wood shall be rinsed in water.

[13]'And when he who has a discharge is cleansed of his discharge, then he shall count for himself seven days for his cleansing, wash his clothes, and bathe his body in running water; then he shall be clean. [14]On the eighth day he shall take for himself two turtledoves or two young pigeons, and come before the LORD, to the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and give them to the priest. [15]Then the priest shall offer them, the one *as* a sin offering and the other *as* a burnt offering. So the priest shall make atonement for him before the LORD because of his discharge.

[16]'If any man has an emission of semen, then he shall wash all his body in water, and be unclean until evening. [17]And any garment and any leather on

which there is semen, it shall be washed with water, and be unclean until evening. [18]Also, when a woman lies with a man, and *there is* an emission of semen, they shall bathe in water, and be unclean until evening.

[19]'If a woman has a discharge, *and* the discharge from her body is blood, she shall be set apart seven days; and whoever touches her shall be unclean until evening. [20]Everything that she lies on during her impurity shall be unclean; also everything that she sits on shall be unclean. [21]Whoever touches her bed shall wash his clothes and bathe in water, and be unclean until evening. [22]And whoever touches anything that she sat on shall wash his clothes and bathe in water, and be unclean until evening. [23]If *anything* is on *her* bed or on anything on which she sits, when he touches it, he shall be unclean until evening. [24]And if any man lies with her at all, so that her impurity is on him, he shall be unclean seven days; and every bed on which he lies shall be unclean.

[25]'If a woman has a discharge of blood for many days, other than at the time of her *customary* impurity, or if it runs beyond her *usual time of* impurity, all the days of her unclean discharge shall be as the days of her *customary* impurity. She *shall be* unclean. [26]Every bed on which she lies all the days of her discharge shall be to her as the bed of her impurity; and whatever she sits on shall be unclean, as the uncleanness of her impurity. [27]Whoever touches those things shall be unclean; he shall wash his clothes and bathe in water, and be unclean until evening.

[28]'But if she is cleansed of her discharge, then she shall count for herself seven days, and after that she shall be clean. [29]And on the eighth day she shall take for herself two turtledoves or two young pigeons, and bring them to the priest, to the door of the tabernacle of meeting. [30]Then the priest shall offer the one *as* a sin offering and the other *as* a burnt offering, and the priest shall make atonement for her before the LORD for the discharge of her uncleanness.

[31]'Thus you shall separate the children of Israel from their uncleanness, lest they die in their uncleanness when they defile My tabernacle that *is* among them. [32]This *is* the law for one who has a discharge, and *for him* who emits semen and is unclean thereby, [33]and for her who is indisposed because

of her *customary* impurity, and for one who has a discharge, either man or woman, and for him who lies with her who is unclean.’ ”

## THE DAY OF ATONEMENT

**16** Now the LORD spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron,
when they offered *profane fire* before the LORD, and died; 2and the LORD
said to Moses: "Tell Aaron your brother not to come at *just* any time into the
Holy *Place* inside the veil, before the mercy seat which *is* on the ark, lest he
die; for I will appear in the cloud above the mercy seat.

3"Thus Aaron shall come into the Holy *Place:* with *the blood of* a young
bull as a sin offering, and *of* a ram as a burnt offering. 4He shall put the holy
linen tunic and the linen trousers on his body; he shall be girded with a linen
sash, and with the linen turban he shall be attired. These *are* holy garments.
Therefore he shall wash his body in water, and put them on. 5And he shall
take from the congregation of the children of Israel two kids of the goats as a
sin offering, and one ram as a burnt offering.

6"Aaron shall offer the bull as a sin offering, which *is* for himself, and
make atonement for himself and for his house. 7He shall take the two goats
and present them before the LORD *at* the door of the tabernacle of meeting.
8Then Aaron shall cast lots for the two goats: one lot for the LORD and the
other lot for the scapegoat. 9And Aaron shall bring the goat on which the
LORD's lot fell, and offer it *as* a sin offering. 10But the goat on which the lot
fell to be the scapegoat shall be presented alive before the LORD, to make
atonement upon it, *and* to let it go as the scapegoat into the wilderness.

11"And Aaron shall bring the bull of the sin offering, which is for himself,
and make atonement for himself and for his house, and shall kill the bull as
the sin offering which *is* for himself. 12Then he shall take a censer full of
burning coals of fire from the altar before the LORD, with his hands full of
sweet incense beaten fine, and bring *it* inside the veil. 13And he shall put the
incense on the fire before the LORD, that the cloud of incense may cover the
mercy seat that *is* on the Testimony, lest he die. 14He shall take some of the
blood of the bull and sprinkle *it* with his finger on the mercy seat on the east
*side;* and before the mercy seat he shall sprinkle some of the blood with his
finger seven times.

15"Then he shall kill the goat of the sin offering, which *is* for the people,

bring its blood inside the veil, do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bull, and sprinkle it on the mercy seat and before the mercy seat. [16]So he shall make atonement for the Holy *Place*, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions, for all their sins; and so he shall do for the tabernacle of meeting which remains among them in the midst of their uncleanness. [17]There shall be no man in the tabernacle of meeting when he goes in to make atonement in the Holy *Place*, until he comes out, that he may make atonement for himself, for his household, and for all the assembly of Israel. [18]And he shall go out to the altar that *is* before the LORD, and make atonement for it, and shall take some of the blood of the bull and some of the blood of the goat, and put it on the horns of the altar all around. [19]Then he shall sprinkle some of the blood on it with his finger seven times, cleanse it, and consecrate it from the uncleanness of the children of Israel.

[20]"And when he has made an end of atoning for the Holy *Place,* the tabernacle of meeting, and the altar, he shall bring the live goat. [21]Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, concerning all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat, and shall send *it* away into the wilderness by the hand of a suitable man. [22]The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to an uninhabited land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness.

[23]"Then Aaron shall come into the tabernacle of meeting, shall take off the linen garments which he put on when he went into the Holy *Place*, and shall leave them there. [24]And he shall wash his body with water in a holy place, put on his garments, come out and offer his burnt offering and the burnt offering of the people, and make atonement for himself and for the people. [25]The fat of the sin offering he shall burn on the altar. [26]And he who released the goat as the scapegoat shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water, and afterward he may come into the camp. [27]The bull *for* the sin offering and the goat *for* the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the Holy *Place,* shall be carried outside the camp. And they shall burn in the fire their skins, their flesh, and their offal. [28]Then he who burns them shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water, and afterward he may

come into the camp.

29 “*This* shall be a statute forever for you: In the seventh month, on the
tenth *day* of the month, you shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all,
*whether* a native of your own country or a stranger who dwells among you.
30 For on that day *the priest* shall make atonement for you, to cleanse you,
*that* you may be clean from all your sins before the LORD. 31 It *is* a sabbath of
solemn rest for you, and you shall afflict your souls. *It is* a statute forever.
32 And the priest, who is anointed and consecrated to minister as priest in his
father’s place, shall make atonement, and put on the linen clothes, the holy
garments; 33 then he shall make atonement for the Holy Sanctuary,[a] and he
shall make atonement for the tabernacle of meeting and for the altar, and he
shall make atonement for the priests and for all the people of the assembly.
34 This shall be an everlasting statute for you, to make atonement for the
children of Israel, for all their sins, once a year.” And he did as the LORD
commanded Moses.

**SOUL NOTE**

**A Nation Under God** *(16:32, 33)* Once each year the Israelites were to humble themselves by prayer and fasting on the day of atonement. National atonement was a serious matter that involved two sacrifices: A bull would be sacrificed for the priests, and a goat for the people (16:11-19). The blood would be used to purify the holy place, and the bodies of the slaughtered animals would be taken outside the camp and burned (16:27). God promises to honor the nation that honors Him (2 Chr. 7:14). **Topic: Repentance**

## THE SANCTITY OF BLOOD

**17** And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 2"Speak to Aaron, to his sons, and to all the children of Israel, and say to them, 'This *is* the thing which the LORD has commanded, saying: 3 "Whatever man of the house of Israel who kills an ox or lamb or goat in the camp, or who kills *it* outside the camp, 4and does not bring it to the door of the tabernacle of meeting to offer an offering to the LORD before the tabernacle of the LORD, the guilt of bloodshed shall be imputed to that man. He has shed blood; and that man shall be cut off from among his people, 5to the end that the children of Israel may bring their sacrifices which they offer in the open field, that they may bring them to the LORD at the door of the tabernacle of meeting, to the priest, and offer them *as* peace offerings to the LORD. 6And the priest shall sprinkle the blood on the altar of the LORD *at* the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and burn the fat for a sweet aroma to the LORD. 7They shall no more offer their sacrifices to demons, after whom they have played the harlot. This shall be a statute forever for them throughout their generations." '

8"Also you shall say to them: 'Whatever man of the house of Israel, or of the strangers who dwell among you, who offers a burnt offering or sacrifice, 9and does not bring it to the door of the tabernacle of meeting, to offer it to the LORD, that man shall be cut off from among his people.

10'And whatever man of the house of Israel, or of the strangers who dwell among you, who eats any blood, I will set My face against that person who eats blood, and will cut him off from among his people. 11For the life of the flesh *is* in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it *is* the blood *that* makes atonement for the soul.' 12Therefore I said to the children of Israel, 'No one among you shall eat blood, nor shall any stranger who dwells among you eat blood.'

> "For the life of the flesh is in the
> blood, and I have given it to you
> upon the altar to make atonement
> for your souls; for it is the blood
> that makes atonement for the soul."

## LEVITICUS 17:11

13 “Whatever man of the children of Israel, or of the strangers who dwell
among you, who hunts and catches any animal or bird that may be eaten, he
shall pour out its blood and cover it with dust; 14 for *it is* the life of all flesh.
Its blood sustains its life. Therefore I said to the children of Israel, ‘You shall
not eat the blood of any flesh, for the life of all flesh is its blood. Whoever
eats it shall be cut off.’

15 “And every person who eats what died *naturally* or what was torn *by*
*beasts*, *whether he is* a native of your own country or a stranger, he shall both
wash his clothes and bathe in water, and be unclean until evening. Then he
shall be clean. 16 But if he does not wash *them* or bathe his body, then he shall
bear his guilt.”

## LAWS OF SEXUAL MORALITY

**18** Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, [2]"Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'I am the LORD your God. [3]According to the doings of the land of Egypt, where you dwelt, you shall not do; and according to the doings of the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you, you shall not do; nor shall you walk in their ordinances. [4]You shall observe My judgments and keep My ordinances, to walk in them: I *am* the LORD your God. [5]You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I *am* the LORD.

[6]'None of you shall approach anyone who is near of kin to him, to uncover his nakedness: I *am* the LORD. [7]The nakedness of your father or the nakedness of your mother you shall not uncover. She *is* your mother; you shall not uncover her nakedness. [8]The nakedness of your father's wife you shall not uncover; it *is* your father's nakedness. [9]The nakedness of your sister, the daughter of your father, or the daughter of your mother, *whether* born at home or elsewhere, their nakedness you shall not uncover. [10]The nakedness of your son's daughter or your daughter's daughter, their nakedness you shall not uncover; for theirs *is* your own nakedness. [11]The nakedness of your father's wife's daughter, begotten by your father-she *is* your sister-you shall not uncover her nakedness. [12]You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's sister; she *is* near of kin to your father. [13]You shall not uncover the nakedness of your mother's sister, for she *is* near of kin to your mother. [14]You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's brother. You shall not approach his wife; she *is* your aunt. [15]You shall not uncover the nakedness of your daughter-in-law-she *is* your son's wife-you shall not uncover her nakedness. [16]You shall not uncover the nakedness of your brother's wife; it *is* your brother's nakedness. [17]You shall not uncover the nakedness of a woman and her daughter, nor shall you take her son's daughter or her daughter's daughter, to uncover her nakedness. They *are* near of kin to her. It *is* wickedness. [18]Nor shall you take a woman as a rival to her sister, to uncover her nakedness while the other is alive.

[19]'Also you shall not approach a woman to uncover her nakedness as long

as she is in her *customary* impurity. [20]Moreover you shall not lie carnally with your neighbor's wife, to defile yourself with her. [21]And you shall not let any of your descendants pass through *the fire* to Molech, nor shall you profane the name of your God: I *am* the LORD. [22]You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It *is* an abomination. [23]Nor shall you mate with any animal, to defile yourself with it. Nor shall any woman stand before an animal to mate with it. It *is* perversion.

[24]'Do not defile yourselves with any of these things; for by all these the nations are defiled, which I am casting out before you. [25]For the land is defiled; therefore I visit the punishment of its iniquity upon it, and the land vomits out its inhabitants. [26]You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, and shall not commit *any* of these abominations, *either* any of your own nation or any stranger who dwells among you [27](for all these abominations the men of the land have done, who *were* before you, and thus the land is defiled), [28]lest the land vomit you out also when you defile it, as it vomited out the nations that *were* before you. [29]For whoever commits any of these abominations, the persons who commit *them* shall be cut off from among their people.

[30]'Therefore you shall keep My ordinance, so that *you* do not commit *any* of these abominable customs which were committed before you, and that you do not defile yourselves by them: I *am* the LORD your God.' "

**SOUL NOTE**

**A Sin Against God** *(18:22)* This charge against homosexual relations appears in a section including rules against marital infidelity and bestiality. This is one of a number of passages in both testaments that, taken together and interpreted plainly, reveal that homosexual conduct is a great offense to God. It is called "an abomination." The Bible always regards it as a serious violation of God's plan for sexual

expression. **Topic: Homosexuality**

## MORAL AND CEREMONIAL LAWS

**19** And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, [2]"Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them: 'You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God *am* holy.

> "You shall be holy,
> for I the LORD your
> God am holy."
> LEVITICUS 19:2

[3]'Every one of you shall revere his mother and his father, and keep My Sabbaths: I *am* the LORD your God.

[4]'Do not turn to idols, nor make for yourselves molded gods: I *am* the LORD your God.

[5]'And if you offer a sacrifice of a peace offering to the LORD, you shall offer it of your own free will. [6]It shall be eaten the same day you offer *it*, and on the next day. And if any remains until the third day, it shall be burned in the fire. [7]And if it is eaten at all on the third day, it *is* an abomination. It shall not be accepted. [8]Therefore *everyone* who eats it shall bear his iniquity, because he has profaned the hallowed *offering* of the LORD; and that person shall be cut off from his people.

[9]'When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field, nor shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest. [10]And you shall not glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather *every* grape of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger: I *am* the LORD your God.

[11]'You shall not steal, nor deal falsely, nor lie to one another. [12]And you shall not swear by My name falsely, nor shall you profane the name of your God: I *am* the LORD.

[13]'You shall not cheat your neighbor, nor rob *him.* The wages of him who is hired shall not remain with you all night until morning. [14]You shall not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling block before the blind, but shall fear your

God: I *am* the LORD.

15 ‘You shall do no injustice in judgment. You shall not be partial to the
poor, nor honor the person of the mighty. In righteousness you shall judge
your neighbor. 16 You shall not go about *as* a talebearer among your people;
nor shall you take a stand against the life of your neighbor: I *am* the LORD.

17 ‘You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely rebuke
your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him. 18 You shall not take
vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you
shall love your neighbor as yourself: I *am* the LORD.

19 ‘You shall keep My statutes. You shall not let your livestock breed with
another kind. You shall not sow your field with mixed seed. Nor shall a
garment of mixed linen and wool come upon you.

20 ‘Whoever lies carnally with a woman who *is* betrothed to a man as a
concubine, and who has not at all been redeemed nor given her freedom, for
this there shall be scourging; *but* they shall not be put to death, because she
was not free. 21 And he shall bring his trespass offering to the LORD, to the
door of the tabernacle of meeting, a ram as a trespass offering. 22 The priest
shall make atonement for him with the ram of the trespass offering before the
LORD for his sin which he has committed. And the sin which he has
committed shall be forgiven him.

23 ‘When you come into the land, and have planted all kinds of trees for
food, then you shall count their fruit as uncircumcised. Three years it shall be
as uncircumcised to you. *It* shall not be eaten. 24 But in the fourth year all its
fruit shall be holy, a praise to the LORD. 25 And in the fifth year you may eat
its fruit, that it may yield to you its increase: I *am* the LORD your God.

26 ‘You shall not eat *anything* with the blood, nor shall you practice
divination or soothsaying. 27 You shall not shave around the sides of your
head, nor shall you disfigure the edges of your beard. 28 You shall not make
any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor tattoo any marks on you: I *am* the
LORD.

29 ‘Do not prostitute your daughter, to cause her to be a harlot, lest the land
fall into harlotry, and the land become full of wickedness.

30 ‘You shall keep My Sabbaths and reverence My sanctuary: I *am* the
LORD.

31 ‘Give no regard to mediums and familiar spirits; do not seek after them,
to be defiled by them: I *am* the LORD your God.

32 ‘You shall rise before the gray headed and honor the presence of an old
man, and fear your God: I *am* the LORD.

33 ‘And if a stranger dwells with you in your land, you shall not mistreat
him. 34 The stranger who dwells among you shall be to you as one born
among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the
land of Egypt: I *am* the LORD your God.

35 ‘You shall do no injustice in judgment, in measurement of length,
weight, or volume. 36 You shall have honest scales, honest weights, an honest
ephah, and an honest hin: I *am* the LORD your God, who brought you out of
the land of Egypt.

37 ‘Therefore you shall observe all My statutes and all My judgments, and
perform them: I *am* the LORD.’ ”

**SOUL NOTE**

**Honor and Respect** *(19:3)* Respect for parents goes along with respect for God. Even when fully grown, children should honor and respect their parents, even if they haven’t always been examples of godly parenting. When a mother and a father show respect for their parents, they set a good example for *their* children. God highly regards parenthood and its responsibilities. Parents should model their devotion to God through godly respect for their own parents. **Topic: Family Life**

## SOUL NOTE

**Living Justly** *(19:16)* The law was designed to help God's people live justly with one another. "You shall do no injustice," God commanded (19:15). In relation to this command, God tells them not to gossip. Gossip is a form of character assassination that reflects hatred (19:17). We should confront wrongdoing directly, not gossip with others about it. God expects us to live above our frustrations and to love our neighbors as ourselves (19:18). Jesus taught this same principle (Matt. 22:39). **Topic: Gossip**

## SOUL NOTE

**Staying Pure** *(19:29)* How can we help our children to stay pure in a world filled with sexual deviance and abuse? In an environment of sexual promiscuity, parents are responsible for protecting their children. God gave women and children great dignity and divine respect. The law in this passage warns fathers not to prostitute their daughters, a terrible form of child abuse. Parents must take seriously their duty of guarding their children's morals, teaching them about sexual purity and helping them to maintain it. **Topic: Abuse**

## SOUL NOTE

**Elder Care** *(19:32)* God's laws include prohibitions against disrespecting the elderly. The "gray headed" and the "old man" are to be treated with honor and respect. This treatment reflects a just society. The fact that laws are needed against elder abuse-physical, sexual, verbal, or financial-shows how far modern society has strayed from this basic attitude of respect. The Bible commands respect for one's elders, who have much to teach from their vast experience.
**Topic: Aging/Elderly**

**PENALTIES FOR BREAKING THE LAW**

**20** Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, [2]"Again, you shall say to the children of Israel: 'Whoever of the children of Israel, or of the strangers who dwell in Israel, who gives *any* of his descendants to Molech, he shall surely be put to death. The people of the land shall stone him with stones. [3]I will set My face against that man, and will cut him off from his people, because he has given *some* of his descendants to Molech, to defile My sanctuary and profane My holy name. [4]And if the people of the land should in any way hide their eyes from the man, when he gives *some* of his descendants to Molech, and they do not kill him, [5]then I will set My face against that man and against his family; and I will cut him off from his people, and all who prostitute themselves with him to commit harlotry with Molech.

[6]'And the person who turns to mediums and familiar spirits, to prostitute himself with them, I will set My face against that person and cut him off from his people. [7]Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I *am* the LORD your God. [8]And you shall keep My statutes, and perform them: I *am* the LORD who sanctifies you.

[9]'For everyone who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death. He has cursed his father or his mother. His blood *shall be* upon him.

[10]'The man who commits adultery with *another* man's wife, *he* who commits adultery with his neighbor's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress, shall surely be put to death. [11]The man who lies with his father's wife has uncovered his father's nakedness; both of them shall surely be put to death. Their blood *shall be* upon them. [12]If a man lies with his daughter-in-law, both of them shall surely be put to death. They have committed perversion. Their blood *shall be* upon them. [13]If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death. Their blood *shall be* upon them. [14]If a man marries a woman and her mother, it *is* wickedness. They shall be burned with fire, both he and they, that there may be no wickedness among you. [15]If a man mates with an animal, he shall surely be put to death, and you shall kill the animal. [16]If a

woman approaches any animal and mates with it, you shall kill the woman and the animal. They shall surely be put to death. Their blood *is* upon them.

17 ‘If a man takes his sister, his father’s daughter or his mother’s daughter, and sees her nakedness and she sees his nakedness, it *is* a wicked thing. And they shall be cut off in the sight of their people. He has uncovered his sister’s nakedness. He shall bear his guilt. 18 If a man lies with a woman during her sickness and uncovers her nakedness, he has exposed her flow, and she has uncovered the flow of her blood. Both of them shall be cut off from their people.

19 ‘You shall not uncover the nakedness of your mother’s sister nor of your father’s sister, for that would uncover his near of kin. They shall bear their guilt. 20 If a man lies with his uncle’s wife, he has uncovered his uncle’s nakedness. They shall bear their sin; they shall die childless. 21 If a man takes his brother’s wife, it *is* an unclean thing. He has uncovered his brother’s nakedness. They shall be childless.

22 ‘You shall therefore keep all My statutes and all My judgments, and perform them, that the land where I am bringing you to dwell may not vomit you out. 23 And you shall not walk in the statutes of the nation which I am casting out before you; for they commit all these things, and therefore I abhor them. 24 But I have said to you, “You shall inherit their land, and I will give it to you to possess, a land flowing with milk and honey.” I *am* the LORD your God, who has separated you from the peoples. 25 You shall therefore distinguish between clean animals and unclean, between unclean birds and clean, and you shall not make yourselves abominable by beast or by bird, or by any kind of living thing that creeps on the ground, which I have separated from you as unclean. 26 And you shall be holy to Me, for I the LORD *am* holy, and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be Mine.

27 ‘A man or a woman who is a medium, or who has familiar spirits, shall surely be put to death; they shall stone them with stones. Their blood *shall be* upon them.’ ”

## SOUL NOTE

**Which Craft?** *(20:6-9)* Chapter 20 prohibits occult practices, including consulting mediums, practicing witchcraft, and sacrificing children. The prophet Samuel told King Saul that his rebellion was like the “sin of witchcraft” (1 Sam. 15:22, 23). In the Bible, rebellion is pictured as the work of Satan. What begins as a spirit of resistance often leads to a person’s spiritual downfall. God does not leave doubt about His moral and spiritual absolutes. His answer to the human dilemma is to keep Satan’s influence and attitudes far from us. **Topic: Occult**

## REGULATIONS FOR CONDUCT OF PRIESTS

**21** And the LORD said to Moses, “Speak to the priests, the sons of Aaron,
and say to them: ‘None shall defile himself for the dead among his
people, 2except for his relatives who are nearest to him: his mother, his
father, his son, his daughter, and his brother; 3also his virgin sister who is
near to him, who has had no husband, for her he may defile himself.
4*Otherwise* he shall not defile himself, *being* a chief man among his people,
to profane himself.

5‘They shall not make any bald *place* on their heads, nor shall they shave
the edges of their beards nor make any cuttings in their flesh. 6They shall be
holy to their God and not profane the name of their God, for they offer the
offerings of the LORD made by fire, *and* the bread of their God; therefore they
shall be holy. 7They shall not take a wife *who is* a harlot or a defiled woman,
nor shall they take a woman divorced from her husband; for *the priest*[a] is
holy to his God. 8Therefore you shall consecrate him, for he offers the bread
of your God. He shall be holy to you, for I the LORD, who sanctify you, *am*
holy. 9The daughter of any priest, if she profanes herself by playing the
harlot, she profanes her father. She shall be burned with fire.

10‘*He who is* the high priest among his brethren, on whose head the
anointing oil was poured and who is consecrated to wear the garments, shall
not uncover his head nor tear his clothes; 11nor shall he go near any dead
body, nor defile himself for his father or his mother; 12nor shall he go out of
the sanctuary, nor profane the sanctuary of his God; for the consecration of
the anointing oil of his God *is* upon him: I *am* the LORD. 13And he shall take a
wife in her virginity. 14A widow or a divorced woman or a defiled woman *or*
a harlot-these he shall not marry; but he shall take a virgin of his own people
as wife. 15Nor shall he profane his posterity among his people, for I the LORD
sanctify him.’ ”

16And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 17“Speak to Aaron, saying: ‘No
man of your descendants in *succeeding* generations, who has *any* defect, may
approach to offer the bread of his God. 18For any man who has a defect shall
not approach: a man blind or lame, who has a marred *face* or any *limb* too

long, [19]a man who has a broken foot or broken hand, [20]or is a hunchback or a dwarf, or *a man* who has a defect in his eye, or eczema or scab, or is a eunuch. [21]No man of the descendants of Aaron the priest, who has a defect, shall come near to offer the offerings made by fire to the LORD. He has a defect; he shall not come near to offer the bread of his God. [22]He may eat the bread of his God, *both* the most holy and the holy; [23]only he shall not go near the veil or approach the altar, because he has a defect, lest he profane My sanctuaries; for I the LORD sanctify them.' "

[24]And Moses told *it* to Aaron and his sons, and to all the children of Israel.

**22** Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, [2]"Speak to Aaron and his sons, that they separate themselves from the holy things of the children of Israel, and that they do not profane My holy name *by* what they dedicate to Me: I *am* the LORD. [3]Say to them: 'Whoever of all your descendants throughout your generations, who goes near the holy things which the children of Israel dedicate to the LORD, while he has uncleanness upon him, that person shall be cut off from My presence: I *am* the LORD.

[4]'Whatever man of the descendants of Aaron, who *is* a leper or has a discharge, shall not eat the holy offerings until he is clean. And whoever touches anything made unclean *by* a corpse, or a man who has had an emission of semen, [5]or whoever touches any creeping thing by which he would be made unclean, or any person by whom he would become unclean, whatever his uncleanness may be- [6]the person who has touched any such thing shall be unclean until evening, and shall not eat the holy *offerings* unless he washes his body with water. [7]And when the sun goes down he shall be clean; and afterward he may eat the holy *offerings*, because it *is* his food. [8]Whatever dies *naturally* or is torn *by beasts* he shall not eat, to defile himself with it: I *am* the LORD.

[9]'They shall therefore keep My ordinance, lest they bear sin for it and die thereby, if they profane it: I the LORD sanctify them.

[10]'No outsider shall eat the holy *offering;* one who dwells with the priest, or a hired servant, shall not eat the holy thing. [11]But if the priest buys a person with his money, he may eat it; and one who is born in his house may eat his food. [12]If the priest's daughter is married to an outsider, she may not eat of the holy offerings. [13]But if the priest's daughter is a widow or divorced, and has no child, and has returned to her father's house as in her youth, she may eat her father's food; but no outsider shall eat it.

[14]'And if a man eats the holy *offering* unintentionally, then he shall restore a holy *offering* to the priest, and add one-fifth to it. [15]They shall not profane the holy *offerings* of the children of Israel, which they offer to the LORD, [16]or allow them to bear the guilt of trespass when they eat their holy *offerings;* for I the LORD sanctify them.' "

**OFFERINGS ACCEPTED AND NOT ACCEPTED**

17 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 18"Speak to Aaron and his sons, and to all the children of Israel, and say to them: 'Whatever man of the house of Israel, or of the strangers in Israel, who offers his sacrifice for any of his vows or for any of his freewill offerings, which they offer to the LORD as a burnt offering-19*you shall offer* of your own free will a male without blemish from the cattle, from the sheep, or from the goats. 20Whatever has a defect, you shall not offer, for it shall not be acceptable on your behalf. 21And whoever offers a sacrifice of a peace offering to the LORD, to fulfill *his* vow, or a freewill offering from the cattle or the sheep, it must be perfect to be accepted; there shall be no defect in it. 22Those *that are* blind or broken or maimed, or have an ulcer or eczema or scabs, you shall not offer to the LORD, nor make an offering by fire of them on the altar to the LORD. 23Either a bull or a lamb that has any limb too long or too short you may offer *as* a freewill offering, but for a vow it shall not be accepted.

24'You shall not offer to the LORD what is bruised or crushed, or torn or cut; nor shall you make *any offering of them* in your land. 25Nor from a foreigner's hand shall you offer any of these as the bread of your God, because their corruption *is* in them, *and* defects *are* in them. They shall not be accepted on your behalf.' "

26And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 27"When a bull or a sheep or a goat is born, it shall be seven days with its mother; and from the eighth day and thereafter it shall be accepted as an offering made by fire to the LORD. 28*Whether it is* a cow or ewe, do not kill both her and her young on the same day. 29And when you offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving to the LORD, offer *it* of your own free will. 30On the same day it shall be eaten; you shall leave none of it until morning: I *am* the LORD.

31"Therefore you shall keep My commandments, and perform them: I *am* the LORD. 32You shall not profane My holy name, but I will be hallowed among the children of Israel. I *am* the LORD who sanctifies you, 33who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: I *am* the LORD."

## FEASTS OF THE LORD

**23** And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, [2]"Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'The feasts of the LORD, which you shall proclaim *to be* holy convocations, these *are* My feasts.

## THE SABBATH

[3]'Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day *is* a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation. You shall do no work *on it;* it *is* the Sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings.

## THE PASSOVER AND UNLEAVENED BREAD

[4]'These *are* the feasts of the LORD, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at their appointed times. [5]On the fourteenth *day* of the first month at twilight *is* the LORD's Passover. [6]And on the fifteenth day of the same month *is* the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the LORD; seven days you must eat unleavened bread. [7]On the first day you shall have a holy convocation; you shall do no customary work on it. [8]But you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LORD for seven days. The seventh day *shall be* a holy convocation; you shall do no customary work *on it.*' "

## THE FEAST OF FIRSTFRUITS

[9]And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, [10]"Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When you come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest, then you shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest. [11]He shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted on your behalf; on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it. [12]And you shall offer on that day, when you wave the sheaf, a male lamb of the first year, without blemish, as a burnt offering to the LORD. [13]Its grain offering *shall be* two-tenths *of an ephah* of fine flour mixed with oil, an offering made by fire to the LORD, for a sweet aroma; and its drink offering *shall be* of wine, one-fourth of a hin. [14]You shall eat neither bread nor parched grain nor fresh grain until the same day that you have brought an offering to your God; *it shall be* a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.

## THE FEAST OF WEEKS

15 ‘And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from
the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering: seven Sabbaths shall
be completed. 16Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then
you shall offer a new grain offering to the LORD. 17You shall bring from your
dwellings two wave *loaves* of two-tenths *of an ephah.* They shall be of fine
flour; they shall be baked with leaven. *They are* the firstfruits to the LORD.
18And you shall offer with the bread seven lambs of the first year, without
blemish, one young bull, and two rams. They shall be *as* a burnt offering to
the LORD, with their grain offering and their drink offerings, an offering made
by fire for a sweet aroma to the LORD. 19Then you shall sacrifice one kid of
the goats as a sin offering, and two male lambs of the first year as a sacrifice
of a peace offering. 20The priest shall wave them with the bread of the
firstfruits *as* a wave offering before the LORD, with the two lambs. They shall
be holy to the LORD for the priest. 21And you shall proclaim on the same day
*that* it is a holy convocation to you. You shall do no customary work *on it. It
shall be* a statute forever in all your dwellings throughout your generations.

22‘When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the
corners of your field when you reap, nor shall you gather any gleaning from
your harvest. You shall leave them for the poor and for the stranger: I *am* the
LORD your God.’ ”

## THE FEAST OF TRUMPETS

23Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 24“Speak to the children of
Israel, saying: ‘In the seventh month, on the first *day* of the month, you shall
have a sabbath-*rest,* a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation.
25You shall do no customary work *on it;* and you shall offer an offering made
by fire to the LORD.’ ”

## THE DAY OF ATONEMENT

26And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 27“Also the tenth *day* of this
seventh month *shall be* the Day of Atonement. It shall be a holy convocation
for you; you shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire to the
LORD. 28And you shall do no work on that same day, for it *is* the Day of

Atonement, to make atonement for you before the LORD your God. [29]For any person who is not afflicted *in soul* on that same day shall be cut off from his people. [30]And any person who does any work on that same day, that person I will destroy from among his people. [31]You shall do no manner of work; *it shall be* a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. [32]It *shall be* to you a sabbath of *solemn* rest, and you shall afflict your souls; on the ninth *day* of the month at evening, from evening to evening, you shall celebrate your sabbath."

**THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES**

[33]Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, [34]"Speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'The fifteenth day of this seventh month *shall be* the Feast of Tabernacles *for* seven days to the LORD. [35]On the first day *there shall be* a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work *on it.* [36]*For* seven days you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LORD. On the eighth day you shall have a holy convocation, and you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LORD. It *is* a sacred assembly, *and* you shall do no customary work *on it.*

[37]'These *are* the feasts of the LORD which you shall proclaim *to be* holy convocations, to offer an offering made by fire to the LORD, a burnt offering and a grain offering, a sacrifice and drink offerings, everything on its day- [38]besides the Sabbaths of the LORD, besides your gifts, besides all your vows, and besides all your freewill offerings which you give to the LORD.

[39]'Also on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the fruit of the land, you shall keep the feast of the LORD *for* seven days; on the first day *there shall be* a sabbath-*rest,* and on the eighth day a sabbath*rest.* [40]And you shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of beautiful trees, branches of palm trees, the boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days. [41]You shall keep it as a feast to the LORD for seven days in the year. *It shall be* a statute forever in your generations. You shall celebrate it in the seventh month. [42]You shall dwell in booths for seven days. All who are native Israelites shall dwell in booths, [43]that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I *am* the LORD your God.' "

44So Moses declared to the children of Israel the feasts of the LORD.

## CARE OF THE TABERNACLE LAMPS

**24** Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: [2]"Command the children of Israel that they bring to you pure oil of pressed olives for the light, to make the lamps burn continually. [3]Outside the veil of the Testimony, in the tabernacle of meeting, Aaron shall be in charge of it from evening until morning before the LORD continually; *it shall be* a statute forever in your generations. [4]He shall be in charge of the lamps on the pure *gold* lampstand before the LORD continually.

## THE BREAD OF THE TABERNACLE

[5]"And you shall take fine flour and bake twelve cakes with it. Two-tenths *of an ephah* shall be in each cake. [6]You shall set them in two rows, six in a row, on the pure *gold* table before the LORD. [7]And you shall put pure frankincense on *each* row, that it may be on the bread for a memorial, an offering made by fire to the LORD. [8]Every Sabbath he shall set it in order before the LORD continually, *being taken* from the children of Israel by an everlasting covenant. [9]And it shall be for Aaron and his sons, and they shall eat it in a holy place; for it *is* most holy to him from the offerings of the LORD made by fire, by a perpetual statute."

## THE PENALTY FOR BLASPHEMY

[10]Now the son of an Israelite woman, whose father *was* an Egyptian, went out among the children of Israel; and this Israelite *woman's* son and a man of Israel fought each other in the camp. [11]And the Israelite woman's son blasphemed the name *of the LORD* and cursed; and so they brought him to Moses. (His mother's name *was* Shelomith the daughter of Dibri, of the tribe of Dan.) [12]Then they put him in custody, that the mind of the LORD might be shown to them.

[13]And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, [14]"Take outside the camp him who has cursed; then let all who heard *him* lay their hands on his head, and let all the congregation stone him.

[15]"Then you shall speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'Whoever curses

his God shall bear his sin. [16]And whoever blasphemes the name of the LORD shall surely be put to death. All the congregation shall certainly stone him, the stranger as well as him who is born in the land. When he blasphemes the name *of the LORD*, he shall be put to death.

[17]‘Whoever kills any man shall surely be put to death. [18]Whoever kills an animal shall make it good, animal for animal.

[19]‘If a man causes disfigurement of his neighbor, as he has done, so shall it be done to him- [20]fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; as he has caused disfigurement of a man, so shall it be done to him. [21]And whoever kills an animal shall restore it; but whoever kills a man shall be put to death. [22]You shall have the same law for the stranger and for one from your own country; for I *am* the LORD your God.’ ”

[23]Then Moses spoke to the children of Israel; and they took outside the camp him who had cursed, and stoned him with stones. So the children of Israel did as the LORD commanded Moses.

## THE SABBATH OF THE SEVENTH YEAR

**25** And the LORD spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai, saying, 2"Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When you come into the land which I give you, then the land shall keep a sabbath to the LORD. 3Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard, and gather its fruit; 4but in the seventh year there shall be a sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a sabbath to the LORD. You shall neither sow your field nor prune your vineyard. 5What grows of its own accord of your harvest you shall not reap, nor gather the grapes of your untended vine, *for* it is a year of rest for the land. 6And the sabbath *produce* of the land shall be food for you: for you, your male and female servants, your hired man, and the stranger who dwells with you, 7for your livestock and the beasts that *are* in your land-all its produce shall be for food.

## THE YEAR OF JUBILEE

8'And you shall count seven sabbaths of years for yourself, seven times seven years; and the time of the seven sabbaths of years shall be to you forty-nine years. 9Then you shall cause the trumpet of the Jubilee to sound on the tenth *day* of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement you shall make the trumpet to sound throughout all your land. 10And you shall consecrate the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout *all* the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a Jubilee for you; and each of you shall return to his possession, and each of you shall return to his family. 11That fiftieth year shall be a Jubilee to you; in it you shall neither sow nor reap what grows of its own accord, nor gather *the grapes* of your untended vine. 12For it *is* the Jubilee; it shall be holy to you; you shall eat its produce from the field.

13'In this Year of Jubilee, each of you shall return to his possession. 14And if you sell anything to your neighbor or buy from your neighbor's hand, you shall not oppress one another. 15According to the number of years after the Jubilee you shall buy from your neighbor, and according to the number of years of crops he shall sell to you. 16According to the multitude of years you shall increase its price, and according to the fewer number of years you shall diminish its price; for he sells to you *according* to the number *of the years* of

the crops. [17]Therefore you shall not oppress one another, but you shall fear your God; for I *am* the LORD your God.

**PROVISIONS FOR THE SEVENTH YEAR**

[18]‘So you shall observe My statutes and keep My judgments, and perform them; and you will dwell in the land in safety. [19]Then the land will yield its fruit, and you will eat your fill, and dwell there in safety.

[20]‘And if you say, “What shall we eat in the seventh year, since we shall not sow nor gather in our produce?” [21]Then I will command My blessing on you in the sixth year, and it will bring forth produce enough for three years. [22]And you shall sow in the eighth year, and eat old produce until the ninth year; until its produce comes in, you shall eat *of* the old *harvest.*

**REDEMPTION OF PROPERTY**

[23]‘The land shall not be sold permanently, for the land *is* Mine; for you *are* strangers and sojourners with Me. [24]And in all the land of your possession you shall grant redemption of the land.

[25]‘If one of your brethren becomes poor, and has sold *some* of his possession, and if his redeeming relative comes to redeem it, then he may redeem what his brother sold. [26]Or if the man has no one to redeem it, but he himself becomes able to redeem it, [27]then let him count the years since its sale, and restore the remainder to the man to whom he sold it, that he may return to his possession. [28]But if he is not able to have *it* restored to himself, then what was sold shall remain in the hand of him who bought it until the Year of Jubilee; and in the Jubilee it shall be released, and he shall return to his possession.

[29]‘If a man sells a house in a walled city, then he may redeem it within a whole year after it is sold; *within* a full year he may redeem it. [30]But if it is not redeemed within the space of a full year, then the house in the walled city shall belong permanently to him who bought it, throughout his generations. It shall not be released in the Jubilee. [31]However the houses of villages which have no wall around them shall be counted as the fields of the country. They may be redeemed, and they shall be released in the Jubilee. [32]Nevertheless

the cities of the Levites, *and* the houses in the cities of their possession, the Levites may redeem at any time. [33]And if a man purchases a house from the Levites, then the house that was sold in the city of his possession shall be released in the Jubilee; for the houses in the cities of the Levites *are* their possession among the children of Israel. [34]But the field of the common-land of their cities may not be sold, for it *is* their perpetual possession.

**LENDING TO THE POOR**

[35]'If one of your brethren becomes poor, and falls into poverty among you, then you shall help him, like a stranger or a sojourner, that he may live with you. [36]Take no usury or interest from him; but fear your God, that your brother may live with you. [37]You shall not lend him your money for usury, nor lend him your food at a profit. [38]I *am* the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to give you the land of Canaan *and* to be your God.

**THE LAW CONCERNING SLAVERY**

[39]'And if *one of* your brethren *who dwells* by you becomes poor, and sells himself to you, you shall not compel him to serve as a slave. [40]As a hired servant *and* a sojourner he shall be with you, *and* shall serve you until the Year of Jubilee. [41]And *then* he shall depart from you-he and his children with him-and shall return to his own family. He shall return to the possession of his fathers. [42]For they *are* My servants, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt; they shall not be sold as slaves. [43]You shall not rule over him with rigor, but you shall fear your God. [44]And as for your male and female slaves whom you may have-from the nations that are around you, from them you may buy male and female slaves. [45]Moreover you may buy the children of the strangers who dwell among you, and their families who are with you, which they beget in your land; and they shall become your property. [46]And you may take them as an inheritance for your children after you, to inherit *them as* a possession; they shall be your permanent slaves. But regarding your brethren, the children of Israel, you shall not rule over one another with rigor.

[47]‘Now if a sojourner or stranger close to you becomes rich, and *one of* your brethren *who dwells* by him becomes poor, and sells himself to the stranger *or* sojourner close to you, or to a member of the stranger’s family, [48]after he is sold he may be redeemed again. One of his brothers may redeem him; [49]or his uncle or his uncle’s son may redeem him; or *anyone* who is near of kin to him in his family may redeem him; or if he is able he may redeem himself. [50]Thus he shall reckon with him who bought him: The price of his release shall be according to the number of years, from the year that he was sold to him until the Year of Jubilee; *it shall be* according to the time of a hired servant for him. [51]If *there are* still many years *remaining*, according to them he shall repay the price of his redemption from the money with which he was bought. [52]And if there remain but a few years until the Year of Jubilee, then he shall reckon with him, *and* according to his years he shall repay him the price of his redemption. [53]He shall be with him as a yearly hired servant, and he shall not rule with rigor over him in your sight. [54]And if he is not redeemed in these *years*, then he shall be released in the Year of Jubilee-he and his children with him. [55]For the children of Israel *are* servants to Me; they *are* My servants whom I brought out of the land of Egypt: I *am* the LORD your God.

**PROMISE OF BLESSING AND RETRIBUTION**

**26** ‘You shall not make idols for
yourselves;
neither a carved image nor a *sacred* pillar
shall you rear up for yourselves;
nor shall you set up an engraved stone in
your land, to bow down to it;
for I *am* the LORD your God.

2 You shall keep My Sabbaths and reverence
My sanctuary:
I *am* the LORD.
3 ‘If you walk in My statutes and keep My
commandments, and perform them,
4 then I will give you rain in its season, the
land shall yield its produce, and the
trees of the field shall yield their fruit.
5 Your threshing shall last till the time of
vintage, and the vintage shall last till
the time of sowing;
you shall eat your bread to the full, and
dwell in your land safely.
6 I will give peace in the land, and you shall
lie down, and none will make *you*
afraid;
I will rid the land of evil beasts,
and the sword will not go through your
land.
7 You will chase your enemies, and they
shall fall by the sword before you.
8 Five of you shall chase a hundred, and a
hundred of you shall put ten thousand
to flight;
your enemies shall fall by the sword

before you.
9 ‘For I will look on you favorably and make
you fruitful, multiply you and confirm
My covenant with you.
10 You shall eat the old harvest, and clear
out the old because of the new.
11 I will set My tabernacle among you, and
My soul shall not abhor you.
12 I will walk among you and be your God,
and you shall be
My people.
13 I *am* the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, that
*you* should not be their slaves;
I have broken the bands of your yoke and
made you walk upright.

> “I will set My tabernacle among you,
> and My soul shall not abhor you.
> I will walk among you and be your
> God, and you shall be My people.”
> LEVITICUS 26:11, 12

14 ‘But if you do not obey Me, and do not
observe all these commandments,
15 and if you despise My statutes, or if your
soul abhors My judgments, so that
you do not perform all My
commandments, *but* break My covenant,
16 I also will do this to you:
I will even appoint terror over you, wasting
disease and fever which shall
consume the eyes and cause sorrow of
heart.
And you shall sow your seed in vain, for
your enemies shall eat it.

17 I will set My face against you, and you
shall be defeated by your enemies.
Those who hate you shall reign over you,
and you shall flee when no one
pursues you.
18 ‘And after all this, if you do not obey Me,
then I will punish you seven times
more for your sins.
19 I will break the pride of your power;
I will make your heavens like iron and
your earth like bronze.
20 And your strength shall be spent in vain;
for your land shall not yield its produce,
nor shall the trees of the land yield
their fruit.
21 ‘Then, if you walk contrary to Me, and are
not willing to obey Me, I will bring on
you seven times more plagues,
according to your sins.
22 I will also send wild beasts among you,
which shall rob you of your children,
destroy your livestock, and make you
few in number;
and your highways shall be desolate.
23 ‘And if by these things you are not reformed by Me, but walk contrary
to Me,
24 then I also will walk contrary to you, and I will punish you yet seven
times for your sins.
25 And I will bring a sword against you that will execute the vengeance of
the covenant;
when you are gathered together within your cities I will send pestilence
among you;
and you shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy.
26 When I have cut off your supply of bread, ten women shall bake your
bread in one oven, and they shall bring back your bread by weight, and

you shall eat and not be satisfied.
27 ‘And after all this, if you do not obey Me,
but walk contrary to Me,
28 then I also will walk contrary to you in fury;
and I, even I, will chastise you seven
times for your sins.
29 You shall eat the flesh of your sons, and
you shall eat the flesh of your daughters.
30 I will destroy your high places, cut down
your incense altars, and cast your
carcasses on the lifeless forms of your
idols;
and My soul shall abhor you.
31 I will lay your cities waste and bring your
sanctuaries to desolation, and I will
not smell the fragrance of your sweet
aromas.
32 I will bring the land to desolation, and
your enemies who dwell in it shall be
astonished at it.
33 I will scatter you among the nations and
draw out a sword after you;
your land shall be desolate and your
cities waste.
34 Then the land shall enjoy its sabbaths as
long as it lies desolate and you *are* in
your enemies’ land;
then the land shall rest and enjoy its
sabbaths.
35 As long as *it* lies desolate it shall rest-
for the time it did not rest on your
sabbaths when you dwelt in it.
36 ‘And as for those of you who are left, I will
send faintness into their hearts in the
lands of their enemies;

the sound of a shaken leaf shall cause
them to flee;
they shall flee as though fleeing from a
sword, and they shall fall when no one
pursues.
37 They shall stumble over one another, as
it were before a sword, when no one
pursues;
and you shall have no *power* to stand
before your enemies.
38 You shall perish among the nations, and
the land of your enemies shall eat you
up.
39 And those of you who are left shall waste
away in their iniquity in your enemies'
lands;
also in their fathers' iniquities, which are
with them, they shall waste away.
40 '*But* if they confess their iniquity and the
iniquity of their fathers, with their
unfaithfulness in which they were
unfaithful to Me, and that they also have
walked contrary to Me,
41 and *that* I also have walked contrary to
them and have brought them into the
land of their enemies;
if their uncircumcised hearts are
humbled, and they accept their guilt-
42 then I will remember My covenant with
Jacob, and My covenant with Isaac
and My covenant with Abraham I will
remember;
I will remember the land.
43 The land also shall be left empty by them,
and will enjoy its sabbaths while it lies

desolate without them;
they will accept their guilt, because they
despised My judgments and because
their soul abhorred My statutes.
44 Yet for all that, when they are in the land
of their enemies, I will not cast them
away, nor shall I abhor them, to
utterly destroy them and break My
covenant with them;
for I *am* the LORD their God.
45 But for their sake I will remember the
covenant of their ancestors, whom I
brought out of the land of Egypt in the
sight of the nations, that I might be
their God:
I *am* the LORD.' "
46 These *are* the statutes and judgments and laws which the LORD made between Himself and the children of Israel on Mount Sinai by the hand of Moses.

**KEY PASSAGE**

## THE GOD WHO CAN BE KNOWN

(26:9-13)

God delivered the Israelites from bondage in Egypt that they might know Him personally. His laws were designed to protect and bless them in their new land. He promised:

- •to confirm His covenant with them,
- •to set His tabernacle among them, and
- •to walk among them and be their God (26:9, 11, 12).

God's commitments to Israel reflect His soul care for them. "My soul shall not abhor you," He assured them (26:11). God also promises that He will never turn His back on us and forsake us. As with Israel, God has

- •a covenant with us (Luke 22:20),
- •a temple within us (1 Cor. 6:19), and
- •a presence among us (Matt. 28:20).

God's expressions of love and grace toward Israel were the responses of His heart toward them. He wanted to know them personally. God also wants to know us personally.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Knowing God. See also the personality profile of The Ethiopian Eunuch's Search For God.

# KNOWING GOD

# LARRY CRABB

# (Leviticus 26:9-13)

**T**heology becomes rich only when it survives the onslaught of pain. A sound theology leads us through our pain to a fuller

experience of God and, therefore, a fuller experience of faith, hope, and love. We learn to enjoy God more than anyone or anything else.

Pain that can open our hearts to search for God is deep pain. Such pain is not the peevish pain of a grumbler who mutters or mumbles in discontent. It is not the angry pain of a narcissist who finds out that being self-centered has consequences. It is not the usual psychological hurt we hear so much about today that creates a thirst for nothing more than liking ourselves better and enjoying life more. Rather, it is the pain of those who want to enjoy pleasures they cannot find and who fear that misery seems inevitable and perhaps deserved.

Pain makes people stand still and think about something outside of themselves, something more important and more interesting than their own concerns about who they are and how they are getting on. Pain compels people to ask terrifying questions about themselves, life, and God.

## WHAT REALLY MATTERS?

When helping people to feel loved and worthwhile has become the central mission of the church, God is used more than worshiped-and that doesn't work. We are learning not to worship God in self-denial and costly service, but to heal our memories, overcome our addictions, lift our depressions, improve our self-images, establish self-preserving boundaries, substitute self-love for self-hatred, and replace our shame with affirming acceptance of who we are.

Recovery from pain is absorbing an increasing share of the church's energy. And that is alarming. Although the gospel does bless us with a new identity that was meant to be enjoyed, it calls us to higher values. The gospel teaches self-acceptance, values like turning the other cheek, esteeming others as greater than ourselves, going the second mile, enduring rejection and persecution, living not for the pleasures of this life but for those of the next, and clinging to the promises of God when we do not feel His goodness.

We need a way of handling our lives that combines a passionate sensitivity to our deepest struggles with a tender insistence that something matters more than how we feel. It is healthy to face the pain in our souls, to feel bad when others violate our dignity, to admit to ourselves how desperately we long to feel loved and valued and accepted as we are. But, in the middle of all this, we need to remember that the point of Christianity is not us, but the *God who cares for us*. Our hunger does not obligate God. He is not a waiter who, at the snap of our fingers, runs out of heaven's kitchen loaded down with trays of food to fill our empty stomachs. With His blood, Christ purchased a people for God and made us priests to serve Him. *We exist for Him*, not the other way around.

## HOW DO WE FIND GOD?

Many people have become more committed to relieving the pain behind their problems than using that pain to wrestle more passionately with the character and purposes of God. Feeling better has become more important than finding God. As a result, many happily camp on biblical ideas that help them feel loved and accepted, and they pass over scriptures that call them to higher ground. They focus on themselves instead of on the stunning revelation of a God gracious enough to love people who hated Him, a God worthy to be honored above everyone and everything else.

God invites us to enter into a relationship with Him on His terms. He invites us to join Him in achieving His great purpose: the overthrowing of evil and the bringing together of all things in Christ. He invites us, in short, to find *Him*. And He lets us know that in the process of finding Him, we will find ourselves.

We must, however, do more than superficially agree that finding God is a higher priority than solving our problems. Somehow that purpose must reach our hearts until the reality of God crowds out every other reality. Until we are moved to know Him with a passion that we feel nowhere else, we will not use the struggles of life as an

impetus to find God. Until our passion for finding God is deeper than any other passion, we will arrange our lives according to our taste, not God's.

To feel a deep, throbbing passion about our well-being in this world is as natural as breathing. And nothing is wrong with that, *unless we feel no deeper passion.* God has told us to love Him with a passion that exceeds all other passions. Until we chase after God like a thirsty deer looking for water, pursuing Him with passion, we will not find Him. We cannot talk about loving God until we come to grips with our raging passion for ourselves. We cannot and will not love anyone but ourselves until we meet God in a way that stirs us to race after Him with a single-minded intensity to get to know Him.

God knows everything about us. He is aware of our struggles and longs for us to know Him through His Son, Jesus Christ. He is the answer to our problems. To believe in Christ is *faith.* To wait for Him is *hope*. To serve Him is *love.* That is what it means to find God. It is a passion to trust a sovereign Savior who will reveal the Father in response to faith in Him.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of knowing God include:

- Exodus 20:1-3
- Psalms 14; 15
- Hosea 6:1-3
- John 1:1-3; 3:16; 14:7-11
- Hebrews 12:29
- 1 John 3:20; 4:7-10

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on knowing God at Leviticus 26:9-13. See also the personality profile of The Ethiopian Eunuch's Search For God.

## REDEEMING PERSONS AND PROPERTY DEDICATED TO GOD

**27** Now the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 2"Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When a man consecrates by a vow certain persons to the LORD, according to your valuation, 3if your valuation is of a male from twenty years old up to sixty years old, then your valuation shall be fifty shekels of silver, according to the shekel of the sanctuary. 4If it *is* a female, then your valuation shall be thirty shekels; 5and if from five years old up to twenty years old, then your valuation for a male shall be twenty shekels, and for a female ten shekels; 6and if from a month old up to five years old, then your valuation for a male shall be five shekels of silver, and for a female your valuation shall be three shekels of silver; 7and if from sixty years old and above, if *it is* a male, then your valuation shall be fifteen shekels, and for a female ten shekels.

8'But if he is too poor to pay your valuation, then he shall present himself before the priest, and the priest shall set a value for him; according to the ability of him who vowed, the priest shall value him.

9'If *it is* an animal that men may bring as an offering to the LORD, all that *anyone* gives to the LORD shall be holy. 10He shall not substitute it or exchange it, good for bad or bad for good; and if he at all exchanges animal for animal, then both it and the one exchanged for it shall be holy. 11If *it is* an unclean animal which they do not offer as a sacrifice to the LORD, then he shall present the animal before the priest; 12and the priest shall set a value for it, whether it is good or bad; as you, the priest, value it, so it shall be. 13But if he *wants* at all *to* redeem it, then he must add one-fifth to your valuation.

14'And when a man dedicates his house *to be* holy to the LORD, then the priest shall set a value for it, whether it is good or bad; as the priest values it, so it shall stand. 15If he who dedicated it *wants to* redeem his house, then he must add one-fifth of the money of your valuation to it, and it shall be his.

16'If a man dedicates to the LORD *part* of a field of his possession, then your valuation shall be according to the seed for it. A homer of barley seed *shall be valued* at fifty shekels of silver. 17If he dedicates his field from the

Year of Jubilee, according to your valuation it shall stand. [18]But if he dedicates his field after the Jubilee, then the priest shall reckon to him the money due according to the years that remain till the Year of Jubilee, and it shall be deducted from your valuation. [19]And if he who dedicates the field ever wishes to redeem it, then he must add one-fifth of the money of your valuation to it, and it shall belong to him. [20]But if he does not want to redeem the field, or if he has sold the field to another man, it shall not be redeemed anymore; [21]but the field, when it is released in the Jubilee, shall be holy to the LORD, as a devoted field; it shall be the possession of the priest.

[22]'And if a man dedicates to the LORD a field which he has bought, which is not the field of his possession, [23]then the priest shall reckon to him the worth of your valuation, up to the Year of Jubilee, and he shall give your valuation on that day *as* a holy *offering* to the LORD. [24]In the Year of Jubilee the field shall return to him from whom it was bought, to the one who *owned* the land as a possession. [25]And all your valuations shall be according to the shekel of the sanctuary: twenty gerahs to the shekel.

[26]'But the firstborn of the animals, which should be the LORD's firstborn, no man shall dedicate; whether *it is* an ox or sheep, it *is* the LORD's. [27]And if *it is* an unclean animal, then he shall redeem *it* according to your valuation, and shall add one-fifth to it; or if it is not redeemed, then it shall be sold according to your valuation.

[28]'Nevertheless no devoted *offering* that a man may devote to the LORD of all that he has, *both* man and beast, or the field of his possession, shall be sold or redeemed; every devoted *offering is* most holy to the LORD. [29]No person under the ban, who may become doomed to destruction among men, shall be redeemed, *but* shall surely be put to death. [30]And all the tithe of the land, *whether* of the seed of the land *or* of the fruit of the tree, *is* the LORD's. It *is* holy to the LORD. [31]If a man wants at all to redeem *any* of his tithes, he shall add one-fifth to it. [32]And concerning the tithe of the herd or the flock, of whatever passes under the rod, the tenth one shall be holy to the LORD. [33]He shall not inquire whether it is good or bad, nor shall he exchange it; and if he exchanges it at all, then both it and the one exchanged for it shall be holy; it shall not be redeemed.' "

[34]These *are* the commandments which the LORD commanded Moses for the children of Israel on Mount Sinai.

# Numbers



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# Numbers

Fear can immobilize. Fearful people often do not think straight and run off in the wrong direction to escape the source of their fear. The world can be quite scary, and at times, Christians will become afraid. On those occasions, they can either run away from God, thinking that He cannot handle their fears, or they can run to God for protection.

The Israelites were poised to enter the Promised Land, but in their fear they grumbled against God. Having heard the spies' report of giants in the land, they decided that they would have preferred to die in Egypt than to have to enter the frightful land, even though they had already been promised victory! They forgot God's promises, God's provision, and God's past miraculous intervention to free them from Egypt. Their fear led to unbelief. Suddenly the giants were too big, they thought-even for God.

God did not take their unbelief lightly. The problem was not their fear, but that they had let the fear turn them away from God. Because their fear revealed their unbelief and rebellion, God told the people they could not enter the land. He would wait for the entire older generation (with two exceptions) to die before He would lead their children into the land. In the meantime, God sent them on a forty-year ordeal of wandering around the Sinai wilderness.

Don't allow fear to immobilize you. Instead, run to God for battle instructions. No problem is too big for Him.

**SOUL CONCERN IN**

## NUMBERS

INSECURITY ( 13:30-33)

## THE FIRST CENSUS OF ISRAEL

**1** Now the LORD spoke to Moses in the Wilderness of Sinai, in the tabernacle
of meeting, on the first *day* of the second month, in the second year after
they had come out of the land of Egypt, saying: 2"Take a census of all the
congregation of the children of Israel, by their families, by their fathers'
houses, according to the number of names, every male individually, 3from
twenty years old and above-all who *are able to* go to war in Israel. You and
Aaron shall number them by their armies. 4And with you there shall be a man
from every tribe, each one the head of his father's house.

5"These are the names of the men who shall stand with you: from Reuben,
Elizur the son of Shedeur; 6from Simeon, Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai;
7from Judah, Nahshon the son of Amminadab; 8from Issachar, Nethanel the
son of Zuar; 9from Zebulun, Eliab the son of Helon; 10from the sons of
Joseph: from Ephraim, Elishama the son of Ammihud; from Manasseh,
Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur; 11from Benjamin, Abidan the son of Gideoni;
12from Dan, Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai; 13from Asher, Pagiel the son
of Ocran; 14from Gad, Eliasaph the son of Deuel;[a] 15from Naph-tali, Ahira
the son of Enan." 16These *were* chosen from the congregation, leaders of their
fathers' tribes, heads of the divisions in Israel.

17Then Moses and Aaron took these men who had been mentioned by
name, 18and they assembled all the congregation together on the first *day* of
the second month; and they recited their ancestry by families, by their
fathers' houses, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and
above, each one individually. 19As the LORD commanded Moses, so he
numbered them in the Wilderness of Sinai.

20Now the children of Reuben, Israel's oldest son, their genealogies by
their families, by their fathers' house, according to the number of names,
every male individually, from twenty years old and above, all who *were able
to* go to war: 21those who were numbered of the tribe of Reuben *were* forty-
six thousand five hundred.

22From the children of Simeon, their genealogies by their families, by their
fathers' house, of those who were numbered, according to the number of

names, every male individually, from twenty years old and above, all who *were able to* go to war: [23]those who were numbered of the tribe of Simeon *were* fifty-nine thousand three hundred.

[24]From the children of Gad, their genealogies by their families, by their fathers' house, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, all who *were able to* go to war: [25]those who were numbered of the tribe of Gad *were* forty-five thousand six hundred and fifty.

[26]From the children of Judah, their genealogies by their families, by their fathers' house, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, all who *were able to* go to war: [27]those who were numbered of the tribe of Judah *were* seventy-four thousand six hundred.

[28]From the children of Issachar, their genealogies by their families, by their fathers' house, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, all who *were able to* go to war: [29]those who were numbered of the tribe of Issachar *were* fifty-four thousand four hundred.

[30]From the children of Zebulun, their genealogies by their families, by their fathers' house, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, all who *were able to* go to war: [31]those who were numbered of the tribe of Zebulun *were* fifty-seven thousand four hundred.

[32]From the sons of Joseph, the children of Ephraim, their genealogies by their families, by their fathers' house, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, all who *were able to* go to war: [33]those who were numbered of the tribe of Ephraim *were* forty thousand five hundred.

[34]From the children of Manasseh, their genealogies by their families, by their fathers' house, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, all who *were able to* go to war: [35]those who were numbered of the tribe of Manasseh *were* thirty-two thousand two hundred.

[36]From the children of Benjamin, their genealogies by their families, by their fathers' house, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, all who *were able to* go to war: [37]those who were numbered of the tribe of Benjamin *were* thirty-five thousand four hundred.

[38]From the children of Dan, their genealogies by their families, by their

fathers' house, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, all who *were able to* go to war: [39]those who were numbered of the tribe of Dan *were* sixty-two thousand seven hundred.

[40]From the children of Asher, their genealogies by their families, by their fathers' house, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, all who *were able to* go to war: [41]those who were numbered of the tribe of Asher *were* forty-one thousand five hundred.

[42]From the children of Naphtali, their genealogies by their families, by their fathers' house, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, all who *were able to* go to war: [43]those who were numbered of the tribe of Naphtali *were* fifty-three thousand four hundred.

[44]These are the ones who were numbered, whom Moses and Aaron numbered, with the leaders of Israel, twelve men, each one representing his father's house. [45]So all who were numbered of the children of Israel, by their fathers' houses, from twenty years old and above, all who *were able to* go to war in Israel-[46]all who were numbered were six hundred and three thousand five hundred and fifty.

[47]But the Levites were not numbered among them by their fathers' tribe; [48]for the LORD had spoken to Moses, saying: [49]"Only the tribe of Levi you shall not number, nor take a census of them among the children of Israel; [50]but you shall appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of the Testimony, over all its furnishings, and over all things that belong to it; they shall carry the tabernacle and all its furnishings; they shall attend to it and camp around the tabernacle.[51]And when the tabernacle is to go forward, the Levites shall take it down; and when the tabernacle is to be set up, the Levites shall set it up. The outsider who comes near shall be put to death. [52]The children of Israel shall pitch their tents, everyone by his own camp, everyone by his own standard, according to their armies;[53]but the Levites shall camp around the tabernacle of the Testimony, that there may be no wrath on the congregation of the children of Israel; and the Levites shall keep charge of the tabernacle of the Testimony."

[54]Thus the children of Israel did; according to all that the LORD commanded Moses, so they did.

## THE TRIBES AND LEADERS BY ARMIES

**2** And the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: 2"Everyone of the children of Israel shall camp by his own standard, beside the emblems of his father's house; they shall camp some distance from the tabernacle of meeting. 3On the east side, toward the rising of the sun, those of the standard of the forces with Judah shall camp according to their armies; and Nahshon the son of Amminadab *shall be* the leader of the children of Judah." 4And his army was numbered at seventy-four thousand six hundred.

5"Those who camp next to him *shall be* the tribe of Issachar, and Nethanel the son of Zuar *shall be* the leader of the children of Issachar." 6And his army was numbered at fifty-four thousand four hundred.

7"Then *comes* the tribe of Zebulun, and Eli-ab the son of Helon *shall be* the leader of the children of Zebulun." 8And his army was numbered at fifty-seven thousand four hundred. 9"All who were numbered according to their armies of the forces with Judah, one hundred and eighty-six thousand four hundred-these shall break camp first.

10""On the south side *shall be* the standard of the forces with Reuben according to their armies, and the leader of the children of Reuben *shall be* Elizur the son of Shedeur." 11And his army was numbered at forty-six thousand five hundred.

12"Those who camp next to him *shall be* the tribe of Simeon, and the leader of the children of Simeon *shall be* Shelumiel the son of Zuri-shaddai." 13And his army was numbered at fifty-nine thousand three hundred.

14"Then *comes* the tribe of Gad, and the leader of the children of Gad *shall be* Eliasaph the son of Reuel."[a] 15And his army was numbered at forty-five thousand six hundred and fifty. 16"All who were numbered according to their armies of the forces with Reuben, one hundred and fifty-one thousand four hundred and fifty-they shall be the second to break camp.

17"And the tabernacle of meeting shall move out with the camp of the Levites in the middle of the camps; as they camp, so they shall move out, everyone in his place, by their standards.

18“On the west side *shall be* the standard of the forces with Ephraim according to their armies, and the leader of the children of Eph-raim *shall be* Elishama the son of Ammihud.”19And his army was numbered at forty thousand five hundred.

20“Next to him *comes* the tribe of Manasseh, and the leader of the children of Manasseh *shall be* Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur.” 21And his army was numbered at thirty-two thousand two hundred.

22“Then *comes* the tribe of Benjamin, and the leader of the children of Benjamin *shall be* Abidan the son of Gideoni.” 23And his army was numbered at thirty-five thousand four hundred. 24“All who were numbered according to their armies of the forces with Ephraim, one hundred and eight thousand one hundred-they shall be the third to break camp.

25“The standard of the forces with Dan *shall be* on the north side according to their armies, and the leader of the children of Dan *shall be* Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai.” 26And his army was numbered at sixty-two thousand seven hundred.

27“Those who camp next to him *shall be* the tribe of Asher, and the leader of the children of Asher *shall be* Pagiel the son of Ocran.” 28And his army was numbered at forty-one thousand five hundred.

29“Then *comes* the tribe of Naphtali, and the leader of the children of Naphtali *shall be* Ahira the son of Enan.” 30And his army was numbered at fifty-three thousand four hundred. 31“All who were numbered of the forces with Dan, one hundred and fifty-seven thousand six hundred-they shall break camp last, with their standards.”

32These *are* the ones who were numbered of the children of Israel by their fathers’ houses. All who were numbered according to their armies of the forces *were* six hundred and three thousand five hundred and fifty. 33But the Levites were not numbered among the children of Israel, just as the LORD commanded Moses.

34Thus the children of Israel did according to all that the LORD commanded Moses; so they camped by their standards and so they broke camp, each one by his family, according to their fathers’ houses.

## THE SONS OF AARON

**3** Now these *are* the records of Aaron and Moses when the LORD spoke with
Moses on Mount Sinai. 2And these *are* the names of the sons of Aaron:
Nadab, the firstborn, and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. 3These *are* the names
of the sons of Aaron, the anointed priests, whom he consecrated to minister
as priests. 4Nadab and Abihu had died before the LORD when they offered
profane fire before the LORD in the Wilderness of Sinai; and they had no
children. So Eleazar and Ithamar ministered as priests in the presence of
Aaron their father.

## THE LEVITES SERVE IN THE TABERNACLE

5And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 6"Bring the tribe of Levi near, and
present them before Aaron the priest, that they may serve him. 7And they
shall attend to his needs and the needs of the whole congregation before the
tabernacle of meeting, to do the work of the tabernacle. 8Also they shall
attend to all the furnishings of the tabernacle of meeting, and to the needs of
the children of Israel, to do the work of the tabernacle. 9And you shall give
the Levites to Aaron and his sons; they *are* given entirely to him[a] from
among the children of Israel. 10So you shall appoint Aaron and his sons, and
they shall attend to their priesthood; but the outsider who comes near shall be
put to death."

11Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 12"Now behold, I Myself have
taken the Levites from among the children of Israel instead of every firstborn
who opens the womb among the children of Israel. Therefore the Levites
shall be Mine, 13because all the firstborn *are* Mine. On the day that I struck
all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, I sanctified to Myself all the firstborn in
Israel, both man and beast. They shall be Mine: I *am* the LORD."

## CENSUS OF THE LEVITES COMMANDED

14Then the LORD spoke to Moses in the Wilderness of Sinai, saying:
15"Number the children of Levi by their fathers' houses, by their families;
you shall number every male from a month old and above."

16So Moses numbered them according to the word of the LORD, as he was
commanded.17These were the sons of Levi by their names: Gershon, Kohath,
and Merari. 18And these *are* the names of the sons of Gershon by their
families: Libni and Shimei. 19And the sons of Kohath by their families:
Amram, Izehar, Hebron, and Uzziel. 20And the sons of Merari by their
families: Mahli and Mushi. These *are* the families of the Levites by their
fathers' houses.

21From Gershon *came* the family of the Lib-nites and the family of the
Shimites; these *were* the families of the Gershonites. 22Those who were
numbered, according to the number of all the males from a month old and
above-of those who were numbered *there were* seven thousand five hundred.
23The families of the Gershonites were to camp behind the tabernacle
westward. 24And the leader of the father's house of the Gershonites *was*
Eliasaph the son of Lael. 25The duties of the children of Ger-shon in the
tabernacle of meeting *included* the tabernacle, the tent with its covering, the
screen for the door of the tabernacle of meeting, 26the screen for the door of
the court, the hangings of the court which *are* around the tabernacle and the
altar, and their cords, according to all the work relating to them.

27From Kohath *came* the family of the Am-ramites, the family of the
Izharites, the family of the Hebronites, and the family of the Uzzi-elites; these
*were* the families of the Kohath-ites. 28According to the number of all the
males, from a month old and above, *there were* eight thousand six[a] hundred
keeping charge of the sanctuary. 29The families of the children of Kohath
were to camp on the south side of the tabernacle. 30And the leader of the
fathers' house of the families of the Kohathites *was* Elizaphan the son of
Uzziel. 31Their duty *included* the ark, the table, the lampstand, the altars, the
utensils of the sanctuary with which they ministered, the screen, and all the
work relating to them.

32And Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest *was to be* chief over the leaders
of the Levites, *with* oversight of those who kept charge of the sanctuary.

33From Merari *came* the family of the Mahlites and the family of the
Mushites; these *were* the families of Merari. 34And those who were
numbered, according to the number of all the males from a month old and

above, *were* six thousand two hundred. [35]The leader of the fathers' house of the families of Merari *was* Zuriel the son of Abihail. These *were* to camp on the north side of the tabernacle. [36]And the appointed duty of the children of Merari *included* the boards of the tabernacle, its bars, its pillars, its sockets, its utensils, all the work relating to them, [37]and the pillars of the court all around, with their sockets, their pegs, and their cords.

[38]Moreover those who were to camp before the tabernacle on the east, before the tabernacle of meeting, *were* Moses, Aaron, and his sons, keeping charge of the sanctuary, to meet the needs of the children of Israel; but the outsider who came near was to be put to death. [39]All who were numbered of the Levites, whom Moses and Aaron numbered at the commandment of the LORD, by their families, all the males from a month old and above, *were* twenty-two thousand.

## LEVITES DEDICATED INSTEAD OF THE FIRSTBORN

[40]Then the LORD said to Moses: "Number all the firstborn males of the children of Israel from a month old and above, and take the number of their names. [41]And you shall take the Levites for Me-I *am* the LORD-instead of all the firstborn among the children of Israel, and the livestock of the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the livestock of the children of Israel." [42]So Moses numbered all the firstborn among the children of Israel, as the LORD commanded him. [43]And all the firstborn males, according to the number of names from a month old and above, of those who were numbered of them, were twenty-two thousand two hundred and seventy-three.

[44]Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying:[45]"Take the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the children of Israel, and the livestock of the Levites instead of their livestock. The Levites shall be Mine: I *am* the LORD. [46]And for the redemption of the two hundred and seventy-three of the firstborn of the children of Israel, who are more than the number of the Levites, [47]you shall take five shekels for each one individually; you shall take *them* in the currency of the shekel of the sanctuary, the shekel of twenty gerahs. [48]And you shall give the money, with which the excess number of them is redeemed, to Aaron and his sons."

[49]So Moses took the redemption money from those who were over and above those who were redeemed by the Levites. [50]From the firstborn of the children of Israel he took the money, one thousand three hundred and sixty-five *shekels*, according to the shekel of the sanctuary. [51]And Moses gave their redemption money to Aaron and his sons, according to the word of the LORD, as the LORD commanded Moses.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Who's Calling?** *(3:1-13)* When God gives us a calling, it's accompanied by responsibility and accountability. God chose Aaron and his descendants to be the priests of Israel, and He chose the tribe of Levi to serve under Aaron "to do the work of the tabernacle" (3:7). God greatly honored the Levites when He separated them for special service and said, "They shall be Mine" (3:13). With this honor came the responsibility of performing their duties as God commanded. When God calls us to serve Him, He both honors us and gives us great responsibility. As we serve, we must remember that we are accountable to Him (Eph. 6:7). **Topic: Accountability**

## DUTIES OF THE SONS OF KOHATH

**4** Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: 2"Take a census of the
sons of Kohath from among the children of Levi, by their families, by their
fathers' house, 3from thirty years old and above, even to fifty years old, all
who enter the service to do the work in the tabernacle of meeting.

4"This *is* the service of the sons of Kohath in the tabernacle of meeting,
*relating to* the most holy things: 5When the camp prepares to journey, Aaron
and his sons shall come, and they shall take down the covering veil and cover
the ark of the Testimony with it. 6Then they shall put on it a covering of
badger skins, and spread over *that* a cloth entirely of blue; and they shall
insert its poles.

7"On the table of showbread they shall spread a blue cloth, and put on it
the dishes, the pans, the bowls, and the pitchers for pouring; and the
showbread[a] shall be on it. 8They shall spread over them a scarlet cloth, and
cover the same with a covering of badger skins; and they shall insert its poles.
9And they shall take a blue cloth and cover the lampstand of the light, with its
lamps, its wick-trimmers, its trays, and all its oil vessels, with which they
service it. 10Then they shall put it with all its utensils in a covering of badger
skins, and put *it* on a carrying beam.

11"Over the golden altar they shall spread a blue cloth, and cover it with a
covering of badger skins; and they shall insert its poles. 12Then they shall
take all the utensils of service with which they minister in the sanctuary, put
*them* in a blue cloth, cover them with a covering of badger skins, and put
*them* on a carrying beam. 13Also they shall take away the ashes from the
altar, and spread a purple cloth over it. 14They shall put on it all its
implements with which they minister there-the firepans, the forks, the
shovels, the basins, and all the utensils of the altar-and they shall spread on it
a covering of badger skins, and insert its poles. 15And when Aaron and his
sons have finished covering the sanctuary and all the furnishings of the
sanctuary, when the camp is set to go, then the sons of Kohath shall come to
carry *them;* but they shall not touch any holy thing, lest they die.

"These *are* the things in the tabernacle of meeting which the sons of

Kohath are to carry.

16 “The appointed duty of Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest *is* the oil for
the light, the sweet incense, the daily grain offering, the anointing oil, the
oversight of all the tabernacle, of all that *is* in it, with the sanctuary and its
furnishings.”

17 Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: 18 “Do not cut off the
tribe of the families of the Kohathites from among the Levites; 19 but do this
in regard to them, that they may live and not die when they approach the
most holy things: Aaron and his sons shall go in and appoint each of them to
his service and his task. 20 But they shall not go in to watch while the holy
things are being covered, lest they die.”

## DUTIES OF THE SONS OF GERSHON

21 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 22 “Also take a census of the sons
of Gershon, by their fathers’ house, by their families. 23 From thirty years old
and above, even to fifty years old, you shall number them, all who enter to
perform the service, to do the work in the tabernacle of meeting. 24 This *is* the
service of the families of the Gershonites, in serving and carrying: 25 They
shall carry the curtains of the tabernacle and the tabernacle of meeting *with*
its covering, the covering of badger skins that *is* on it, the screen for the door
of the tabernacle of meeting, 26 the screen for the door of the gate of the court,
the hangings of the court which *are* around the tabernacle and altar, and their
cords, all the furnishings for their service and all that is made for these things:
so shall they serve.

27 “Aaron and his sons shall assign all the service of the sons of the
Gershonites, all their tasks and all their service. And you shall appoint to
them all their tasks as their duty. 28 This *is* the service of the families of the
sons of Gershon in the tabernacle of meeting. And their duties *shall be* under
the authority[a] of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest.

## DUTIES OF THE SONS OF MERARI

29 “*As for* the sons of Merari, you shall number them by their families and
by their fathers’ house. 30 From thirty years old and above, even to fifty years

old, you shall number them, everyone who enters the service to do the work of the tabernacle of meeting. [31]And this *is* what they must carry as all their service for the tabernacle of meeting: the boards of the tabernacle, its bars, its pillars, its sockets, [32]and the pillars around the court with their sockets, pegs, and cords, with all their furnishings and all their service; and you shall assign *to each man* by name the items he must carry. [33]This *is* the service of the families of the sons of Merari, as all their service for the tabernacle of meeting, under the authority[a] of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest."

**CENSUS OF THE LEVITES**

[34]And Moses, Aaron, and the leaders of the congregation numbered the sons of the Kohathites by their families and by their fathers' house, [35]from thirty years old and above, even to fifty years old, everyone who entered the service for work in the tabernacle of meeting;[36]and those who were numbered by their families were two thousand seven hundred and fifty. [37]These *were* the ones who were numbered of the families of the Kohathites, all who might serve in the tabernacle of meeting, whom Moses and Aaron numbered according to the commandment of the LORD by the hand of Moses.

[38]And those who were numbered of the sons of Gershon, by their families and by their fathers' house, [39]from thirty years old and above, even to fifty years old, everyone who entered the service for work in the tabernacle of meeting- [40]those who were numbered by their families, by their fathers' house, were two thousand six hundred and thirty. [41]These *are* the ones who were numbered of the families of the sons of Gershon, of all who might serve in the tabernacle of meeting, whom Moses and Aaron numbered according to the commandment of the LORD.

[42]Those of the families of the sons of Merari who were numbered, by their families, by their fathers' house, [43]from thirty years old and above, even to fifty years old, everyone who entered the service for work in the tabernacle of meeting- [44]those who were numbered by their families were three thousand two hundred. [45]These *are* the ones who were numbered of the families of the sons of Merari, whom Moses and Aaron numbered according to the word of the LORD by the hand of Moses.

[46]All who were numbered of the Levites, whom Moses, Aaron, and the leaders of Israel numbered, by their families and by their fathers' houses, [47]from thirty years old and above, even to fifty years old, everyone who came to do the work of service and the work of bearing burdens in the tabernacle of meeting-[48]those who were numbered were eight thousand five hundred and eighty.

[49]According to the commandment of the LORD they were numbered by the hand of Moses, each according to his service and according to his task; thus were they numbered by him, as the LORD commanded Moses.

## CEREMONIALLY UNCLEAN PERSONS ISOLATED

**5** And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 2"Command the children of Israel
that they put out of the camp every leper, everyone who has a discharge,
and whoever becomes defiled by a corpse. 3You shall put out both male and
female; you shall put them outside the camp, that they may not defile their
camps in the midst of which I dwell." 4And the children of Israel did so, and
put them outside the camp; as the LORD spoke to Moses, so the children of
Israel did.

## CONFESSION AND RESTITUTION

5Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 6"Speak to the children of Israel:
'When a man or woman commits any sin that men commit in unfaithfulness
against the LORD, and that person is guilty, 7then he shall confess the sin
which he has committed. He shall make restitution for his trespass in full,
plus one-fifth of it, and give *it* to the one he has wronged. 8But if the man has
no relative to whom restitution may be made for the wrong, the restitution for
the wrong *must go* to the LORD for the priest, in addition to the ram of the
atonement with which atonement is made for him. 9Every offering of all the
holy things of the children of Israel, which they bring to the priest, shall be
his. 10And every man's holy things shall be his; whatever any man gives the
priest shall be his.' "

## CONCERNING UNFAITHFUL WIVES

11And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 12"Speak to the children of Israel,
and say to them: 'If any man's wife goes astray and behaves unfaithfully
toward him, 13and a man lies with her carnally, and it is hidden from the eyes
of her husband, and it is concealed that she has defiled herself, and *there was*
no witness against her, nor was she caught- 14if the spirit of jealousy comes
upon him and he becomes jealous of his wife, who has defiled herself; or if
the spirit of jealousy comes upon him and he becomes jealous of his wife,
although she has not defiled herself- 15then the man shall bring his wife to the
priest. He shall bring the offering required for her, one-tenth of an ephah of
barley meal; he shall pour no oil on it and put no frankincense on it, because

it *is* a grain offering of jealousy, an offering for remembering, for bringing iniquity to remembrance.

16 ‘And the priest shall bring her near, and set her before the LORD. 17 The priest shall take holy water in an earthen vessel, and take some of the dust that is on the floor of the tabernacle and put *it* into the water. 18 Then the priest shall stand the woman before the LORD, uncover the woman’s head, and put the offering for remembering in her hands, which *is* the grain offering of jealousy. And the priest shall have in his hand the bitter water that brings a curse. 19 And the priest shall put her under oath, and say to the woman, “If no man has lain with you, and if you have not gone astray to uncleanness *while* under your husband’s *authority*, be free from this bitter water that brings a curse. 20 But if you have gone astray *while* under your husband’s *authority*, and if you have defiled yourself and some man other than your husband has lain with you”- 21 then the priest shall put the woman under the oath of the curse, and he shall say to the woman-“the LORD make you a curse and an oath among your people, when the LORD makes your thigh rot and your belly swell; 22 and may this water that causes the curse go into your stomach, and make *your* belly swell and *your* thigh rot.”

‘Then the woman shall say, “Amen, so be it.”

23 ‘Then the priest shall write these curses in a book, and he shall scrape *them* off into the bitter water. 24 And he shall make the woman drink the bitter water that brings a curse, and the water that brings the curse shall enter her *to become* bitter. 25 Then the priest shall take the grain offering of jealousy from the woman’s hand, shall wave the offering before the LORD, and bring it to the altar; 26 and the priest shall take a handful of the offering, as its memorial portion, burn *it* on the altar, and afterward make the woman drink the water. 27 When he has made her drink the water, then it shall be, if she has defiled herself and behaved unfaithfully toward her husband, that the water that brings a curse will enter her *and become* bitter, and her belly will swell, her thigh will rot, and the woman will become a curse among her people. 28 But if the woman has not defiled herself, and is clean, then she shall be free and may conceive children.

29 ‘This *is* the law of jealousy, when a wife, *while* under her husband’s

*authority*, goes astray and defiles herself, [30]or when the spirit of jealousy comes upon a man, and he becomes jealous of his wife; then he shall stand the woman before the LORD, and the priest shall execute all this law upon her. [31]Then the man shall be free from iniquity, but that woman shall bear her guilt.' "

**SOUL NOTE**

**Owning Up** *(5:6, 7)* God's Law provided the opportunity for a person to correct his or her mistakes by making restitution to the offended person. These laws of restitution held people accountable for their behavior. A person who had wronged another had to *admit* doing wrong and then *do* whatever was possible in order to make things right again. The principle is important today. People should take responsibility for their behavior and, when it's needed, make restitution to the one whom they have wronged. **Topic: Conflict**

**KEY PASSAGE**

## The Wedge of Jealousy

## (5:29)

The ancient Israelites had a complex ritual for dealing with jealousy.

Their detailed process (Num. 5:11-31) recognized the destructive potential of a jealous husband or wife. The most important part was that they dealt with this issue before the Lord (Num. 5:30). Jealousy can destroy any relationship, and in a marriage, it can drive in a wedge of mistrust.

Protection from the wedge of jealousy begins with honesty. Each spouse should honestly consider his or her own tendency toward jealousy, answering the question, “What makes me jealous?” Each spouse should honestly tell his or her feelings. Then they can discuss what they could do for each other to alleviate those feelings. Complete honesty and trust will help to obliterate jealousy.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Jealousy: A Consuming Passion. See also the personality profile of Rachel And Leah: Jealous Sisters.

## THE LAW OF THE NAZIRITE

**6** Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 2"Speak to the children of Israel,
and say to them: 'When either a man or woman consecrates an offering to
take the vow of a Nazi-rite, to separate himself to the LORD, 3he shall separate
himself from wine and *similar* drink; he shall drink neither vinegar made
from wine nor vinegar made from *similar* drink; neither shall he drink any
grape juice, nor eat fresh grapes or raisins. 4All the days of his separation he
shall eat nothing that is produced by the grapevine, from seed to skin.

5'All the days of the vow of his separation no razor shall come upon his
head; until the days are fulfilled for which he separated himself to the LORD,
he shall be holy. *Then* he shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow. 6All
the days that he separates himself to the LORD he shall not go near a dead
body. 7He shall not make himself unclean even for his father or his mother,
for his brother or his sister, when they die, because his separation to God *is*
on his head. 8All the days of his separation he shall be holy to the LORD.

9'And if anyone dies very suddenly beside him, and he defiles his
consecrated head, then he shall shave his head on the day of his cleansing; on
the seventh day he shall shave it. 10Then on the eighth day he shall bring two
turtledoves or two young pigeons to the priest, to the door of the tabernacle of
meeting; 11and the priest shall offer one as a sin offering and *the* other as a
burnt offering, and make atonement for him, because he sinned in regard to
the corpse; and he shall sanctify his head that same day. 12He shall consecrate
to the LORD the days of his separation, and bring a male lamb in its first year
as a trespass offering; but the former days shall be lost, because his
separation was defiled.

"The LORD bless you and keep you;
the LORD make His face shine upon you,
and be gracious to you;
and give you peace."
NUMBERS 6:24-26

13'Now this *is* the law of the Nazirite: When the days of his separation are

fulfilled, he shall be brought to the door of the tabernacle of meeting. [14]And he shall present his offering to the LORD: one male lamb in its first year without blemish as a burnt offering, one ewe lamb in its first year without blemish as a sin offering, one ram without blemish as a peace offering, [15]a basket of unleavened bread, cakes of fine flour mixed with oil, unleavened wafers anointed with oil, and their grain offering with their drink offerings.

[16]'Then the priest shall bring *them* before the LORD and offer his sin offering and his burnt offering; [17]and he shall offer the ram as a sacrifice of a peace offering to the LORD, with the basket of unleavened bread; the priest shall also offer its grain offering and its drink offering. [18]Then the Nazirite shall shave his consecrated head *at* the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and shall take the hair from his consecrated head and put *it* on the fire which is under the sacrifice of the peace offering.

[19]'And the priest shall take the boiled shoulder of the ram, one unleavened cake from the basket, and one unleavened wafer, and put *them* upon the hands of the Nazirite after he has shaved his consecrated *hair*, [20]and the priest shall wave them as a wave offering before the LORD; they *are* holy for the priest, together with the breast of the wave offering and the thigh of the heave offering. After that the Nazirite may drink wine.'

[21]"This is the law of the Nazirite who vows to the LORD the offering for his separation, and besides that, whatever else his hand is able to provide; according to the vow which he takes, so he must do according to the law of his separation."

"The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace."
NUMBERS 6:24-26

**THE PRIESTLY BLESSING**

[22]And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: [23]"Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, 'This is the way you shall bless the children of Israel. Say to them:

[24] "The LORD bless you and keep you;

25 The LORD make His face shine upon you, And be gracious to you;
26 The LORD lift up His countenance upon you,
And give you peace.” ’
27“So they shall put My name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them.”

**SOUL NOTE**

**Speaking the Truth** *(6:2-21)* The Nazirite vow included separation from the world and consecration to the Lord. A person could take the vow for a certain amount of time in order to focus on God. Taking this vow was very serious, and the person was expected to follow all the procedures described here. How easily people “promise” to do something, but how hard it may be to keep that promise. Vows (promises) are very important-whether they are made to God or to other people. God does not take them lightly, and neither should we (Matt. 5:37). **Topic: Truth**

**SOUL NOTE**

**Bless You** *(6:22-27)* This beautiful blessing was a way of asking for God’s divine favor upon the people. To have the Lord’s “face shine upon” someone pictures that person experiencing pleasure in God’s presence. To have the Lord “lift up His countenance upon” someone pictures God, in turn, experiencing pleasure in the presence of the person. While the ancient form of blessing may be unfamiliar, the

words of this prayer seek God’s pleasure, protection, grace, favor, and peace on others. When we pray for others, we also can use these words as a blessing upon them.**Topic: Attachment/Blessing**

## OFFERINGS OF THE LEADERS

7 Now it came to pass, when Moses had finished setting up the tabernacle,
that he anointed it and consecrated it and all its furnishings, and the altar
and all its utensils; so he anointed them and consecrated them. 2Then the
leaders of Israel, the heads of their fathers' houses, who *were* the leaders of
the tribes and over those who were numbered, made an offering. 3And they
brought their offering before the LORD, six covered carts and twelve oxen, a
cart for *every* two of the leaders, and for each one an ox; and they presented
them before the tabernacle.

4Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 5"Accept *these* from them, that
they may be used in doing the work of the tabernacle of meeting; and you
shall give them to the Levites, *to* every man according to his service." 6So
Moses took the carts and the oxen, and gave them to the Levites. 7Two carts
and four oxen he gave to the sons of Gershon, according to their service; 8and
four carts and eight oxen he gave to the sons of Merari, according to their
service, under the authority[a] of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest. 9But to
the sons of Kohath he gave none, because theirs *was* the service of the holy
things, *which* they carried on their shoulders.

10Now the leaders offered the dedication *offering* for the altar when it was
anointed; so the leaders offered their offering before the altar. 11For the LORD
said to Moses, "They shall offer their offering, one leader each day, for the
dedication of the altar."

12And the one who offered his offering on the first day *was* Nahshon the
son of Ammina-dab, from the tribe of Judah. 13His offering *was* one silver
platter, the weight of which *was* one hundred and thirty *shekels,* and one
silver bowl of seventy shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, both
of them full of fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering; 14one gold pan of
ten *shekels,* full of incense; 15one young bull, one ram, and one male lamb in
its first year, as a burnt offering; 16one kid of the goats as a sin offering; 17and
for the sacrifice of peace offerings: two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and
five male lambs in their first year. This *was* the offering of Nahshon the son
of Amminadab.

[18]On the second day Nethanel the son of Zuar, leader of Issachar, presented *an offering.* [19]*For* his offering he offered one silver platter, the weight of which *was* one hundred and thirty *shekels,* and one silver bowl of seventy shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering; [20]one gold pan of ten *shekels,* full of incense; [21]one young bull, one ram, and one male lamb in its first year, as a burnt offering; [22]one kid of the goats as a sin offering; [23]and as the sacrifice of peace offerings: two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs in their first year. This *was* the offering of Nethanel the son of Zuar.

[24]On the third day Eliab the son of Helon, leader of the children of Zebulun, *presented an offering.* [25]His offering *was* one silver platter, the weight of which *was* one hundred and thirty *shekels,* and one silver bowl of seventy shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering; [26]one gold pan of ten *shekels,* full of incense; [27]one young bull, one ram, and one male lamb in its first year, as a burnt offering; [28]one kid of the goats as a sin offering; [29]and for the sacrifice of peace offerings: two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs in their first year. This *was* the offering of Eliab the son of Helon.

[30]On the fourth day Elizur the son of Shed-eur, leader of the children of Reuben, *presented an offering.* [31]His offering *was* one silver platter, the weight of which *was* one hundred and thirty *shekels,* and one silver bowl of seventy shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering; [32]one gold pan of ten *shekels,* full of incense; [33]one young bull, one ram, and one male lamb in its first year, as a burnt offering; [34]one kid of the goats as a sin offering; [35]and as the sacrifice of peace offerings: two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs in their first year. This *was* the offering of Elizur the son of Shedeur.

[36]On the fifth day Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai, leader of the children of Simeon, *presented an offering.* [37]His offering *was* one silver platter, the weight of which *was* one hundred and thirty *shekels,* and one silver bowl of seventy shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of

fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering;[38]one gold pan of ten *shekels,* full of incense;[39]one young bull, one ram, and one male lamb in its first year, as a burnt offering; [40]one kid of the goats as a sin offering; [41]and as the sacrifice of peace offerings: two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs in their first year. This *was* the offering of Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai.

[42]On the sixth day Eliasaph the son of Deuel,[a] leader of the children of Gad, *presented an offering.* [43]His offering *was* one silver platter, the weight of which *was* one hundred and thirty *shekels,* and one silver bowl of seventy shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering; [44]one gold pan of ten *shekels,* full of incense; [45]one young bull, one ram, and one male lamb in its first year, as a burnt offering; [46]one kid of the goats as a sin offering; [47]and as the sacrifice of peace offerings: two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs in their first year. This *was* the offering of Eliasaph the son of Deuel.

[48]On the seventh day Elishama the son of Ammihud, leader of the children of Ephraim, *presented an offering.* [49]His offering *was* one silver platter, the weight of which *was* one hundred and thirty *shekels,* and one silver bowl of seventy shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering;[50]one gold pan of ten *shekels,* full of incense;[51]one young bull, one ram, and one male lamb in its first year, as a burnt offering; [52]one kid of the goats as a sin offering; [53]and as the sacrifice of peace offerings: two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs in their first year. This *was* the offering of Elishama the son of Ammihud.

[54]On the eighth day Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur, leader of the children of Manasseh, *presented an offering.* [55]His offering *was* one silver platter, the weight of which *was* one hundred and thirty *shekels,* and one silver bowl of seventy shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering;[56]one gold pan of ten *shekels,* full of incense;[57]one young bull, one ram, and one male lamb in its first year, as a burnt offering; [58]one kid of the goats as a sin offering; [59]and as the sacrifice of peace offerings: two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs in their first year. This *was* the offering of Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur.

[60]On the ninth day Abidan the son of Gideoni, leader of the children of

Benjamin, *presented an offering.* [61]His offering *was* one silver platter, the weight of which *was* one hundred and thirty *shekels,* and one silver bowl of seventy shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering; [62]one gold pan of ten *shekels,* full of incense; [63]one young bull, one ram, and one male lamb in its first year, as a burnt offering; [64]one kid of the goats as a sin offering; [65]and as the sacrifice of peace offerings: two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs in their first year. This *was* the offering of Abidan the son of Gideoni.

[66]On the tenth day Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai, leader of the children of Dan, *presented an offering.* [67]His offering *was* one silver platter, the weight of which *was* one hundred and thirty *shekels,* and one silver bowl of seventy shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering; [68]one gold pan of ten *shekels,* full of incense; [69]one young bull, one ram, and one male lamb in its first year, as a burnt offering; [70]one kid of the goats as a sin offering; [71]and as the sacrifice of peace offerings: two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs in their first year. This *was* the offering of Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai.

[72]On the eleventh day Pagiel the son of Ocran, leader of the children of Asher, *presented an offering.* [73]His offering *was* one silver platter, the weight of which *was* one hundred and thirty *shekels,* and one silver bowl of seventy shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering;[74]one gold pan of ten *shekels,* full of incense; [75]one young bull, one ram, and one male lamb in its first year, as a burnt offering; [76]one kid of the goats as a sin offering; [77]and as the sacrifice of peace offerings: two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs in their first year. This *was* the offering of Pagiel the son of Ocran.

[78]On the twelfth day Ahira the son of Enan, leader of the children of Naphtali, *presented an offering.* [79]His offering *was* one silver platter, the weight of which *was* one hundred and thirty *shekels,* and one silver bowl of seventy shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering; [80]one gold pan of ten *shekels,*

full of incense; [81]one young bull, one ram, and one male lamb in its first year, as a burnt offering; [82]one kid of the goats as a sin offering; [83]and as the sacrifice of peace offerings: two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs in their first year. This *was* the offering of Ahira the son of Enan.

[84]This *was* the dedication *offering* for the altar from the leaders of Israel, when it was anointed: twelve silver platters, twelve silver bowls, and twelve gold pans. [85]Each silver platter *weighed* one hundred and thirty *shekels* and each bowl seventy *shekels.* All the silver of the vessels *weighed* two thousand four hundred *shekels,* according to the shekel of the sanctuary. [86]The twelve gold pans full of incense *weighed* ten *shekels* apiece, according to the shekel of the sanctuary; all the gold of the pans *weighed* one hundred and twenty *shekels.* [87]All the oxen for the burnt offering *were* twelve young bulls, the rams twelve, the male lambs in their first year twelve, with their grain offering, and the kids of the goats as a sin offering twelve. [88]And all the oxen for the sacrifice of peace offerings were twenty-four bulls, the rams sixty, the male goats sixty, and the lambs in their first year sixty. This *was* the dedication *offering* for the altar after it was anointed.

[89]Now when Moses went into the tabernacle of meeting to speak with Him, he heard the voice of One speaking to him from above the mercy seat that *was* on the ark of the Testimony, from between the two cherubim; thus He spoke to him.

## ARRANGEMENT OF THE LAMPS

**8** And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: [2]"Speak to Aaron, and say to him, 'When you arrange the lamps, the seven lamps shall give light in front of the lampstand.' " [3]And Aaron did so; he arranged the lamps to face toward the front of the lampstand, as the LORD commanded Moses. [4]Now this workmanship of the lampstand *was* hammered gold; from its shaft to its flowers it *was* hammered work. According to the pattern which the LORD had shown Moses, so he made the lampstand.

## CLEANSING AND DEDICATION OF THE LEVITES

[5]Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: [6]"Take the Levites from among the children of Israel and cleanse them *ceremonially*. [7]Thus you shall do to them to cleanse them: Sprinkle water of purification on them, and let them shave all their body, and let them wash their clothes, and *so* make themselves clean. [8]Then let them take a young bull with its grain offering of fine flour mixed with oil, and you shall take another young bull as a sin offering. [9]And you shall bring the Levites before the tabernacle of meeting, and you shall gather together the whole congregation of the children of Israel. [10]So you shall bring the Levites before the LORD, and the children of Israel shall lay their hands on the Levites; [11]and Aaron shall offer the Levites before the LORD *like* a wave offering from the children of Israel, that they may perform the work of the LORD. [12]Then the Levites shall lay their hands on the heads of the young bulls, and you shall offer one as a sin offering and the other as a burnt offering to the LORD, to make atonement for the Levites.

[13]"And you shall stand the Levites before Aaron and his sons, and then offer them *like* a wave offering to the LORD. [14]Thus you shall separate the Levites from among the children of Israel, and the Levites shall be Mine. [15]After that the Levites shall go in to service the tabernacle of meeting. So you shall cleanse them and offer them *like* a wave offering. [16]For they *are* wholly given to Me from among the children of Israel; I have taken them for Myself instead of all who open the womb, the firstborn of all the children of Israel. [17]For all the firstborn among the children of Israel *are* Mine, *both* man

and beast; on the day that I struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt I sanctified them to Myself. [18]I have taken the Levites instead of all the firstborn of the children of Israel. [19]And I have given the Levites as a gift to Aaron and his sons from among the children of Israel, to do the work for the children of Israel in the tabernacle of meeting, and to make atonement for the children of Israel, that there be no plague among the children of Israel when the children of Israel come near the sanctuary."

[20]Thus Moses and Aaron and all the congregation of the children of Israel did to the Levites; according to all that the LORD commanded Moses concerning the Levites, so the children of Israel did to them. [21]And the Levites purified themselves and washed their clothes; then Aaron presented them *like* a wave offering before the LORD, and Aaron made atonement for them to cleanse them.[22]After that the Levites went in to do their work in the tabernacle of meeting before Aaron and his sons; as the LORD commanded Moses concerning the Levites, so they did to them.

[23]Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, [24]"This *is* what *pertains* to the Levites: From twenty-five years old and above one may enter to perform service in the work of the tabernacle of meeting; [25]and at the age of fifty years they must cease performing this work, and shall work no more. [26]They may minister with their brethren in the tabernacle of meeting, to attend to needs, but they *themselves* shall do no work. Thus you shall do to the Levites regarding their duties."

## THE SECOND PASSOVER

**9** Now the LORD spoke to Moses in the Wilderness of Sinai, in the first
month of the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt,
saying: 2"Let the children of Israel keep the Passover at its appointed time.
3On the fourteenth day of this month, at twilight, you shall keep it at its
appointed time. According to all its rites and ceremonies you shall keep it."
4So Moses told the children of Israel that they should keep the Passover.
5And they kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the first month, at
twilight, in the Wilderness of Sinai; according to all that the LORD
commanded Moses, so the children of Israel did.

6Now there were *certain* men who were defiled by a human corpse, so that
they could not keep the Passover on that day; and they came before Moses
and Aaron that day. 7And those men said to him, "We *became* defiled by a
human corpse. Why are we kept from presenting the offering of the LORD at
its appointed time among the children of Israel?"

8And Moses said to them, "Stand still, that I may hear what the LORD will
command concerning you."

9Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 10"Speak to the children of Israel,
saying: 'If anyone of you or your posterity is unclean because of a corpse, or
*is* far away on a journey, he may still keep the LORD's Passover. 11On the
fourteenth day of the second month, at twilight, they may keep it. They shall
eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. 12They shall leave none of it
until morning, nor break one of its bones. According to all the ordinances of
the Passover they shall keep it. 13But the man who *is* clean and is not on a
journey, and ceases to keep the Passover, that same person shall be cut off
from among his people, because he did not bring the offering of the LORD at
its appointed time; that man shall bear his sin.

14'And if a stranger dwells among you, and would keep the LORD's
Passover, he must do so according to the rite of the Passover and according to
its ceremony; you shall have one ordinance, both for the stranger and the
native of the land.' "

**THE CLOUD AND THE FIRE**

[15]Now on the day that the tabernacle was raised up, the cloud covered the tabernacle, the tent of the Testimony; from evening until morning it was above the tabernacle like the appearance of fire. [16]So it was always: the cloud covered it *by day*, and the appearance of fire by night. [17]Whenever the cloud was taken up from above the tabernacle, after that the children of Israel would journey; and in the place where the cloud settled, there the children of Israel would pitch their tents. [18]At the command of the LORD the children of Israel would journey, and at the command of the LORD they would camp; as long as the cloud stayed above the tabernacle they remained encamped. [19]Even when the cloud continued long, many days above the tabernacle, the children of Israel kept the charge of the LORD and did not journey. [20]So it was, when the cloud was above the tabernacle a few days: according to the command of the LORD they would remain encamped, and according to the command of the LORD they would journey. [21]So it was, when the cloud remained only from evening until morning: when the cloud was taken up in the morning, then they would journey; whether by day or by night, whenever the cloud was taken up, they would journey. [22]*Whether it was* two days, a month, or a year that the cloud remained above the tabernacle, the children of Israel would remain encamped and not journey; but when it was taken up, they would journey. [23]At the command of the LORD they remained encamped, and at the command of the LORD they journeyed; they kept the charge of the LORD, at the command of the LORD by the hand of Moses.

## TWO SILVER TRUMPETS

**10** And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 2"Make two silver trumpets for
yourself; you shall make them of hammered work; you shall use them
for calling the congregation and for directing the movement of the camps.
3When they blow both of them, all the congregation shall gather before you at
the door of the tabernacle of meeting. 4But if they blow *only* one, then the
leaders, the heads of the divisions of Israel, shall gather to you. 5When you
sound the advance, the camps that lie on the east side shall then begin their
journey. 6When you sound the advance the second time, then the camps that
lie on the south side shall begin their journey; they shall sound the call for
them to begin their journeys. 7And when the assembly is to be gathered
together, you shall blow, but not sound the advance. 8The sons of Aaron, the
priests, shall blow the trumpets; and these shall be to you as an ordinance
forever throughout your generations.

9"When you go to war in your land against the enemy who oppresses you,
then you shall sound an alarm with the trumpets, and you will be remembered
before the LORD your God, and you will be saved from your enemies. 10Also
in the day of your gladness, in your appointed feasts, and at the beginning of
your months, you shall blow the trumpets over your burnt offerings and over
the sacrifices of your peace offerings; and they shall be a memorial for you
before your God: I *am* the LORD your God."

## DEPARTURE FROM SINAI

11Now it came to pass on the twentieth *day* of the second month, in the
second year, that the cloud was taken up from above the tabernacle of the
Testimony. 12And the children of Israel set out from the Wilderness of Sinai
on their journeys; then the cloud settled down in the Wilderness of Paran.
13So they started out for the first time according to the command of the LORD
by the hand of Moses.

14The standard of the camp of the children of Judah set out first according
to their armies; over their army was Nahshon the son of Am-minadab. 15Over
the army of the tribe of the children of Issachar *was* Nethanel the son of Zuar.

16 And over the army of the tribe of the children of Zebulun *was* Eliab the son
of Helon.

17 Then the tabernacle was taken down; and the sons of Gershon and the
sons of Merari set out, carrying the tabernacle.

18 And the standard of the camp of Reuben set out according to their
armies; over their army *was* Elizur the son of Shedeur. 19 Over the army of the
tribe of the children of Simeon *was* Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai. 20 And
over the army of the tribe of the children of Gad *was* Eliasaph the son of
Deuel.

21 Then the Kohathites set out, carrying the holy things. (The tabernacle
would be prepared for their arrival.)

22 And the standard of the camp of the children of Ephraim set out
according to their armies; over their army *was* Elishama the son of Ammihud.
23 Over the army of the tribe of the children of Manasseh *was* Gamaliel the
son of Pedahzur. 24 And over the army of the tribe of the children of Benjamin
*was* Abidan the son of Gideoni.

25 Then the standard of the camp of the children of Dan (the rear guard of
all the camps) set out according to their armies; over their army *was* Ahiezer
the son of Ammishaddai. 26 Over the army of the tribe of the children of
Asher *was* Pagiel the son of Ocran. 27 And over the army of the tribe of the
children of Naph-tali *was* Ahira the son of Enan.

28 Thus *was* the order of march of the children of Israel, according to their
armies, when they began their journey.

29 Now Moses said to Hobab the son of Reuel***a*** the Midianite, Moses'
father-in-law, "We are setting out for the place of which the LORD said, 'I
will give it to you.' Come with us, and we will treat you well; for the LORD
has promised good things to Israel."

30 And he said to him, "I will not go, but I will depart to my *own* land and
to my relatives."

31 So *Moses* said, "Please do not leave, inasmuch as you know how we are
to camp in the wilderness, and you can be our eyes. 32 And it shall be, if you

go with us-indeed it shall be-that whatever good the LORD will do to us, the same we will do to you."

[33]So they departed from the mountain of the LORD on a journey of three days; and the ark of the covenant of the LORD went before them for the three days' journey, to search out a resting place for them. [34]And the cloud of the LORD *was* above them by day when they went out from the camp.

[35]So it was, whenever the ark set out, that Moses said:

"Rise up, O LORD!
Let Your enemies be scattered,
And let those who hate You flee before You."

[36]And when it rested, he said:

*To* the many thousands of Israel."

**SOUL NOTE**

**Let Others Help** *(10:29-31)* When Moses led the people of Israel through the wilderness, he utilized a combination of divine and human guidance. He followed the cloud of the Lord's presence (9:15-23; 10:34), and he invited Hobab, who knew about surviving in the wilderness, to act as a guide (10:29-31). Moses realized the value of human resources to help him accomplish a divinely appointed task. In the same way today, God teaches us His truth through His Word, but He also uses significant others to help us apply that truth to our daily lives. As you serve God, make use of the resources He gives you.
**Topic: Mentoring**

## THE PEOPLE COMPLAIN

**11** Now *when* the people complained, it displeased the LORD; for the LORD
heard *it*, and His anger was aroused. So the fire of the LORD burned
among them, and consumed *some* in the outskirts of the camp. 2Then the
people cried out to Moses, and when Moses prayed to the LORD, the fire was
quenched. 3So he called the name of the place Taberah,[a] because the fire of
the LORD had burned among them.

4Now the mixed multitude who were among them yielded to intense
craving; so the children of Israel also wept again and said: "Who will give us
meat to eat? 5We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the
cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic; 6but now our
whole being *is* dried up; *there is* nothing at all except this manna *before* our
eyes!"

7Now the manna *was* like coriander seed, and its color like the color of
bdellium. 8The people went about and gathered *it*, ground *it* on millstones or
beat *it* in the mortar, cooked *it* in pans, and made cakes of it; and its taste was
like the taste of pastry prepared with oil. 9And when the dew fell on the camp
in the night, the manna fell on it.

10Then Moses heard the people weeping throughout their families,
everyone at the door of his tent; and the anger of the LORD was greatly
aroused; Moses also was displeased. 11So Moses said to the LORD, "Why
have You afflicted Your servant? And why have I not found favor in Your
sight, that You have laid the burden of all these people on me? 12Did I
conceive all these people? Did I beget them, that You should say to me,
'Carry them in your bosom, as a guardian carries a nursing child,' to the land
which You swore to their fathers? 13Where am I to get meat to give to all
these people? For they weep all over me, saying, 'Give us meat, that we may
eat.' 14I am not able to bear all these people alone, because the burden *is* too
heavy for me. 15If You treat me like this, please kill me here and now-if I
have found favor in Your sight-and do not let me see my wretchedness!"

## THE SEVENTY ELDERS

16 So the LORD said to Moses: “Gather to Me seventy men of the elders of
Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and officers over them;
bring them to the tabernacle of meeting, that they may stand there with you.
17 Then I will come down and talk with you there. I will take of the Spirit that
*is* upon you and will put *the same* upon them; and they shall bear the burden
of the people with you, that you may not bear *it* yourself alone. 18 Then you
shall say to the people, ‘Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow, and you shall
eat meat; for you have wept in the hearing of the LORD, saying, “Who will
give us meat to eat? For *it was* well with us in Egypt.” Therefore the LORD
will give you meat, and you shall eat. 19 You shall eat, not one day, nor two
days, nor five days, nor ten days, nor twenty days, 20 but *for* a whole month,
until it comes out of your nostrils and becomes loathsome to you, because
you have despised the LORD who is among you, and have wept before Him,
saying, “Why did we ever come up out of Egypt?” ’ ”

21 And Moses said, “The people whom I *am* among *are* six hundred
thousand men on foot; yet You have said, ‘I will give them meat, that they
may eat *for* a whole month.’ 22 Shall flocks and herds be slaughtered for them,
to provide enough for them? Or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered
together for them, to provide enough for them?”

23 And the LORD said to Moses, “Has the LORD’s arm been shortened? Now
you shall see whether what I say will happen to you or not.”

24 So Moses went out and told the people the words of the LORD, and he
gathered the seventy men of the elders of the people and placed them around
the tabernacle. 25 Then the LORD came down in the cloud, and spoke to him,
and took of the Spirit that *was* upon him, and placed *the same* upon the
seventy elders; and it happened, when the Spirit rested upon them, that they
prophesied, although they never did *so* again.[a]

26 But two men had remained in the camp: the name of one *was* Eldad, and
the name of the other Medad. And the Spirit rested upon them. Now they
*were* among those listed, but who had not gone out to the tabernacle; yet they
prophesied in the camp. 27 And a young man ran and told Moses, and said,
“Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp.”

28 So Joshua the son of Nun, Moses’ assistant, *one* of his choice men,

answered and said, “Moses my lord, forbid them!”

29 Then Moses said to him, “Are you zealous for my sake? Oh, that all the LORD’s people were prophets *and* that the LORD would put His Spirit upon them!” 30 And Moses returned to the camp, he and the elders of Israel.

**THE LORD SENDS QUAIL**

31 Now a wind went out from the LORD, and it brought quail from the sea and left *them* fluttering near the camp, about a day’s journey on this side and about a day’s journey on the other side, all around the camp, and about two cubits above the surface of the ground. 32 And the people stayed up all that day, all night, and all the next day, and gathered the quail (he who gathered least gathered ten homers); and they spread *them* out for themselves all around the camp. 33 But while the meat *was* still between their teeth, before it was chewed, the wrath of the LORD was aroused against the people, and the LORD struck the people with a very great plague. 34 So he called the name of that place Kibroth Hattaavah,[a] because there they buried the people who had yielded to craving.

35 From Kibroth Hattaavah the people moved to Hazeroth, and camped at Hazeroth.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Food Fixations** *(11:4-9)* Preoccupation with food can indicate an eating disorder. When people become overly focused on food, their dependence on God suffers. The Israelites, while not having an eating disorder, *did* experience a “perspective disorder” because of their focus on food. Their preoccupation with foods they did not have caused them to lose sight of God’s miraculous and loving provision of manna. So today, when people become preoccupied with anything other than God, they can lose their perspective of God’s care for

them. People with eating disorders need to refocus on their worth in God's eyes and be thankful for God's provision.
**Topic: Eating Disorders**

## SOUL NOTE

**Going It Alone** *(11:16, 17)* Pushing hard with many hours and demands can become counterproductive. We need to set boundaries around our time and energy to protect ourselves. God is aware of our limitations and encourages us to lighten the load by delegating responsibility to others who can help us be more productive and effective. The leader always carries greater responsibility, but he or she can alleviate the stress of going it alone by sharing the load. We should consider our responsibilities and how we can delegate to others in order to get the job done.
**Topic: Burnout**

## DISSENSION OF AARON AND MIRIAM

**12** Then Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Ethiopian
woman whom he had married; for he had married an Ethiopian woman.
2 So they said, “Has the LORD indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not
spoken through us also?” And the LORD heard *it.* 3 (Now the man Moses *was*
very humble, more than all men who *were* on the face of the earth.)

4 Suddenly the LORD said to Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, “Come out, you
three, to the tabernacle of meeting!” So the three came out. 5 Then the LORD
came down in the pillar of cloud and stood *in* the door of the tabernacle, and
called Aaron and Miriam. And they both went forward. 6 Then He said,

> “Hear now My words:
>
> If there is a prophet among you
>
> *I,* the LORD, make Myself known to him in a vision;
>
> I speak to him in a dream.
>
> 7 Not so with My servant Moses; He *is* faithful in all My house.
>
> 8 I speak with him face to face, Even plainly, and not in dark sayings;
> And he sees the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid To
> speak against My servant Moses?”

9 So the anger of the LORD was aroused against them, and He departed.
10 And when the cloud departed from above the tabernacle, suddenly Miriam
*became* leprous, as *white as* snow. Then Aaron turned toward Miriam, and
there she was, a leper. 11 So Aaron said to Moses, “Oh, my lord! Please do not
lay *this* sin on us, in which we have done foolishly and in which we have
sinned. 12 Please do not let her be as one dead, whose flesh is half consumed
when he comes out of his mother’s womb!”

13 So Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, “Please heal her, O God, I
pray!”

[14]Then the LORD said to Moses, “If her father had but spit in her face,
would she not be shamed seven days? Let her be shut out of the camp seven
days, and afterward she may be received *again.*”[15]So Miriam was shut out of
the camp seven days, and the people did not journey till Miriam was brought
in *again.* [16]And afterward the people moved from Hazeroth and camped in
the Wilderness of Paran.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# AARON AND MIRIAM:
# A CASE STUDY IN JUDGMENTALISM

**(NUMBERS 12)**

While he was living in Midian, Moses had married Zipporah, the daughter of Reuel, a Midianite priest (Ex. 2:21). It is likely that she is the “Ethiopian woman” referred to in Numbers 12:1, of whom Aaron and Miriam disapproved. Their expression leaves it unclear whether their resentment was because Moses’ wife was dark-skinned or simply not a Hebrew. In either case, their underlying problem had to do with jealousy toward Moses. They expressed it by treating his wife with disrespect. They also questioned Moses’ authority as the spokesman for God, implying that Moses had grown proud. But they actually revealed their own self-centeredness.

Aaron and Miriam had been chosen for influential roles among the leaders of Israel. But they directly challenged Moses by telling the people that their word was just as godly and important as their brother’s. God came directly to Moses’ defense, chastising both

Aaron and Miriam for their ungodly judgments and striking Miriam with leprosy. Moses did not retaliate, but "cried out to the LORD, saying, 'Please heal her, O God, I pray!' " (Num. 12:13).Miriam was indeed healed, but was sent out of the camp for seven days. When she returned, she seems to have been healed not only of leprosy, but also of her judgmental attitudes.

A "leprosy of the spirit" often infects judgmental Christians today as it did Aaron and Miriam. They cannot distinguish between right judgments and judgmental attitudes. This pattern eats away at the soul, filling it with jealousy, envy, fear, pride, and self-righteousness. Prejudice and racism flow from this same infection. Judgmental Christians are not only rejected by unbelievers, but eventually are avoided like lepers were. Fellow Christians feel betrayed by those who project such a negative image of believers before the watching world. Repentance and godly humility are the only effective treatments against the path of judgmentalism.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about judgmentalism Dealing With A Critical Spirit. See also the key passage note at Luke 6:37.

## SPIES SENT INTO CANAAN

**13** And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 2"Send men to spy out the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the children of Israel; from each tribe of their fathers you shall send a man, every one a leader among them."

> "Let us go up at once and take
> possession, for we are
> well able to overcome it."
> NUMBERS 13:30

3So Moses sent them from the Wilderness of Paran according to the command of the LORD, all of them men who *were* heads of the children of Israel. 4Now these *were* their names: from the tribe of Reuben, Shammua the son of Zaccur; 5from the tribe of Simeon, Shaphat the son of Hori; 6from the tribe of Judah, Caleb the son of Jephunneh; 7from the tribe of Issachar, Igal the son of Joseph; 8from the tribe of Ephraim, Hoshea ***a*** the son of Nun; 9from the tribe of Benjamin, Palti the son of Raphu; 10from the tribe of Zebulun, Gaddiel the son of Sodi; 11from the tribe of Joseph, *that is,* from the tribe of Manasseh, Gaddi the son of Susi; 12from the tribe of Dan, Ammiel the son of Ge-malli; 13from the tribe of Asher, Sethur the son of Michael; 14from the tribe of Naphtali, Nahbi the son of Vophsi; 15from the tribe of Gad, Ge-uel the son of Machi.

16These *are* the names of the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land. And Moses called Hoshea***a*** the son of Nun, Joshua.

17Then Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, and said to them, "Go up this *way* into the South, and go up to the mountains, 18and see what the land is like: whether the people who dwell in it *are* strong or weak, few or many; 19whether the land they dwell in *is* good or bad; whether the cities they inhabit *are* like camps or strongholds; 20whether the land *is* rich or poor; and whether there are forests there or not. Be of good courage. And bring some of the fruit of the land." Now the time *was* the season of the first ripe grapes.

21So they went up and spied out the land from the Wilderness of Zin as far

as Rehob, near the entrance of Hamath. [22]And they went up through the South and came to Hebron; Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmai, the descendants of Anak, *were* there. (Now Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.) [23]Then they came to the Valley of Eshcol, and there cut down a branch with one cluster of grapes; they carried it between two of them on a pole. *They* also *brought* some of the pomegranates and figs. [24]The place was called the Valley of Eshcol,[a] because of the cluster which the men of Israel cut down there. [25]And they returned from spying out the land after forty days.

[26]Now they departed and came back to Moses and Aaron and all the congregation of the children of Israel in the Wilderness of Paran, at Kadesh; they brought back word to them and to all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land. [27]Then they told him, and said: "We went to the land where you sent us. It truly flows with milk and honey, and this *is* its fruit. [28]Never theless the people who dwell in the land *are* strong; the cities *are* fortified *and* very large; moreover we saw the descendants of Anak there. [29]The Amalekites dwell in the land of the South; the Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites dwell in the mountains; and the Ca-naanites dwell by the sea and along the banks of the Jordan."

[30]Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said, "Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it."

[31]But the men who had gone up with him said, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they *are* stronger than we." [32]And they gave the children of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, "The land through which we have gone as spies *is* a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people whom we saw in it *are* men of *great* stature. [33]There we saw the giants***a*** (the descendants of Anak came from the giants); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight."

# DISCOVERING THE DECEPTIONS

**ROBERT MCGEE**

## (Numbers 13:30-33)

**E**vil flourishes when we base our self-worth on what we do or what others think of us. Destined to drink the cup of failure, we'll soon learn that we can never do enough or be good enough. Many believers discover that their lives seem very similar to the lives of those who have never accepted Christ. So they try to gain value and meaning in their lives by obtaining the approval of people. They are tormented by past failures. They experience loneliness and alienation. In short, they are insecure.

Many people are seeking relief from emotional, relational, and spiritual insecurity. Their intense feeling of insecurity, along with the related thought patterns, is debilitating and painful. People who experience insecurity need to focus on the underlying reasons for the insecurity, not simply on finding ways to escape it. Feelings of insecurity reveal that something important is wrong with a person's foundational beliefs. As a fever indicates a physical illness, insecurity indicates a faith ailment that needs attention.

Insecurity is a common experience because of the effects of being born into a fallen human race. If people understand the ramifications of that liability, then they will also understand that life is a constant struggle to gain more and more freedom from this "birth defect." Scripture is replete with warnings about our natural condition. Before becoming believers, people are "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1). They walk "in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart" (Eph. 4:17, 18).They also have "an evil conscience" from which they need to be cleansed (Heb.10:22).

We are warned, however, that the battle for security and significance is far from over at the moment we become God's children. Believers must be on their guard about accepting deceptions. Being deceived is simply believing something to be true that is false and, conversely, believing something to be false that is true.

**DOUBLE DECEPTIONS**

Two prime deceptions are the cause of many people's insecurity. The first prime deception is that people don't realize that they are plagued by many deceptions. Only God can reveal the deceptions that hinder people's lives. These deceptions come in all shapes and sizes, in varying degrees, with varying sources. No amount of contemplation or reasoning can reveal every person's deceptions. Yet they constantly see the effects of those deceptions on their lives.

The second prime deception is that what people think they believe isn't what they truly believe. People often give intellectual assent to truth, but sadly, they don't entrust their lives to it. For example, if a person had a harsh, condemning father, usually their early beliefs about the heavenly Father are that He also is harsh and condemning. Later in life, they might be told that God is really a loving Father. But unless these early beliefs are confronted as deception, the person will give only intellectual assent to the belief that God is loving. They *think* that they believe that God is a loving God, yet they struggle to trust Him.

These "heart beliefs" are what actually control the person's understanding and experience of God. When people begin life as babies, they have no defense against absorbing the deceptions around them. That, combined with the natural mind that is antagonistic to the things of God, has encouraged people to entrust their lives to critical beliefs that are false. False critical or heart beliefs then influence their lives and their beliefs about God and themselves.

**TIME TO ASK SOME QUESTIONS**

People usually do not question the beliefs to which they entrust themselves. Most people can trace almost all of their insecurity to a deception about how they believe God responds to their failures, their sins, and their times of falling short of His standards. Every perception of God, every way a person interacts with Him, is built on what they believe is the basis of their relationship with Him.

Satan has been quite successful in distorting this aspect of a person's relationship with God. Many Christians hold a distorted view of grace and God's unconditional love. They know intellectually what these mean, but their hearts don't believe what their heads acknowledge. People fail consistently because of the sin nature; if they are not relying completely on the grace and love of God, they will feel that He has abandoned them or, even worse, that He has become their enemy.

When a person experiences insecurity, God desires that they come to Him and allow the Holy Spirit to reveal the deceptions on which they depend. They need not be frightened by experiencing insecurity, worry, anxiety, or lack of peace. God allows these experiences so that He can show His people the deceptions on which they are relying, and then remove those deceptions. He wants to set us free from insecurity so that we can be truly secure in Him. He will set us free when we seek Him, in spite of our fears and insecurity.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of insecurity include:

• Psalm 23

• Psalm 34:18-22

• Isaiah 43:1-3

- Matthew 10:29-31
- Ephesians 1:3-14
- 1 John 2:1, 2

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on insecurity at Numbers 13:30-33. See also the personality profile of Moses: Humble Or Insecure?.

**KEY PASSAGE**

# WE WERE LIKE GRASSHOPPERS!

## (13:30-33)

Insecurity often occurs through comparing ourselves with others. Discouraging comments, negative thinking, and unreasonable expectations can also make us feel insecure. When the ten spies compared themselves to the well-armed Canaanites and their heavily fortified cities, they concluded: “We were like grasshoppers in our own sight.” The result was fear, unbelief, and rebellion against God’s plan for the people to take the land.

Measuring oneself against others will lead to insecurity. We can always find someone who is better looking, wealthier, better dressed, more spiritual, or more intelligent. We’ll see “giants” next to whom we feel like “grasshoppers.” Instead, we are to measure ourselves “within the limits of the sphere which God appointed us” (2 Cor.

10:13). In other words, we should be asking how we are doing with the looks, wealth, appearance, brains, and special abilities that God has given us. Ultimately we are accountable only to Him.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Discovering The Deceptions. See also the personality profiles of Moses: Humble Or Insecure?.

## ISRAEL REFUSES TO ENTER CANAAN

**14** So all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people
wept that night. 2And all the children of Israel complained against Moses
and Aaron, and the whole congregation said to them, “If only we had died in
the land of Egypt! Or if only we had died in this wilderness! 3Why has the
LORD brought us to this land to fall by the sword, that our wives and children
should become victims? Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?” 4So
they said to one another, “Let us select a leader and return to Egypt.”

5Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the
congregation of the children of Israel.

6But Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, *who were*
among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes;7and they spoke to
all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying: “The land we passed
through to spy out *is* an exceedingly good land. 8If the LORD delights in us,
then He will bring us into this land and give it to us, ‘a land which flows with
milk and honey.’*a* 9Only do not rebel against the LORD, nor fear the people of
the land, for they *are* our bread; their protection has departed from them, and
the LORD *is* with us. Do not fear them.”

10And all the congregation said to stone them with stones. Now the glory
of the LORD appeared in the tabernacle of meeting before all the children of
Israel.

## MOSES INTERCEDES FOR THE PEOPLE

11Then the LORD said to Moses: “How long will these people reject Me?
And how long will they not believe Me, with all the signs which I have
performed among them? 12I will strike them with the pestilence and disinherit
them, and I will make of you a nation greater and mightier than they.”

13And Moses said to the LORD: “Then the Egyptians will hear *it*, for by
Your might You brought these people up from among them, 14and they will
tell *it* to the inhabitants of this land. They have heard that You, LORD, *are*
among these people; that You, LORD, are seen face to face and Your cloud
stands above them, and You go before them in a pillar of cloud by day and in

a pillar of fire by night. [15]Now *if* You kill these people as one man, then the nations which have heard of Your fame will speak, saying, [16]'Because the LORD was not able to bring this people to the land which He swore to give them, therefore He killed them in the wilderness.' [17]And now, I pray, let the power of my Lord be great, just as You have spoken, saying, [18]'The LORD is longsuffering and abundant in mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He by no means clears *the guilty,* visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth *generation.'*[a] [19]Pardon the iniquity of this people, I pray, according to the greatness of Your mercy, just as You have forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now."

[20]Then the LORD said: "I have pardoned, according to your word; [21]but truly, as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD- [22]because all these men who have seen My glory and the signs which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have put Me to the test now these ten times, and have not heeded My voice, [23]they certainly shall not see the land of which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who rejected Me see it. [24]But My servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit in him and has followed Me fully, I will bring into the land where he went, and his descendants shall inherit it. [25]Now the Ama-lekites and the Canaanites dwell in the valley; tomorrow turn and move out into the wilderness by the Way of the Red Sea."

**DEATH SENTENCE ON THE REBELS**

[26]spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, [27]"How long *shall I bear with* this evil congregation who complain against Me? I have heard the complaints which the children of Israel make against Me. [28]Say to them, 'As I live,' says the LORD, 'just as you have spoken in My hearing, so I will do to you: [29]The carcasses of you who have complained against Me shall fall in this wilderness, all of you who were numbered, according to your entire number, from twenty years old and above.[30]Except for Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun, you shall by no means enter the land which I swore I would make you dwell in. [31]But your little ones, whom you said would be victims, I will bring in, and they shall know the land which you have despised.[32]But *as for* you, your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness.

[33]And your sons shall be shepherds in the wilderness forty years, and bear the brunt of your infidelity, until your carcasses are consumed in the wilderness.[34]According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, for each day you shall bear your guilt one year, *namely* forty years, and you shall know My rejection. [35]I the LORD have spoken this. I will surely do so to all this evil congregation who are gathered together against Me. In this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die.' "

[36]Now the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land, who returned and made all the congregation complain against him by bringing a bad report of the land, [37]those very men who brought the evil report about the land, died by the plague before the LORD. [38]But Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh remained alive, of the men who went to spy out the land.

## A FUTILE INVASION ATTEMPT

[39]Then Moses told these words to all the children of Israel, and the people mourned greatly. [40]And they rose early in the morning and went up to the top of the mountain, saying, "Here we are, and we will go up to the place which the LORD has promised, for we have sinned!"

[41]And Moses said, "Now why do you transgress the command of the LORD? For this will not succeed. [42]Do not go up, lest you be defeated by your enemies, for the LORD *is* not among you. [43]For the Amalekites and the Canaanites *are* there before you, and you shall fall by the sword; because you have turned away from the LORD, the LORD will not be with you."

[44]But they presumed to go up to the mountaintop. Nevertheless, neither the ark of the covenant of the LORD nor Moses departed from the camp. [45]Then the Amalekites and the Canaanites who dwelt in that mountain came down and attacked them, and drove them back as far as Hormah.

## SOUL NOTE

**Lost Hope** *(14:1-4)* The Israelites were camped at the edge of the Promised Land, but the negative report of the spies caused them to lose hope and perspective. They wanted to go back to Egypt, forgetting that they had been slaves there. They were afraid to enter the land, forgetting the miracles God had performed to deliver them from Egypt. Lost hope and lost perspective meant a lost land, for God refused to let them enter. When feeling hopeless, we should check our perspective, remembering where God has brought us, and allowing Him to work new miracles in our lives.
**Topic: Hope**

## SOUL NOTE

**Won't They Ever Learn?** *(14:1-4)* Chronic complainers gripe about anything and everything. The Israelites had grumbled against God and Moses ever since leaving Egypt (see, for example, Ex. 15:24; 16:3; 17:2; Num. 11:1, 4), and they would continue to complain (Num. 16:3, 41; 20:2, 3; 21:5). In every circumstance, we have a choice: We can complain, or we can trust God's ability to handle any situation. Complaining means inaction; faith means moving ahead with God. Trusting Him with our problems is the first real step in overcoming them. **Topic: Attitudes**

## LAWS OF GRAIN AND DRINK OFFERINGS

**15** And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, [2]"Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When you have come into the land you are to inhabit, which I am giving to you, [3]and you make an offering by fire to the LORD, a burnt offering or a sacrifice, to fulfill a vow or as a freewill offering or in your appointed feasts, to make a sweet aroma to the LORD, from the herd or the flock, [4]then he who presents his offering to the LORD shall bring a grain offering of one-tenth *of an ephah* of fine flour mixed with one-fourth of a hin of oil; [5]and one-fourth of a hin of wine as a drink offering you shall prepare with the burnt offering or the sacrifice, for each lamb. [6]Or for a ram you shall prepare as a grain offering two-tenths *of an ephah* of fine flour mixed with one-third of a hin of oil; [7]and as a drink offering you shall offer one-third of a hin of wine as a sweet aroma to the LORD. [8]And when you prepare a young bull as a burnt offering, or as a sacrifice to fulfill a vow, or as a peace offering to the LORD, [9]then shall be offered with the young bull a grain offering of three-tenths *of an ephah* of fine flour mixed with half a hin of oil; [10]and you shall bring as the drink offering half a hin of wine as an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the LORD.

[11]'Thus it shall be done for each young bull, for each ram, or for each lamb or young goat. [12]According to the number that you prepare, so you shall do with everyone according to their number. [13]All who are native-born shall do these things in this manner, in presenting an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the LORD. [14]And if a stranger dwells with you, or whoever *is* among you throughout your generations, and would present an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the LORD, just as you do, so shall he do. [15]One ordinance *shall be* for you of the assembly and for the stranger who dwells *with you*, an ordinance forever throughout your generations; as you are, so shall the stranger be before the LORD. [16]One law and one custom shall be for you and for the stranger who dwells with you.' "[a]

[17]Again the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, [18]"Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When you come into the land to which I bring you, [19]then it will be, when you eat of the bread of the land, that you shall offer up

a heave offering to the LORD. [20]You shall offer up a cake of the first of your ground meal *as* a heave offering; as a heave offering of the threshing floor, so shall you offer it up. [21]Of the first of your ground meal you shall give to the LORD a heave offering throughout your generations.

## LAWS CONCERNING UNINTENTIONAL SIN

[22]'If you sin unintentionally, and do not observe all these commandments which the LORD has spoken to Moses- [23]all that the LORD has commanded you by the hand of Moses, from the day the LORD gave commandment and onward throughout your generations- [24]then it will be, if it is unintentionally committed, without the knowledge of the congregation, that the whole congregation shall offer one young bull as a burnt offering, as a sweet aroma to the LORD, with its grain offering and its drink offering, according to the ordinance, and one kid of the goats as a sin offering. [25]So the priest shall make atonement for the whole congregation of the children of Israel, and it shall be forgiven them, for it was unintentional; they shall bring their offering, an offering made by fire to the LORD, and their sin offering before the LORD, for their unintended sin. [26]It shall be forgiven the whole congregation of the children of Israel and the stranger who dwells among them, because all the people *did it* unintentionally.

[27]'And if a person sins unintentionally, then he shall bring a female goat in its first year as a sin offering. [28]So the priest shall make atonement for the person who sins unintentionally, when he sins unintentionally before the LORD, to make atonement for him; and it shall be forgiven him. [29]You shall have one law for him who sins unintentionally, *for* him who is native-born among the children of Israel and for the stranger who dwells among them.

## LAW CONCERNING PRESUMPTUOUS SIN

[30]'But the person who does *anything* presumptuously, *whether he is* native-born or a stranger, that one brings reproach on the LORD, and he shall be cut off from among his people. [31]Because he has despised the word of the LORD, and has broken His commandment, that person shall be completely cut off; his guilt *shall be* upon him.' "

## PENALTY FOR VIOLATING THE SABBATH

[32]Now while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering sticks on the Sabbath day. [33]And those who found him gathering sticks brought him to Moses and Aaron, and to all the congregation. [34]They put him under guard, because it had not been explained what should be done to him.

[35]Then the LORD said to Moses, “The man must surely be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones outside the camp.” [36]So, as the LORD commanded Moses, all the congregation brought him outside the camp and stoned him with stones, and he died.

## TASSELS ON GARMENTS

[37]Again the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, [38]“Speak to the children of Israel: Tell them to make tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and to put a blue thread in the tassels of the corners. [39]And you shall have the tassel, that you may look upon it and remember all the commandments of the LORD and do them, and that you *may* not follow the harlotry to which your own heart and your own eyes are inclined, [40]and that you may remember and do all My commandments, and be holy for your God. [41]I *am* the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: I *am* the LORD your God.”

**REBELLION AGAINST MOSES AND AARON**

**16** Now Korah the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, with
Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab, and On the son of Peleth, sons of
Reuben, took *men;* 2and they rose up before Moses with some of the children
of Israel, two hundred and fifty leaders of the congregation, representatives of
the congregation, men of renown. 3They gathered together against Moses and
Aaron, and said to them, "*You take* too much upon yourselves, for all the
congregation *is* holy, every one of them, and the LORD *is* among them. Why
then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD?"

4So when Moses heard *it,* he fell on his face;5and he spoke to Korah and all
his company, saying, "Tomorrow morning the LORD will show who *is* His
and *who is* holy, and will cause *him* to come near to Him. That one whom He
chooses He will cause to come near to Him. 6Do this: Take censers, Korah
and all your company; 7put fire in them and put incense in them before the
LORD tomorrow, and it shall be *that* the man whom the LORD chooses *is* the
holy one. *You take* too much upon yourselves, you sons of Levi!"

8Then Moses said to Korah, "Hear now, you sons of Levi: 9*Is it* a small
thing to you that the God of Israel has separated you from the congregation of
Israel, to bring you near to Himself, to do the work of the tabernacle of the
LORD, and to stand before the congregation to serve them; 10and that He has
brought you near *to Himself,* you and all your brethren, the sons of Levi, with
you? And are you seeking the priesthood also? 11Therefore you and all your
company *are* gathered together against the LORD. And what *is* Aaron that you
complain against him?"

12And Moses sent to call Dathan and Abi-ram the sons of Eliab, but they
said, "We will not come up! 13*Is it* a small thing that you have brought us up
out of a land flowing with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, that
you should keep acting like a prince over us? 14Moreover you have not
brought us into a land flowing with milk and honey, nor given us inheritance
of fields and vineyards. Will you put out the eyes of these men? We will not
come up!"

15Then Moses was very angry, and said to the LORD, "Do not respect their

offering. I have not taken one donkey from them, nor have I hurt one of them.”

16And Moses said to Korah, “Tomorrow, you and all your company be present before the LORD-you and they, as well as Aaron. 17Let each take his censer and put incense in it, and each of you bring his censer before the LORD, two hundred and fifty censers; both you and Aaron, each *with* his censer.” 18So every man took his censer, put fire in it, laid incense on it, and stood at the door of the tabernacle of meeting with Moses and Aaron. 19And Korah gathered all the congregation against them at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. Then the glory of the LORD appeared to all the congregation.

20And the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, 21“Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment.”

22Then they fell on their faces, and said, “O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and You be angry with all the congregation?”

23So the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 24“Speak to the congregation, saying, ‘Get away from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.’ ”

25Then Moses rose and went to Dathan and Abiram, and the elders of Israel followed him. 26And he spoke to the congregation, saying, “Depart now from the tents of these wicked men! Touch nothing of theirs, lest you be consumed in all their sins.” 27So they got away from around the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram; and Dathan and Abiram came out and stood at the door of their tents, with their wives, their sons, and their little children.

28And Moses said: “By this you shall know that the LORD has sent me to do all these works, for *I have* not *done them* of my own will. 29If these men die naturally like all men, or if they are visited by the common fate of all men, *then* the LORD has not sent me. 30But if the LORD creates a new thing, and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that belongs to them, and they go down alive into the pit, then you will understand that these men have rejected the LORD.”

31Now it came to pass, as he finished speaking all these words, that the ground split apart under them, 32and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households and all the men with Korah, with

all *their* goods. [33]So they and all those with them went down alive into the pit; the earth closed over them, and they perished from among the assembly. [34]Then all Israel who *were* around them fled at their cry, for they said, “Lest the earth swallow us up *also!* ”

[35]And a fire came out from the LORD and consumed the two hundred and fifty men who were offering incense.

[36]Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying:[37]“Tell Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, to pick up the censers out of the blaze, for they are holy, and scatter the fire some distance away. [38]The censers of these men who sinned against their own souls, let them be made into hammered plates as a covering for the altar. Because they presented them before the LORD, therefore they are holy; and they shall be a sign to the children of Israel.” [39]So Eleazar the priest took the bronze censers, which those who were burned up had presented, and they were hammered out as a covering on the altar, [40]*to be* a memorial to the children of Israel that no outsider, who *is* not a descendant of Aaron, should come near to offer incense before the LORD, that he might not become like Korah and his companions, just as the LORD had said to him through Moses.

**COMPLAINTS OF THE PEOPLE**

[41]On the next day all the congregation of the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, saying, “You have killed the people of the LORD.” [42]Now it happened, when the congregation had gathered against Moses and Aaron, that they turned toward the tabernacle of meeting; and suddenly the cloud covered it, and the glory of the LORD appeared. [43]Then Moses and Aaron came before the tabernacle of meeting.

[44]And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, [45]“Get away from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment.”

And they fell on their faces.

[46]So Moses said to Aaron, “Take a censer and put fire in it from the altar, put incense *on it*, and take it quickly to the congregation and make atonement for them; for wrath has gone out from the LORD. The plague has begun.” [47]Then Aaron took *it* as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the assembly; and already the plague had begun among the people. So he put in

the incense and made atonement for the people. [48]And he stood between the dead and the living; so the plague was stopped. [49]Now those who died in the plague were fourteen thousand seven hundred, besides those who died in the Korah incident. [50]So Aaron returned to Moses at the door of the tabernacle of meeting, for the plague had stopped.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Don’t Be Stubborn!** *(16:12)* Dathan and Abiram stubbornly refused to discuss their differences with Moses. How different the outcome might have been if they had been willing to listen to Moses. Instead, they let their pride get in the way and stubbornly refused to listen to Moses as God’s appointed leader. A strong will can be a valuable asset if it grows out of the character strength of commitment. But stubbornness arising from a wrong attitude and selfishness is a great liability. **Topic: Attitudes**

## THE BUDDING OF AARON'S ROD

**17** And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: [2]"Speak to the children of Israel, and get from them a rod from each father's house, all their leaders according to their fathers' houses-twelve rods. Write each man's name on his rod. [3]And you shall write Aaron's name on the rod of Levi. For there shall be one rod [5]And it shall be *that* the rod of the man whom I choose will blossom; thus I will rid Myself of the complaints of the children of Israel, which they make against you." for the head of *each* father's house. [4]Then you shall place them in the tabernacle of meeting before the Testimony, where I meet with you.

[6]So Moses spoke to the children of Israel, and each of their leaders gave him a rod apiece, for each leader according to their fathers' houses, twelve rods; and the rod of Aaron *was* among their rods. [7]And Moses placed the rods before the LORD in the tabernacle of witness.

[8]Now it came to pass on the next day that Moses went into the tabernacle of witness, and behold, the rod of Aaron, of the house of Levi, had sprouted and put forth buds, had produced blossoms and yielded ripe almonds.[9]Then Moses brought out all the rods from before the LORD to all the children of Israel; and they looked, and each man took his rod.

[10]And the LORD said to Moses, "Bring Aaron's rod back before the Testimony, to be kept as a sign against the rebels, that you may put their complaints away from Me, lest they die." [11]Thus did Moses; just as the LORD had commanded him, so he did.

[12]So the children of Israel spoke to Moses, saying, "Surely we die, we perish, we all perish! [13]Whoever even comes near the tabernacle of the LORD must die. Shall we all utterly die?"

## SOUL NOTE

**Go Directly to God** *(17:10, 11)* When Aaron's rod miraculously "sprouted and put forth buds" (17:8), God was showing clearly that He had chosen Aaron to serve as Israel's high priest. The high priest served as the intermediary between the people and God. This important position foreshadowed Christ who is our great High Priest (Heb. 8:1-6; 9:11-22). Instead of offering sacrifices of animals, however, Christ offered Himself as the final sacrifice for sin. Because of Christ, believers can go directly to God for forgiveness and help.
**Topic: Crises**

## DUTIES OF PRIESTS AND LEVITES

**18** Then the LORD said to Aaron: “You and your sons and your father’s
house with you shall bear the iniquity *related to* the sanctuary, and you
and your sons with you shall bear the iniquity *associated with* your
priesthood. 2Also bring with you your brethren of the tribe of Levi, the tribe
of your father, that they may be joined with you and serve you while you and
your sons *are* with you before the tabernacle of witness. 3They shall attend to
your needs and all the needs of the tabernacle; but they shall not come near
the articles of the sanctuary and the altar, lest they die-they and you also.
4They shall be joined with you and attend to the needs of the tabernacle of
meeting, for all the work of the tabernacle; but an outsider shall not come
near you. 5And you shall attend to the duties of the sanctuary and the duties
of the altar, that there *may* be no more wrath on the children of Israel.
6Behold, I Myself have taken your brethren the Levites from among the
children of Israel; *they are* a gift to you, given by the LORD, to do the work of
the tabernacle of meeting. 7Therefore you and your sons with you shall attend
to your priesthood for everything at the altar and behind the veil; and you
shall serve. I give your priesthood *to you* as a gift for service, but the outsider
who comes near shall be put to death.”

## OFFERINGS FOR SUPPORT OF THE PRIESTS

8And the LORD spoke to Aaron: “Here, I Myself have also given you
charge of My heave offerings, all the holy gifts of the children of Israel; I
have given them as a portion to you and your sons, as an ordinance forever.
9This shall be yours of the most holy things *reserved* from the fire: every
offering of theirs, every grain offering and every sin offering and every
trespass offering which they render to Me, *shall be* most holy for you and
your sons. 10In a most holy *place* you shall eat it; every male shall eat it. It
shall be holy to you.

11“This also *is* yours: the heave offering of their gift, with all the wave
offerings of the children of Israel; I have given them to you, and your sons
and daughters with you, as an ordinance forever. Everyone who is clean in
your house may eat it.

12“All the best of the oil, all the best of the new wine and the grain, their
firstfruits which they offer to the LORD, I have given them to you. 13Whatever
first ripe fruit is in their land, which they bring to the LORD, shall be yours.
Everyone who is clean in your house may eat it.

14“Every devoted thing in Israel shall be yours.

15“Everything that first opens the womb of all flesh, which they bring to
the LORD, whether man or beast, shall be yours; nevertheless the firstborn of
man you shall surely redeem, and the firstborn of unclean animals you shall
redeem. 16And those redeemed of the devoted things you shall redeem when
one month old, according to your valuation, for five shekels of silver,
according to the shekel of the sanctuary, which *is* twenty gerahs. 17But the
firstborn of a cow, the firstborn of a sheep, or the firstborn of a goat you shall
not redeem; they *are* holy. You shall sprinkle their blood on the altar, and
burn their fat *as* an offering made by fire for a sweet aroma to the LORD.
18And their flesh shall be yours, just as the wave breast and the right thigh are
yours.

19“All the heave offerings of the holy things, which the children of Israel
offer to the LORD, I have given to you and your sons and daughters with you
as an ordinance forever; it *is* a covenant of salt forever before the LORD with
you and your descendants with you.”

20Then the LORD said to Aaron: “You shall have no inheritance in their
land, nor shall you have any portion among them; I *am* your portion and your
inheritance among the children of Israel.

## TITHES FOR SUPPORT OF THE LEVITES

21“Behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tithes in Israel as an
inheritance in return for the work which they perform, the work of the
tabernacle of meeting. 22Hereafter the children of Israel shall not come near
the tabernacle of meeting, lest they bear sin and die. 23But the Levites shall
perform the work of the tabernacle of meeting, and they shall bear their
iniquity; *it shall be* a statute forever, throughout your generations, that among
the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance. 24For the tithes of the
children of Israel, which they offer up *as* a heave offering to the LORD, I have

given to the Levites as an inheritance; therefore I have said to them, ‘Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance.’ ”

**THE TITHE OF THE LEVITES**

25 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 26 “Speak thus to the Levites, and say to them: ‘When you take from the children of Israel the tithes which I have given you from them as your inheritance, then you shall offer up a heave offering of it to the LORD, a tenth of the tithe. 27 And your heave offering shall be reckoned to you as though *it were* the grain of the threshing floor and as the fullness of the winepress. 28 Thus you shall also offer a heave offering to the LORD from all your tithes which you receive from the children of Israel, and you shall give the LORD’s heave offering from it to Aaron the priest. 29 Of all your gifts you shall offer up every heave offering due to the LORD, from all the best of them, the consecrated part of them.’ 30 Therefore you shall say to them: ‘When you have lifted up the best of it, then *the rest* shall be accounted to the Levites as the produce of the threshing floor and as the produce of the winepress. 31 You may eat it in any place, you and your households, for it *is* your reward for your work in the tabernacle of meeting. 32 And you shall bear no sin because of it, when you have lifted up the best of it. But you shall not profane the holy gifts of the children of Israel, lest you die.’ ”

**SOUL NOTE**

**The Gift** *(18:6, 7)* Work is a gift? That’s exactly what God told the Levites whom he had chosen to serve in the tabernacle: “I give your priesthood to you as a gift for service.” God makes work sacred. Almost any job can be done for the glory of God. Those who see their vocations as gifts through which they can serve God gain a whole new perspective. “And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the

name of the Lord Jesus" (Col. 3:17). **Topic: Work**

## LAWS OF PURIFICATION

**19** Now the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, [2]"This *is* the ordinance of the law which the LORD has commanded, saying: 'Speak to the children of Israel, that they bring you a red heifer without blemish, in which there *is* no defect *and* on which a yoke has never come. [3]You shall give it to Eleazar the priest, that he may take it outside the camp, and it shall be slaughtered before him; [4]and Eleazar the priest shall take some of its blood with his finger, and sprinkle some of its blood seven times directly in front of the tabernacle of meeting. [5]Then the heifer shall be burned in his sight: its hide, its flesh, its blood, and its offal shall be burned. [6]And the priest shall take cedar wood and hyssop and scarlet, and cast *them* into the midst of the fire burning the heifer. [7]Then the priest shall wash his clothes, he shall bathe in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp; the priest shall be unclean until evening. [8]And the one who burns it shall wash his clothes in water, bathe in water, and shall be unclean until evening. [9]Then a man *who is* clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer, and store *them* outside the camp in a clean place; and they shall be kept for the congregation of the children of Israel for the water of purification;[a] it *is* for purifying from sin. [10]And the one who gathers the ashes of the heifer shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until evening. It shall be a statute forever to the children of Israel and to the stranger who dwells among them.

[11]'He who touches the dead body of anyone shall be unclean seven days. [12]He shall purify himself with the water on the third day and on the seventh day; *then* he will be clean. But if he does not purify himself on the third day and on the seventh day, he will not be clean. [13]Whoever touches the body of anyone who has died, and does not purify himself, defiles the tabernacle of the LORD. That person shall be cut off from Israel. He shall be unclean, because the water of purification was not sprinkled on him; his uncleanness *is* still on him.

[14]'This *is* the law when a man dies in a tent: All who come into the tent and all who *are* in the tent shall be unclean seven days; [15]and every open vessel, which has no cover fastened on it, *is* unclean. [16]Whoever in the open

field touches one who is slain by a sword or who has died, or a bone of a man, or a grave, shall be unclean seven days.

17 ‘And for an unclean *person* they shall take some of the ashes of the heifer burnt for purification from sin, and running water shall be put on them in a vessel. 18 A clean person shall take hyssop and dip *it* in the water, sprinkle *it* on the tent, on all the vessels, on the persons who were there, or on the one who touched a bone, the slain, the dead, or a grave. 19 The clean *person* shall sprinkle the unclean on the third day and on the seventh day; and on the seventh day he shall purify himself, wash his clothes, and bathe in water; and at evening he shall be clean.

20 ‘But the man who is unclean and does not purify himself, that person shall be cut off from among the assembly, because he has defiled the sanctuary of the LORD. The water of purification has not been sprinkled on him; he *is* unclean. 21 It shall be a perpetual statute for them. He who sprinkles the water of purification shall wash his clothes; and he who touches the water of purification shall be unclean until evening. 22 Whatever the unclean *person* touches shall be unclean; and the person who touches *it* shall be unclean until evening.’ ”

## MOSES' ERROR AT KADESH

**20** Then the children of Israel, the whole congregation, came into the Wilderness of Zin in the first month, and the people stayed in Kadesh; and Miriam died there and was buried there.

2 Now there was no water for the congregation; so they gathered together
against Moses and Aaron. 3 And the people contended with Moses and spoke,
saying: "If only we had died when our brethren died before the LORD!
4 Why have you brought up the assembly of the LORD into this wilderness, that we
and our animals should die here? 5 And why have you made us come up out
of Egypt, to bring us to this evil place? It *is* not a place of grain or figs or
vines or pomegranates; nor *is* there any water to drink." 6 So Moses and
Aaron went from the presence of the assembly to the door of the tabernacle
of meeting, and they fell on their faces. And the glory of the LORD appeared
to them.

7 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 8 "Take the rod; you and your
brother Aaron gather the congregation together. Speak to the rock before their
eyes, and it will yield its water; thus you shall bring water for them out of the
rock, and give drink to the congregation and their animals." 9 So Moses took
the rod from before the LORD as He commanded him.

10 And Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock;
and he said to them, "Hear now, you rebels! Must we bring water for you out
of this rock?" 11 Then Moses lifted his hand and struck the rock twice with his
rod; and water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their animals
drank.

12 Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not believe
Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not
bring this assembly into the land which I have given them."

13 This *was* the water of Meribah,[a] because the children of Israel contended
with the LORD, and He was hallowed among them.

## PASSAGE THROUGH EDOM REFUSED

14 Now Moses sent messengers from Kadesh to the king of Edom. "Thus

says your brother Israel: ‘You know all the hardship that has befallen us, [15]how our fathers went down to Egypt, and we dwelt in Egypt a long time, and the Egyptians afflicted us and our fathers.[16]When we cried out to the LORD, He heard our voice and sent the Angel and brought us up out of Egypt; now here we are in Kadesh, a city on the edge of your border. [17]Please let us pass through your country. We will not pass through fields or vineyards, nor will we drink water from wells; we will go along the King’s Highway; we will not turn aside to the right hand or to the left until we have passed through your territory.’ ”

[18]Then Edom said to him, “You shall not pass through my *land*, lest I come out against you with the sword.”

[19]So the children of Israel said to him, “We will go by the Highway, and if I or my livestock drink any of your water, then I will pay for it; let me only pass through on foot, nothing *more*. ”

[20]Then he said, “You shall not pass through.” So Edom came out against them with many men and with a strong hand.[21]Thus Edom refused to give Israel passage through his territory; so Israel turned away from him.

**DEATH OF AARON**

[22]Now the children of Israel, the whole congregation, journeyed from Kadesh and came to Mount Hor. [23]And the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron in Mount Hor by the border of the land of Edom, saying: [24]“Aaron shall be gathered to his people, for he shall not enter the land which I have given to the children of Israel, because you rebelled against My word at the water of Meribah.[25] Take Aaron and Elea-zar his son, and bring them up to Mount Hor; [26]and strip Aaron of his garments and put them on Eleazar his son; for Aaron shall be gathered *to his people* and die there.” [27]So Moses did just as the LORD commanded, and they went up to Mount Hor in the sight of all the congregation. [28]Moses stripped Aaron of his garments and put them on Eleazar his son; and Aaron died there on the top of the mountain. Then Moses and Eleazar came down from the mountain. [29]Now when all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead, all the house of Israel mourned for Aaron thirty days.

## SOUL NOTE

**Can’t Take It Back** *(20:7-13)* It was too late-Moses couldn’t take it back. He had exploded in anger, so God punished him. Anger can be the most damaging of all emotions, causing people to say or do things they regret. Out-of-control anger can ruin friendships and marriages and even cause nations to go to war. Some people end up living forever with the consequences of choices made in a moment of heated anger. People who struggle with destructive anger must find help to discover alternative ways to manage it. This begins by turning it over to God. **Topic: Anger**

## CANAANITES DEFEATED AT HORMAH

**21** The king of Arad, the Canaanite, who dwelt in the South, heard that Israel was coming on the road to Atharim. Then he fought against Israel and took *some* of them prisoners. 2So Israel made a vow to the LORD, and said, "If You will indeed deliver this people into my hand, then I will utterly destroy their cities." 3And the LORD listened to the voice of Israel and delivered up the Canaanites, and they utterly destroyed them and their cities. So the name of that place was called Hormah.[a]

## THE BRONZE SERPENT

4Then they journeyed from Mount Hor by the Way of the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; and the soul of the people became very discouraged on the way. 5And the people spoke against God and against Moses: "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For *there is* no food and no water, and our soul loathes this worthless bread." 6So the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died.

7Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD that He take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people.

8Then the LORD said to Moses, "Make a fiery *serpent,* and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live." 9So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived.

## FROM MOUNT HOR TO MOAB

10Now the children of Israel moved on and camped in Oboth. 11And they journeyed from Oboth and camped at Ije Abarim, in the wilderness which *is* east of Moab, toward the sunrise. 12From there they moved and camped in the Valley of Zered. 13From there they moved and camped on the other side of the Arnon, which *is* in the wilderness that extends from the border of the Amorites; for the Arnon *is* the border of Moab, between Moab and the

Amorites. [14]Therefore it is said in the Book of the Wars of the LORD:

"Waheb in Suphah,[a]
The brooks of the Arnon,

[15] And the slope of the brooks
That reaches to the dwelling of Ar,
And lies on the border of Moab."

[16]From there *they went* to Beer, which *is* the well where the LORD said to Moses, "Gather the people together, and I will give them water." [17]Then Israel sang this song:

"Spring up, O well!
All of you sing to it-

[18] The well the leaders sank,
Dug by the nation's nobles,
By the lawgiver, with their staves."

And from the wilderness *they went* to Matta-nah, [19]from Mattanah to Nahaliel, from Naha-liel to Bamoth, [20]and from Bamoth, *in* the valley that *is* in the country of Moab, to the top of Pisgah which looks down on the wasteland.[a]

**KING SIHON DEFEATED**

[21]Then Israel sent messengers to Sihon king of the Amorites, saying, [22]"Let me pass through your land. We will not turn aside into fields or vineyards; we will not drink water from wells. We will go by the King's Highway until we have passed through your territory." [23]But Sihon would not allow Israel to pass through his territory. So Sihon gathered all his people together and went out against Israel in the wilderness, and he came to Jahaz and fought against Israel. [24]Then Israel defeated him with the edge of the sword, and took possession of his land from the Arnon to the Jab-bok, as far as the people of Ammon; for the border of the people of Ammon *was*

fortified. [25]So Israel took all these cities, and Israel dwelt in all the cities of the Amorites, in Hesh-bon and in all its villages. [26]For Heshbon *was* the city of Sihon king of the Amorites, who had fought against the former king of Moab, and had taken all his land from his hand as far as the Arnon. [27]Therefore those who speak in proverbs say:

"Come to Heshbon, let it be built;
Let the city of Sihon be repaired.

[28] "For fire went out from Heshbon,
A flame from the city of Sihon;
It consumed Ar of Moab,
The lords of the heights of the Arnon.

[29] Woe to you, Moab!
You have perished, O people of Chemosh!

He has given his sons as fugitives,
And his daughters into captivity,
To Sihon king of the Amorites.

[30] "But we have shot at them;
Heshbon has perished as far as Dibon.
Then we laid waste as far as Nophah,
Which *reaches* to Medeba."

[31]Thus Israel dwelt in the land of the Amorites. [32]Then Moses sent to spy out Jazer; and they took its villages and drove out the Amo-rites who *were* there.

**KING OG DEFEATED**

[33]And they turned and went up by the way to Bashan. So Og king of Bashan went out against them, he and all his people, to battle at Edrei. [34]Then the LORD said to Moses, "Do not fear him, for I have delivered him into your hand, with all his people and his land; and you shall do to him as you did to

Sihon king of the Amorites, who dwelt at Heshbon.” [35]So they defeated him, his sons, and all his people, until there was no survivor left him; and they took possession of his land.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Deliverance** *(21:8, 9)* A pole with one or two snakes on it is often used as an emblem of the medical profession and a symbol of healing. It reminds us of this biblical event. God told Moses to make a bronze serpent and place it on a pole. He promised that everyone who looked at the pole by faith would be healed. In the New Testament, Jesus used this incident to illustrate His willingness to die on the Cross and be “lifted up” so that all who look to Him by faith might be saved ( John 3:14, 15). That is the ultimate healing that Christ offers to all people and which all people need-healing from sin.
**Topic: Health/Spirituality**

## BALAK SENDS FOR BALAAM

**22** Then the children of Israel moved, and camped in the plains of Moab on the side of the Jordan *across from* Jericho.

2 Now Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites.
3 And Moab was exceedingly afraid of the people because they *were* many,
and Moab was sick with dread because of the children of Israel. 4 So Moab
said to the elders of Midian, "Now this company will lick up everything
around us, as an ox licks up the grass of the field." And Ba-lak the son of
Zippor *was* king of the Moabites at that time. 5 Then he sent messengers to
Ba-laam the son of Beor at Pethor, which *is* near the River*a* in the land of the
sons of his people,*b* to call him, saying: "Look, a people has come from
Egypt. See, they cover the face of the earth, and are settling next to me!
6 Therefore please come at once, curse this people for me, for they *are* too
mighty for me. Perhaps I shall be able to defeat them and drive them out of
the land, for I know that he whom you bless *is* blessed, and he whom you
curse is cursed."

7 So the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the
diviner's fee in their hand, and they came to Balaam and spoke to him the
words of Balak. 8 And he said to them, "Lodge here tonight, and I will bring
back word to you, as the LORD speaks to me." So the princes of Moab stayed
with Balaam.

9 Then God came to Balaam and said, "Who *are* these men with you?"

10 So Balaam said to God, "Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, has sent
to me, *saying*, 11 'Look, a people has come out of Egypt, and they cover the
face of the earth. Come now, curse them for me; perhaps I shall be able to
overpower them and drive them out.' "

12 And God said to Balaam, "You shall not go with them; you shall not
curse the people, for they *are* blessed."

13 So Balaam rose in the morning and said to the princes of Balak, "Go
back to your land, for the LORD has refused to give me permission to go with
you."

14 And the princes of Moab rose and went to Balak, and said, “Balaam
refuses to come with us.”

15 Then Balak again sent princes, more numerous and more honorable than
they. 16 And they came to Balaam and said to him, “Thus says Balak the son
of Zippor: ‘Please let nothing hinder you from coming to me; 17 for I will
certainly honor you greatly, and I will do whatever you say to me. Therefore
please come, curse this people for me.’ ”

18 Then Balaam answered and said to the servants of Balak, “Though Balak
were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not go beyond the
word of the LORD my God, to do less or more. 19 Now therefore, please, you
also stay here tonight, that I may know what more the LORD will say to me.”

20 And God came to Balaam at night and said to him, “If the men come to
call you, rise *and* go with them; but only the word which I speak to you-that
you shall do.” 21 So Balaam rose in the morning, saddled his donkey, and
went with the princes of Moab.

**BALAAM, THE DONKEY, AND THE ANGEL**

22 Then God’s anger was aroused because he went, and the Angel of the
LORD took His stand in the way as an adversary against him. And he was
riding on his donkey, and his two servants *were* with him. 23 Now the donkey
saw the Angel of the LORD standing in the way with His drawn sword in His
hand, and the donkey turned aside out of the way and went into the field. So
Balaam struck the donkey to turn her back onto the road. 24 Then the Angel of
the LORD stood in a narrow path between the vineyards, *with* a wall on this
side and a wall on that side. 25 And when the donkey saw the Angel of the
LORD, she pushed herself against the wall and crushed Balaam’s foot against
the wall; so he struck her again.

26 Then the Angel of the LORD went further, and stood in a narrow place
where there *was* no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left. 27 And
when the donkey saw the Angel of the LORD, she lay down under Balaam; so
Balaam’s anger was aroused, and he struck the donkey with his staff.

28 Then the LORD opened the mouth of the donkey, and she said to Balaam,
“What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times?”

[29]And Balaam said to the donkey, “Because you have abused me. I wish there were a sword in my hand, for now I would kill you!”

[30]So the donkey said to Balaam, “*Am* I not your donkey on which you have ridden, ever since *I became* yours, to this day? Was I ever disposed to do this to you?”

And he said, “No.”

[31]Then the LORD opened Balaam’s eyes, and he saw the Angel of the LORD standing in the way with His drawn sword in His hand; and he bowed his head and fell flat on his face.

[32]And the Angel of the LORD said to him, “Why have you struck your donkey these three times? Behold, I have come out to stand against you, because *your* way is perverse before Me. [33]The donkey saw Me and turned aside from Me these three times. If she had not turned aside from Me, surely I would also have killed you by now, and let her live.”

[34]And Balaam said to the Angel of the LORD, “I have sinned, for I did not know You stood in the way against me. Now therefore, if it displeases You, I will turn back.”

[35]Then the Angel of the LORD said to Ba-laam, “Go with the men, but only the word that I speak to you, that you shall speak.” So Balaam went with the princes of Balak.

[36]Now when Balak heard that Balaam was coming, he went out to meet him at the city of Moab, which *is* on the border at the Arnon, the boundary of the territory. [37]Then Balak said to Balaam, “Did I not earnestly send to you, calling for you? Why did you not come to me? Am I not able to honor you?”

[38]And Balaam said to Balak, “Look, I have come to you! Now, have I any power at all to say anything? The word that God puts in my mouth, that I must speak.” [39]So Balaam went with Balak, and they came to Kirjath Huzoth.

[40]Then Balak offered oxen and sheep, and he sent *some* to Balaam and to the princes who *were* with him.

## BALAAM’S FIRST PROPHECY

[41]So it was, the next day, that Balak took Ba-laam and brought him up to

the high places of Baal, that from there he might observe the extent of the people.

**23** Then Balaam said to Balak, “Build seven altars for me here, and prepare
for me here seven bulls and seven rams.”

2 And Balak did just as Balaam had spoken, and Balak and Balaam offered a
bull and a ram on *each* altar. 3 Then Balaam said to Balak, “Stand by your
burnt offering, and I will go; perhaps the LORD will come to meet me, and
whatever He shows me I will tell you.” So he went to a desolate height. 4 And
God met Ba-laam, and he said to Him, “I have prepared the seven altars, and
I have offered on *each* altar a bull and a ram.”

5 Then the LORD put a word in Balaam’s mouth, and said, “Return to Balak,
and thus you shall speak.” 6 So he returned to him, and there he was, standing
by his burnt offering, he and all the princes of Moab.

7 And he took up his oracle and said:

“Balak the king of Moab has brought me from Aram,
From the mountains of the east.
‘Come, curse Jacob for me,
And come, denounce Israel!’

8 “How shall I curse whom God has not cursed?
And how shall I denounce *whom* the LORD has not denounced?
9 For from the top of the rocks I see him,
And from the hills I behold him;
There! A people dwelling alone,
Not reckoning itself among the nations.
10 “Who can count the dust[a] of Jacob,
Or number one-fourth of Israel?
Let me die the death of the righteous,
And let my end be like his!”

11 Then Balak said to Balaam, “What have you done to me? I took you to
curse my enemies, and look, you have blessed *them* bountifully!”

12 So he answered and said, “Must I not take heed to speak what the LORD
has put in my mouth?”

**BALAAM’S SECOND PROPHECY**

13 Then Balak said to him, “Please come with me to another place from
which you may see them; you shall see only the outer part of them, and shall
not see them all; curse them for me from there.” 14 So he brought him to the
field of Zophim, to the top of Pisgah, and built seven altars, and offered a bull
and a ram on *each* altar.

> “It now must be said of Jacob and of Israel, ‘Oh, what God has done!’ ”
> NUMBERS 23:23

15 And he said to Balak, “Stand here by your burnt offering while I meet ***a*** *the* LORD over there.”

16 Then the LORD met Balaam, and put a word in his mouth, and said, “Go
back to Ba-lak, and thus you shall speak.” 17 So he came to him, and there he
was, standing by his burnt offering, and the princes of Moab were with him.
And Balak said to him, “What has the LORD spoken?”

18 Then he took up his oracle and said:

“Rise up, Balak, and hear!
Listen to me, son of Zippor!

19 “God *is* not a man, that He should lie,
Nor a son of man, that He should repent.
Has He said, and will He not do?
Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?

20 Behold, I have received *a command* to bless;
He has blessed, and I cannot reverse it.

21 “He has not observed iniquity in Jacob,
Nor has He seen wickedness in Israel.
The LORD his God *is* with him,
And the shout of a King *is* among them.

22 God brings them out of Egypt;

He has strength like a wild ox.

23 “For *there is* no sorcery against Jacob,
Nor any divination against Israel.
It now must be said of Jacob
And of Israel, ‘Oh, what God has done!’

24 Look, a people rises like a lioness,
And lifts itself up like a lion;
It shall not lie down until it devours the prey,
And drinks the blood of the slain.”

25Then Balak said to Balaam, “Neither curse them at all, nor bless them at all!”

26So Balaam answered and said to Balak, “Did I not tell you, saying, ‘All that the LORD speaks, that I must do’?”

**BALAAM’S THIRD PROPHECY**

27Then Balak said to Balaam, “Please come, I will take you to another place; perhaps it will please God that you may curse them for me from there.” 28So Balak took Balaam to the top of Peor, that overlooks the wasteland.[a] 29Then Balaam said to Balak, “Build for me here seven altars, and prepare for me here seven bulls and seven rams.” 30And Balak did as Ba-laam had said, and offered a bull and a ram on *every* altar.

**24** Now when Balaam saw that it pleased the LORD to bless Israel, he did
not go as at other times, to seek to use sorcery, but he set his face toward
the wilderness.—2And Ba-laam raised his eyes, and saw Israel encamped
according to their tribes; and the Spirit of God came upon him.

3Then he took up his oracle and said:

"The utterance of Balaam the son of Beor, The utterance of the man
whose eyes are opened,

4 The utterance of him who hears the words of God,
Who sees the vision of the Almighty,
Who falls down, with eyes wide open:

5 "How lovely are your tents, O Jacob!
Your dwellings, O Israel!
6 Like valleys that stretch out,
Like gardens by the riverside,
Like aloes planted by the LORD,
Like cedars beside the waters.
7He shall pour water from his buckets,
And his seed *shall be* in many waters.

"His king shall be higher than Agag,
And his kingdom shall be exalted.

8 "God brings him out of Egypt;
He has strength like a wild ox;
He shall consume the nations, his enemies;
shall break their bones And pierce *them* with his arrows.

9 'He bows down, he lies down as a lion;
And as a lion, who shall rouse him?'[a]

"Blessed *is* he who blesses you,
And cursed *is* he who curses you."

10 Then Balak's anger was aroused against Balaam, and he struck his hands
together; and Balak said to Balaam, "I called you to curse my enemies, and
look, you have bountifully blessed *them* these three times! 11 Now therefore,
flee to your place. I said I would greatly honor you, but in fact, the LORD has
kept you back from honor."

12 So Balaam said to Balak, "Did I not also speak to your messengers
whom you sent to me, saying, 13 'If Balak were to give me his house full of
silver and gold, I could not go beyond the word of the LORD, to do good or
bad of my own will. What the LORD says, that I must speak'? 14 And now,
indeed, I am going to my people. Come, I will advise you what this people
will do to your people in the latter days."

## BALAAM'S FOURTH PROPHECY

15 So he took up his oracle and said:

"The utterance of Balaam the son of Beor,
And the utterance of the man whose eyes are opened;

16 The utterance of him who hears the words of God,
And has the knowledge of the Most High, *Who* sees the vision of the
Almighty,
*Who* falls down, with eyes wide open:

17 "I see Him, but not now;
I behold Him, but not near;
A Star shall come out of Jacob;
A Scepter shall rise out of Israel,
And batter the brow of Moab, And destroy all the sons of tumult.[a]

18 "And Edom shall be a possession;
Seir also, his enemies, shall be a possession,
While Israel does valiantly.

19 Out of Jacob One shall have dominion,

And destroy the remains of the city.”

20 Then he looked on Amalek, and he took up his oracle and said:

“Amalek *was* first among the nations,
But *shall be* last until he perishes.”
21 Then he looked on the Kenites, and he took up his oracle and said:

“Firm is your dwelling place, And your nest is set in the rock;

22 Nevertheless Kain shall be burned.
How long until Asshur carries you away captive?”

23 Then he took up his oracle and said:

“Alas! Who shall live when God does this?

24 But ships *shall come* from the coasts of Cyprus,[a] And they shall afflict Asshur and afflict Eber,
And so shall *Amalek*,[b] until he perishes.”
25 So Balaam rose and departed and returned to his place; Balak also went his way.

## ISRAEL'S HARLOTRY IN MOAB

**25** Now Israel remained in Acacia Grove,[a] and the people began to commit
harlotry with the women of Moab. 2They invited the people to the
sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods. 3So
Israel was joined to Baal of Peor, and the anger of the LORD was aroused
against Israel.

4Then the LORD said to Moses, "Take all the leaders of the people and hang
the offenders before the LORD, out in the sun, that the fierce anger of the
LORD may turn away from Israel." 5So Moses said to the judges of Israel,
"Every one of you kill his men who were joined to Baal of Peor."

6And indeed, one of the children of Israel came and presented to his
brethren a Midianite woman in the sight of Moses and in the sight of all the
congregation of the children of Israel, who *were* weeping at the door of the
tabernacle of meeting. 7Now when Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of
Aaron the priest, saw *it*, he rose from among the congregation and took a
javelin in his hand; 8and he went after the man of Israel into the tent and
thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her
body. So the plague was stopped among the children of Israel. 9And those
who died in the plague were twenty-four thousand.

10Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 11"Phinehas the son of Eleazar,
the son of Aaron the priest, has turned back My wrath from the children of
Israel, because he was zealous with My zeal among them, so that I did not
consume the children of Israel in My zeal. 12Therefore say, 'Behold, I give to
him My covenant of peace; 13and it shall be to him and his descendants after
him a covenant of an everlasting priesthood, because he was zealous for his
God, and made atonement for the children of Israel.' "

14Now the name of the Israelite who was killed, who was killed with the
Midianite woman, *was* Zimri the son of Salu, a leader of a father's house
among the Simeonites. 15And the name of the Midianite woman who was
killed *was* Cozbi the daughter of Zur; he *was* head of the people of a father's
house in Midian.

16Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 17"Harass the Midianites, and

attack them; [18]for they harassed you with their schemes by which they seduced you in the matter of Peor and in the matter of Cozbi, the daughter of a leader of Midian, their sister, who was killed in the day of the plague because of Peor."

**SOUL NOTE**

**Sleeping with the Enemy** *(25:1)* The Israelites' commitment to God was violated by their sexual indulgence with the women of Moab. The Israelite men committed sexual sin with these foreign women, and this led to the men worshiping the foreign gods as well. Sexual sin always progresses, drawing people farther and farther from God. What may start as an "innocent" flirtation with sin can lead to deadly consequences. Dabbling around the edges of sexual sin can take hold and consume a person, leading to pain and brokenness.
**Topic: Sexual Sin**

## THE SECOND CENSUS OF ISRAEL

**26** And it came to pass, after the plague, that the LORD spoke to Moses and
Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest, saying: 2"Take a census of all the
congregation of the children of Israel from twenty years old and above, by
their fathers' houses, all who are able to go to war in Israel." 3So Moses and
El-eazar the priest spoke with them in the plains of Moab by the Jordan,
*across from* Jericho, saying: 4"*Take a census of the people* from twenty years
old and above, just as the LORD commanded Moses and the children of Israel
who came out of the land of Egypt."

5Reuben *was* the firstborn of Israel. The children of Reuben *were: of*
Hanoch, the family of the Hanochites; of Pallu, the family of the Palluites;
6of Hezron, the family of the Hezronites; of Carmi, the family of the
Carmites. 7These *are* the families of the Reubenites: those who were
numbered of them were forty-three thousand seven hundred and thirty. 8And
the son of Pallu *was* Eliab. 9The sons of Eliab *were* Nemuel, Dathan, and
Abiram. These *are* the Dathan and Abiram, representatives of the
congregation, who contended against Moses and Aaron in the company of
Korah, when they contended against the LORD; 10and the earth opened its
mouth and swallowed them up together with Korah when that company died,
when the fire devoured two hundred and fifty men; and they became a sign.
11Nevertheless the children of Korah did not die.

12The sons of Simeon according to their families *were: of* Nemuel,[a] the
family of the Nemuelites; *of* Jamin, the family of the Jam-inites; *of* Jachin,[b]
the family of the Jachinites; 13*of* Zerah,[a] the family of the Zarhites; *of* Shaul,
the family of the Shaulites. 14These *are* the families of the Simeonites:
twenty-two thousand two hundred.

15The sons of Gad according to their families *were: of* Zephon,[a] the family
of the Zephonites; *of* Haggi, the family of the Haggites; *of* Shuni, the family
of the Shunites; 16*of* Ozni,[a] the family of the Oznites; *of* Eri, the family of the
Erites; 17*of* Arod,[a] the family of the Arodites; *of* Areli, the family of the
Arelites.18These *are* the families of the sons of Gad according to those who
were numbered of them: forty thousand five hundred.

19 The sons of Judah *were* Er and Onan; and Er and Onan died in the land
of Canaan. 20 And the sons of Judah according to their families were: *of*
Shelah, the family of the Shelanites; *of* Perez, the family of the Parzites; *of*
Zerah, the family of the Zarhites. 21 And the sons of Perez were: *of* Hezron,
the family of the Hez-ronites; *of* Hamul, the family of the Hamulites. 22 These
*are* the families of Judah according to those who were numbered of them:
seventy-six thousand five hundred.

23 The sons of Issachar according to their families *were: of* Tola, the family
of the Tolaites; of Puah,[a] the family of the Punites;[b] 24 of Jashub, the family
of the Jashubites; of Shimron, the family of the Shimronites. 25 These *are* the
families of Issachar according to those who were numbered of them: sixty-
four thousand three hundred.

26 The sons of Zebulun according to their families *were:* of Sered, the
family of the Sardites; of Elon, the family of the Elonites; of Jahleel, the
family of the Jahleelites. 27 These *are* the families of the Zebulunites
according to those who were numbered of them: sixty thousand five hundred.

28 The sons of Joseph according to their families, by Manasseh and
Ephraim, *were:* 29 The sons of Manasseh: of Machir, the family of the
Machirites; and Machir begot Gilead; of Gile-ad, the family of the Gileadites.
30 These *are* the sons of Gilead: *of* Jeezer,[a] the family of the Jeezerites; of
Helek, the family of the Hele-kites; 31 *of* Asriel, the family of the Asrielites; *of*
Shechem, the family of the Shechemites; 32 *of* Shemida, the family of the
Shemidaites; *of* Hepher, the family of the Hepherites. 33 Now Zelophehad the
son of Hepher had no sons, but daughters; and the names of the daughters of
Zelophehad *were* Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Mil-cah, and Tirzah. 34 These *are*
the families of Manasseh; and those who were numbered of them *were* fifty-
two thousand seven hundred.

35 These *are* the sons of Ephraim according to their families: of Shuthelah,
the family of the Shuthalhites; of Becher,[a] the family of the Bachrites; of
Tahan, the family of the Tahanites. 36 And these *are* the sons of Shuthelah: of
Eran, the family of the Eranites. 37 These *are* the families of the sons of
Ephraim according to those who were numbered of them: thirty-two thousand
five hundred.

These *are* the sons of Joseph according to their families.

[38]The sons of Benjamin according to their families were: of Bela, the family of the Bela-ites; of Ashbel, the family of the Ashbelites; of Ahiram, the family of the Ahiramites; [39]of Shupham,[a] the family of the Shuphamites; of Hupham,[b] the family of the Huphamites. [40]And the sons of Bela were Ard[a] and Naaman: *of Ard,* the family of the Ardites; of Naaman, the family of the Naamites. [41]These *are* the sons of Benjamin according to their families; and those who were numbered of them *were* forty-five thousand six hundred.

[42]These *are* the sons of Dan according to their families: of Shuham,[a] the family of the Shuhamites. These *are* the families of Dan according to their families. [43]All the families of the Shuhamites, according to those who were numbered of them, *were* sixty-four thousand four hundred.

[44]The sons of Asher according to their families *were:* of Jimna, the family of the Jimnites; of Jesui, the family of the Jesuites; of Beriah, the family of the Beriites. [45]Of the sons of Be-riah: of Heber, the family of the Heberites; of Malchiel, the family of the Malchielites. [46]And the name of the daughter of Asher *was* Serah.

[47]These *are* the families of the sons of Asher according to those who were numbered of them: fifty-three thousand four hundred.

[48]The sons of Naphtali according to their families *were:* of Jahzeel,[a] the family of the Jahzeelites; of Guni, the family of the Gunites; [49]of Jezer, the family of the Jezerites; of Shillem, the family of the Shillemites. [50]These *are* the families of Naphtali according to their families; and those who were numbered of them *were* forty-five thousand four hundred.

[51]These *are* those who were numbered of the children of Israel: six hundred and one thousand seven hundred and thirty.

[52]Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying:[53]"To these the land shall be divided as an inheritance, according to the number of names. [54]To a large *tribe* you shall give a larger inheritance, and to a small *tribe* you shall give a smaller inheritance. Each shall be given its inheritance according to those who were numbered of them. [55]But the land shall be divided by lot; they shall

inherit according to the names of the tribes of their fathers. [56]According to the lot their inheritance shall be divided between the larger and the smaller."

[57]And these *are* those who were numbered of the Levites according to their families: of Gershon, the family of the Gershonites; of Ko-hath, the family of the Kohathites; of Merari, the family of the Merarites. [58]These *are* the families of the Levites: the family of the Lib-nites, the family of the Hebronites, the family of the Mahlites, the family of the Mushites, and the family of the Korathites. And Kohath begot Amram. [59]The name of Amram's wife *was* Jochebed the daughter of Levi, who was born to Levi in Egypt; and to Amram she bore Aaron and Moses and their sister Miriam. [60]To Aaron were born Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Itha-mar. [61]And Nadab and Abihu died when they offered profane fire before the LORD.

[62]Now those who were numbered of them were twenty-three thousand, every male from a month old and above; for they were not numbered among the other children of Israel, because there was no inheritance given to them among the children of Israel.

[63]These *are* those who were numbered by Moses and Eleazar the priest, who numbered the children of Israel in the plains of Moab by the Jordan, *across from* Jericho. [64]But among these there was not a man of those who were numbered by Moses and Aaron the priest when they numbered the children of Israel in the Wilderness of Sinai. [65]For the LORD had said of them, "They shall surely die in the wilderness." So there was not left a man of them, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun.

## INHERITANCE LAWS

**27** Then came the daughters of Zelophehad the son of Hepher, the son of
Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, from the families of
Manasseh the son of Joseph; and these *were* the names of his daughters:
Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah. 2And they stood before Moses,
before Eleazar the priest, and before the leaders and all the congregation, *by*
the doorway of the tabernacle of meeting, saying: 3"Our father died in the
wilderness; but he was not in the company of those who gathered together
against the LORD, in company with Korah, but he died in his own sin; and he
had no sons. 4Why should the name of our father be removed from among his
family because he had no son? Give us a possession among our father's
brothers."

5So Moses brought their case before the LORD.

6And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 7"The daughters of Zelophehad
speak *what is* right; you shall surely give them a possession of inheritance
among their father's brothers, and cause the inheritance of their father to pass
to them. 8And you shall speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'If a man dies
and has no son, then you shall cause his inheritance to pass to his daughter.
9If he has no daughter, then you shall give his inheritance to his brothers. 10If
he has no brothers, then you shall give his inheritance to his father's brothers.
11And if his father has no brothers, then you shall give his inheritance to the
relative closest to him in his family, and he shall possess it.' " And it shall be
to the children of Israel a statute of judgment, just as the LORD commanded
Moses.

## JOSHUA THE NEXT LEADER OF ISRAEL

12Now the LORD said to Moses: "Go up into this Mount Abarim, and see
the land which I have given to the children of Israel. 13And when you have
seen it, you also shall be gathered to your people, as Aaron your brother was
gathered. 14For in the Wilderness of Zin, during the strife of the
congregation, you rebelled against My command to hallow Me at the waters
before their eyes." (These *are* the waters of Meribah, at Kadesh in the
Wilderness of Zin.)

15 Then Moses spoke to the LORD, saying: 16 "Let the LORD, the God of the
spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, 17 who may go out before
them and go in before them, who may lead them out and bring them in, that
the congregation of the LORD may not be like sheep which have no
shepherd."

18 And the LORD said to Moses: "Take Joshua the son of Nun with you, a
man in whom *is* the Spirit, and lay your hand on him; 19 set him before
Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation, and inaugurate him in their
sight. 20 And you shall give *some* of your authority to him, that all the
congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient. 21 He shall stand
before Eleazar the priest, who shall inquire before the LORD for him by the
judgment of the Urim. At his word they shall go out, and at his word they
shall come in, he and all the children of Israel with him-all the congregation."

22 So Moses did as the LORD commanded him. He took Joshua and set him
before Elea-zar the priest and before all the congregation. 23 And he laid his
hands on him and inaugurated him, just as the LORD commanded by the hand
of Moses.

**SOUL NOTE**

**God Is Fair** *(27:1-11)* Land was customarily inherited by the sons of a family. This would keep the land in the family generation after generation. When daughters married they went to another family and so were not included in the settlement of the estate. The daughters of Zelophehad, however, appealed to Moses to allow them to inherit the land because their father had died without leaving any sons. God allowed the women to inherit the land, showing His concern for them. God treated them fairly, even making an exception in the Law for them. **Topic: Women's Issues**

## DAILY OFFERINGS

**28** Now the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 2"Command the children of Israel, and say to them, 'My offering, My food for My offerings made by fire as a sweet aroma to Me, you shall be careful to offer to Me at their appointed time.'

3"And you shall say to them, 'This *is* the offering made by fire which you shall offer to the LORD: two male lambs in their first year without blemish, day by day, as a regular burnt offering. 4The one lamb you shall offer in the morning, the other lamb you shall offer in the evening, 5and one-tenth of an ephah of fine flour as a grain offering mixed with one-fourth of a hin of pressed oil. 6*It is* a regular burnt offering which was ordained at Mount Sinai for a sweet aroma, an offering made by fire to the LORD. 7And its drink offering *shall be* one-fourth of a hin for each lamb; in a holy *place* you shall pour out the drink to the LORD as an offering. 8The other lamb you shall offer in the evening; as the morning grain offering and its drink offering, you shall offer *it* as an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the LORD.

## SABBATH OFFERINGS

9'And on the Sabbath day two lambs in their first year, without blemish, and two-tenths *of an ephah* of fine flour as a grain offering, mixed with oil, with its drink offering- 10*this is* the burnt offering for every Sabbath, besides the regular burnt offering with its drink offering.

## MONTHLY OFFERINGS

11'At the beginnings of your months you shall present a burnt offering to the LORD: two young bulls, one ram, and seven lambs in their first year, without blemish; 12three-tenths *of an ephah* of fine flour as a grain offering, mixed with oil, for each bull; two-tenths *of an ephah* of fine flour as a grain offering, mixed with oil, for the one ram; 13and one-tenth *of an ephah* of fine flour, mixed with oil, as a grain offering for each lamb, as a burnt offering of sweet aroma, an offering made by fire to the LORD. 14Their drink offering shall be half a hin of wine for a bull, one-third of a hin for a ram, and one-

fourth of a hin for a lamb; this *is* the burnt offering for each month throughout the months of the year. [15]Also one kid of the goats as a sin offering to the LORD shall be offered, besides the regular burnt offering and its drink offering.

**OFFERINGS AT PASSOVER**

[16]'On the fourteenth day of the first month *is* the Passover of the LORD. [17]And on the fifteenth day of this month *is* the feast; unleavened bread shall be eaten for seven days. [18]On the first day *you shall have* a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work. [19]And you shall present an offering made by fire as a burnt offering to the LORD: two young bulls, one ram, and seven lambs in their first year. Be sure they are without blemish. [20]Their grain offering shall be of fine flour mixed with oil: three-tenths *of an ephah* you shall offer for a bull, and two-tenths for a ram; [21]you shall offer one-tenth *of an ephah* for each of the seven lambs; [22]also one goat *as* a sin offering, to make atonement for you. [23]You shall offer these besides the burnt offering of the morning, which *is* for a regular burnt offering. [24]In this manner you shall offer the food of the offering made by fire daily for seven days, as a sweet aroma to the LORD; it shall be offered besides the regular burnt offering and its drink offering. [25]And on the seventh day you shall have a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work.

**OFFERINGS AT THE FEAST OF WEEKS**

[26]'Also on the day of the firstfruits, when you bring a new grain offering to the LORD at your *Feast of* Weeks, you shall have a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work. [27]You shall present a burnt offering as a sweet aroma to the LORD: two young bulls, one ram, and seven lambs in their first year, [28]with their grain offering of fine flour mixed with oil: three-tenths *of an ephah* for each bull, two-tenths for the one ram, [29]and one-tenth for each of the seven lambs; [30]*also* one kid of the goats, to make atonement for you. [31]Be sure they are without blemish. You shall present *them* with their drink offerings, besides the regular burnt offering with its grain offering.

## SOUL NOTE

**Come to God** *(28:2)* For the Hebrews, worship meant regularly bringing offerings to God at appointed times. This continually reminded them that they belonged to God, and it helped them focus on His greatness. For today's believers, worship is accomplished by daily communication with God, commitment to serve Him, and regular gatherings for worship with other believers. Regular worship, both public and private, helps us keep our focus on who God is and what He has done for us. **Topic: Praise and Worship**

## OFFERINGS AT THE FEAST OF TRUMPETS

**29** ‘And in the seventh month, on the first *day* of the month, you shall have
a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work. For you it is a day
of blowing the trumpets. 2You shall offer a burnt offering as a sweet aroma to
the LORD: one young bull, one ram, *and* seven lambs in their first year,
without blemish. 3Their grain offering *shall be* fine flour mixed with oil:
three-tenths *of an ephah* for the bull, two-tenths for the ram,—4and one-tenth
for each of the seven lambs; 5also one kid of the goats *as* a sin offering, to
make atonement for you; 6besides the burnt offering with its grain offering
for the New Moon, the regular burnt offering with its grain offering, and their
drink offerings, according to their ordinance, as a sweet aroma, an offering
made by fire to the LORD.

## OFFERINGS ON THE DAY OF ATONEMENT

7‘On the tenth *day* of this seventh month you shall have a holy
convocation. You shall afflict your souls; you shall not do any work. 8You
shall present a burnt offering to the LORD *as* a sweet aroma: one young bull,
one ram, *and* seven lambs in their first year. Be sure they are without
blemish. 9Their grain offering *shall be of* fine flour mixed with oil: three-
tenths *of an ephah* for the bull, two-tenths for the one ram, 10and one-tenth
for each of the seven lambs; 11also one kid of the goats *as* a sin offering,
besides the sin offering for atonement, the regular burnt offering with its
grain offering, and their drink offerings.

## OFFERINGS AT THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES

12‘On the fifteenth day of the seventh month you shall have a holy
convocation. You shall do no customary work, and you shall keep a feast to
the LORD seven days. 13You shall present a burnt offering, an offering made
by fire as a sweet aroma to the LORD: thirteen young bulls, two rams, *and*
fourteen lambs in their first year. They shall be without blemish. 14Their
grain offering *shall be of* fine flour mixed with oil: three-tenths *of an ephah*
for each of the thirteen bulls, two-tenths for each of the two rams, 15and one-
tenth for each of the fourteen lambs; 16also one kid of the goats *as* a sin

offering, besides the regular burnt offering, its grain offering, and its drink offering.

17‘On the second day *present* twelve young bulls, two rams, fourteen lambs in their first year without blemish, 18and their grain offering and their drink offerings for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, by their number, according to the ordinance; 19also one kid of the goats *as* a sin offering, besides the regular burnt offering with its grain offering, and their drink offerings.

20‘On the third day *present* eleven bulls, two rams, fourteen lambs in their first year without blemish, 21and their grain offering and their drink offerings for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, by their number, according to the ordinance; 22also one goat *as* a sin offering, besides the regular burnt offering, its grain offering, and its drink offering.23‘On the fourth day *present* ten bulls, two rams, *and* fourteen lambs in their first year, without blemish, 24and their grain offering and their drink offerings for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, by their number, according to the ordinance; 25also one kid of the goats *as* a sin offering, besides the regular burnt offering, its grain offering, and its drink offering.

26‘On the fifth day *present* nine bulls, two rams, *and* fourteen lambs in their first year without blemish, 27and their grain offering and their drink offerings for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, by their number, according to the ordinance; 28also one goat *as* a sin offering, besides the regular burnt offering, its grain offering, and its drink offering.

29‘On the sixth day *present* eight bulls, two rams, *and* fourteen lambs in their first year without blemish, 30and their grain offering and their drink offerings for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, by their number, according to the ordinance; 31also one goat *as* a sin offering, besides the regular burnt offering, its grain offering, and its drink offering.

32‘On the seventh day *present* seven bulls, two rams, *and* fourteen lambs in their first year without blemish, 33and their grain offering and their drink offerings for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, by their number, according to the ordinance; 34also one goat *as* a sin offering, besides the regular burnt offering, its grain offering, and its drink offering.

35 ‘On the eighth day you shall have a sacred assembly. You shall do no
customary work.

36 You shall present a burnt offering, an offering made by fire as a sweet
aroma to the LORD: one bull, one ram, seven lambs in their first year without
blemish, 37 and their grain offering and their drink offerings for the bull, for
the ram, and for the lambs, by their number, according to the ordinance;
38 also one goat *as* a sin offering, besides the regular burnt offering, its grain
offering, and its drink offering.

39 ‘These you shall present to the LORD at your appointed feasts (besides
your vowed offerings and your freewill offerings) as your burnt offerings and
your grain offerings, as your drink offerings and your peace offerings.’ ”

40 So Moses told the children of Israel everything, just as the LORD
commanded Moses.

## THE LAW CONCERNING VOWS

**30** Then Moses spoke to the heads of the tribes concerning the children of Israel, saying, “This *is* the thing which the LORD has commanded: 2If a man makes a vow to the LORD, or swears an oath to bind himself by some agreement, he shall not break his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth.

3“Or if a woman makes a vow to the LORD, and binds *herself* by some agreement while in her father’s house in her youth, 4and her father hears her vow and the agreement by which she has bound herself, and her father holds his peace, then all her vows shall stand, and every agreement with which she has bound herself shall stand. 5But if her father overrules her on the day that he hears, then none of her vows nor her agreements by which she has bound herself shall stand; and the LORD will release her, because her father overruled her.

6“If indeed she takes a husband, while bound by her vows or by a rash utterance from her lips by which she bound herself, 7and her husband hears *it*, and makes no response to her on the day that he hears, then her vows shall stand, and her agreements by which she bound herself shall stand. 8But if her husband overrules her on the day that he hears *it*, he shall make void her vow which she took and what she uttered with her lips, by which she bound herself, and the LORD will release her.

9“Also any vow of a widow or a divorced woman, by which she has bound herself, shall stand against her.

10“If she vowed in her husband’s house, or bound herself by an agreement with an oath, 11and her husband heard *it*, and made no response to her *and* did not overrule her, then all her vows shall stand, and every agreement by which she bound herself shall stand. 12But if her husband truly made them void on the day he heard *them*, then whatever proceeded from her lips concerning her vows or concerning the agreement binding her, it shall not stand; her husband has made them void, and the LORD will release her. 13Every vow and every binding oath to afflict her soul, her husband may confirm it, or her husband may make it void. 14Now if her husband makes no

response whatever to her from day to day, then he confirms all her vows or all the agreements that bind her; he confirms them, because he made no response to her on the day that he heard *them.* [15]But if he does make them void after he has heard *them,* then he shall bear her guilt."

[16]These *are* the statutes which the LORD commanded Moses, between a man and his wife, and between a father and his daughter in her youth in her father's house.

## VENGEANCE ON THE MIDIANITES

**31** And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: [2]"Take vengeance on the Midianites for the children of Israel. Afterward you shall be gathered to your people."

[3]So Moses spoke to the people, saying, "Arm some of yourselves for war, and let them go against the Midianites to take vengeance for the LORD on Midian. [4]A thousand from each tribe of all the tribes of Israel you shall send to the war."

[5]So there were recruited from the divisions of Israel one thousand from *each* tribe, twelve thousand armed for war. [6]Then Moses sent them to the war, one thousand from *each* tribe; he sent them to the war with Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, with the holy articles and the signal trumpets in his hand. [7]And they warred against the Midianites, just as the LORD commanded Moses, and they killed all the males. [8]They killed the kings of Midian with *the rest of* those who were killed-Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba, the five kings of Midian. Balaam the son of Beor they also killed with the sword.

[9]And the children of Israel took the women of Midian captive, with their little ones, and took as spoil all their cattle, all their flocks, and all their goods. [10]They also burned with fire all the cities where they dwelt, and all their forts. [11]And they took all the spoil and all the booty-of man and beast.

## RETURN FROM THE WAR

[12]Then they brought the captives, the booty, and the spoil to Moses, to Eleazar the priest, and to the congregation of the children of Israel, to the camp in the plains of Moab by the Jordan, *across from* Jericho. [13]And Moses, Ele-azar the priest, and all the leaders of the congregation, went to meet them outside the camp. [14]But Moses was angry with the officers of the army, *with* the captains over thousands and captains over hundreds, who had come from the battle.

[15]And Moses said to them: "Have you kept all the women alive? [16]Look, these *women* caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against the LORD in the incident of Peor, and there was a plague

among the congregation of the LORD.[17]Now therefore, kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman who has known a man intimately. [18]But keep alive for yourselves all the young girls who have not known a man intimately. [19]And as for you, remain outside the camp seven days; whoever has killed any person, and whoever has touched any slain, purify yourselves and your captives on the third day and on the seventh day. [20]Purify every garment, everything made of leather, everything woven of goats' *hair*, and everything made of wood."

[21]Then Eleazar the priest said to the men of war who had gone to the battle, "This *is* the ordinance of the law which the LORD commanded Moses: [22]Only the gold, the silver, the bronze, the iron, the tin, and the lead, [23]everything that can endure fire, you shall put through the fire, and it shall be clean; and it shall be purified with the water of purification. But all that cannot endure fire you shall put through water. [24]And you shall wash your clothes on the seventh day and be clean, and afterward you may come into the camp."

**DIVISION OF THE PLUNDER**

[25]Now the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: [26]"Count up the plunder that was taken-of man and beast-you and Eleazar the priest and the chief fathers of the congregation; [27]and divide the plunder into two parts, between those who took part in the war, who went out to battle, and all the congregation. [28]And levy a tribute for the LORD on the men of war who went out to battle: one of every five hundred of the persons, the cattle, the donkeys, and the sheep; [29]take *it* from their half, and give *it* to Eleazar the priest as a heave offering to the LORD. [30]And from the children of Israel's half you shall take one of every fifty, drawn from the persons, the cattle, the donkeys, and the sheep, from all the livestock, and give them to the Levites who keep charge of the tabernacle of the LORD." [31]So Moses and Eleazar the priest did as the LORD commanded Moses.

[32]The booty remaining from the plunder, which the men of war had taken, was six hundred and seventy-five thousand sheep, [33]seventy-two thousand cattle, [34]sixty-one thousand donkeys, [35]and thirty-two thousand persons in

all, of women who had not known a man intimately. [36]And the half, the portion for those who had gone out to war, was in number three hundred and thirty-seven thousand five hundred sheep; [37]and the LORD's tribute of the sheep was six hundred and seventy-five. [38]The cattle *were* thirty-six thousand, of which the LORD's tribute *was* seventy-two. [39]The donkeys *were* thirty thousand five hundred, of which the LORD's tribute *was* sixty-one. [40]The persons *were* sixteen thousand, of which the LORD's tribute *was* thirty-two persons. [41]So Moses gave the tribute *which was* the LORD's heave offering to Eleazar the priest, as the LORD commanded Moses.

[42]And from the children of Israel's half, which Moses separated from the men who fought- [43]now the half belonging to the congregation was three hundred and thirty-seven thousand five hundred sheep, [44]thirty-six thousand cattle, [45]thirty thousand five hundred donkeys, [46]and sixteen thousand persons-[47]and from the children of Israel's half Moses took one of every fifty, drawn from man and beast, and gave them to the Levites, who kept charge of the tabernacle of the LORD, as the LORD commanded Moses.

[48]Then the officers who *were* over thousands of the army, the captains of thousands and captains of hundreds, came near to Moses; [49]and they said to Moses, "Your servants have taken a count of the men of war who *are* under our command, and not a man of us is missing.[50]Therefore we have brought an offering for the LORD, what every man found of ornaments of gold: armlets and bracelets and signet rings and earrings and necklaces, to make atonement for ourselves before the LORD." [51]So Moses and Eleazar the priest received the gold from them, all the fashioned ornaments. [52]And all the gold of the offering that they offered to the LORD, from the captains of thousands and captains of hundreds, was sixteen thousand seven hundred and fifty shekels. [53](The men of war had taken spoil, every man for himself.) [54]And Moses and Eleazar the priest received the gold from the captains of thousands and of hundreds, and brought it into the tabernacle of meeting as a memorial for the children of Israel before the LORD.

## SOUL NOTE

**Kill Everybody?** *(31:17, 18)* The command to kill everyone was part of God's plan to cleanse the land of evil influences and prepare it for the Israelites. The violence does not sit well with modern tastes, but it was God's judgment against these pagan nations. God knew that evil influences can affect a nation like yeast affects a batch of dough. Likewise, allowing a little bit of sin to stay in our lives will eventually have a profound effect. As the Israelites were called to eradicate the evil in the land, so believers should seek out and destroy sin in their lives. **Topic: Violence**

## THE TRIBES SETTLING EAST OF THE JORDAN

**32** Now the children of Reuben and the children of Gad had a very great
multitude of livestock; and when they saw the land of Jazer and the land
of Gilead, that indeed the region *was* a place for livestock, 2the children of
Gad and the children of Reuben came and spoke to Moses, to Eleazar the
priest, and to the leaders of the congregation, saying, 3"Ataroth, Dibon, Jazer,
Nimrah, Heshbon, Elealeh, Shebam, Nebo, and Beon, 4the country which the
LORD defeated before the congregation of Israel, *is* a land for livestock, and
your servants have livestock." 5Therefore they said, "If we have found favor
in your sight, let this land be given to your servants as a possession. Do not
take us over the Jordan."

6And Moses said to the children of Gad and to the children of Reuben:
"Shall your brethren go to war while you sit here? 7Now why will you
discourage the heart of the children of Israel from going over into the land
which the LORD has given them? 8Thus your fathers did when I sent them
away from Kadesh Barnea to see the land. 9For when they went up to the
Valley of Eshcol and saw the land, they discouraged the heart of the children
of Israel, so that they did not go into the land which the LORD had given
them. 10So the LORD's anger was aroused on that day, and He swore an oath,
saying, 11'Surely none of the men who came up from Egypt, from twenty
years old and above, shall see the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac,
and Jacob, because they have not wholly followed Me, 12except Caleb the
son of Jephunneh, the Kenizzite, and Joshua the son of Nun, for they have
wholly followed the LORD.' 13So the LORD's anger was aroused against
Israel, and He made them wander in the wilderness forty years, until all the
generation that had done evil in the sight of the LORD was gone. 14And look!
You have risen in your fathers' place, a brood of sinful men, to increase still
more the fierce anger of the LORD against Israel. 15For if you turn away from
following Him, He will once again leave them in the wilderness, and you will
destroy all these people."

16Then they came near to him and said: "We will build sheepfolds here for
our livestock, and cities for our little ones, 17but we ourselves will be armed,

ready *to go* before the children of Israel until we have brought them to their place; and our little ones will dwell in the fortified cities because of the inhabitants of the land. [18]We will not return to our homes until every one of the children of Israel has received his inheritance. [19]For we will not inherit with them on the other side of the Jordan and beyond, because our inheritance has fallen to us on this eastern side of the Jordan."

[20]Then Moses said to them: "If you do this thing, if you arm yourselves before the LORD for the war, [21]and all your armed men cross over the Jordan before the LORD until He has driven out His enemies from before Him, [22]and the land is subdued before the LORD, then afterward you may return and be blameless before the LORD and before Israel; and this land shall be your possession before the LORD. [23]But if you do not do so, then take note, you have sinned against the LORD; and be sure your sin will find you out. [24]Build cities for your little ones and folds for your sheep, and do what has proceeded out of your mouth."

[25]And the children of Gad and the children of Reuben spoke to Moses, saying: "Your servants will do as my lord commands. [26]Our little ones, our wives, our flocks, and all our livestock will be there in the cities of Gilead; [27]but your servants will cross over, every man armed for war, before the LORD to battle, just as my lord says."

[28]So Moses gave command concerning them to Eleazar the priest, to Joshua the son of Nun, and to the chief fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel. [29]And Moses said to them: "If the children of Gad and the children of Reuben cross over the Jordan with you, every man armed for battle before the LORD, and the land is subdued before you, then you shall give them the land of Gilead as a possession. [30]But if they do not cross over armed with you, they shall have possessions among you in the land of Canaan."

[31]Then the children of Gad and the children of Reuben answered, saying: "As the LORD has said to your servants, so we will do. [32]We will cross over armed before the LORD into the land of Canaan, but the possession of our inheritance *shall remain* with us on this side of the Jordan."

[33]So Moses gave to the children of Gad, to the children of Reuben, and to half the tribe of Manasseh the son of Joseph, the kingdom of Sihon king of

the Amorites and the kingdom of Og king of Bashan, the land with its cities within the borders, the cities of the surrounding country. [34]And the children of Gad built Dibon and Ataroth and Aroer, [35]Atroth and Shophan and Jazer and Jogbehah, [36]Beth Nimrah and Beth Haran, fortified cities, and folds for sheep. [37]And the children of Reuben built Heshbon and Elealeh and Kirjathaim, [38]Nebo and Baal Meon (*their* names being changed) and Shibmah; and they gave *other* names to the cities which they built.

[39]And the children of Machir the son of Ma-nasseh went to Gilead and took it, and dispossessed the Amorites who *were* in it. [40]So Moses gave Gilead to Machir the son of Manasseh, and he dwelt in it. [41]Also Jair the son of Manasseh went and took its small towns, and called them Havoth Jair.[a] [42]Then Nobah went and took Kenath and its villages, and he called it Nobah, after his own name.

## ISRAEL'S JOURNEY FROM EGYPT REVIEWED

**33** These *are* the journeys of the children of Israel, who went out of the land of Egypt by their armies under the hand of Moses and Aaron. 2Now Moses wrote down the starting points of their journeys at the command of the LORD. And these *are* their journeys according to their starting points:

3They departed from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month; on the day after the Passover the children of Israel went out with boldness in the sight of all the Egyptians. 4For the Egyptians were burying all *their* firstborn, whom the LORD had killed among them. Also on their gods the LORD had executed judgments.

5Then the children of Israel moved from Rameses and camped at Succoth. 6They departed from Succoth and camped at Etham, which *is* on the edge of the wilderness. 7They moved from Etham and turned back to Pi Ha-hiroth, which *is* east of Baal Zephon; and they camped near Migdol. 8They departed from before Hahiroth[a] and passed through the midst of the sea into the wilderness, went three days' journey in the Wilderness of Etham, and camped at Marah. 9They moved from Marah and came to Elim. At Elim *were* twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees; so they camped there.

10They moved from Elim and camped by the Red Sea. 11They moved from the Red Sea and camped in the Wilderness of Sin. 12They journeyed from the Wilderness of Sin and camped at Dophkah. 13They departed from Dophkah and camped at Alush. 14They moved from Alush and camped at Rephidim, where there was no water for the people to drink.

15They departed from Rephidim and camped in the Wilderness of Sinai. 16They moved from the Wilderness of Sinai and camped at Kibroth Hattaavah. 17They departed from Kibroth Hattaavah and camped at Hazeroth. 18They departed from Hazeroth and camped at Rithmah. 19They departed from Rithmah and camped at Rimmon Perez. 20They departed from Rimmon Perez and camped at Libnah. 21They moved from Libnah and camped at Rissah. 22They journeyed from Rissah and camped at Kehelathah. 23They went from Kehelathah and camped at Mount Shepher. 24They moved from

Mount Shepher and camped at Haradah. [25]They moved from Haradah and camped at Makheloth. [26]They moved from Makheloth and camped at Tahath. [27]They departed from Ta-hath and camped at Terah. [28]They moved from Terah and camped at Mithkah. [29]They went from Mithkah and camped at Hashmonah. [30]They departed from Hashmonah and camped at Moseroth. [31]They departed from Moseroth and camped at Bene Jaakan. [32]They moved from Bene Jaakan and camped at Hor Hagid-gad. [33]They went from Hor Hagidgad and camped at Jotbathah. [34]They moved from Jot-bathah and camped at Abronah. [35]They departed from Abronah and camped at Ezion Geber. [36]They moved from Ezion Geber and camped in the Wilderness of Zin, which *is* Kadesh. [37]They moved from Kadesh and camped at Mount Hor, on the boundary of the land of Edom.

[38]Then Aaron the priest went up to Mount Hor at the command of the LORD, and died there in the fortieth year after the children of Israel had come out of the land of Egypt, on the first *day* of the fifth month. [39]Aaron *was* one hundred and twenty-three years old when he died on Mount Hor.

[40]Now the king of Arad, the Canaanite, who dwelt in the South in the land of Canaan, heard of the coming of the children of Israel.

[41]So they departed from Mount Hor and camped at Zalmonah. [42]They departed from Zalmonah and camped at Punon. [43]They departed from Punon and camped at Oboth. [44]They departed from Oboth and camped at Ije Abarim, at the border of Moab. [45]They departed from Ijim[a] and camped at Dibon Gad. [46]They moved from Dibon Gad and camped at Almon Diblathaim. [47]They moved from Almon Diblathaim and camped in the mountains of Abarim, before Nebo. [48]They departed from the mountains of Abarim and camped in the plains of Moab by the Jordan, *across from* Jericho. [49]They camped by the Jordan, from Beth Jesimoth as far as the Abel Acacia Grove[a] in the plains of Moab.

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE CONQUEST OF CANAAN

[50]Now the LORD spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan, *across from* Jericho, saying, [51]“Speak to the children of Israel, and say to

them: ‘When you have crossed the Jordan into the land of Canaan, [52]then you shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, destroy all their engraved stones, destroy all their molded images, and demolish all their high places; [53]you shall dispossess *the inhabitants of* the land and dwell in it, for I have given you the land to possess. [54]And you shall divide the land by lot as an inheritance among your families; to the larger you shall give a larger inheritance, and to the smaller you shall give a smaller inheritance; there everyone’s *inheritance* shall be whatever falls to him by lot. You shall inherit according to the tribes of your fathers. [55]But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then it shall be that those whom you let remain *shall be* irritants in your eyes and thorns in your sides, and they shall harass you in the land where you dwell. [56]Moreover it shall be *that* I will do to you as I thought to do to them.’ ”

## THE APPOINTED BOUNDARIES OF CANAAN

**34** Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 2"Command the children of
Israel, and say to them: 'When you come into the land of Canaan, this *is*
the land that shall fall to you as an inheritance-the land of Canaan to its
boundaries. 3Your southern border shall be from the Wilderness of Zin along
the border of Edom; then your southern border shall extend eastward to the
end of the Salt Sea; 4your border shall turn from the southern side of the
Ascent of Akrabbim, continue to Zin, and be on the south of Kadesh Barnea;
then it shall go on to Hazar Addar, and continue to Azmon; 5the border shall
turn from Azmon to the Brook of Egypt, and it shall end at the Sea.

6'As for the western border, you shall have the Great Sea for a border; this
shall be your western border.

7'And this shall be your northern border: From the Great Sea you shall
mark out your *border* line to Mount Hor; 8from Mount Hor you shall mark
out *your border* to the entrance of Hamath; then the direction of the border
shall be toward Zedad; 9the border shall proceed to Ziphron, and it shall end
at Hazar Enan. This shall be your northern border.

10'You shall mark out your eastern border from Hazar Enan to Shepham;
11the border shall go down from Shepham to Riblah on the east side of Ain;
the border shall go down and reach to the eastern side of the Sea of
Chinnereth; 12the border shall go down along the Jordan, and it shall end at
the Salt Sea. This shall be your land with its surrounding boundaries.' "

13Then Moses commanded the children of Israel, saying: "This *is* the land
which you shall inherit by lot, which the LORD has commanded to give to the
nine tribes and to the half-tribe. 14For the tribe of the children of Reuben
according to the house of their fathers, and the tribe of the children of Gad
according to the house of their fathers, have received *their inheritance;* and
the half-tribe of Manasseh has received its inheritance. 15The two tribes and
the half-tribe have received their inheritance on this side of the Jordan, *across*
*from* Jericho eastward, toward the sunrise."

## THE LEADERS APPOINTED TO DIVIDE THE LAND

16And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 17“These *are* the names of the
men who shall divide the land among you as an inheritance: Eleazar the priest
and Joshua the son of Nun. 18And you shall take one leader of every tribe to
divide the land for the inheritance. 19These *are* the names of the men: from
the tribe of Judah, Caleb the son of Jephunneh; 20from the tribe of the
children of Simeon, Shemuel the son of Ammihud; 21from the tribe of
Benjamin, Elidad the son of Chislon; 22a leader from the tribe of the children
of Dan, Bukki the son of Jogli; 23from the sons of Joseph: a leader from the
tribe of the children of Manasseh, Hanniel the son of Ephod, 24and a leader
from the tribe of the children of Ephraim, Kemuel the son of Shiphtan; 25a
leader from the tribe of the children of Zebulun, Elizaphan the son of
Parnach; 26a leader from the tribe of the children of Issachar, Paltiel the son
of Azzan; 27a leader from the tribe of the children of Asher, Ahihud the son
of Shelomi; 28and a leader from the tribe of the children of Naphtali, Pedahel
the son of Ammihud.”

29These *are* the ones the LORD commanded to divide the inheritance
among the children of Israel in the land of Canaan.

## CITIES FOR THE LEVITES

**35** And the LORD spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan *across from* Jericho, saying:[2]"Command the children of Israel that they give the Levites cities to dwell in from the inheritance of their possession, and you shall *also* give the Levites common-land around the cities.[3]They shall have the cities to dwell in; and their common-land shall be for their cattle, for their herds, and for all their animals. [4]The common-land of the cities which you will give the Levites *shall extend* from the wall of the city outward a thousand cubits all around. [5]And you shall measure outside the city on the east side two thousand cubits, on the south side two thousand cubits, on the west side two thousand cubits, and on the north side two thousand cubits. The city *shall be* in the middle. This shall belong to them as common-land for the cities. [6]"Now among the cities which you will give to the Levites *you shall appoint* six cities of refuge, to which a manslayer may flee. And to these you shall add forty-two cities. [7]So all the cities you will give to the Levites *shall be* forty- eight; these *you shall give* with their common- land. [8]And the cities which you will give *shall be* from the possession of the children of Israel; from the larger *tribe* you shall give many, from the smaller you shall give few. Each shall give some of its cities to the Levites, in proportion to the inheritance that each receives."

## CITIES OF REFUGE

[9]Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, [10]"Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When you cross the Jordan into the land of Canaan,[11]then you shall appoint cities to be cities of refuge for you, that the manslayer who kills any person accidentally may flee there.[12]They shall be cities of refuge for you from the avenger, that the manslayer may not die until he stands before the congregation in judgment. [13]And of the cities which you give, you shall have six cities of refuge. [14]You shall appoint three cities on this side of the Jordan, and three cities you shall appoint in the land of Canaan, *which* will be cities of refuge. [15]These six cities shall be for refuge for the children of Israel, for the stranger, and for the sojourner among them, that anyone who kills a person accidentally may flee there.

16 ‘But if he strikes him with an iron implement, so that he dies, he *is* a
murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death. 17 And if he strikes him
with a stone in the hand, by which one could die, and he does die, he *is* a
murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death. 18 Or *if* he strikes him
with a wooden hand weapon, by which one could die, and he does die, he *is* a
murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death. 19 The avenger of blood
himself shall put the murderer to death; when he meets him, he shall put him
to death. 20 If he pushes him out of hatred or, while lying in wait, hurls
something at him so that he dies, 21 or in enmity he strikes him with his hand
so that he dies, the one who struck *him* shall surely be put to death. He *is* a
murderer. The avenger of blood shall put the murderer to death when he
meets him.

22 ‘However, if he pushes him suddenly without enmity, or throws anything
at him without lying in wait, 23 or uses a stone, by which a man could die,
throwing *it* at him without seeing *him*, so that he dies, while he was not his
enemy or seeking his harm, 24 then the congregation shall judge between the
manslayer and the avenger of blood according to these judgments. 25 So the
congregation shall deliver the manslayer from the hand of the avenger of
blood, and the congregation shall return him to the city of refuge where he
had fled, and he shall remain there until the death of the high priest who was
anointed with the holy oil. 26 But if the manslayer at any time goes outside the
limits of the city of refuge where he fled, 27 and the avenger of blood finds
him outside the limits of his city of refuge, and the avenger of blood kills the
manslayer, he shall not be guilty of blood, 28 because he should have
remained in his city of refuge until the death of the high priest. But after the
death of the high priest the manslayer may return to the land of his
possession.

29 ‘And these *things* shall be a statute of judgment to you throughout your
generations in all your dwellings. 30 Whoever kills a person, the murderer
shall be put to death on the testimony of witnesses; but one witness is not
*sufficient* testimony against a person for the death *penalty*. 31 Moreover you
shall take no ransom for the life of a murderer who *is* guilty of death, but he
shall surely be put to death.

[32]And you shall take no ransom for him who has fled to his city of refuge, that he may return to dwell in the land before the death of the priest. [33]So you shall not pollute the land where you *are;* for blood defiles the land, and no atonement can be made for the land, for the blood that is shed on it, except by the blood of him who shed it. [34]Therefore do not defile the land which you inhabit, in the midst of which I dwell; for I the LORD dwell among the children of Israel.' "

## MARRIAGE OF FEMALE HEIRS

**36** Now the chief fathers of the families of the children of Gilead the son of
Machir, the son of Manasseh, of the families of the sons of Joseph, came
near and spoke before Moses and before the leaders, the chief fathers of the
children of Israel. 2 And they said: “The LORD commanded my lord *Moses* to
give the land as an inheritance by lot to the children of Israel, and my lord
was commanded by the LORD to give the inheritance of our brother
Zelophehad to his daughters. 3 Now if they are married to any of the sons of
the *other* tribes of the children of Israel, then their inheritance will be taken
from the inheritance of our fathers, and it will be added to the inheritance of
the tribe into which they marry; so it will be taken from the lot of our
inheritance. 4 And when the Jubilee of the children of Israel comes, then their
inheritance will be added to the inheritance of the tribe into which they
marry; so their inheritance will be taken away from the inheritance of the
tribe of our fathers.”

5 Then Moses commanded the children of Israel according to the word of
the LORD, saying: “What the tribe of the sons of Joseph speaks is right. 6 This
*is* what the LORD commands concerning the daughters of Zelophehad, saying,
‘Let them marry whom they think best, but they may marry only within the
family of their father’s tribe.’ 7 So the inheritance of the children of Israel
shall not change hands from tribe to tribe, for every one of the children of
Israel shall keep the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers. 8 And every
daughter who possesses an inheritance in any tribe of the children of Israel
shall be the wife of one of the family of her father’s tribe, so that the children
of Israel each may possess the inheritance of his fathers. 9 Thus no inheritance
shall change hands from *one* tribe to another, but every tribe of the children
of Israel shall keep its own inheritance.”

10 Just as the LORD commanded Moses, so did the daughters of Zelophehad;
11 for Mah-lah, Tirzah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Noah, the daughters of
Zelophehad, were married to the sons of their father’s brothers. 12 They were
married into the families of the children of Manasseh the son of Joseph, and
their inheritance remained in the tribe of their father’s family.

[13]These *are* the commandments and the judgments which the LORD commanded the children of Israel by the hand of Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan, *across from* Jericho.

# Deuteronomy



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# Deuteronomy

What can people do about wasted years? What truths learned in the "wasted" years of life should be passed on to the younger generation?

These are the issues of the Book of Deuteronomy, written by Moses. On the plains of Moab, just east of the Jordan River, Moses had gathered the new generation of Israelites (those who survived the forty years of wandering detailed in Numbers). The challenge before them was great; the opportunities were even greater. The earlier generation had turned from God. Had this new generation learned from that mistake?

The great leader reiterated God's law for the twelve tribes (the title "Deuteronomy" literally means "second law"). Moses also renewed the covenant agreement between God and Israel. He then transferred leadership to Joshua, who would take the people the rest of the way.

Deuteronomy is a strong call to allegiance to God. The older generation of Israelites never reached the Promised Land because of fear and unbelief. But the younger generation had the opportunity to learn from their parents' errors and experience God's blessing in their lives.

This is a book about rebounding from failure. Though probably not for as long as the wilderness wanderings, most of us can confess to wasted years-years of wandering and confusion when we did not obey the call and commands of God. Read on for an encouraging reminder that God will lead us out of the wilderness, if and when we simply say yes to His call.

**SOUL CONCERNS IN**

## DEUTERONOMY

GOD'S PROMISES (1:8-11)
CHILD DEVELOPMENT (4:9, 10)
DIVORCE/SEPARATION (24:1-4)

## THE PREVIOUS COMMAND TO ENTER CANAAN

**1** These *are* the words which Moses spoke to all Israel on this side of the
Jordan in the wilderness, in the plain[a] opposite Suph,[b] between Paran,
Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth, and Dizahab. 2*It is* eleven days' *journey* from
Horeb by way of Mount Seir to Kadesh Barnea. 3Now it came to pass in the
fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first *day* of the month, *that* Moses
spoke to the children of Israel according to all that the LORD had given him as
commandments to them, 4after he had killed Sihon king of the Amorites, who
dwelt in Heshbon, and Og king of Bashan, who dwelt at Ashtaroth in[a] Edrei.

5On this side of the Jordan in the land of Moab, Moses began to explain
this law, saying, 6"The LORD our God spoke to us in Horeb, saying: 'You
have dwelt long enough at this mountain. 7Turn and take your journey, and
go to the mountains of the Amorites, to all the neighboring *places* in the
plain,[a] in the mountains and in the lowland, in the South and on the seacoast,
to the land of the Canaanites and to Lebanon, as far as the great river, the
River Euphrates. 8See, I have set the land before you; go in and possess the
land which the LORD swore to your fathers-to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob-to
give to them and their descendants after them.'

## TRIBAL LEADERS APPOINTED

9"And I spoke to you at that time, saying: 'I alone am not able to bear you.
10The LORD your God has multiplied you, and here you *are* today, as the stars
of heaven in multitude. 11May the LORD God of your fathers make you a
thousand times more numerous than you are, and bless you as He has
promised you! 12How can I alone bear your problems and your burdens and
your complaints? 13Choose wise, understanding, and knowledgeable men
from among your tribes, and I will make them heads over you.' 14And you
answered me and said, 'The thing which you have told *us* to do *is* good.' 15So
I took the heads of your tribes, wise and knowledgeable men, and made them
heads over you, leaders of thousands, leaders of hundreds, leaders of fifties,
leaders of tens, and officers for your tribes.

16"Then I commanded your judges at that time, saying, 'Hear *the cases*

between your brethren, and judge righteously between a man and his brother or the stranger who is with him. [17]You shall not show partiality in judgment; you shall hear the small as well as the great; you shall not be afraid in any man's presence, for the judgment *is* God's. The case that is too hard for you, bring to me, and I will hear it.' [18]And I commanded you at that time all the things which you should do.

> "You shall not show partiality in judgment; you shall hear the small as well as the great; you shall not be afraid in any man's presence, for the judgment is God's."
> DEUTERONOMY 1:17

**ISRAEL'S REFUSAL TO ENTER THE LAND**

[19]"So we departed from Horeb, and went through all that great and terrible wilderness which you saw on the way to the mountains of the Amorites, as the LORD our God had commanded us. Then we came to Kadesh Barnea. [20]And I said to you, 'You have come to the mountains of the Amorites, which the LORD our God is giving us. [21]Look, the LORD your God has set the land before you; go up *and* possess *it*, as the LORD God of your fathers has spoken to you; do not fear or be discouraged.'

[22]"And every one of you came near to me and said, 'Let us send men before us, and let them search out the land for us, and bring back word to us of the way by which we should go up, and of the cities into which we shall come.'

[23]"The plan pleased me well; so I took twelve of your men, one man from *each* tribe. [24]And they departed and went up into the mountains, and came to the Valley of Eshcol, and spied it out. [25]They also took *some* of the fruit of the land in their hands and brought *it* down to us; and they brought back word to us, saying, '*It is* a good land which the LORD our God is giving us.'

[26]"Nevertheless you would not go up, but rebelled against the command of the LORD your God; [27]and you complained in your tents, and said, 'Because the LORD hates us, He has brought us out of the land of Egypt to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us. [28]Where can we go up? Our

brethren have discouraged our hearts, saying, “The people *are* greater and taller than we; the cities *are* great and fortified up to heaven; moreover we have seen the sons of the Anakim there.” ’

29“Then I said to you, ‘Do not be terrified, or afraid of them. 30The LORD your God, who goes before you, He will fight for you, according to all He did for you in Egypt before your eyes, 31and in the wilderness where you saw how the LORD your God carried you, as a man carries his son, in all the way that you went until you came to this place.’ 32Yet, for all that, you did not believe the LORD your God, 33who went in the way before you to search out a place for you to pitch your tents, to show you the way you should go, in the fire by night and in the cloud by day.

**THE PENALTY FOR ISRAEL’S REBELLION**

34“And the LORD heard the sound of your words, and was angry, and took an oath, saying, 35‘Surely not one of these men of this evil generation shall see that good land of which I swore to give to your fathers, 36except Caleb the son of Jephunneh; he shall see it, and to him and his children I am giving the land on which he walked, because he wholly followed the LORD.’ 37The LORD was also angry with me for your sakes, saying, ‘Even you shall not go in there. 38Joshua the son of Nun, who stands before you, he shall go in there. Encourage him, for he shall cause Israel to inherit it.

39‘Moreover your little ones and your children, who you say will be victims, who today have no knowledge of good and evil, they shall go in there; to them I will give it, and they shall possess it. 40But *as for* you, turn and take your journey into the wilderness by the Way of the Red Sea.’

41“Then you answered and said to me, ‘We have sinned against the LORD; we will go up and fight, just as the LORD our God commanded us.’ And when everyone of you had girded on his weapons of war, you were ready to go up into the mountain.

42“And the LORD said to me, ‘Tell them, “Do not go up nor fight, for I *am* not among you; lest you be defeated before your enemies.” ’ 43So I spoke to you; yet you would not listen, but rebelled against the command of the LORD, and presumptuously went up into the mountain. 44And the Amorites who

dwelt in that mountain came out against you and chased you as bees do, and drove you back from Seir to Hormah. [45]Then you returned and wept before the LORD, but the LORD would not listen to your voice nor give ear to you.

[46]"So you remained in Kadesh many days, according to the days that you spent *there.*

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# MOSES: HUMBLE OR INSECURE?

**(DEUTERONOMY 1)**

Moses had an amazing early childhood. Born in secret, lovingly abandoned, miraculously rescued, unexpectedly raised, Moses appears in the Bible as a person with an unusually varied past. The mystery that surrounds Moses' growth to adulthood offers few clues, but the man who eventually served as God's chosen leader of the chosen people was more prepared to lead than he realized.

Moses' life spanned 120 years. The first 40 were devoted to academic and leadership training-Egyptian style. The second 40 years Moses spent in the desert, where he practiced leading sheep through the wilderness. Thus he was unknowingly prepared to lead people through the same terrain. The last 40 years were spent in the stressful role of champion and leader of a nation on the move.

Each phase in Moses' life began with a crisis. By the time he was 40, his instincts to protect his people were well intentioned but poorly timed (Ex. 2:11-15). He killed an Egyptian guard and had to flee for

his life into the desert. There he stayed until God called him. That call (Ex. 3:1-4:17) reveals much about Moses' character. He questioned, avoided, and resisted God's direction. He had lived with the failure and shame of his actions in Egypt for almost 40 years. He had grown accustomed to what seemed like insignificance. But God had plans for Moses' combination of ability and insecurity, a combination that made Moses a humble man.

God used Moses' experiences to hone his abilities and shape his character. Moses' training improved his gifts, his failures deepened his dependence on God, and God made the loving effort to convince Moses of His plans.

God can use our insecurities and uncertainties as effective tools in our lives. They can make us useful in God's service. God can make strengths out of weaknesses. We might allow them to come between God and us, but God transforms them into part of the living bridge that connects us with the One who loves us best of all.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Discovering The Deceptions. See also the key passage note at Numbers 13:30-33.

**FINDING THE COURAGE TO BELIEVE**

JAMES CLINTON

(Deuteronomy 1:8-11)

**R**ain splashing against a windowpane can evoke many emotions-comfort in the face of natural forces or restlessness during the idle rainy days of childhood. When a drizzle turns into a downpour and deafening thunder shakes the windows, people often become fearful.

Inevitably, the storm subsides and a ray of sunshine breaks through the clouds. A bright, multicolored rainbow may even appear. The rainbow stands as a reminder of God's faithfulness, that He will keep His promises. The rainbow first appeared to Noah centuries ago when God promised that He would never again destroy the earth with a flood: "This is the sign of the covenant which I make between Me and you. . . . I set My rainbow in the cloud. . . . It shall be, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the rainbow shall be seen in the cloud; and I will remember My covenant" (Gen. 9:12-15).

## THE FOUNDATION OF A PROMISE

A promise is essentially a guarantee that something will happen. A promise is only as good as the person who makes it, however. A person who has broken promise after promise cannot be trusted.

Most people try to keep their promises, but that doesn't always happen. They may forget or get distracted or change their minds. Some, of course, never intended to keep their promise in the first place. Sometimes they change their minds. In a world of broken promises, however, God's promises are certain. He never forgets; He never makes a promise He does not intend to keep; He never changes His mind.

Behind all the promises in Scripture stands our loyal, faithful God who can never lie (Num. 23:19). And He has proven Himself true to His word again and again-whether it was His promise to provide Abraham with an heir (Gen. 15:4, 5; 17:15-22; 21:1-7) or to deliver the Israelites from slavery (Gen. 15:13-16; 50:24-26; Ex. 2:23-25; 3:7-10; 12:31-42). Because the estimated nearly three thousand promises recorded in the Bible are given by God Himself, we can be

absolutely certain that they will come true.

## GOD'S PROMISES TO HIS PEOPLE

Scripture holds two kinds of promises: *conditional* and *unconditional. Conditional* promises are those that will be fulfilled if the recipient does something. Leviticus 26:3-13 contains conditional promises. If the Israelites remained faithful to God and kept His commands, God promised to make their land fruitful.

*Unconditional* promises have no conditions attached. They will happen no matter what. The conditional promise mentioned above, that God would make the land fruitful if the Israelites obeyed, is couched in God's *unconditional* promise: God's covenant with Abraham, promising that his descendants will become a great nation and that all the families of the earth will be blessed through him (Gen. 12:1-3; 15:1-18). God didn't require anything from Abraham when He made that promise. Though the Israelites sinned against God and eventually faced defeat and captivity, God always preserved a remnant of faith ful people. Eventually, of course, Abraham's descendant, Jesus Christ, fulfilled the promise as He became a blessing to the entire world.

God's ultimate unconditional promise is that "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved" (Joel 2:32; Rom. 10:13). To guarantee this promise of salvation, God gave His Son, Jesus, to die for our sin. This unconditional promise of salvation to those who believe forms the basis of God's new covenant with humanity and of all His other promises (Heb. 8:7-12). God also promises His presence with His people. Jesus told His followers, "I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:20).

From the beginning, God wanted to make a certain nation His own special people. He promised to make Abraham's descendants into a nation that would enjoy a special relationship with Him (Gen. 12:2, 3). At Mount Sinai, God even called the Israelites "My people" (Lev.

26:12). Through Christ's sacrifice on the Cross, God invites all people to join His family of faith (John 1:12; 1 Pet. 2:9, 10; 1 John 3:1, 2). "For all the promises of God in [Christ] are Yes" (2 Cor. 1:20). In Christ, all of God's promises to save are fulfilled (Is. 35:3, 4; Matt. 1:21; 1 Tim. 1:15). Out of every nation, God is calling people to be His children (Rom. 8:16, 17; Rev. 5:9; 7:9). Indeed, He promises us that no one can snatch us out of His Son's hand (John 10:28).

The Bible is filled with wonderful promises from God. Believers can call on God and fully expect Him to answer in marvelous ways.

**STANDING ON GOD'S PROMISES**

When the storms assault us, we may find it difficult to trust in what we cannot see, to believe in what God has promised. During those times, it takes courage to lean on the invisible God. I've had to do just that throughout my life-and very recently with the loss of my wife of fifty years. That's what the heroes of faith did (Heb. 11). In his lifetime, Abraham never saw the numerous descendants that God had promised (Gen. 15:4, 5), but he still believed in the God who made the promise because he knew that God was faithful.

Nothing is too hard for our all-powerful God. We need Abraham's courage to believe. We need to stand on God's promises, though the dark clouds of troubles and trials roll over our lives. God's certain promises give us hope and comfort. How many promises do we know and claim?

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of God's promises include:

- Genesis 18:1-15
- Mark 11:24

- Romans 4:13-25
- Hebrews 11:11-16
- 2 Peter 1:4

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on God's promises at 2 Peter 1:4. See also the personality profile of Noah: Floating On God's Promises.

**SOUL NOTE**

**The Promise Keeper** *(1:8)* God explained to the Israelites that they were about to enter the Promised Land in fulfillment of His promises to their forefathers-Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The nation had multiplied "as the stars of heaven" (1:10), also fulfilling a promise (Gen. 15:5). Like Israel, people sin, rebel, turn away, and face punishment. Regardless of their actions, however, God always keeps His promises in the end. Read God's Word and claim His promises for your life.**Topic: God's Promises**

**THE DESERT YEARS**

**2** "Then we turned and journeyed into the wilderness of the Way of the Red
Sea, as the LORD spoke to me, and we skirted Mount Seir for many days.

2"And the LORD spoke to me, saying: 3'You have skirted this mountain
long enough; turn northward. 4And command the people, saying, "You *are about to* pass through the territory of your brethren, the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir; and they will be afraid of you. Therefore watch yourselves carefully. 5Do not meddle with them, for I will not give you *any* of their land, no, not so much as one footstep, because I have given Mount Seir to Esau *as* a possession. 6You shall buy food from them with money, that you may eat; and you shall also buy water from them with money, that you may drink.

> "For the LORD your God has blessed you in all the work of your hand. He knows your trudging through this great wilderness. These forty years the LORD your God has been with you; you have lacked nothing."
> DEUTERONOMY 2:7

7"For the LORD your God has blessed you in all the work of your hand. He knows your trudging through this great wilderness. These forty years the LORD your God *has been* with you; you have lacked nothing." '

8"And when we passed beyond our brethren, the descendants of Esau who dwell in Seir, away from the road of the plain, away from Elath and Ezion Geber, we turned and passed by way of the Wilderness of Moab. 9Then the LORD said to me, 'Do not harass Moab, nor contend with them in battle, for I will not give you *any* of their land *as* a possession, because I have given Ar to the descendants of Lot *as* a possession.' "

10(The Emim had dwelt there in times past, a people as great and numerous and tall as the Anakim. 11They were also regarded as giants,[a] like the Anakim, but the Moabites call them Emim. 12The Horites formerly dwelt in Seir, but the descendants of Esau dispossessed them and destroyed them from before them, and dwelt in their place, just as Israel did to the land of their possession which the LORD gave them.)

13“ ‘Now rise and cross over the Valley of the Zered.’ So we crossed over
the Valley of the Zered. 14And the time we took to come from Kadesh Barnea
until we crossed over the Valley of the Zered *was* thirty-eight years, until all
the generation of the men of war was consumed from the midst of the camp,
just as the LORD had sworn to them. 15For indeed the hand of the LORD was
against them, to destroy them from the midst of the camp until they were
consumed.

16“So it was, when all the men of war had finally perished from among the
people, 17that the LORD spoke to me, saying: 18‘This day you are to cross over
at Ar, the boundary of Moab. 19And *when* you come near the people of
Ammon, do not harass them or meddle with them, for I will not give you *any*
of the land of the people of Ammon *as* a possession, because I have given it
to the descendants of Lot *as* a possession.’ ”

20(That was also regarded as a land of giants;[a] giants formerly dwelt there.
But the Ammonites call them Zamzummim, 21a people as great and
numerous and tall as the Anakim. But the LORD destroyed them before them,
and they dispossessed them and dwelt in their place, 22just as He had done for
the descendants of Esau, who dwelt in Seir, when He destroyed the Horites
from before them. They dispossessed them and dwelt in their place, even to
this day. 23And the Avim, who dwelt in villages as far as Gaza-the Caph-
torim, who came from Caphtor, destroyed them and dwelt in their place.)

24“ ‘Rise, take your journey, and cross over the River Arnon. Look, I have
given into your hand Sihon the Amorite, king of Heshbon, and his land.
Begin to possess *it*, and engage him in battle. 25This day I will begin to put
the dread and fear of you upon the nations under the whole heaven, who shall
hear the report of you, and shall tremble and be in anguish because of you.’

**KING SIHON DEFEATED**

26“And I sent messengers from the Wilderness of Kedemoth to Sihon king
of Heshbon, with words of peace, saying, 27‘Let me pass through your land; I
will keep strictly to the road, and I will turn neither to the right nor to the left.
28You shall sell me food for money, that I may eat, and give me water for
money, that I may drink; only let me pass through on foot, 29just as the

descendants of Esau who dwell in Seir and the Moabites who dwell in Ar did for me, until I cross the Jordan to the land which the LORD our God is giving us.'

30"But Sihon king of Heshbon would not let us pass through, for the LORD your God hardened his spirit and made his heart obstinate, that He might deliver him into your hand, as *it is* this day.

31"And the LORD said to me, 'See, I have begun to give Sihon and his land over to you. Begin to possess *it,* that you may inherit his land.' 32Then Sihon and all his people came out against us to fight at Jahaz. 33And the LORD our God delivered him over to us; so we defeated him, his sons, and all his people. 34We took all his cities at that time, and we utterly destroyed the men, women, and little ones of every city; we left none remaining. 35We took only the livestock as plunder for ourselves, with the spoil of the cities which we took. 36From Aroer, which *is* on the bank of the River Arnon, and *from* the city that *is* in the ravine, as far as Gilead, there was not one city too strong for us; the LORD our God delivered all to us. 37Only you did not go near the land of the people of Ammon-anywhere along the River Jabbok, or to the cities of the mountains, or wherever the LORD our God had forbidden us.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Armed and Ready** *(2:24, 25)* God always keeps His promises, but that doesn't mean that life will be easy or smooth. God had promised a land to Israel and had made all the nations fear them, but the Israelites would have to battle against powerful armies in order to see the promise fulfilled. God gave Israel victories, but they had to trust God and fight. We too will see God's promises fulfilled, but we may have to fight some battles along the way-perhaps against fear, temptation, or suffering. Whatever we face, we must remember that God promises victory if we depend on Him.**Topic: God's Promises**

## KING OG DEFEATED

**3** “Then we turned and went up the road to Bashan; and Og king of Bashan
came out against us, he and all his people, to battle at Edrei. 2And the
LORD said to me, ‘Do not fear him, for I have delivered him and all his people
and his land into your hand; you shall do to him as you did to Sihon king of
the Amorites, who dwelt at Heshbon.’

3“So the LORD our God also delivered into our hands Og king of Bashan,
with all his people, and we attacked him until he had no survivors remaining.
4And we took all his cities at that time; there was not a city which we did not
take from them: sixty cities, all the region of Argob, the kingdom of Og in
Bashan. 5All these cities *were* fortified with high walls, gates, and bars,
besides a great many rural towns. 6And we utterly destroyed them, as we did
to Sihon king of Heshbon, utterly destroying the men, women, and children
of every city. 7But all the livestock and the spoil of the cities we took as
booty for ourselves.

8“And at that time we took the land from the hand of the two kings of the
Amorites who *were* on this side of the Jordan, from the River Arnon to
Mount Hermon 9(the Sidonians call Hermon Sirion, and the Amorites call it
Senir), 10all the cities of the plain, all Gilead, and all Bashan, as far as Salcah
and Edrei, cities of the kingdom of Og in Bashan.

11“For only Og king of Bashan remained of the remnant of the giants.[a]
Indeed his bedstead *was* an iron bedstead. (*Is* it not in Rab-bah of the people
of Ammon?) Nine cubits *is* its length and four cubits its width, according to
the standard cubit.

## THE LAND EAST OF THE JORDAN DIVIDED

12“And this land, *which* we possessed at that time, from Aroer, which *is* by
the River Arnon, and half the mountains of Gilead and its cities, I gave to the
Reubenites and the Gadites. 13The rest of Gilead, and all Bashan, the
kingdom of Og, I gave to half the tribe of Manasseh. (All the region of
Argob, with all Bashan, was called the land of the giants.[a] 14 Jair the son of
Manasseh took all the region of Argob, as far as the border of the Geshurites

and the Maachathites, and called Bashan after his own name, Havoth Jair,[a] to this day.)

15 "Also I gave Gilead to Machir. 16 And to the Reubenites and the Gadites I
gave from Gilead as far as the River Arnon, the middle of the river as *the*
border, as far as the River Jabbok, the border of the people of Ammon; 17 the
plain also, with the Jordan as *the* border, from Chinnereth as far as the east
side of the Sea of the Arabah (the Salt Sea), below the slopes of Pisgah.

18 "Then I commanded you at that time, saying: 'The LORD your God has
given you this land to possess. All you men of valor shall cross over armed
before your brethren, the children of Israel. 19 But your wives, your little ones,
and your livestock (I know that you have much livestock) shall stay in your
cities which I have given you, 20 until the LORD has given rest to your brethren
as to you, and they also possess the land which the LORD your God is giving
them beyond the Jordan. Then each of you may return to his possession
which I have given you.'

21 "And I commanded Joshua at that time, saying, 'Your eyes have seen all
that the LORD your God has done to these two kings; so will the LORD do to
all the kingdoms through which you pass. 22 You must not fear them, for the
LORD your God Himself fights for you.'

## MOSES FORBIDDEN TO ENTER THE LAND

23 "Then I pleaded with the LORD at that time, saying: 24 'O Lord GOD, You
have begun to show Your servant Your greatness and Your mighty hand, for
what god *is there* in heaven or on earth who can do *anything* like Your works
and Your mighty *deeds?* 25 I pray, let me cross over and see the good land
beyond the Jordan, those pleasant mountains, and Lebanon.'

26 "But the LORD was angry with me on your account, and would not listen
to me. So the LORD said to me: 'Enough of that! Speak no more to Me of this
matter. 27 Go up to the top of Pisgah, and lift your eyes toward the west, the
north, the south, and the east; behold *it* with your eyes, for you shall not cross
over this Jordan. 28 But command Joshua, and encourage him and strengthen
him; for he shall go over before this people, and he shall cause them to inherit
the land which you will see.'

29 “So we stayed in the valley opposite Beth Peor.

## MOSES COMMANDS OBEDIENCE

**4** “Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I teach you
to observe, that you may live, and go in and possess the land which the
LORD God of your fathers is giving you. 2You shall not add to the word
which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the
commandments of the LORD your God which I command you. 3Your eyes
have seen what the LORD did at Baal Peor; for the LORD your God has
destroyed from among you all the men who followed Baal of Peor. 4But you
who held fast to the LORD your God *are* alive today, every one of you.

5“Surely I have taught you statutes and judgments, just as the LORD my
God commanded me, that you should act according *to them* in the land which
you go to possess. 6Therefore be careful to observe *them;* for this *is* your
wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all
these statutes, and say, ‘Surely this great nation *is* a wise and understanding
people.’

7“For what great nation *is there* that has God *so* near to it, as the LORD our
God *is* to us, for whatever *reason* we may call upon Him? 8And what great
nation *is there* that has *such* statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this
law which I set before you this day? 9Only take heed to yourself, and
diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and
lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. And teach them to
your children and your grandchildren, 10*especially concerning* the day you
stood before the LORD your God in Horeb, when the LORD said to me,
‘Gather the people to Me, and I will let them hear My words, that they may
learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and *that* they may teach
their children.’

11“Then you came near and stood at the foot of the mountain, and the
mountain burned with fire to the midst of heaven, with darkness, cloud, and
thick darkness. 12And the LORD spoke to you out of the midst of the fire. You
heard the sound of the words, but saw no form; *you* only *heard* a voice. 13So
He declared to you His covenant which He commanded you to perform, the
Ten Commandments; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone. 14And the

LORD commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments, that you might observe them in the land which you cross over to possess.

**BEWARE OF IDOLATRY**

15 "Take careful heed to yourselves, for you saw no form when the LORD spoke to you at Horeb out of the midst of the fire, 16 lest you act corruptly and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of any figure: the likeness of male or female, 17 the likeness of any animal that *is* on the earth or the likeness of any winged bird that flies in the air, 18 the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground or the likeness of any fish that *is* in the water beneath the earth. 19 And *take heed*, lest you lift your eyes to heaven, and *when* you see the sun, the moon, and the stars, all the host of heaven, you feel driven to worship them and serve them, which the LORD your God has given to all the peoples under the whole heaven as a heritage. 20 But the LORD has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt, to be His people, an inheritance, as you are this day. 21 Furthermore the LORD was angry with me for your sakes, and swore that I would not cross over the Jordan, and that I would not enter the good land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance. 22 But I must die in this land, I must not cross over the Jordan; but you shall cross over and possess that good land. 23 Take heed to yourselves, lest you forget the covenant of the LORD your God which He made with you, and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of anything which the LORD your God has forbidden you. 24 For the LORD your God *is* a consuming fire, a jealous God.

25 "When you beget children and grandchildren and have grown old in the land, and act corruptly and make a carved image in the form of anything, and do evil in the sight of the LORD your God to provoke Him to anger, 26 I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that you will soon utterly perish from the land which you cross over the Jordan to possess; you will not prolong *your* days in it, but will be utterly destroyed. 27 And the LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations where the LORD will drive you. 28 And there you will serve gods, the work of men's hands, wood and stone, which neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell. 29 But from there you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find

*Him* if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul. [30]When you are in distress, and all these things come upon you in the latter days, when you turn to the LORD your God and obey His voice [31](for the LORD your God *is* a merciful God), He will not forsake you nor destroy you, nor forget the covenant of your fathers which He swore to them.

> "But from there you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find Him if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul."
> DEUTERONOMY 4:29

[32]"For ask now concerning the days that are past, which were before you, since the day that God created man on the earth, and *ask* from one end of heaven to the other, whether *any* great *thing* like this has happened, or *anything* like it has been heard. [33]Did *any* people *ever* hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as you have heard, and live? [34]Or did God *ever* try to go *and* take for Himself a nation from the midst of *another* nation, by trials, by signs, by wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? [35]To you it was shown, that you might know that the LORD Himself *is* God; *there is* none other besides Him. [36]Out of heaven He let you hear His voice, that He might instruct you; on earth He showed you His great fire, and you heard His words out of the midst of the fire. [37]And because He loved your fathers, therefore He chose their descendants after them; and He brought you out of Egypt with His Presence, with His mighty power, [38]driving out from before you nations greater and mightier than you, to bring you in, to give you their land *as* an inheritance, as *it is* this day. [39]Therefore know this day, and consider *it* in your heart, that the LORD Himself *is* God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; *there is* no other. [40]You shall therefore keep His statutes and His commandments which I command you today, that it may go well with you and with your children after you, and that you may prolong *your* days in the land which the LORD your God is giving you for all time."

## CITIES OF REFUGE EAST OF THE JORDAN

41 Then Moses set apart three cities on this side of the Jordan, toward the
rising of the sun, 42 that the manslayer might flee there, who kills his neighbor
unintentionally, without having hated him in time past, and that by fleeing to
one of these cities he might live: 43 Bezer in the wilderness on the plateau for
the Reubenites, Ramoth in Gilead for the Gadites, and Golan in Bashan for
the Manassites.

**INTRODUCTION TO GOD'S LAW**

44 Now this *is* the law which Moses set before the children of Israel.
45 These *are* the testimonies, the statutes, and the judgments which Moses
spoke to the children of Israel after they came out of Egypt, 46 on this side of
the Jordan, in the valley opposite Beth Peor, in the land of Sihon king of the
Amorites, who dwelt at Heshbon, whom Moses and the children of Israel
defeated after they came out of Egypt. 47 And they took possession of his land
and the land of Og king of Bashan, two kings of the Amorites, who *were* on
this side of the Jordan, toward the rising of the sun, 48 from Aroer, which *is* on
the bank of the River Arnon, even to Mount Sion[a] (that is, Hermon), 49 and all
the plain on the east side of the Jordan as far as the Sea of the Arabah, below
the slopes of Pisgah.

**KEY PASSAGE**

# TEACH YOUR CHILDREN WELL

**(4:9, 10)**

Parents are responsible for raising and guiding their children from infancy to adulthood. Parents influence their children in all areas of

development-social, physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual. Moses advised parents to “take heed” and “diligently keep” themselves, not forgetting what God had done for them. These parents had seen God’s mighty miracles on their behalf as He had rescued them, had revealed Himself to them, and had given them His Word-especially the Ten Commandments. “Teach them to your children and your grandchildren,” said Moses.

That is true soul care from one generation to the next. Christian parents can help their children develop spiritually by:

- sharing the story of how God rescued them from sin,
- telling what God has done in their lives,
- modeling the Christian life, and
- teaching God’s Word and how it applies in everyday life.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about child development Raising Our Children. See also the personality profile of Jesus, God’s Son.

## RAISING OUR CHILDREN

PAUL MEIER

(Deuteronomy 4:9, 10)

**O**ne of the most important responsibilities and privileges that the Lord entrusts to people is to love and nurture children, teaching them about Him (Deut. 4:9, 10; 11:19). In the Old Testament, children are called “a heritage” and “a reward” (Ps. 127:3). Whether or not people

have children of their own, they still have a shared responsibility for the nurture and care of the children in their lives.

God cares about children. He is "the helper of the fatherless" (Ps. 10:14) and the One who takes care of those children who have been forsaken by parents (Ps. 27:10). Our own responsibility for child rearing extends beyond that of the children in our own families. There is a great need for the healthy involvement of Christian adults in the lives of our children as mentors, teachers, and coaches, as well as a need to support and encourage other parents.

## THREE FACTORS IN DEVELOPMENT

As we consider the growth and development of children, there are three factors that affect the kind of adults they will become: (1) who God created them to be, (2) the environment in which they grow, and (3) the choices that they make.

### *God's Unique Creations*

God created each child to be unique, with different personality traits, levels of intelligence, physical characteristics, and even differing energy and activity levels. Children in the same family differ remarkably from each other from the moment they're born. King David was amazed at these God-designed differences when he exclaimed, "You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made" (Ps. 139:13, 14).

### *A Nurturing Environment*

The environment in which children are nurtured is as vital to their development as are their God-given genetic gifts. In Proverbs 22:6, Solomon encourages parents to "train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." Parents are wisely instructed by Solomon to bring up their children in an environment

shaped by and infused with biblical principles. God, the heavenly Father, models His love in people's lives, and they in turn have the privilege and responsibility of loving their children just as He continually loves them!

Moses told the people of Israel to remember what they had seen and known of the Lord's goodness and to pass that knowledge on to their children (Deut. 4:9). God's desire was that parents would teach their children and grandchildren to hear His word and to reverence Him. Moses' words assume that the parents themselves have a first-hand knowledge of God's love and goodness. Perhaps one of the primary tasks of child rearing is to remember what God has done and is doing in our own lives and to share that with our children. In addition, children who grow up in a relationship with parents and other adults who live their faith will have not only the knowledge of God, but also a strong example of the truth of God's word in action.

Paul provided a wonderful model when he described himself as a father to the believers at Thessalonica (1 Thess. 2:11). He loved the believers deeply, so he encouraged, comforted, and urged them to live worthy of God, who had called them into His kingdom and glory. Paul's example extends to us as we seek to encourage, comfort, and communicate the love of Christ to the children in our families and communities.

*Ability to Choose*

However, God has also created every person with the ability to make choices. As children grow, parents have increasingly less control over their choices. Our children make their own choices every day, and some of those choices are life-changing. Even though children can have wonderful God-given gifts and abilities, and have grown up in a loving, Christ-centered environment, they can still make poor choices. Part of child rearing is to help children learn to make good choices and to encourage them with love and forgiveness when they must work through the consequences of poor choices. As we

decrease, the rules increase, and children must take on more responsibility.

Psychiatric research has shown that children who grow up with the following five factors will have a better chance of making choices that will positively affect their own lives as well as those of the generations to come:

1. Lots of unconditional love.
2. Reasonable boundaries and discipline.
3. Consistency in parenting principles and family values.
4. Expectation that the children will follow their parents' example, not just their words.
5. Bonding with healthy male and female authority figures (either Mom and Dad, or healthy grandparents, aunts, uncles, Sunday school teachers, school teachers, coaches, or other mentors).

All of these factors are consistent with what Scripture teaches and can be put into practice in our families as well as in our Christian communities.

**PREPARED FOR LIFE**

As parents and those concerned for the development of children, we know that God has created our children in the way that He has chosen and that our children will make their own choices. We can love them, create safe, consistent environments for them to grow in, and model Christlike lives, and we can teach them the truth of the Scriptures. As they emerge from the dependence of childhood to the interdependence of adulthood, we can continue to pray for them and to thank the Lord for the role that He has allowed us to play in their lives.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of child development include:

- Genesis 18:19
- Proverbs 20:7, 11; 22:15; 23:13, 24; 29:15
- Ecclesiastes 11:9, 10
- Matthew 19:13, 14
- Mark 9:36, 37
- Ephesians 6:1-4
- 2 Timothy 3:14, 15

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on child development at Deuteronomy 4:9, 10. See also the personality profile of Jesus, God's Son.

## THE TEN COMMANDMENTS REVIEWED

**5** And Moses called all Israel, and said to them: “Hear, O Israel, the statutes
and judgments which I speak in your hearing today, that you may learn
them and be careful to observe them. 2The LORD our God made a covenant
with us in Horeb. 3The LORD did not make this covenant with our fathers, but
with us, those who *are* here today, all of us who *are* alive. 4The LORD talked
with you face to face on the mountain from the midst of the fire. 5I stood
between the LORD and you at that time, to declare to you the word of the
LORD; for you were afraid because of the fire, and you did not go up the
mountain. *He* said:

6 ‘ I *am* the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out
of the house of bondage.

7 ‘You shall have no other gods before Me.

8 ‘You shall not make for yourself a carved image-any likeness *of anything*
that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water
under the earth; 9you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the
LORD your God, *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon
the children to the third and fourth *generations* of those who hate Me, 10but
showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My
commandments.

11 ‘You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD
will not hold *him* guiltless who takes His name in vain.

12 ‘Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the LORD your God
commanded you. 13Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 14but the
seventh day *is* the Sabbath of the LORD your God. *In it* you shall do no work:
you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female
servant, nor your ox, nor your donkey, nor any of your cattle, nor your
stranger who *is* within your gates, that your male servant and your female
servant may rest as well as you. 15And remember that you were a slave in the
land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there by a
mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God
commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.

16 ‘Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God has commanded you, that your days may be long, and that it may be well with you in the land which the LORD your God is giving you.

17 ‘You shall not murder.

18 ‘You shall not commit adultery.

19 ‘You shall not steal.

20 ‘You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

21 ‘You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife; and you shall not desire your neighbor’s house, his field, his male servant, his female servant, his ox, his donkey, or anything that *is* your neighbor’s.’

22“These words the LORD spoke to all your assembly, in the mountain from the midst of the fire, the cloud, and the thick darkness, with a loud voice; and He added no more. And He wrote them on two tablets of stone and gave them to me.

**THE PEOPLE AFRAID OF GOD’S PRESENCE**

23“So it was, when you heard the voice from the midst of the darkness, while the mountain was burning with fire, that you came near to me, all the heads of your tribes and your elders. 24And you said: ‘Surely the LORD our God has shown us His glory and His greatness, and we have heard His voice from the midst of the fire. We have seen this day that God speaks with man; yet he *still* lives. 25Now therefore, why should we die? For this great fire will consume us; if we hear the voice of the LORD our God anymore, then we shall die. 26For who *is there* of all flesh who has heard the voice of the living God speaking from the midst of the fire, as we *have,* and lived? 27You go near and hear all that the LORD our God may say, and tell us all that the LORD our God says to you, and we will hear and do *it.* ’

28“Then the LORD heard the voice of your words when you spoke to me, and the LORD said to me: ‘I have heard the voice of the words of this people which they have spoken to you. They are right *in* all that they have spoken. 29Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their

children forever! [30]Go and say to them, “Return to your tents.” [31]But as for you, stand here by Me, and I will speak to you all the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments which you shall teach them, that they may observe *them* in the land which I am giving them to possess.’

[32]“Therefore you shall be careful to do as the LORD your God has commanded you; you shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. [33]You shall walk in all the ways which the LORD your God has commanded you, that you may live and *that it may be* well with you, and *that* you may prolong *your* days in the land which you shall possess.

> “You shall walk in all the ways which the LORD your God has commanded you, that you may live and that it may be well with you, and that you may prolong your days in the land which you shall possess.”
> DEUTERONOMY 5:33

**SOUL NOTE**

**Honor Your Parents** *(5:16)* God stated in His Ten Commandments that He requires all people to honor their parents. Adults can honor their parents by treating them with respect and helping to meet their needs, especially as they become elderly. Doing so will be a great lesson to their children. Parents must teach their children what it means to “honor” them. This can be done as Mom and Dad honor Grandpa and Grandma, and as they honor God as their ultimate authority. Children will see and learn what it means to honor one’s parents and then to honor God as one’s ultimate authority as well. **Topic: Honor**

## THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT

**6** “Now this *is* the commandment, *and these are* the statutes and judgments
which the LORD your God has commanded to teach you, that you may
observe *them* in the land which you are crossing over to possess, 2that you
may fear the LORD your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments
which I command you, you and your son and your grandson, all the days of
your life, and that your days may be prolonged. 3Therefore hear, O Israel, and
be careful to observe *it*, that it may be well with you, and that you may
multiply greatly as the LORD God of your fathers has promised you-‘a land
flowing with milk and honey.’[a]

4“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD *is* one![a] 5You shall love the
LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your
strength.

6“And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart.
7You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when
you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and
when you rise up. 8You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall
be as frontlets between your eyes. 9You shall write them on the doorposts of
your house and on your gates.

> “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart,
> with all your soul, and with all your strength.”
> DEUTERONOMY 6:5

## CAUTION AGAINST DISOBEDIENCE

10“So it shall be, when the LORD your God brings you into the land of
which He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give you
large and beautiful cities which you did not build, 11houses full of all good
things, which you did not fill, hewn-out wells which you did not dig,
vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant-when you have eaten and
are full- 12*then* beware, lest you forget the LORD who brought you out of the
land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. 13You shall fear the LORD your

God and serve Him, and shall take oaths in His name. [14]You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who *are* all around you [15](for the LORD your God *is* a jealous God among you), lest the anger of the LORD your God be aroused against you and destroy you from the face of the earth.

[16]"You shall not tempt the LORD your God as you tempted *Him* in Massah. [17]You shall diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, His testimonies, and His statutes which He has commanded you. [18]And you shall do *what is* right and good in the sight of the LORD, that it may be well with you, and that you may go in and possess the good land of which the LORD swore to your fathers, [19]to cast out all your enemies from before you, as the LORD has spoken.

[20]"When your son asks you in time to come, saying, 'What *is the meaning of* the testimonies, the statutes, and the judgments which the LORD our God has commanded you?' [21]then you shall say to your son: 'We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, and the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand; [22]and the LORD showed signs and wonders before our eyes, great and severe, against Egypt, Pharaoh, and all his household. [23]Then He brought us out from there, that He might bring us in, to give us the land of which He swore to our fathers. [24]And the LORD commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that He might preserve us alive, as *it is* this day. [25]Then it will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to observe all these commandments before the LORD our God, as He has commanded us.'

**SOUL NOTE**

**A Godly Heritage** *(6:4-9)* God wants His people to teach His commandments to their children, by words and by example. To talk about God and His commands when sitting, walking, lying down, and getting up emphasizes the importance of making God's Word a part

of every aspect of daily living. Such demonstrations make it clear to children that the Word of God has authority over every area of life. Parents give children much, but the greatest gift they can give is a godly heritage.**Topic: Child Development**

**A CHOSEN PEOPLE**

**7** “When the LORD your God brings you into the land which you go to
possess, and has cast out many nations before you, the Hittites and the
Girgashites and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Perizzites and the
Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than you, 2and
when the LORD your God delivers them over to you, you shall conquer them
*and* utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them nor show
mercy to them. 3Nor shall you make marriages with them. You shall not give
your daughter to their son, nor take their daughter for your son. 4For they will
turn your sons away from following Me, to serve other gods; so the anger of
the LORD will be aroused against you and destroy you suddenly. 5But thus
you shall deal with them: you shall destroy their altars, and break down their
*sacred* pillars, and cut down their wooden images,[a] and burn their carved
images with fire.

> “Therefore know that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments.”
> DEUTERONOMY 7:9

6“For you *are* a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has
chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the
peoples on the face of the earth. 7The LORD did not set His love on you nor
choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you
were the least of all peoples; 8but because the LORD loves you, and because
He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the LORD has
brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of
bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

9“Therefore know that the LORD your God, He *is* God, the faithful God
who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who
love Him and keep His commandments; 10and He repays those who hate Him
to their face, to destroy them. He will not be slack with him who hates Him;

He will repay him to his face. [11]Therefore you shall keep the commandment, the statutes, and the judgments which I command you today, to observe them.

**BLESSINGS OF OBEDIENCE**

[12]"Then it shall come to pass, because you listen to these judgments, and keep and do them, that the LORD your God will keep with you the covenant and the mercy which He swore to your fathers. [13]And He will love you and bless you and multiply you; He will also bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your land, your grain and your new wine and your oil, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flock, in the land of which He swore to your fathers to give you. [14]You shall be blessed above all peoples; there shall not be a male or female barren among you or among your livestock. [15]And the LORD will take away from you all sickness, and will afflict you with none of the terrible diseases of Egypt which you have known, but will lay *them* on all those who hate you. [16]Also you shall destroy all the peoples whom the LORD your God delivers over to you; your eye shall have no pity on them; nor shall you serve their gods, for that *will be* a snare to you.

[17]"If you should say in your heart, 'These nations are greater than I; how can I dispossess them?'- [18]you shall not be afraid of them, *but* you shall remember well what the LORD your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt: [19]the great trials which your eyes saw, the signs and the wonders, the mighty hand and the outstretched arm, by which the LORD your God brought you out. So shall the LORD your God do to all the peoples of whom you are afraid. [20]Moreover the LORD your God will send the hornet among them until those who are left, who hide themselves from you, are destroyed. [21]You shall not be terrified of them; for the LORD your God, the great and awesome

God, *is* among you. [22]And the LORD your God will drive out those nations before you little by little; you will be unable to destroy them at once, lest the beasts of the field become *too* numerous for you. [23]But the LORD your God will deliver them over to you, and will inflict defeat upon them until they are destroyed. [24]And He will deliver their kings into your hand, and you will destroy their name from under heaven; no one shall be able to stand against you until you have destroyed them. [25]You shall burn the carved images of

their gods with fire; you shall not covet the silver or gold *that is* on them, nor take *it* for yourselves, lest you be snared by it; for it *is* an abomination to the LORD your God. [26]Nor shall you bring an abomination into your house, lest you be doomed to destruction like it. You shall utterly detest it and utterly abhor it, for it *is* an accursed thing.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Do Not Be Afraid** *(7:17-21)* The Christian life is not easy. Believers face difficulties, pain, suffering, and sorrow. In situations that seem impossible they sometimes become afraid. God told Israel not to be afraid when the battle seemed too great. Instead, they should remember what He had done for them in the past and take heart. We must look at our fearful situations in the light of what God has already done for us, remembering that "the great and awesome God" will be going into battle with us. **Topic: Fear/Fear of God**

**REMEMBER THE LORD YOUR GOD**

**8** "Every commandment which I command you today you must be careful to
observe, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land of
which the LORD swore to your fathers. 2And you shall remember that the
LORD your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to
humble you *and* test you, to know what *was* in your heart, whether you
would keep His commandments or not. 3So He humbled you, allowed you to
hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers
know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone;
but man lives by every *word* that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD.
4Your garments did not wear out on you, nor did your foot swell these forty
years. 5You should know in your heart that as a man chastens his son, *so* the
LORD your God chastens you.

6"Therefore you shall keep the commandments of the LORD your God, to
walk in His ways and to fear Him. 7For the LORD your God is bringing you
into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, that
flow out of valleys and hills; 8a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig
trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey; 9a land in which you
will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing; a land whose
stones *are* iron and out of whose hills you can dig copper. 10When you have
eaten and are full, then you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land
which He has given you.

11"Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping His
commandments, His judgments, and His statutes which I command you
today, 12lest-*when* you have eaten and are full, and have built beautiful
houses and dwell *in them;* 13and *when* your herds and your flocks multiply,
and your silver and your gold are multiplied, and all that you have is
multiplied; 14when your heart is lifted up, and you forget the LORD your God
who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage; 15who
led you through that great and terrible wilderness, *in which were* fiery
serpents and scorpions and thirsty land where there was no water; who
brought water for you out of the flinty rock; 16who fed you in the wilderness

with manna, which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and that He might test you, to do you good in the end- [17]then you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth.’

[18]“And you shall remember the LORD your God, for *it is* He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as *it is* this day. [19]Then it shall be, if you by any means forget the LORD your God, and follow other gods, and serve them and worship them, I testify against you this day that you shall surely perish. [20]As the nations which the LORD destroys before you, so you shall perish, because you would not be obedient to the voice of the LORD your God.

## ISRAEL'S REBELLIONS REVIEWED

**9** "Hear, O Israel: You *are* to cross over the Jordan today, and go in to
dispossess nations greater and mightier than yourself, cities great and
fortified up to heaven, 2a people great and tall, the descendants of the
Anakim, whom you know, and *of whom* you heard *it said,* 'Who can stand
before the descendants of Anak?' 3Therefore understand today that the LORD
your God *is* He who goes over before you *as* a consuming fire. He will
destroy them and bring them down before you; so you shall drive them out
and destroy them quickly, as the LORD has said to you.

4"Do not think in your heart, after the LORD your God has cast them out
before you, saying, 'Because of my righteousness the LORD has brought me
in to possess this land'; but *it is* because of the wickedness of these nations
*that* the LORD is driving them out from before you. 5*It is* not because of your
righteousness or the uprightness of your heart *that* you go in to possess their
land, but because of the wickedness of these nations *that* the LORD your God
drives them out from before you, and that He may fulfill the word which the
LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. 6Therefore
understand that the LORD your God is not giving you this good land to
possess because of your righteousness, for you *are* a stiff-necked people.

7"Remember! Do not forget how you provoked the LORD your God to
wrath in the wilderness. From the day that you departed from the land of
Egypt until you came to this place, you have been rebellious against the
LORD. 8Also in Horeb you provoked the LORD to wrath, so that the LORD was
angry *enough* with you to have destroyed you. 9When I went up into the
mountain to receive the tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant which the
LORD made with you, then I stayed on the mountain forty days and forty
nights. I neither ate bread nor drank water. 10Then the LORD delivered to me
two tablets of stone written with the finger of God, and on them *were* all the
words which the LORD had spoken to you on the mountain from the midst of
the fire in the day of the assembly. 11And it came to pass, at the end of forty
days and forty nights, *that* the LORD gave me the two tablets of stone, the
tablets of the covenant.

12 “Then the LORD said to me, ‘Arise, go down quickly from here, for your
people whom you brought out of Egypt have acted corruptly; they have
quickly turned aside from the way which I commanded them; they have made
themselves a molded image.’

13 “Furthermore the LORD spoke to me, saying, ‘I have seen this people, and
indeed they are a stiff-necked people. 14 Let Me alone, that I may destroy
them and blot out their name from under heaven; and I will make of you a
nation mightier and greater than they.’

15 “So I turned and came down from the mountain, and the mountain
burned with fire; and the two tablets of the covenant *were* in my two hands.
16 And I looked, and behold, you had sinned against the LORD your God-had
made for yourselves a molded calf ! You had turned aside quickly from the
way which the LORD had commanded you. 17 Then I took the two tablets and
threw them out of my two hands and broke them before your eyes. 18 And I
fell down before the LORD, as at the first, forty days and forty nights; I neither
ate bread nor drank water, because of all your sin which you committed in
doing wickedly in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger. 19 For I
was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure with which the LORD was angry
with you, to destroy you. But the LORD listened to me at that time also. 20 And
the LORD was very angry with Aaron *and* would have destroyed him; so I
prayed for Aaron also at the same time. 21 Then I took your sin, the calf which
you had made, and burned it with fire and crushed it *and* ground *it* very
small, until it was as fine as dust; and I threw its dust into the brook that
descended from the mountain.

22 “Also at Taberah and Massah and Kibroth Hattaavah you provoked the
LORD to wrath. 23 Likewise, when the LORD sent you from Kadesh Barnea,
saying, ‘Go up and possess the land which I have given you,’ then you
rebelled against the commandment of the LORD your God, and you did not
believe Him nor obey His voice. 24 You have been rebellious against the LORD
from the day that I knew you.

25 “Thus I prostrated myself before the LORD; forty days and forty nights I
kept prostrating myself, because the LORD had said He would destroy you.
26 Therefore I prayed to the LORD, and said: ‘O Lord GOD, do not destroy

Your people and Your inheritance whom You have redeemed through Your greatness, whom You have brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand. [27]Remember Your servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; do not look on the stubbornness of this people, or on their wickedness or their sin, [28]lest the land from which You brought us should say, “Because the LORD was not able to bring them to the land which He promised them, and because He hated them, He has brought them out to kill them in the wilderness.” [29]Yet they *are* Your people and Your inheritance, whom You brought out by Your mighty power and by Your outstretched arm.’

**THE SECOND PAIR OF TABLETS**

**10** "At that time the LORD said to me, 'Hew for yourself two tablets of stone
like the first, and come up to Me on the mountain and make yourself an
ark of wood. 2And I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first
tablets, which you broke; and you shall put them in the ark.'

3"So I made an ark of acacia wood, hewed two tablets of stone like the
first, and went up the mountain, having the two tablets in my hand. 4And He
wrote on the tablets according to the first writing, the Ten Commandments,
which the LORD had spoken to you in the mountain from the midst of the fire
in the day of the assembly; and the LORD gave them to me. 5Then I turned
and came down from the mountain, and put the tablets in the ark which I had
made; and there they are, just as the LORD commanded me."

> "What does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the LORD and His statutes which I command you today for your good?"
> DEUTERONOMY 10:12, 13

6(Now the children of Israel journeyed from the wells of Bene Jaakan to
Moserah, where Aaron died, and where he was buried; and El-eazar his son
ministered as priest in his stead. 7From there they journeyed to Gudgodah,
and from Gudgodah to Jotbathah, a land of rivers of water. 8At that time the
LORD separated the tribe of Levi to bear the ark of the covenant of the LORD,
to stand before the LORD to minister to Him and to bless in His name, to this
day. 9Therefore Levi has no portion nor inheritance with his brethren; the
LORD *is* his inheritance, just as the LORD your God promised him.)

10"As at the first time, I stayed in the mountain forty days and forty nights;
the LORD also heard me at that time, *and* the LORD chose not to destroy you.
11Then the LORD said to me, 'Arise, begin *your* journey before the people,
that they may go in and possess the land which I swore to their fathers to give

them.’

**THE ESSENCE OF THE LAW**

12 “And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to
fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the
LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, 13 *and* to keep the
commandments of the LORD and His statutes which I command you today for
your good? 14 Indeed heaven and the highest heavens belong to the LORD your
God, *also* the earth with all that *is* in it. 15 The LORD delighted only in your
fathers, to love them; and He chose their descendants after them, you above
all peoples, as *it is* this day. 16 Therefore circumcise the foreskin of your heart,
and be stiff-necked no longer. 17 For the LORD your God *is* God of gods and
Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality
nor takes a bribe. 18 He administers justice for the fatherless and the widow,
and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing. 19 Therefore love the
stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. 20 You shall fear the
LORD your God; you shall serve Him, and to Him you shall hold fast, and
take oaths in His name. 21 He *is* your praise, and He *is* your God, who has
done for you these great and awesome things which your eyes have seen.
22 Your fathers went down to Egypt with seventy persons, and now the LORD
your God has made you as the stars of heaven in multitude.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Seriously Now** *(10:12, 13)* What does it mean to “fear the LORD”? Fearing God means to reverence Him, to take Him seriously. How can we do that? By our obedience. These verses say that God’s people must “walk in all His ways,” loving Him, serving Him, and keeping His commandments. Why? Because these commandments are for our good. God gave His laws, not to keep people from

enjoying life, but to help them find ultimate joy and purpose through a relationship with Him. Fear of God leads to true fulfillment. **Topic: Fear/Fear of God**

**LOVE AND OBEDIENCE REWARDED**

**11** “Therefore you shall love the LORD your God, and keep His charge, His
statutes, His judgments, and His commandments always. 2Know today
that *I do* not *speak* with your children, who have not known and who have
not seen the chastening of the LORD your God, His greatness and His mighty
hand and His outstretched arm- 3His signs and His acts which He did in the
midst of Egypt, to Pharaoh king of Egypt, and to all his land; 4what He did to
the army of Egypt, to their horses and their chariots: how He made the waters
of the Red Sea overflow them as they pursued you, and *how* the LORD has
destroyed them to this day; 5what He did for you in the wilderness until you
came to this place; 6and what He did to Da-than and Abiram the sons of
Eliab, the son of Reuben: how the earth opened its mouth and swallowed
them up, their households, their tents, and all the substance that *was* in their
possession, in the midst of all Israel- 7but your eyes have seen every great act
of the LORD which He did.

> “Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and bind them as a sign on your hand.”
> DEUTERONOMY 11:18

8“Therefore you shall keep every commandment which I command you
today, that you may be strong, and go in and possess the land which you
cross over to possess, 9and that you may prolong *your* days in the land which
the LORD swore to give your fathers, to them and their descendants, ‘a land
flowing with milk and honey.’*a* 10For the land which you go to possess *is* not
like the land of Egypt from which you have come, where you sowed your
seed and watered *it* by foot, as a vegetable garden; 11but the land which you
cross over to possess *is* a land of hills and valleys, which drinks water from
the rain of heaven, 12a land for which the LORD your God cares; the eyes of
the LORD your God *are* always on it, from the beginning of the year to the
very end of the year.

13‘And it shall be that if you earnestly obey My commandments which I

command you today, to love the LORD your God and serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul, 14then I[a] will give *you* the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the latter rain, that you may gather in your grain, your new wine, and your oil. 15And I will send grass in your fields for your livestock, that you may eat and be filled.' 16Take heed to yourselves, lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them, 17lest the LORD's anger be aroused against you, and He shut up the heavens so that there be no rain, and the land yield no produce, and you perish quickly from the good land which the LORD is giving you.

18"Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. 19You shall teach them to your children, speaking of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. 20And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, 21that your days and the days of your children may be multiplied in the land of which the LORD swore to your fathers to give them, like the days of the heavens above the earth.

22"For if you carefully keep all these commandments which I command you to do-to love the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways, and to hold fast to Him- 23then the LORD will drive out all these nations from before you, and you will dispossess greater and mightier nations than yourselves. 24Every place on which the sole of your foot treads shall be yours: from the wilderness and Lebanon, from the river, the River Euphrates, even to the Western Sea,[a] shall be your territory. 25No man shall be able to stand against you; the LORD your God will put the dread of you and the fear of you upon all the land where you tread, just as He has said to you.

26"Behold, I set before you today a blessing and a curse: 27the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you today; 28and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside from the way which I command you today, to go after other gods which you have not known. 29Now it shall be, when the LORD your God has brought you into the land which you go to possess, that you shall put the blessing on Mount Gerizim and the curse on Mount Ebal.

[30]*Are* they not on the other side of the Jordan, toward the setting sun, in the land of the Canaanites who dwell in the plain opposite Gilgal, beside the terebinth trees of Moreh? [31]For you will cross over the Jordan and go in to possess the land which the LORD your God is giving you, and you will possess it and dwell in it. [32]And you shall be careful to observe all the statutes and judgments which I set before you today.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Teach Them Well** *(11:18, 19)* So important were the words of 4:9, 10 that they are repeated here. God commands parents to teach their children about Him and His love for them. Parental soul care involves a commitment to teach children in the ways of God. Parents should be able to sense teachable moments with their children. Then they can instruct them in God's ways. Home is the incubator where small hearts and hands are trained to serve God. **Topic: Parenting**

## A PRESCRIBED PLACE OF WORSHIP

**12** “These *are* the statutes and judgments which you shall be careful to
observe in the land which the LORD God of your fathers is giving you to
possess, all the days that you live on the earth. 2You shall utterly destroy all
the places where the nations which you shall dispossess served their gods, on
the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree. 3And you
shall destroy their altars, break their *sacred* pillars, and burn their wooden
images with fire; you shall cut down the carved images of their gods and
destroy their names from that place. 4You shall not worship the LORD your
God *with* such *things.*

5“But you shall seek the place where the LORD your God chooses, out of all
your tribes, to put His name for His dwelling place; and there you shall go.
6There you shall take your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the
heave offerings of your hand, your vowed offerings, your freewill offerings,
and the firstborn of your herds and flocks. 7And there you shall eat before the
LORD your God, and you shall rejoice in all to which you have put your hand,
you and your households, in which the LORD your God has blessed you.

8“You shall not at all do as we are doing here today-every man doing
whatever *is* right in his own eyes- 9for as yet you have not come to the rest
and the inheritance which the LORD your God is giving you. 10But *when* you
cross over the Jordan and dwell in the land which the LORD your God is
giving you to inherit, and He gives you rest from all your enemies round
about, so that you dwell in safety, 11then there will be the place where the
LORD your God chooses to make His name abide. There you shall bring all
that I command you: your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the
heave offerings of your hand, and all your choice offerings which you vow to
the LORD. 12And you shall rejoice before the LORD your God, you and your
sons and your daughters, your male and female servants, and the Levite who
*is* within your gates, since he has no portion nor inheritance with you. 13Take
heed to yourself that you do not offer your burnt offerings in every place that
you see; 14but in the place which the LORD chooses, in one of your tribes,
there you shall offer your burnt offerings, and there you shall do all that I
command you.

15 “However, you may slaughter and eat meat within all your gates,
whatever your heart desires, according to the blessing of the LORD your God
which He has given you; the unclean and the clean may eat of it, of the
gazelle and the deer alike. 16 Only you shall not eat the blood; you shall pour
it on the earth like water. 17 You may not eat within your gates the tithe of
your grain or your new wine or your oil, of the firstborn of your herd or your
flock, of any of your offerings which you vow, of your freewill offerings, or
of the heave offering of your hand. 18 But you must eat them before the LORD
your God in the place which the LORD your God chooses, you and your son
and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, and the Levite
who *is* within your gates; and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God in
all to which you put your hands. 19 Take heed to yourself that you do not
forsake the Levite as long as you live in your land.

20 “When the LORD your God enlarges your border as He has promised you,
and you say, ‘Let me eat meat,’ because you long to eat meat, you may eat as
much meat as your heart desires. 21 If the place where the LORD your God
chooses to put His name is too far from you, then you may slaughter from
your herd and from your flock which the LORD has given you, just as I have
commanded you, and you may eat within your gates as much as your heart
desires. 22 Just as the gazelle and the deer are eaten, so you may eat them; the
unclean and the clean alike may eat them. 23 Only be sure that you do not eat
the blood, for the blood *is* the life; you may not eat the life with the meat.
24 You shall not eat it; you shall pour it on the earth like water. 25 You shall
not eat it, that it may go well with you and your children after you, when you
do *what is* right in the sight of the LORD. 26 Only the holy things which you
have, and your vowed offerings, you shall take and go to the place which the
LORD chooses. 27 And you shall offer your burnt offerings, the meat and the
blood, on the altar of the LORD your God; and the blood of your sacrifices
shall be poured out on the altar of the LORD your God, and you shall eat the
meat. 28 Observe and obey all these words which I command you, that it may
go well with you and your children after you forever, when you do *what is*
good and right in the sight of the LORD your God.

**BEWARE OF FALSE GODS**

29 “When the LORD your God cuts off from before you the nations which
you go to dispossess, and you displace them and dwell in their land, 30 take
heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are
destroyed from before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods,
saying, ‘How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise.’
31 You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way; for every
abomination to the LORD which He hates they have done to their gods; for
they burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods.

32 “Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to
it nor take away from it.

**PUNISHMENT OF APOSTATES**

**13** "If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he
gives you a sign or a wonder, [2]and the sign or the wonder comes to pass,
of which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods'-which you
have not known-'and let us serve them,' [3]you shall not listen to the words of
that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the LORD your God is testing you
to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all
your soul. [4]You shall walk after the LORD your God and fear Him, and keep
His commandments and obey His voice; you shall serve Him and hold fast to
Him. [5]But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death,
because he has spoken in order to turn *you* away from the LORD your God,
who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house
of bondage, to entice you from the way in which the LORD your God
commanded you to walk. So you shall put away the evil from your midst.

[6]"If your brother, the son of your mother, your son or your daughter, the
wife of your bosom, or your friend who is as your own soul, secretly entices
you, saying, 'Let us go and serve other gods,' which you have not known,
neither you nor your fathers, [7]of the gods of the people which *are* all around
you, near to you or far off from you, from *one* end of the earth to the *other*
end of the earth, [8]you shall not consent to him or listen to him, nor shall your
eye pity him, nor shall you spare him or conceal him; [9]but you shall surely
kill him; your hand shall be first against him to put him to death, and
afterward the hand of all the people. [10]And you shall stone him with stones
until he dies, because he sought to entice you away from the LORD your God,
who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. [11]So
all Israel shall hear and fear, and not again do such wickedness as this among
you.

[12]"If you hear someone in one of your cities, which the LORD your God
gives you to dwell in, saying, [13]'Corrupt men have gone out from among you
and enticed the inhabitants of their city, saying, "Let us go and serve other
gods" '-which you have not known- [14]then you shall inquire, search out, and
ask diligently. And *if it is* indeed true *and* certain *that* such an abomination
was committed among you, [15]you shall surely strike the inhabitants of that

city with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying it, all that is in it and its livestock-with the edge of the sword. [16]And you shall gather all its plunder into the middle of the street, and completely burn with fire the city and all its plunder, for the LORD your God. It shall be a heap forever; it shall not be built again. [17]So none of the accursed things shall remain in your hand, that the LORD may turn from the fierceness of His anger and show you mercy, have compassion on you and multiply you, just as He swore to your fathers, [18]because you have listened to the voice of the LORD your God, to keep all His commandments which I command you today, to do *what is* right in the eyes of the LORD your God.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Sticking to the Truth** *(13:1-5)* Satan always draws people away from God, and he often works through willing people. This passage warns that if someone claims to be a prophet of God but points people toward other gods, then that person is a false prophet. Under Old Testament law, a false prophet was to be put to death. Teaching that was obviously false was taken seriously and punished accordingly. God's people must have discernment, refusing to listen to anyone who speaks anything different from the truth found in God's Word. That truth will keep us from error. **Topic: Truth**

## IMPROPER MOURNING

**14** “You *are* the children of the LORD your God; you shall not cut
yourselves nor shave the front of your head for the dead. 2For you *are* a
holy people to the LORD your God, and the LORD has chosen you to be a
people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples who *are* on
the face of the earth.

## CLEAN AND UNCLEAN MEAT

3“You shall not eat any detestable thing. 4These *are* the animals which you
may eat: the ox, the sheep, the goat, 5the deer, the gazelle, the roe deer, the
wild goat, the mountain goat,[a] the antelope, and the mountain sheep. 6And
you may eat every animal with cloven hooves, having the hoof split into two
parts, *and that* chews the cud, among the animals. 7Nevertheless, of those that
chew the cud or have cloven hooves, you shall not eat, *such as* these: the
camel, the hare, and the rock hyrax; for they chew the cud but do not have
cloven hooves; they *are* unclean for you. 8Also the swine is unclean for you,
because it has cloven hooves, yet *does* not *chew* the cud; you shall not eat
their flesh or touch their dead carcasses.

9“These you may eat of all that *are* in the waters: you may eat all that have
fins and scales. 10And whatever does not have fins and scales you shall not
eat; it *is* unclean for you.

11“All clean birds you may eat. 12But these you shall not eat: the eagle, the
vulture, the buzzard, 13the red kite, the falcon, and the kite after their kinds;
14every raven after its kind; 15the ostrich, the short-eared owl, the sea gull,
and the hawk after their kinds; 16the little owl, the screech owl, the white owl,
17the jackdaw, the carrion vulture, the fisher owl, 18the stork, the heron after
its kind, and the hoopoe and the bat.

19“Also every creeping thing that flies is unclean for you; they shall not be
eaten.

20“You may eat all clean birds.

21“You shall not eat anything that dies *of itself;* you may give it to the alien

who *is* within your gates, that he may eat it, or you may sell it to a foreigner; for you *are* a holy people to the LORD your God.

"You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk.

**TITHING PRINCIPLES**

22"You shall truly tithe all the increase of your grain that the field produces year by year. 23And you shall eat before the LORD your God, in the place where He chooses to make His name abide, the tithe of your grain and your new wine and your oil, of the firstborn of your herds and your flocks, that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always. 24But if the journey is too long for you, so that you are not able to carry *the tithe, or* if the place where the LORD your God chooses to put His name is too far from you, when the LORD your God has blessed you, 25then you shall exchange *it* for money, take the money in your hand, and go to the place which the LORD your God chooses. 26And you shall spend that money for whatever your heart desires: for oxen or sheep, for wine or similar drink, for whatever your heart desires; you shall eat there before the LORD your God, and you shall rejoice, you and your household. 27You shall not forsake the Levite who *is* within your gates, for he has no part nor inheritance with you.

28"At the end of *every* third year you shall bring out the tithe of your produce of that year and store *it* up within your gates. 29And the Levite, because he has no portion nor inheritance with you, and the stranger and the fatherless and the widow who *are* within your gates, may come and eat and be satisfied, that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do.

## DEBTS CANCELED EVERY SEVEN YEARS

**15** “At the end of *every* seven years you shall grant a release *of debts.* [2]And this *is* the form of the release: Every creditor who has lent *anything* to his neighbor shall release *it;* he shall not require *it* of his neighbor or his brother, because it is called the LORD’s release. [3]Of a foreigner you may require *it;* but you shall give up your claim to what is owed by your brother, [4]except when there may be no poor among you; for the LORD will greatly bless you in the land which the LORD your God is giving you to possess *as* an inheritance-[5]only if you carefully obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe with care all these commandments which I command you today. [6]For the LORD your God will bless you just as He promised you; you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow; you shall reign over many nations, but they shall not reign over you.

## GENEROSITY TO THE POOR

[7]“If there is among you a poor man of your brethren, within any of the gates in your land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart nor shut your hand from your poor brother, [8]but you shall open your hand wide to him and willingly lend him sufficient for his need, whatever he needs. [9] Beware lest there be a wicked thought in your heart, saying, ‘The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand,’ and your eye be evil against your poor brother and you give him nothing, and he cry out to the LORD against you, and it become sin among you. [10]You shall surely give to him, and your heart should not be grieved when you give to him, because for this thing the LORD your God will bless you in all your works and in all to which you put your hand. [11]For the poor will never cease from the land; therefore I command you, saying, ‘You shall open your hand wide to your brother, to your poor and your needy, in your land.’

## THE LAW CONCERNING BONDSERVANTS

[12]“If your brother, a Hebrew man, or a Hebrew woman, is sold to you and serves you six years, then in the seventh year you shall let him go free from you. [13]And when you send him away free from you, you shall not let him go

away empty-handed; [14]you shall supply him liberally from your flock, from your threshing floor, and from your winepress. *From what* the LORD your God has blessed you with, you shall give to him. [15]You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God redeemed you; therefore I command you this thing today. [16]And if it happens that he says to you, 'I will not go away from you,' because he loves you and your house, since he prospers with you, [17]then you shall take an awl and thrust *it* through his ear to the door, and he shall be your servant forever. Also to your female servant you shall do likewise. [18]It shall not seem hard to you when you send him away free from you; for he has been worth a double hired servant in serving you six years. Then the LORD your God will bless you in all that you do.

**THE LAW CONCERNING FIRSTBORN ANIMALS**

[19]"All the firstborn males that come from your herd and your flock you shall sanctify to the LORD your God; you shall do no work with the firstborn of your herd, nor shear the firstborn of your flock. [20]You and your household shall eat *it* before the LORD your God year by year in the place which the LORD chooses. [21]But if there is a defect in it, *if it is* lame or blind *or has* any serious defect, you shall not sacrifice it to the LORD your God. [22]You may eat it within your gates; the unclean and the clean *person* alike *may eat it,* as *if it were* a gazelle or a deer. [23]Only you shall not eat its blood; you shall pour it on the ground like water.

## THE PASSOVER REVIEWED

**16** "Observe the month of Abib, and keep the Passover to the LORD your God, for in the month of Abib the LORD your God brought you out of Egypt by night. 2Therefore you shall sacrifice the Passover to the LORD your God, from the flock and the herd, in the place where the LORD chooses to put His name. 3You shall eat no leavened bread with it; seven days you shall eat unleavened bread with it, *that is,* the bread of affliction (for you came out of the land of Egypt in haste), that you may remember the day in which you came out of the land of Egypt all the days of your life. 4And no leaven shall be seen among you in all your territory for seven days, nor shall *any* of the meat which you sacrifice the first day at twilight remain overnight until morning.

5"You may not sacrifice the Passover within any of your gates which the LORD your God gives you; 6but at the place where the LORD your God chooses to make His name abide, there you shall sacrifice the Passover at twilight, at the going down of the sun, at the time you came out of Egypt. 7And you shall roast and eat *it* in the place which the LORD your God chooses, and in the morning you shall turn and go to your tents. 8Six days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there *shall be* a sacred assembly to the LORD your God. You shall do no work *on it.*

## THE FEAST OF WEEKS REVIEWED

9"You shall count seven weeks for yourself; begin to count the seven weeks from *the time* you begin *to put* the sickle to the grain. 10Then you shall keep the Feast of Weeks to the LORD your God with the tribute of a freewill offering from your hand, which you shall give as the LORD your God blesses you. 11You shall rejoice before the LORD your God, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, the Levite who *is* within your gates, the stranger and the fatherless and the widow who *are* among you, at the place where the LORD your God chooses to make His name abide. 12And you shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt, and you shall be careful to observe these statutes.

## THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES REVIEWED

13 "You shall observe the Feast of Tabernacles seven days, when you have
gathered from your threshing floor and from your winepress. 14 And you shall
rejoice in your feast, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant
and your female servant and the Levite, the stranger and the fatherless and the
widow, who *are* within your gates. 15 Seven days you shall keep a sacred feast
to the LORD your God in the place which the LORD chooses, because the
LORD your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your
hands, so that you surely rejoice.

16 "Three times a year all your males shall appear before the LORD your
God in the place which He chooses: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the
Feast of Weeks, and at the Feast of Tabernacles; and they shall not appear
before the LORD empty-handed. 17 Every man *shall give* as he is able,
according to the blessing of the LORD your God which He has given you.

## JUSTICE MUST BE ADMINISTERED

18 "You shall appoint judges and officers in all your gates, which the LORD
your God gives you, according to your tribes, and they shall judge the people
with just judgment. 19 You shall not pervert justice; you shall not show
partiality, nor take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists
the words of the righteous. 20 You shall follow what is altogether just, that
you may live and inherit the land which the LORD your God is giving you.

21 "You shall not plant for yourself any tree, as a wooden image, near the
altar which you build for yourself to the LORD your God. 22 You shall not set
up a *sacred* pillar, which the LORD your God hates.

**17** “You shall not sacrifice to the LORD your God a bull or sheep which has
any blemish *or* defect, for that *is* an abomination to the LORD your God.

2“If there is found among you, within any of your gates which the LORD
your God gives you, a man or a woman who has been wicked in the sight of
the LORD your God, in transgressing His covenant, 3who has gone and served
other gods and worshiped them, either the sun or moon or any of the host of
heaven, which I have not commanded, 4and it is told you, and you hear *of it,*
then you shall inquire diligently. And if *it is* indeed true *and* certain that such
an abomination has been committed in Israel, 5then you shall bring out to
your gates that man or woman who has committed that wicked thing, and
shall stone to death that man or woman with stones. 6Whoever is deserving of
death shall be put to death on the testimony of two or three witnesses; he
shall not be put to death on the testimony of one witness. 7The hands of the
witnesses shall be the first against him to put him to death, and afterward the
hands of all the people. So you shall put away the evil from among you.

8“If a matter arises which is too hard for you to judge, between degrees of
guilt for bloodshed, between one judgment or another, or between one
punishment or another, matters of controversy within your gates, then you
shall arise and go up to the place which the LORD your God chooses. 9And
you shall come to the priests, the Levites, and to the judge *there* in those
days, and inquire *of them;* they shall pronounce upon you the sentence of
judgment. 10You shall do according to the sentence which they pronounce
upon you in that place which the LORD chooses. And you shall be careful to
do according to all that they order you. 11According to the sentence of the
law in which they instruct you, according to the judgment which they tell
you, you shall do; you shall not turn aside *to* the right hand or *to* the left from
the sentence which they pronounce upon you. 12Now the man who acts
presumptuously and will not heed the priest who stands to minister there
before the LORD your God, or the judge, that man shall die. So you shall put
away the evil from Israel. 13And all the people shall hear and fear, and no
longer act presumptuously.

## PRINCIPLES GOVERNING KINGS

14“When you come to the land which the LORD your God is giving you,

and possess it and dwell in it, and say, ‘I will set a king over me like all the nations that *are* around me,’ [15]you shall surely set a king over you whom the LORD your God chooses; *one* from among your brethren you shall set as king over you; you may not set a foreigner over you, who *is* not your brother. [16]But he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, for the LORD has said to you, ‘You shall not return that way again.’ [17]Neither shall he multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away; nor shall he greatly multiply silver and gold for himself.

[18]“Also it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book, from *the one* before the priests, the Levites. [19]And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes, [20]that his heart may not be lifted above his brethren, that he may not turn aside from the commandment *to* the right hand or *to* the left, and that he may prolong *his* days in his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel.

## THE PORTION OF THE PRIESTS AND LEVITES

**18** "The priests, the Levites-all the tribe of Levi-shall have no part nor inheritance with Israel; they shall eat the offerings of the LORD made by fire, and His portion. 2Therefore they shall have no inheritance among their brethren; the LORD is their inheritance, as He said to them.

3"And this shall be the priest's due from the people, from those who offer a sacrifice, whether *it is* bull or sheep: they shall give to the priest the shoulder, the cheeks, and the stomach. 4The firstfruits of your grain and your new wine and your oil, and the first of the fleece of your sheep, you shall give him. 5For the LORD your God has chosen him out of all your tribes to stand to minister in the name of the LORD, him and his sons forever.

6"So if a Levite comes from any of your gates, from where he dwells among all Israel, and comes with all the desire of his mind to the place which the LORD chooses, 7then he may serve in the name of the LORD his God as all his brethren the Levites *do*, who stand there before the LORD. 8They shall have equal portions to eat, besides what comes from the sale of his inheritance.

## AVOID WICKED CUSTOMS

9"When you come into the land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations. 10There shall not be found among you *anyone* who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, *or one* who practices witchcraft, *or* a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, 11or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. 12For all who do these things *are* an abomination to the LORD, and because of these abominations the LORD your God drives them out from before you. 13You shall be blameless before the LORD your God. 14For these nations which you will dispossess listened to soothsayers and diviners; but as for you, the LORD your God has not appointed such for you.

## A NEW PROPHET LIKE MOSES

15 “The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your
midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear, 16 according to all you desired
of the LORD your God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, ‘Let me
not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, nor let me see this great fire
anymore, lest I die.’

17 “And the LORD said to me: ‘What they have spoken is good. 18 I will raise
up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My
words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him.
19 And it shall be *that* whoever will not hear My words, which He speaks in
My name, I will require *it* of him. 20 But the prophet who presumes to speak a
word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks
in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die.’ 21 And if you say in your
heart, ‘How shall we know the word which the LORD has not spoken?’-
22 when a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not
happen or come to pass, that *is* the thing which the LORD has not spoken; the
prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Steer Clear!** *(18:9-14)* The Bible is very clear in its condemnation of witchcraft and other occult practices. The Israelites were told to drive such people out of the land. Worshipers of Satan, such as witches and other members of satanic cults, still exist today. Forms of the occult are also found in New Age teachings, psychic hotlines, astrology and astrological charts, horoscopes, and the tricks of tarot card readers. All of these are from the realm of Satan. Believers must discern the evil inherent in these practices and steer clear of any involvement with them. **Topic: Occult**

**THREE CITIES OF REFUGE**

**19** “When the LORD your God has cut off the nations whose land the LORD
your God is giving you, and you dispossess them and dwell in their cities
and in their houses, 2you shall separate three cities for yourself in the midst of
your land which the LORD your God is giving you to possess. 3You shall
prepare roads for yourself, and divide into three parts the territory of your
land which the LORD your God is giving you to inherit, that any manslayer
may flee there.

4“And this *is* the case of the manslayer who flees there, that he may live:
Whoever kills his neighbor unintentionally, not having hated him in time
past- 5as when *a man* goes to the woods with his neighbor to cut timber, and
his hand swings a stroke with the ax to cut down the tree, and the head slips
from the handle and strikes his neighbor so that he dies-he shall flee to one of
these cities and live; 6lest the avenger of blood, while his anger is hot, pursue
the manslayer and overtake him, because the way is long, and kill him,
though he *was* not deserving of death, since he had not hated the victim in
time past. 7Therefore I command you, saying, ‘You shall separate three cities
for yourself.’

8“Now if the LORD your God enlarges your territory, as He swore to your
fathers, and gives you the land which He promised to give to your fathers,
9and if you keep all these commandments and do them, which I command
you today, to love the LORD your God and to walk always in His ways, then
you shall add three more cities for yourself besides these three, 10lest
innocent blood be shed in the midst of your land which the LORD your God is
giving you *as* an inheritance, and *thus* guilt of bloodshed be upon you.

11“But if anyone hates his neighbor, lies in wait for him, rises against him
and strikes him mortally, so that he dies, and he flees to one of these cities,
12then the elders of his city shall send and bring him from there, and deliver
him over to the hand of the avenger of blood, that he may die. 13Your eye
shall not pity him, but you shall put away *the guilt of* innocent blood from
Israel, that it may go well with you.

## PROPERTY BOUNDARIES

14 “You shall not remove your neighbor’s landmark, which the men of old
have set, in your inheritance which you will inherit in the land that the LORD
your God is giving you to possess.

## THE LAW CONCERNING WITNESSES

15 “One witness shall not rise against a man concerning any iniquity or any
sin that he commits; by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall
be established. 16 If a false witness rises against any man to testify against him
of wrongdoing, 17 then both men in the controversy shall stand before the
LORD, before the priests and the judges who serve in those days. 18 And the
judges shall make careful inquiry, and indeed, *if* the witness *is* a false
witness, who has testified falsely against his brother, 19 then you shall do to
him as he thought to have done to his brother; so you shall put away the evil
from among you. 20 And those who remain shall hear and fear, and hereafter
they shall not again commit such evil among you. 21 Your eye shall not pity:
life *shall be* for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

**PRINCIPLES GOVERNING WARFARE**

**20** “When you go out to battle against your enemies, and see horses and
chariots *and* people more numerous than you, do not be afraid of them;
for the LORD your God *is* with you, who brought you up from the land of
Egypt. 2So it shall be, when you are on the verge of battle, that the priest shall
approach and speak to the people. 3And he shall say to them, ‘Hear, O Israel:
Today you are on the verge of battle with your enemies. Do not let your heart
faint, do not be afraid, and do not tremble or be terrified because of them;
4for the LORD your God *is* He who goes with you, to fight for you against
your enemies, to save you.’

5“Then the officers shall speak to the people, saying: ‘What man *is there*
who has built a new house and has not dedicated it? Let him go and return to
his house, lest he die in the battle and another man dedicate it. 6Also what
man *is there* who has planted a vineyard and has not eaten of it? Let him go
and return to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man eat of it.
7And what man *is there* who is betrothed to a woman and has not married
her? Let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle and another
man marry her.’

8“The officers shall speak further to the people, and say, ‘What man *is*
*there who is* fearful and fainthearted? Let him go and return to his house, lest
the heart of his brethren faint[a] like his heart.’ 9And so it shall be, when the
officers have finished speaking to the people, that they shall make captains of
the armies to lead the people.

10“When you go near a city to fight against it, then proclaim an offer of
peace to it. 11And it shall be that if they accept your offer of peace, and open
to you, then all the people *who are* found in it shall be placed under tribute to
you, and serve you. 12Now if *the city* will not make peace with you, but war
against you, then you shall besiege it. 13And when the LORD your God
delivers it into your hands, you shall strike every male in it with the edge of
the sword. 14But the women, the little ones, the livestock, and all that is in the
city, all its spoil, you shall plunder for yourself; and you shall eat the
enemies’ plunder which the LORD your God gives you. 15Thus you shall do to

all the cities *which are* very far from you, which *are* not of the cities of these nations.

16 “But of the cities of these peoples which the LORD your God gives you *as* an inheritance, you shall let nothing that breathes remain alive, 17 but you shall utterly destroy them: the Hittite and the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite, just as the LORD your God has commanded you, 18 lest they teach you to do according to all their abominations which they have done for their gods, and you sin against the LORD your God.

19 “When you besiege a city for a long time, while making war against it to take it, you shall not destroy its trees by wielding an ax against them; if you can eat of them, do not cut them down to use in the siege, for the tree of the field *is* man’s *food*. 20 Only the trees which you know *are* not trees for food you may destroy and cut down, to build siege-works against the city that makes war with you, until it is subdued.

## THE LAW CONCERNING UNSOLVED MURDER

**21** “If *anyone* is found slain, lying in the field in the land which the LORD
your God is giving you to possess, *and* it is not known who killed him,
2 then your elders and your judges shall go out and measure *the distance* from
the slain man to the surrounding cities. 3 And it shall be *that* the elders of the
city nearest to the slain man will take a heifer which has not been worked *and*
which has not pulled with a yoke. 4 The elders of that city shall bring the
heifer down to a valley with flowing water, which is neither plowed nor
sown, and they shall break the heifer’s neck there in the valley. 5 Then the
priests, the sons of Levi, shall come near, for the LORD your God has chosen
them to minister to Him and to bless in the name of the LORD; by their word
every controversy and every assault shall be *settled.* 6 And all the elders of
that city nearest to the slain *man* shall wash their hands over the heifer whose
neck was broken in the valley. 7 Then they shall answer and say, ‘Our hands
have not shed this blood, nor have our eyes seen *it.* 8 Provide atonement, O
LORD, for Your people Israel, whom You have redeemed, and do not lay
innocent blood to the charge of Your people Israel.’ And atonement shall be
provided on their behalf for the blood. 9 So you shall put away the *guilt of*
innocent blood from among you when you do *what is* right in the sight of the
LORD.

## FEMALE CAPTIVES

10 “When you go out to war against your enemies, and the LORD your God
delivers them into your hand, and you take them captive, 11 and you see
among the captives a beautiful woman, and desire her and would take her for
your wife, 12 then you shall bring her home to your house, and she shall shave
her head and trim her nails. 13 She shall put off the clothes of her captivity,
remain in your house, and mourn her father and her mother a full month; after
that you may go in to her and be her husband, and she shall be your wife.
14 And it shall be, if you have no delight in her, then you shall set her free, but
you certainly shall not sell her for money; you shall not treat her brutally,
because you have humbled her.

## FIRSTBORN INHERITANCE RIGHTS

15 "If a man has two wives, one loved and the other unloved, and they have
borne him children, *both* the loved and the unloved, and *if* the firstborn son is
of her who is unloved, 16 then it shall be, on the day he bequeaths his
possessions to his sons, *that* he must not bestow firstborn status on the son of
the loved wife in preference to the son of the unloved, the *true* firstborn.
17 But he shall acknowledge the son of the unloved wife *as* the firstborn by
giving him a double portion of all that he has, for he *is* the beginning of his
strength; the right of the firstborn *is* his.

## THE REBELLIOUS SON

18 "If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice
of his father or the voice of his mother, and *who*, when they have chastened
him, will not heed them, 19 then his father and his mother shall take hold of
him and bring him out to the elders of his city, to the gate of his city. 20 And
they shall say to the elders of his city, 'This son of ours is stubborn and
rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard.' 21 Then
all the men of his city shall stone him to death with stones; so you shall put
away the evil from among you, and all Israel shall hear and fear.

## MISCELLANEOUS LAWS

22 "If a man has committed a sin deserving of death, and he is put to death,
and you hang him on a tree, 23 his body shall not remain overnight on the tree,
but you shall surely bury him that day, so that you do not defile the land
which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance; for he who is
hanged is accursed of God.

### SOUL NOTE

**Who's Responsible?** *(21:18-21)* Under Moses' law, incorrigibly

stubborn and rebellious children were to be put to death. As God's holy people, the Israelites were responsible before God to eradicate all evil among them. Parents bear the responsibility of rearing their children, but sometimes they must face the pain of a child's waywardness. Even parents who have lovingly disciplined their children can still find they have a rebellious child. Parents need to discern between irresponsibility and willful defiance, and then discipline accordingly. They need to deal with defiance in order to help their children learn self-control and respect, important lessons for the rest of their lives.**Topic:** **Adolescent Problems**

**22** “You shall not see your brother’s ox or his sheep going astray, and hide
yourself from them; you shall certainly bring them back to your brother.
2 And if your brother *is* not near you, or if you do not know him, then you
shall bring it to your own house, and it shall remain with you until your
brother seeks it; then you shall restore it to him. 3 You shall do the same with
his donkey, and so shall you do with his garment; with any lost thing of your
brother’s, which he has lost and you have found, you shall do likewise; you
must not hide yourself.

4 “You shall not see your brother’s donkey or his ox fall down along the
road, and hide yourself from them; you shall surely help him lift *them* up
again.

5 “A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man
put on a woman’s garment, for all who do so *are* an abomination to the LORD
your God.

6 “If a bird’s nest happens to be before you along the way, in any tree or on
the ground, with young ones or eggs, with the mother sitting on the young or
on the eggs, you shall not take the mother with the young; 7 you shall surely
let the mother go, and take the young for yourself, that it may be well with
you and *that* you may prolong *your* days.

8 “When you build a new house, then you shall make a parapet for your
roof, that you may not bring guilt of bloodshed on your household if anyone
falls from it.

9 “You shall not sow your vineyard with different kinds of seed, lest the
yield of the seed which you have sown and the fruit of your vineyard be
defiled.

10 “You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together.

11 “You shall not wear a garment of different sorts, *such as* wool and linen
mixed together.

12 “You shall make tassels on the four corners of the clothing with which
you cover *yourself.*

### LAWS OF SEXUAL MORALITY

13“If any man takes a wife, and goes in to her, and detests her, 14and charges her with shameful conduct, and brings a bad name on her, and says, ‘I took this woman, and when I came to her I found she *was* not a virgin,’ 15then the father and mother of the young woman shall take and bring out *the evidence of* the young woman’s virginity to the elders of the city at the gate. 16And the young woman’s father shall say to the elders, ‘I gave my daughter to this man as wife, and he detests her. 17Now he has charged her with shameful conduct, saying, “I found your daughter *was* not a virgin,” and yet these *are the evidences of* my daughter’s virginity.’ And they shall spread the cloth before the elders of the city. 18Then the elders of that city shall take that man and punish him; 19and they shall fine him one hundred *shekels* of silver and give *them* to the father of the young woman, because he has brought a bad name on a virgin of Israel. And she shall be his wife; he cannot divorce her all his days.

20“But if the thing is true, *and evidences of* virginity are not found for the young woman, 21then they shall bring out the young woman to the door of her father’s house, and the men of her city shall stone her to death with stones, because she has done a disgraceful thing in Israel, to play the harlot in her father’s house. So you shall put away the evil from among you.

22“If a man is found lying with a woman married to a husband, then both of them shall die-the man that lay with the woman, and the woman; so you shall put away the evil from Israel.

23“If a young woman *who is* a virgin is betrothed to a husband, and a man finds her in the city and lies with her, 24then you shall bring them both out to the gate of that city, and you shall stone them to death with stones, the young woman because she did not cry out in the city, and the man because he humbled his neighbor’s wife; so you shall put away the evil from among you.

25“But if a man finds a betrothed young woman in the countryside, and the man forces her and lies with her, then only the man who lay with her shall die. 26But you shall do nothing to the young woman; *there is* in the young woman no sin *deserving* of death, for just as when a man rises against his neighbor and kills him, even so *is* this matter. 27For he found her in the countryside, *and* the betrothed young woman cried out, but *there was* no one

to save her.

28 “If a man finds a young woman *who is* a virgin, who is not betrothed,
and he seizes her and lies with her, and they are found out, 29 then the man
who lay with her shall give to the young woman’s father fifty *shekels* of
silver, and she shall be his wife because he has humbled her; he shall not be
permitted to divorce her all his days.

30 “A man shall not take his father’s wife, nor uncover his father’s bed.

## THOSE EXCLUDED FROM THE CONGREGATION

**23** “He who is emasculated by crushing or mutilation shall not enter the assembly of the LORD.

2“One of illegitimate birth shall not enter the assembly of the LORD; even to the tenth generation none of his *descendants* shall enter the assembly of the LORD.

3“An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter the assembly of the LORD; even to the tenth generation none of his *descendants* shall enter the assembly of the LORD forever, 4because they did not meet you with bread and water on the road when you came out of Egypt, and because they hired against you Balaam the son of Beor from Pethor of Mesopotamia,[a] to curse you. 5Nevertheless the LORD your God would not listen to Balaam, but the LORD your God turned the curse into a blessing for you, because the LORD your God loves you. 6You shall not seek their peace nor their prosperity all your days forever.

7“You shall not abhor an Edomite, for he *is* your brother. You shall not abhor an Egyptian, because you were an alien in his land. 8The children of the third generation born to them may enter the assembly of the LORD.

## CLEANLINESS OF THE CAMPSITE

9“When the army goes out against your enemies, then keep yourself from every wicked thing. 10If there is any man among you who becomes unclean by some occurrence in the night, then he shall go outside the camp; he shall not come inside the camp. 11But it shall be, when evening comes, that he shall wash with water; and when the sun sets, he may come into the camp.

12“Also you shall have a place outside the camp, where you may go out; 13and you shall have an implement among your equipment, and when you sit down outside, you shall dig with it and turn and cover your refuse. 14For the LORD your God walks in the midst of your camp, to deliver you and give your enemies over to you; therefore your camp shall be holy, that He may see no unclean thing among you, and turn away from you.

**MISCELLANEOUS LAWS**

15 "You shall not give back to his master the slave who has escaped from
his master to you. 16 He may dwell with you in your midst, in the place which
he chooses within one of your gates, where it seems best to him; you shall not
oppress him.

17 "There shall be no *ritual* harlot[a] of the daughters of Israel, or a
perverted[b] one of the sons of Israel. 18 You shall not bring the wages of a
harlot or the price of a dog to the house of the LORD your God for any vowed
offering, for both of these *are* an abomination to the LORD your God.

19 "You shall not charge interest to your brother-interest on money *or* food
*or* anything that is lent out at interest. 20 To a foreigner you may charge
interest, but to your brother you shall not charge interest, that the LORD your
God may bless you in all to which you set your hand in the land which you
are entering to possess.

21 "When you make a vow to the LORD your God, you shall not delay to
pay it; for the LORD your God will surely require it of you, and it would be
sin to you. 22 But if you abstain from vowing, it shall not be sin to you. 23 That
which has gone from your lips you shall keep and perform, for you
voluntarily vowed to the LORD your God what you have promised with your
mouth.

24 "When you come into your neighbor's vineyard, you may eat your fill of
grapes at your pleasure, but you shall not put *any* in your container. 25 When
you come into your neighbor's standing grain, you may pluck the heads with
your hand, but you shall not use a sickle on your neighbor's standing grain.

## LAW CONCERNING DIVORCE

**24** “When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds
no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and
he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts *it* in her hand, and sends her out of
his house, 2when she has departed from his house, and goes and becomes
another man’s *wife,* 3*if* the latter husband detests her and writes her a
certificate of divorce, puts *it* in her hand, and sends her out of his house, or if
the latter husband dies who took her as his wife, 4*then* her former husband
who divorced her must not take her back to be his wife after she has been
defiled; for that *is* an abomination before the LORD, and you shall not bring
sin on the land which the LORD your God is giving you *as* an inheritance.

## MISCELLANEOUS LAWS

5“When a man has taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war or be
charged with any business; he shall be free at home one year, and bring
happiness to his wife whom he has taken.

6“No man shall take the lower or the upper millstone in pledge, for he
takes *one’s* living in pledge.

7“If a man is found kidnapping any of his brethren of the children of Israel,
and mistreats him or sells him, then that kidnapper shall die; and you shall
put away the evil from among you.

8“Take heed in an outbreak of leprosy, that you carefully observe and do
according to all that the priests, the Levites, shall teach you; just as I
commanded them, *so* you shall be careful to do. 9Remember what the LORD
your God did to Miriam on the way when you came out of Egypt!

10“When you lend your brother anything, you shall not go into his house to
get his pledge. 11You shall stand outside, and the man to whom you lend shall
bring the pledge out to you. 12And if the man *is* poor, you shall not keep his
pledge overnight. 13You shall in any case return the pledge to him again
when the sun goes down, that he may sleep in his own garment and bless
you; and it shall be righteousness to you before the LORD your God.

14 “You shall not oppress a hired servant *who is* poor and needy, *whether*
one of your brethren or one of the aliens who *is* in your land within your
gates. 15 Each day you shall give *him* his wages, and not let the sun go down
on it, for he *is* poor and has set his heart on it; lest he cry out against you to
the LORD, and it be sin to you.

16 “Fathers shall not be put to death for *their* children, nor shall children be
put to death for *their* fathers; a person shall be put to death for his own sin.

17 “You shall not pervert justice due the stranger or the fatherless, nor take
a widow’s garment as a pledge. 18 But you shall remember that you were a
slave in Egypt, and the LORD your God redeemed you from there; therefore I
command you to do this thing.

19 “When you reap your harvest in your field, and forget a sheaf in the field,
you shall not go back to get it; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and
the widow, that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your
hands. 20 When you beat your olive trees, you shall not go over the boughs
again; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow. 21 When you
gather the grapes of your vineyard, you shall not glean *it* afterward; it shall be
for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow. 22 And you shall remember
that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore I command you to do
this thing.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Helpless But Not Hopeless** *(24:1-4)* God desires marriages to stay together. Because sin has infected all relationships, however, some marriages do not survive. Moses’ commands regarding divorce were given in a culture where a man could divorce his wife verbally and leave her with no property or rights. These commandments regulating divorce in Israel protected those left most helpless-the woman and her children. The Bible does not give people an easy way out of their

commitments. People are expected to honor their commitments; Jesus later made it clear that Moses's words were not to be taken as promoting easy divorce. Divorce should be the exception, not the rule. **Topic: Divorce/Separation**

**Divorce Recovery**

# TOM WHITEMAN

## (Deuteronomy 24:1-4)

**I**'ll never forget the day he told me that he was leaving," said Marcy. "I thought I would die. I just couldn't imagine that God would let this happen to me and to my children. It **"I** seems like just yesterday even though it was about eighteen months ago."

Marcy's story is similar to thousands of others. For her, divorce was not an option. She knew that whatever happened, her commitment to God, to her husband, and to her three young children dictated that she would work out the problems in her marriage. She tried to keep her part of the commitment, but unfortunately she could not influence her husband's decision.

Too many times, I meet committed Christians who are getting divorced against their will. How do these families move on? Can anything redemptive come out of such pain?

From my own experience and from having ministered to thousands of separated and divorced people for over fifteen years, let me assure you that God can take the worst events in our lives and use them for

good. This transformation requires prayer, time, support from others, and wise decisions.

Here are some key elements that are required for a healthy divorce recovery.

## EMOTIONAL NEEDS

During and after a divorce, most people feel as if they are on an emotional roller coaster, vacillating between desperation to get the spouse back no matter what and feelings of anger and revulsion toward the spouse. People who go through a divorce are extremely vulnerable. Many feel a deep emptiness within their soul. One recently divorced woman described it this way, “I felt like I had a huge hole in my chest, like part of me had been ripped away. I walked around feeling as if people could see right through me. I was embarrassed and ashamed.”

This vulnerability can make the divorced person prone to other hurts. For example, it is common for them to feel rejected by family and friends. Others are drawn to anyone who pays attention or strokes the damaged areas of their lives. People who have been recently divorced need to be careful about forming new relationships or making any major changes. They need close accountability with a friend or counselor who will help guard and protect them from making poor choices or from moving forward too quickly into new relationships.

## TIME

The grieving process takes time-realistically, at least two to five years. People typically go through stages of denial, anger, bargaining, and depression. The final stage is acceptance, when they learn to be satisfied with the changes that God has allowed them to experience and to move forward in a productive new lifestyle.

## SOCIAL NEEDS

Divorce ends a primary relationship and often many social relationships as well. After a divorce, people may be very vulnerable to "rebound relationships" and may need friends to help them through the trauma. Divorced people should wait at least two years before involvement in romantic relationships. The emptiness in one's soul after a divorce requires God's healing and completeness apart from a romantic relationship. No human can substitute for the work of God in someone's life.

## SPIRITUAL NEEDS

Most Christians who go through a divorce feel guilt and shame. Often they feel, "Maybe I should have, or could have, done more." These feelings may be compounded by the reactions of others, who in an effort to discourage divorce are afraid to minister to those who experience this brokenness for fear of appearing to condone divorce. Divorced people need to hear the truth that God loves, forgives, and offers full fellowship with Him. Yes, God hates divorce because He understands, through the life of His Son, the hurt and pain of betrayal, rejection, and abandonment. Divorce has negative consequences, but God can take the worst things in life and use them for good and for the good of others.

## THE NEED TO FORGIVE

Another part of spiritual healing comes through divorced people forgiving themselves and those who have hurt them. Without such forgiveness, they can never be truly healed and released. Most divorced people blame themselves, so healing includes confessing those mistakes and then accepting the forgiveness that God offers (1 John 1:9). As long as they wallow in self-pity, guilt, and self-condemnation, those who have been divorced will never realize the blessings that God has in store for them.

Divorced people will also struggle with forgiving others who have wounded them so deeply. True forgiveness means that they are able to rise above the pain from those who have wronged them, pray for them, and wish them well. At some point, they make a decision to forgive-but the process of forgiveness may take a lifetime. Especially if there are children involved, new issues will continually arise. When that happens, they should take those issues to the Lord one more time and recommit themselves to a lifestyle of forgiveness.

**GIVING BACK**

The final step of recovery, following the teachings of Christ, is to focus on giving back to others (2 Cor. 1:3-7). Giving to others too early in the process will only lead to new pain. In the proper time, however, comforting with the comfort that has been received can give divorced people purpose, meaning, and fulfillment.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of divorce/separation include:

- Malachi 2:16
- Matthew 5:31, 32; 19:1-10
- Mark 10:1-12
- Romans 7:2, 3
- 1 Corinthians 7:10-16

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on divorce/separation at Matthew 19:3-8. See also the personality profile of The Woman At The Well: Found And Forgiven. See also the articles on Marital Problems And Problem-solving and marital communication Talking Sense.

**25** “If there is a dispute between men, and they come to court, that *the judges* may judge them, and they justify the righteous and condemn the wicked, 2then it shall be, if the wicked man deserves to be beaten, that the judge will cause him to lie down and be beaten in his presence, according to his guilt, with a certain number of blows. 3Forty blows he may give him *and* no more, lest he should exceed this and beat him with many blows above these, and your brother be humiliated in your sight.

4“You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out *the grain.*

## MARRIAGE DUTY OF THE SURVIVING BROTHER

5“If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the widow of the dead man shall not be *married* to a stranger outside *the family;* her husband’s brother shall go in to her, take her as his wife, and perform the duty of a husband’s brother to her. 6And it shall be *that* the firstborn son which she bears will succeed to the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel. 7But if the man does not want to take his brother’s wife, then let his brother’s wife go up to the gate to the elders, and say, ‘My husband’s brother refuses to raise up a name to his brother in Israel; he will not perform the duty of my husband’s brother.’ 8Then the elders of his city shall call him and speak to him. But *if* he stands firm and says, ‘I do not want to take her,’ 9then his brother’s wife shall come to him in the presence of the elders, remove his sandal from his foot, spit in his face, and answer and say, ‘So shall it be done to the man who will not build up his brother’s house.’ 10And his name shall be called in Israel, ‘The house of him who had his sandal removed.’

## MISCELLANEOUS LAWS

11“If *two* men fight together, and the wife of one draws near to rescue her husband from the hand of the one attacking him, and puts out her hand and seizes him by the genitals, 12then you shall cut off her hand; your eye shall not pity *her.*

13“You shall not have in your bag differing weights, a heavy and a light. 14You shall not have in your house differing measures, a large and a small.

15 You shall have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure, that
your days may be lengthened in the land which the LORD your God is giving
you. 16 For all who do such things, all who behave unrighteously, *are* an
abomination to the LORD your God.

## DESTROY THE AMALEKITES

17 "Remember what Amalek did to you on the way as you were coming out
of Egypt, 18 how he met you on the way and attacked your rear ranks, all the
stragglers at your rear, when you *were* tired and weary; and he did not fear
God. 19 Therefore it shall be, when the LORD your God has given you rest
from your enemies all around, in the land which the LORD your God is giving
you to possess *as* an inheritance, *that* you will blot out the remembrance of
Amalek from under heaven. You shall not forget.

**OFFERINGS OF FIRSTFRUITS AND TITHES**

**26** “And it shall be, when you come into the land which the LORD your God
is giving you *as* an inheritance, and you possess it and dwell in it, 2that
you shall take some of the first of all the produce of the ground, which you
shall bring from your land that the LORD your God is giving you, and put *it* in
a basket and go to the place where the LORD your God chooses to make His
name abide. 3And you shall go to the one who is priest in those days, and say
to him, ‘I declare today to the LORD your[a] God that I have come to the
country which the LORD swore to our fathers to give us.’

4“Then the priest shall take the basket out of your hand and set it down
before the altar of the LORD your God. 5And you shall answer and say before
the LORD your God: ‘My father *was* a Syrian,[a] about to perish, and he went
down to Egypt and dwelt there, few in number; and there he became a nation,
great, mighty, and populous. 6But the Egyptians mistreated us, afflicted us,
and laid hard bondage on us. 7Then we cried out to the LORD God of our
fathers, and the LORD heard our voice and looked on our affliction and our
labor and our oppression. 8So the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a
mighty hand and with an outstretched arm, with great terror and with signs
and wonders. 9He has brought us to this place and has given us this land, “a
land flowing with milk and honey”;[a] 10and now, behold, I have brought the
firstfruits of the land which you, O LORD, have given me.’

“Then you shall set it before the LORD your God, and worship before the
LORD your God. 11So you shall rejoice in every good *thing* which the LORD
your God has given to you and your house, you and the Levite and the
stranger who *is* among you.

12“When you have finished laying aside all the tithe of your increase in the
third year-the year of tithing-and have given *it* to the Levite, the stranger, the
fatherless, and the widow, so that they may eat within your gates and be
filled, 13then you shall say before the LORD your God: ‘I have removed the
holy *tithe* from *my* house, and also have given them to the Levite, the
stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, according to all Your commandments
which You have commanded me; I have not transgressed Your

commandments, nor have I forgotten *them.* [14]I have not eaten any of it when in mourning, nor have I removed *any* of it for an unclean *use,* nor given *any* of it for the dead. I have obeyed the voice of the LORD my God, and have done according to all that You have commanded me. [15]Look down from Your holy habitation, from heaven, and bless Your people Israel and the land which You have given us, just as You swore to our fathers, "a land flowing with milk and honey." '[a]

## A SPECIAL PEOPLE OF GOD

[16]"This day the LORD your God commands you to observe these statutes and judgments; therefore you shall be careful to observe them with all your heart and with all your soul. [17]Today you have proclaimed the LORD to be your God, and that you will walk in His ways and keep His statutes, His commandments, and His judgments, and that you will obey His voice. [18]Also today the LORD has proclaimed you to be His special people, just as He promised you, that *you* should keep all His commandments, [19]and that He will set you high above all nations which He has made, in praise, in name, and in honor, and that you may be a holy people to the LORD your God, just as He has spoken."

## THE LAW INSCRIBED ON STONES

**27** Now Moses, with the elders of Israel, commanded the people, saying: “Keep all the commandments which I command you today. 2And it shall be, on the day when you cross over the Jordan to the land which the LORD your God is giving you, that you shall set up for yourselves large stones, and whitewash them with lime. 3You shall write on them all the words of this law, when you have crossed over, that you may enter the land which the LORD your God is giving you, ‘a land flowing with milk and honey,’[a] just as the LORD God of your fathers promised you. 4Therefore it shall be, when you have crossed over the Jordan, *that* on Mount Ebal you shall set up these stones, which I command you today, and you shall whitewash them with lime. 5And there you shall build an altar to the LORD your God, an altar of stones; you shall not use an iron *tool* on them. 6You shall build with whole stones the altar of the LORD your God, and offer burnt offerings on it to the LORD your God. 7You shall offer peace offerings, and shall eat there, and rejoice before the LORD your God. 8And you shall write very plainly on the stones all the words of this law.”

9Then Moses and the priests, the Levites, spoke to all Israel, saying, “Take heed and listen, O Israel: This day you have become the people of the LORD your God. 10Therefore you shall obey the voice of the LORD your God, and observe His commandments and His statutes which I command you today.”

## CURSES PRONOUNCED FROM MOUNT EBAL

11And Moses commanded the people on the same day, saying, 12“These shall stand on Mount Gerizim to bless the people, when you have crossed over the Jordan: Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin; 13and these shall stand on Mount Ebal to curse: Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali.

14“And the Levites shall speak with a loud voice and say to all the men of Israel: 15‘Cursed *is* the one who makes a carved or molded image, an abomination to the LORD, the work of the hands of the craftsman, and sets *it* up in secret.’

“And all the people shall answer and say, ‘Amen!’

16 ‘Cursed *is* the one who treats his father or his mother with contempt.’

“And all the people shall say, ‘Amen!’

17 ‘Cursed *is* the one who moves his neighbor’s landmark.’

“And all the people shall say, ‘Amen!’

18 ‘Cursed *is* the one who makes the blind to wander off the road.’

“And all the people shall say, ‘Amen!’

19 ‘Cursed *is* the one who perverts the justice due the stranger, the fatherless, and widow.’

“And all the people shall say, ‘Amen!’

20 ‘Cursed *is* the one who lies with his father’s wife, because he has uncovered his father’s bed.’

“And all the people shall say, ‘Amen!’

21 ‘Cursed *is* the one who lies with any kind of animal.’

“And all the people shall say, ‘Amen!’

22 ‘Cursed *is* the one who lies with his sister, the daughter of his father or the daughter of his mother.’

“And all the people shall say, ‘Amen!’

23 ‘Cursed *is* the one who lies with his mother-in-law.’

“And all the people shall say, ‘Amen!’

24 ‘Cursed *is* the one who attacks his neighbor secretly.’

“And all the people shall say, ‘Amen!’

25 ‘Cursed *is* the one who takes a bribe to slay an innocent person.’

“And all the people shall say, ‘Amen!’

26 ‘Cursed *is* the one who does not confirm *all* the words of this law by observing them.’

“And all the people shall say, ‘Amen!’ ”

**BLESSINGS ON OBEDIENCE**

**28** “Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the LORD
your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command
you today, that the LORD your God will set you high above all nations of the
earth. 2And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you,
because you obey the voice of the LORD your God:

3“Blessed *shall* you *be* in the city, and blessed *shall* you *be* in the country.

4“Blessed *shall be* the fruit of your body, the produce of your ground and
the increase of your herds, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of
your flocks.

5“Blessed *shall be* your basket and your kneading bowl.

6“Blessed *shall* you *be* when you come in, and blessed *shall* you *be* when
you go out.

7“The LORD will cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated
before your face; they shall come out against you one way and flee before
you seven ways.

8“The LORD will command the blessing on you in your storehouses and in
all to which you set your hand, and He will bless you in the land which the
LORD your God is giving you.

9“The LORD will establish you as a holy people to Himself, just as He has
sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of the LORD your God and
walk in His ways. 10Then all peoples of the earth shall see that you are called
by the name of the LORD, and they shall be afraid of you. 11And the LORD
will grant you plenty of goods, in the fruit of your body, in the increase of
your livestock, and in the produce of your ground, in the land of which the
LORD swore to your fathers to give you. 12The LORD will open to you His
good treasure, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season, and to
bless all the work of your hand. You shall lend to many nations, but you shall
not borrow. 13And the LORD will make you the head and not the tail; you
shall be above only, and not be beneath, if you heed the commandments of
the LORD your God, which I command you today, and are careful to observe

*them.* [14]So you shall not turn aside from any of the words which I command you this day, *to* the right or the left, to go after other gods to serve them.

**CURSES ON DISOBEDIENCE**

[15]"But it shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you:

[16]"Cursed *shall* you *be* in the city, and cursed *shall* you *be* in the country.

[17]"Cursed *shall be* your basket and your kneading bowl.

[18]"Cursed *shall be* the fruit of your body and the produce of your land, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flocks.

[19]"Cursed *shall* you *be* when you come in, and cursed *shall* you *be* when you go out.

[20]"The LORD will send on you cursing, confusion, and rebuke in all that you set your hand to do, until you are destroyed and until you perish quickly, because of the wickedness of your doings in which you have forsaken Me. [21]The LORD will make the plague cling to you until He has consumed you from the land which you are going to possess. [22]The LORD will strike you with consumption, with fever, with inflammation, with severe burning fever, with the sword, with scorching, and with mildew; they shall pursue you until you perish. [23]And your heavens which *are* over your head shall be bronze, and the earth which is under you *shall be* iron. [24]The LORD will change the rain of your land to powder and dust; from the heaven it shall come down on you until you are destroyed.

[25]"The LORD will cause you to be defeated before your enemies; you shall go out one way against them and flee seven ways before them; and you shall become troublesome to all the kingdoms of the earth. [26]Your carcasses shall be food for all the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and no one shall frighten *them* away. [27]The LORD will strike you with the boils of Egypt, with tumors, with the scab, and with the itch, from which you cannot be healed. [28]The LORD will strike you with madness and blindness and confusion of

heart. [29]And you shall grope at noonday, as a blind man gropes in darkness; you shall not prosper in your ways; you shall be only oppressed and plundered continually, and no one shall save *you.*

[30]"You shall betroth a wife, but another man shall lie with her; you shall build a house, but you shall not dwell in it; you shall plant a vineyard, but shall not gather its grapes. [31]Your ox *shall be* slaughtered before your eyes, but you shall not eat of it; your donkey *shall be* violently taken away from before you, and shall not be restored to you; your sheep *shall be* given to your enemies, and you shall have no one to rescue *them.* [32]Your sons and your daughters *shall be* given to another people, and your eyes shall look and fail *with longing* for them all day long; and *there shall be* no strength in your hand. [33]A nation whom you have not known shall eat the fruit of your land and the produce of your labor, and you shall be only oppressed and crushed continually. [34]So you shall be driven mad because of the sight which your eyes see. [35]The LORD will strike you in the knees and on the legs with severe boils which cannot be healed, and from the sole of your foot to the top of your head.

[36]"The LORD will bring you and the king whom you set over you to a nation which neither you nor your fathers have known, and there you shall serve other gods-wood and stone. [37]And you shall become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword among all nations where the LORD will drive you.

[38]"You shall carry much seed out to the field but gather little in, for the locust shall consume it. [39]You shall plant vineyards and tend *them,* but you shall neither drink *of* the wine nor gather the *grapes;* for the worms shall eat them. [40]You shall have olive trees throughout all your territory, but you shall not anoint *yourself* with the oil; for your olives shall drop off. [41]You shall beget sons and daughters, but they shall not be yours; for they shall go into captivity. [42]Locusts shall consume all your trees and the produce of your land.

[43]"The alien who *is* among you shall rise higher and higher above you, and you shall come down lower and lower. [44]He shall lend to you, but you shall not lend to him; he shall be the head, and you shall be the tail.

[45]"Moreover all these curses shall come upon you and pursue and overtake

you, until you are destroyed, because you did not obey the voice of the LORD your God, to keep His commandments and His statutes which He commanded you. 46And they shall be upon you for a sign and a wonder, and on your descendants forever.

47"Because you did not serve the LORD your God with joy and gladness of heart, for the abundance of everything, 48therefore you shall serve your enemies, whom the LORD will send against you, in hunger, in thirst, in nakedness, and in need of everything; and He will put a yoke of iron on your neck until He has destroyed you. 49The LORD will bring a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth, *as swift* as the eagle flies, a nation whose language you will not understand, 50a nation of fierce countenance, which does not respect the elderly nor show favor to the young. 51And they shall eat the increase of your livestock and the produce of your land, until you are destroyed; they shall not leave you grain or new wine or oil, *or* the increase of your cattle or the offspring of your flocks, until they have destroyed you.

52"They shall besiege you at all your gates until your high and fortified walls, in which you trust, come down throughout all your land; and they shall besiege you at all your gates throughout all your land which the LORD your God has given you. 53You shall eat the fruit of your own body, the flesh of your sons and your daughters whom the LORD your God has given you, in the siege and desperate straits in which your enemy shall distress you. 54The sensitive and very refined man among you will be hostile toward his brother, toward the wife of his bosom, and toward the rest of his children whom he leaves behind, 55so that he will not give any of them the flesh of his children whom he will eat, because he has nothing left in the siege and desperate straits in which your enemy shall distress you at all your gates. 56The tender and delicate woman among you, who would not venture to set the sole of her foot on the ground because of her delicateness and sensitivity, will refuse[a] to the husband of her bosom, and to her son and her daughter, 57her placenta which comes out from between her feet and her children whom she bears; for she will eat them secretly for lack of everything in the siege and desperate straits in which your enemy shall distress you at all your gates.

58"If you do not carefully observe all the words of this law that are written

in this book, that you may fear this glorious and awesome name, THE LORD YOUR GOD, [59]then the LORD will bring upon you and your descendants extraordinary plagues-great and prolonged plagues-and serious and prolonged sicknesses. [60]Moreover He will bring back on you all the diseases of Egypt, of which you were afraid, and they shall cling to you. [61]Also every sickness and every plague, which *is* not written in this Book of the Law, will the LORD bring upon you until you are destroyed. [62]You shall be left few in number, whereas you were as the stars of heaven in multitude, because you would not obey the voice of the LORD your God. [63]And it shall be, *that* just as the LORD rejoiced over you to do you good and multiply you, so the LORD will rejoice over you to destroy you and bring you to nothing; and you shall be plucked from off the land which you go to possess.

[64]"Then the LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other, and there you shall serve other gods, which neither you nor your fathers have known-wood and stone. [65]And among those nations you shall find no rest, nor shall the sole of your foot have a resting place; but there the LORD will give you a trembling heart, failing eyes, and anguish of soul. [66]Your life shall hang in doubt before you; you shall fear day and night, and have no assurance of life. [67]In the morning you shall say, 'Oh, that it were evening!' And at evening you shall say, 'Oh, that it were morning!' because of the fear which terrifies your heart, and because of the sight which your eyes see.

[68]"And the LORD will take you back to Egypt in ships, by the way of which I said to you, 'You shall never see it again.' And there you shall be offered for sale to your enemies as male and female slaves, but no one will buy *you.* "

**SOUL NOTE**

**Loving Warnings** *(28:2, 15)* Chapter 28 contains a list of blessings

and curses. The people of Israel would experience the blessings if they kept their part of the covenant by obeying God. The curses, however, were God's certain punishment for disobedience. These curses were loving warnings about the natural consequences of sin. Wrongdoing toward God or others has tragic consequences. God's strong words are meant to help people avoid the consequences that will come from disobeying Him and hurting others. **Topic: Obedience**

## THE COVENANT RENEWED IN MOAB

**29** These *are* the words of the covenant which the LORD commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, besides the covenant which He made with them in Horeb.

2 Now Moses called all Israel and said to them: "You have seen all that the
LORD did before your eyes in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his
servants and to all his land- 3 the great trials which your eyes have seen, the
signs, and those great wonders. 4 Yet the LORD has not given you a heart to
perceive and eyes to see and ears to hear, to this *very* day. 5 And I have led
you forty years in the wilderness. Your clothes have not worn out on you, and
your sandals have not worn out on your feet. 6 You have not eaten bread, nor
have you drunk wine or *similar* drink, that you may know that I *am* the LORD
your God. 7 And when you came to this place, Sihon king of Heshbon and Og
king of Bashan came out against us to battle, and we conquered them. 8 We
took their land and gave it as an inheritance to the Reubenites, to the Gadites,
and to half the tribe of Manasseh. 9 Therefore keep the words of this covenant,
and do them, that you may prosper in all that you do.

10 "All of you stand today before the LORD your God: your leaders and your
tribes and your elders and your officers, all the men of Israel, 11 your little
ones and your wives-also the stranger who *is* in your camp, from the one who
cuts your wood to the one who draws your water- 12 that you may enter into
covenant with the LORD your God, and into His oath, which the LORD your
God makes with you today, 13 that He may establish you today as a people for
Himself, and *that* He may be God to you, just as He has spoken to you, and
just as He has sworn to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

14 "I make this covenant and this oath, not with you alone, 15 but with *him*
who stands here with us today before the LORD our God, as well as with *him*
who *is* not here with us today 16 (for you know that we dwelt in the land of
Egypt and that we came through the nations which you passed by, 17 and you
saw their abominations and their idols which *were* among them-wood and
stone and silver and gold); 18 so that there may not be among you man or
woman or family or tribe, whose heart turns away today from the LORD our

God, to go *and* serve the gods of these nations, and that there may not be among you a root bearing bitterness or wormwood; [19]and so it may not happen, when he hears the words of this curse, that he blesses himself in his heart, saying, ‘I shall have peace, even though I follow the dictates[a] of my heart’-as though the drunkard could be included with the sober.

[20]“The LORD would not spare him; for then the anger of the LORD and His jealousy would burn against that man, and every curse that is written in this book would settle on him, and the LORD would blot out his name from under heaven. [21]And the LORD would separate him from all the tribes of Israel for adversity, according to all the curses of the covenant that are written in this Book of the Law, [22]so that the coming generation of your children who rise up after you, and the foreigner who comes from a far land, would say, when they see the plagues of that land and the sicknesses which the LORD has laid on it:

[23]‘The whole land *is* brimstone, salt, and burning; it is not sown, nor does it bear, nor does any grass grow there, like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah, and Ze-boiim, which the LORD overthrew in His anger and His wrath.’ [24]All nations would say, ‘Why has the LORD done so to this land? What does the heat of this great anger mean?’ [25]Then *people* would say: ‘Because they have forsaken the covenant of the LORD God of their fathers, which He made with them when He brought them out of the land of Egypt; [26]for they went and served other gods and worshiped them, gods that they did not know and that He had not given to them. [27]Then the anger of the LORD was aroused against this land, to bring on it every curse that is written in this book. [28]And the LORD uprooted them from their land in anger, in wrath, and in great indignation, and cast them into another land, as *it is* this day.’

[29]“The secret *things belong* to the LORD our God, but those *things which are* revealed *belong* to us and to our children forever, that *we* may do all the words of this law.

## THE BLESSING OF RETURNING TO GOD

**30** “Now it shall come to pass, when all these things come upon you, the
blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call *them* to
mind among all the nations where the LORD your God drives you, 2and you
return to the LORD your God and obey His voice, according to all that I
command you today, you and your children, with all your heart and with all
your soul, 3that the LORD your God will bring you back from captivity, and
have compassion on you, and gather you again from all the nations where the
LORD your God has scattered you. 4If *any* of you are driven out to the farthest
*parts* under heaven, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from
there He will bring you. 5Then the LORD your God will bring you to the land
which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it. He will prosper you
and multiply you more than your fathers. 6And the LORD your God will
circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD
your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.

7“Also the LORD your God will put all these curses on your enemies and on
those who hate you, who persecuted you. 8And you will again obey the voice
of the LORD and do all His commandments which I command you today.
9The LORD your God will make you abound in all the work of your hand, in
the fruit of your body, in the increase of your livestock, and in the produce of
your land for good. For the LORD will again rejoice over you for good as He
rejoiced over your fathers, 10if you obey the voice of the LORD your God, to
keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this Book of
the Law, *and* if you turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and with
all your soul.

## THE CHOICE OF LIFE OR DEATH

11“For this commandment which I command you today *is* not *too*
mysterious for you, nor *is* it far off. 12It *is* not in heaven, that you should say,
‘Who will ascend into heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it
and do it?’ 13Nor *is* it beyond the sea, that you should say, ‘Who will go over
the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’ 14But the
word *is* very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it.

15 “See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil, 16 in that I
command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, and to
keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live
and multiply; and the LORD your God will bless you in the land which you go
to possess. 17 But if your heart turns away so that you do not hear, and are
drawn away, and worship other gods and serve them, 18 I announce to you
today that you shall surely perish; you shall not prolong *your* days in the land
which you cross over the Jordan to go in and possess. 19 I call heaven and
earth as witnesses today against you, *that* I have set before you life and death,
blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your
descendants may live; 20 that you may love the LORD your God, that you may
obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He *is* your life and the
length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which the LORD
swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them.”

## JOSHUA THE NEW LEADER OF ISRAEL

**31** Then Moses went and spoke these words to all Israel. 2 And he said to
them: “I *am* one hundred and twenty years old today. I can no longer go
out and come in. Also the LORD has said to me, ‘You shall not cross over this
Jordan.’ 3 The LORD your God Himself crosses over before you; He will
destroy these nations from before you, and you shall dispossess them. Joshua
himself crosses over before you, just as the LORD has said. 4 And the LORD
will do to them as He did to Si-hon and Og, the kings of the Amorites and
their land, when He destroyed them. 5 The LORD will give them over to you,
that you may do to them according to every commandment which I have
commanded you. 6 Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of
them; for the LORD your God, He *is* the One who goes with you. He will not
leave you nor forsake you.”

7 Then Moses called Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, “Be
strong and of good courage, for you must go with this people to the land
which the LORD has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall cause
them to inherit it. 8 And the LORD, He *is* the One who goes before you. He
will be with you, He will not leave you nor forsake you; do not fear nor be
dismayed.”

## THE LAW TO BE READ EVERY SEVEN YEARS

9 So Moses wrote this law and delivered it to the priests, the sons of Levi,
who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and to all the elders of Israel.
10 And Moses commanded them, saying: “At the end of *every* seven years, at
the appointed time in the year of release, at the Feast of Tabernacles, 11 when
all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God in the place which He
chooses, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing. 12 Gather the
people together, men and women and little ones, and the stranger who *is*
within your gates, that they may hear and that they may learn to fear the
LORD your God and carefully observe all the words of this law, 13 and *that*
their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the LORD
your God as long as you live in the land which you cross the Jordan to
possess.”

**PREDICTION OF ISRAEL'S REBELLION**

14 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, the days approach when you must die; call Joshua, and present yourselves in the tabernacle of meeting, that I may inaugurate him."

So Moses and Joshua went and presented themselves in the tabernacle of meeting. 15 Now the LORD appeared at the tabernacle in a pillar of cloud, and the pillar of cloud stood above the door of the tabernacle.

16 And the LORD said to Moses: "Behold, you will rest with your fathers; and this people will rise and play the harlot with the gods of the foreigners of the land, where they go *to be* among them, and they will forsake Me and break My covenant which I have made with them. 17 Then My anger shall be aroused against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide My face from them, and they shall be devoured. And many evils and troubles shall befall them, so that they will say in that day, 'Have not these evils come upon us because our God *is* not among us?' 18 And I will surely hide My face in that day because of all the evil which they have done, in that they have turned to other gods.

19 "Now therefore, write down this song for yourselves, and teach it to the children of Israel; put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for Me against the children of Is rael. 20 When I have brought them to the land flowing with milk and honey, of which I swore to their fathers, and they have eaten and filled themselves and grown fat, then they will turn to other gods and serve them; and they will provoke Me and break My covenant. 21 Then it shall be, when many evils and troubles have come upon them, that this song will testify against them as a witness; for it will not be forgotten in the mouths of their descendants, for I know the inclination of their behavior today, even before I have brought them to the land of which I swore *to give them.* "

22 Therefore Moses wrote this song the same day, and taught it to the children of Israel. 23 Then He inaugurated Joshua the son of Nun, and said, "Be strong and of good courage; for you shall bring the children of Israel into the land of which I swore to them, and I will be with you."

24 So it was, when Moses had completed writing the words of this law in a

book, when they were finished, [25]that Moses commanded the Levites, who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD, saying: [26]"Take this Book of the Law, and put it beside the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may be there as a witness against you; [27]for I know your rebellion and your stiff neck. *If* today, while I am yet alive with you, you have been rebellious against the LORD, then how much more after my death? [28]Gather to me all the elders of your tribes, and your officers, that I may speak these words in their hearing and call heaven and earth to witness against them. [29]For I know that after my death you will become utterly corrupt, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you. And evil will befall you in the latter days, because you will do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger through the work of your hands."

**THE SONG OF MOSES**

[30]Then Moses spoke in the hearing of all the assembly of Israel the words of this song until they were ended:

**SOUL NOTE**

**Never Alone** *(31:7, 8)* God encouraged Joshua through these words of Moses (later repeated in Josh. 1:6). He promised to be with Joshua in the coming task of conquering the land, so Joshua should be "strong and of good courage." God also promises to be with us in the pressures and challenges of life. The tasks ahead may be difficult, the enemy powerful, and the work immense, but God calls His people to trust Him. "He is the One who goes before you. He will be with you, He will not leave you nor forsake you." **Topic: God's Promises**

**32** “Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak;
And hear, O earth, the words of my mouth.

2 Let my teaching drop as the rain,
My speech distill as the dew,
As raindrops on the tender herb,
And as showers on the grass.

3 For I proclaim the name of the LORD:
Ascribe greatness to our God.

4 *He is* the Rock,
His work *is* perfect;
For all His ways *are* justice,

A God of truth and without injustice;

Righteous and upright *is* He.

> “For I proclaim the name of the LORD: Ascribe greatness to our God. He is the Rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are justice, a God of truth and without injustice; righteous and upright is He.”
> DEUTERONOMY 32:3, 4

5 “They have corrupted themselves;
*They are* not His children,
Because of their blemish:
A perverse and crooked generation.
6 Do you thus deal with the LORD,
O foolish and unwise people?
*Is* He not your Father, *who* bought you?
Has He not made you and established you?
7 “Remember the days of old, Consider the years of many generations.
Ask your father, and he will show you;
Your elders, and they will tell you:

[8] When the Most High divided their inheritance to the nations,
When He separated the sons of Adam,
He set the boundaries of the peoples
According to the number of the children of Israel.
[9] For the LORD's portion *is* His people;
Jacob *is* the place of His inheritance.
[10] "He found him in a desert land
And in the wasteland, a howling wilderness;
He encircled him, He instructed him,
He kept him as the apple of His eye.
[11] As an eagle stirs up its nest,
Hovers over its young,
Spreading out its wings, taking them up,
Carrying them on its wings,
[12]*So* the LORD alone led him,
And *there was* no foreign god with him.
[13] "He made him ride in the heights of the earth,
That he might eat the produce of the fields;
He made him draw honey from the rock,
And oil from the flinty rock;
[14] Curds from the cattle, and milk of the flock,
With fat of lambs;
And rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats,
With the choicest wheat;
And you drank wine, the blood of the grapes.
[15] "But Jeshurun grew fat and kicked;
You grew fat, you grew thick,
You are obese!
Then he forsook God *who* made him,
And scornfully esteemed the Rock of his salvation.
[16] They provoked Him to jealousy with foreign *gods;*
With abominations they provoked Him to anger.
[17] They sacrificed to demons, not to God,
*To gods* they did not know,
To new *gods,* new arrivals

That your fathers did not fear.
18 Of the Rock *who* begot you, you are unmindful, And have forgotten the
God who fathered you.
19 “And when the LORD saw *it,* He spurned *them,*
Because of the provocation of His sons and His daughters.
20 And He said: ‘I will hide My face from them,
I will see what their end *will be,*
For they *are* a perverse generation,
Children in whom *is* no faith.
21 They have provoked Me to jealousy by *what* is not God;
They have moved Me to anger by their foolish idols.
But I will provoke them to jealousy by *those who are* not a nation;
I will move them to anger by a foolish nation.
22 For a fire is kindled in My anger,
And shall burn to the lowest hell;
It shall consume the earth with her increase,
And set on fire the foundations of the mountains.
23 ‘I will heap disasters on them;
I will spend My arrows on them.
24*They shall be* wasted with hunger,
Devoured by pestilence and bitter destruction;
I will also send against them the teeth of beasts,
With the poison of serpents of the dust.
25 The sword shall destroy outside;
*There shall be* terror within For the young man and virgin,
The nursing child with the man of gray hairs.
26 I would have said, “I will dash them in pieces,
I will make the memory of them to cease from among men,”
27 Had I not feared the wrath of the enemy,
Lest their adversaries should misunderstand,
Lest they should say, “Our hand *is* high;
And it is not the LORD who has done all this.” ’
28 “For they *are* a nation void of counsel,
Nor *is there any* understanding in them.
29 Oh, that they were wise, *that* they understood this,

*That* they would consider their latter end!
30 How could one chase a thousand,
And two put ten thousand to flight,
Unless their Rock had sold them,
And the LORD had surrendered them?
31 For their rock *is* not like our Rock,
Even our enemies themselves *being* judges.
32 For their vine *is* of the vine of Sodom
And of the fields of Gomorrah;
Their grapes *are* grapes of gall,
Their clusters *are* bitter.
33 Their wine *is* the poison
of serpents, And the cruel venom of cobras.
34 '*Is* this not laid up in store with Me,
Sealed up among My treasures?
35 Vengeance is Mine, and recompense;
Their foot shall slip in *due* time;
For the day of their calamity *is* at hand,
And the things to come hasten upon them.'
36 "For the LORD will judge His people
And have compassion on His servants,
When He sees that *their* power is gone,
And *there is* no one *remaining*, bond or free.
37 He will say: 'Where *are* their gods,
The rock in which they sought refuge?

38 Who ate the fat of their sacrifices,
*And* drank the wine of their drink offering?
Let them rise and help you, *And* be your refuge.

39 'Now see that I, *even* I, *am* He,
And *there is* no God besides Me;
I kill and I make alive;
I wound and I heal;
Nor *is there any* who can deliver from My hand.

40 For I raise My hand to heaven,
And say, “*As* I live forever,
41 If I whet My glittering sword,
And My hand takes hold on judgment,
I will render vengeance to My enemies,
And repay those who hate Me.
42 I will make My arrows drunk with blood,
And My sword shall devour flesh,
With the blood of the slain and the captives,
From the heads of the leaders of the enemy.” ’
43 “Rejoice, O Gentiles, *with* His people; [a] For He will avenge the blood of His servants,
And render vengeance to His adversaries;
He will provide atonement for His land *and* His people.”
44So Moses came with Joshua[a] the son of Nun and spoke all the words of this song in the hearing of the people. 45Moses finished speaking all these words to all Israel, 46and he said to them: “Set your hearts on all the words which I testify among you today, which you shall command your children to be careful to observe-all the words of this law. 47For it *is* not a futile thing for you, because it *is* your life, and by this word you shall prolong *your* days in the land which you cross over the Jordan to possess.”

**MOSES TO DIE ON MOUNT NEBO**

48Then the LORD spoke to Moses that very same day, saying: 49“Go up this mountain of the Abarim, Mount Nebo, which *is* in the land of Moab, across from Jericho; view the land of Canaan, which I give to the children of Israel as a possession; 50and die on the mountain which you ascend, and be gathered to your people, just as Aaron your brother died on Mount Hor and was gathered to his people; 51because you trespassed against Me among the children of Israel at the waters of Meribah Kadesh, in the Wilderness of Zin, because you did not hallow Me in the midst of the children of Israel. 52Yet you shall see the land before *you,* though you shall not go there, into the land which I am giving to the children of Israel.”

**MOSES' FINAL BLESSING ON ISRAEL**

**33** Now this *is* the blessing with which Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death. 2 And he said:

"The LORD came from Sinai,
And dawned on them from Seir;
He shone forth from Mount Paran,
And He came with ten thousands of saints;
From His right hand *Came* a fiery law for them.
3 Yes, He loves the people;
All His saints *are* in Your hand;
They sit down at Your feet;
*Everyone* receives Your words.
4 Moses commanded a law for us,
A heritage of the congregation of Jacob.
5 And He was King in Jeshurun,
When the leaders of the people were gathered,
All the tribes of Israel together.
6 "Let Reuben live, and not die,
*Nor* let his men be few."
7 And this he said of Judah:
"Hear, LORD, the voice of Judah,
And bring him to his people;
Let his hands be sufficient for him,
And may You be a help against his enemies."
8 And of Levi he said:
"*Let* Your Thummim and Your Urim *be* with Your holy one,
Whom You tested at Massah,
And with whom You contended at the waters of Meribah,
9 Who says of his father and mother,
' I have not seen them';
Nor did he acknowledge his brothers,
Or know his own children; For they have observed Your word
And kept Your covenant.

10 They shall teach Jacob Your judgments,
And Israel Your law. They shall put incense before You,
And a whole burnt sacrifice on Your altar.
11 Bless his substance, LORD,
And accept the work of his hands;

Strike the loins of those who rise against him,
And of those who hate him, that they rise not again."
12 Of Benjamin he said:
"The beloved of the LORD shall dwell in safety by Him,
*Who* shelters him all the day long;
And he shall dwell between His shoulders."
13 And of Joseph he said:

> "The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms."
> DEUTERONOMY 33:27

"Blessed of the LORD *is* his land,
With the precious things of heaven,
with the dew, And the deep lying beneath,
14 With the precious fruits of the sun,
With the precious produce of the months,
15 With the best things of the ancient mountains,
With the precious things of the everlasting hills,
16 With the precious things of the earth and its fullness,
And the favor of Him who dwelt in the bush.
Let *the blessing* come 'on the head of Joseph,
And on the crown of the head of him *who was* separate from his brothers.'[a]
17 His glory *is like* a firstborn bull,
And his horns *like* the horns of the wild ox;
Together with them
He shall push the peoples
To the ends of the earth;

They *are* the ten thousands of Ephraim,
And they *are* the thousands of Manasseh.”
18 And of Zebulun he said:
“Rejoice, Zebulun, in your going out,
And Issachar in your tents!
19 They shall call the peoples *to* the mountain;
There they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness;
For they shall partake *of* the abundance of the seas
And *of* treasures hidden in the sand.”
20 And of Gad he said:
“Blessed *is* he who enlarges Gad;
He dwells as a lion,
And tears the arm and the crown of his head.
21 He provided the first *part* for himself,
Because a lawgiver’s portion was reserved there.
He came *with* the heads of the people;
He administered the justice of the LORD,
And His judgments with Israel.”
22 And of Dan he said:
“Dan *is* a lion’s whelp;
He shall leap from Bashan.”
23 And of Naphtali he said:
“O Naphtali, satisfied with favor,
And full of the blessing of the LORD,
Possess the west and the south.”
24 And of Asher he said:
“Asher *is* most blessed of sons;
Let him be favored by his brothers,
And let him dip his foot in oil.
25 Your sandals *shall be* iron and bronze;
As your days, *so shall* your strength *be.*
26 “*There is* no one like the God of Jeshurun,
*Who* rides the heavens to help you, And in His excellency on the clouds.
27 The eternal God *is your* refuge,
And underneath *are* the everlasting arms;

He will thrust out the enemy from before you,
And will say, ‘Destroy!’
28 Then Israel shall dwell in safety,
The fountain of Jacob alone,
In a land of grain and new wine;
His heavens shall also drop dew.
29 Happy *are* you, O Israel!
Who *is* like you, a people saved by the LORD,
The shield of your help
And the sword of your majesty!
Your enemies shall submit to you,
And you shall tread down their high places.”

## SOUL NOTE

**Faithful Generations** *(33:1)* Chapter 33 contains a series of blessings that Moses pronounced on the tribes of Israel. These are similar to Jacob’s blessings on his twelve sons, the ancestors to these tribes (Gen. 49). Jacob’s blessings revealed each son’s character and potential. A person’s true character tends to be reflected in his or her children and grandchildren. What legacy will you leave? **Topic: Attachment/Blessing**

## MOSES DIES ON MOUNT NEBO

**34** Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top
of Pisgah, which is across from Jericho. And the LORD showed him all
the land of Gilead as far as Dan, 2 all Naphtali and the land of Ephraim and
Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the Western Sea,[a] 3 the South, and
the plain of the Valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, as far as Zoar. 4 Then
the LORD said to him, "This *is* the land of which I swore to give Abraham,
Isaac, and Jacob, saying, 'I will give it to your descendants.' I have caused
you to see *it* with your eyes, but you shall not cross over there."

5 So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab,
according to the word of the LORD. 6 And He buried him in a valley in the
land of Moab, opposite Beth Peor; but no one knows his grave to this day.
7 Moses *was* one hundred and twenty years old when he died. His eyes were
not dim nor his natural vigor diminished. 8 And the children of Israel wept for
Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days. So the days of weeping *and*
mourning for Moses ended.

9 Now Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses
had laid his hands on him; so the children of Israel heeded him, and did as the
LORD had commanded Moses.

10 But since then there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses, whom
the LORD knew face to face, 11 in all the signs and wonders which the LORD
sent him to do in the land of Egypt, before Pharaoh, before all his servants,
and in all his land, 12 and by all that mighty power and all the great terror
which Moses performed in the sight of all Israel.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Age Is No Object** *(34:7-12)* Moses was 120 years old when he died.

He had returned to Egypt to deal with Pharaoh when he was 80 and had been mightily used by God to free Israel from slavery (Ex. 7:7). Moses had spent the last forty years of his life in the wilderness leading the people of God who were being punished for their disobedience (Num. 14:32-35). Our generation tends to emphasize the importance of youth, but God uses servants of all ages. Age does not limit God's ability to work through people. As long as we have breath, we should be serving God. **Topic: Aging/Elderly**

# Joshua



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# Joshua

Sometimes life is difficult. The tasks before us appear overwhelming and we wonder if we can accomplish them. We don't have to read too far in the Bible to recognize a pattern: God repeatedly asks His children to believe the incredible and attempt the impossible.

Abraham went to an unknown land that God promised to give to his descendants. Moses led Abraham's many descendants out of Egypt and back to the edge of the Promised Land. Moses passed the leadership to Joshua (Deut. 31:7, 8) who was to lead the Israelites in conquering the land.

This book written by Joshua teaches us not to be content with a timid faith. Joshua was a courageous military leader and a man of great spiritual influence. The key to his leadership, however, was not reliance on his abundant talents, but on his faith in God. Under Joshua's command, the nation learned to step out by faith against overwhelming opposition. By faith they crossed the Jordan River into the land (ch. 4). By faith they reestablished the rite of circumcision to emphasize dedication to God (ch. 5). By faith they conquered Jericho (ch. 6) and, in a relatively short time, much of the remaining land.

God had promised Abraham that his descendants would eventually possess the land of Canaan. The story of this conquest assures us that God always keeps His promises. We can have victory, even over what seems impossible, if we put our faith in God.

**SOUL CONCERNS IN**

## JOSHUA

DISCOURAGEMENT (1:6-8)

AGING/ELDERLY (CH. 14)

## FAMILY LIFE (24:15)

## GOD'S COMMISSION TO JOSHUA

**1** After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, it came to pass that the
LORD spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, saying: [2]"Moses
My servant is dead. Now therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this
people, to the land which I am giving to them-the children of Israel. [3]Every
place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to
Moses. [4]From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the
River Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and to the Great Sea toward the
going down of the sun, shall be your territory. [5]No man shall *be able to* stand
before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, *so* I will be with
you. I will not leave you nor forsake you. [6]Be strong and of good courage, for
to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to
their fathers to give them. [7]Only be strong and very courageous, that you may
observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded
you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper
wherever you go. [8]This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth,
but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do
according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way
prosperous, and then you will have good success. [9]Have I not commanded
you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for
the LORD your God *is* with you wherever you go."

> "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."
> JOSHUA 1:9

## THE ORDER TO CROSS THE JORDAN

[10]Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying, [11]"Pass
through the camp and command the people, saying, 'Prepare provisions for
yourselves, for within three days you will cross over this Jordan, to go in to
possess the land which the LORD your God is giving you to possess.' "

[12]And to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh

Joshua spoke, saying, [13]"Remember the word which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, saying, 'The LORD your God is giving you rest and is giving you this land.' [14]Your wives, your little ones, and your livestock shall remain in the land which Moses gave you on this side of the Jordan. But you shall pass before your brethren armed, all your mighty men of valor, and help them, [15]until the LORD has given your brethren rest, as He *gave* you, and they also have taken possession of the land which the LORD your God is giving them. Then you shall return to the land of your possession and enjoy it, which Moses the LORD's servant gave you on this side of the Jordan toward the sunrise."

[16]So they answered Joshua, saying, "All that you command us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go. [17]Just as we heeded Moses in all things, so we will heed you. Only the LORD your God be with you, as He was with Moses. [18]Whoever rebels against your command and does not heed your words, in all that you command him, shall be put to death. Only be strong and of good courage."

**OVERCOMING DISCOURAGEMENT**

# JOHN R. CHEYDLEUR

## (Joshua 1:6-8)

**L**ife is filled with problems, challenges, and disappointments. The school fundraiser didn't go as well as we had hoped. The team finished the season last despite our best coaching efforts. The job presentation did not receive glowing reviews despite all our hard work and late nights of preparation. The report from the doctor was

worse than we expected.

Things happen that foil our best-laid plans. Often, we find ourselves let down and discouraged. Sometimes, it's so bad that we just want to give up. Discouragement sets in and says, "Why bother? Nobody cares anyhow." Despite the circumstances, discouragement doesn't have to overwhelm us. We can learn from it, benefit from it, and overcome it.

## FACING UP TO DISCOURAGEMENT

Discouragement is not the same as clinical depression. Long-term depression is often the result of unacknowledged anger turned inward upon oneself. By contrast, discouragement comes from a conscious awareness of our lack of ability to overcome a difficult situation.

When we are discouraged, our faith is often put to the test. It is time for us to reassess our goals and reevaluate our responses. In some cases, we will find that there were circumstances that were beyond our control-like the weather, unexpected company, or the emergence of a misplaced bill. While these things aggravate us, they need not overwhelm us. God is also the God of the unexpected. He sees these things before we do and chooses to use them to shape our personal and spiritual lives to our own good: "We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

Discouragement ought to be our first indication that it is time to pray. We often become discouraged because we get busy and neglect prayer. Many believers are discouraged by life's problems and have a lack of confidence that they can deal effectively with life's toughest challenges. We need to call on God to help us understand His guidance in the midst of our circumstances.

## UNDERLYING CAUSES OF DISCOURAGEMENT

There are three underlying causes for discouragement: (1) lack of confidence in God; (2) lack of confidence in ourselves; or (3) lack of direction for the future. Joshua faced these same challenges when he led the children of Israel into the Promised Land. God told Joshua, "Be strong and of good courage" (Josh. 1:6). God reminded him that the key to overcoming discouragement was a vital, personal relationship with Him. The Lord told him, "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success" (Josh. 1:8).

## KEYS TO OVERCOMING DISCOURAGEMENT

Once we really believe that God loves us and cares about us, we can begin to have confidence in His plan for our lives. The key is lining up our lives and our prayers with the wise and certain promises of God's Word. When we quote the promises of God back to Him in our prayers, we are agreeing with what God has already promised and reordering our lives accordingly. These key thoughts can help:

1. *Ride out the storm.* Some people never realize their potential because they are beaten down by the storms of life and give up too soon. We must not quit.

2. *Realize that God uses ordinary people.* We don't have to be spiritual giants to experience God's grace in our lives. He chooses ordinary people to accomplish extraordinary things for Him (1 Cor. 1:26, 27).

3. *Don't be defeated by the negatives.* We must keep our focus on Christ and the wonderful possibilities in our lives. Listening to the negative voices that say, "You can't . . ." or "It will never work . . ." will only discourage us.

4. *Focus on Christ.* It helps to envision what He can do for us and

what we can do for Him. No life is meaningless if Christ is at the center of it.

5. *Remember that we are special.* God uniquely created us and designed us to serve Him. No one else can do what we can do for Him. We are uniquely gifted to minister to people no one else will ever meet or touch. We must not give up just because there are challenges and obstacles.

6. *Focus on behavior.* We must do what is right, no matter how we feel. We should make sure our behavior determines our feelings rather than allowing our feelings to determine our behavior. This sets us free to be creative, confident, and committed.

7. *Be persistent.* There is an interesting story in the Bible about a persistent widow who insisted that a judge give her legal protection. He finally granted her request because she wouldn't give up (Luke 18:1-8). We actualize the impossible when we honor God with our faith.

The answer to discouragement is getting our focus off ourselves and our limited resources and focusing on the unlimited power of God. He can do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. Even in the face of life's greatest challenges, His grace is sufficient. When we give our discouragement to God, He can encourage and draw us ever closer to Him.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of discouragement include:

- Psalms 25:1-22; 40:1-3; 55:22; 56:1-13; 91:1-16
- Isaiah 41:10
- Jeremiah 15:16; 29:11; 33:3
- Habakkuk 3:17-19

- Zephaniah 3:14, 15
- Romans 8:35-39
- 2 Corinthians 12:9, 10
- Philippians 4:11-13, 19

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on discouragement at 1 Peter 5:7. See also the personality profile of Nehemiah-rising Above Discouragement.

**SOUL NOTE**

**The Whole Truth** *(1:8, 9)* Joshua faced the challenge of leading the Israelites into the Promised Land. To encourage him, God urged him to meditate day and night on the Book of the Law (Moses' writings). God promised Joshua that doing so would make him prosperous and successful. This is not a promise of earthly prosperity-although certainly following God's rules for living will have a positive effect on our lives. But living by the truth of God's Word will make us successful in God's eyes. That kind of success is eternal. **Topic: Truth**

## RAHAB HIDES THE SPIES

**2** Now Joshua the son of Nun sent out two men from Acacia Grove[a] to spy secretly, saying, “Go, view the land, especially Jericho.” So they went, and came to the house of a harlot named Rahab, and lodged there. 2And it was told the king of Jericho, saying, “Behold, men have come here tonight from the children of Israel to search out the country.”

3So the king of Jericho sent to Rahab, saying, “Bring out the men who have come to you, who have entered your house, for they have come to search out all the country.”

4Then the woman took the two men and hid them. So she said, “Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they *were* from. 5And it happened as the gate was being shut, when it was dark, that the men went out. Where the men went I do not know; pursue them quickly, for you may overtake them.” 6(But she had brought them up to the roof and hidden them with the stalks of flax, which she had laid in order on the roof.) 7Then the men pursued them by the road to the Jordan, to the fords. And as soon as those who pursued them had gone out, they shut the gate.

8Now before they lay down, she came up to them on the roof, 9and said to the men: “I know that the LORD has given you the land, that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of you. 10For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who *were* on the other side of the Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. 11And as soon as we heard *these things,* our hearts melted; neither did there remain any more courage in anyone because of you, for the LORD your God, He *is* God in heaven above and on earth beneath. 12Now therefore, I beg you, swear to me by the LORD, since I have shown you kindness, that you also will show kindness to my father’s house, and give me a true token, 13and spare my father, my mother, my brothers, my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death.”

14So the men answered her, “Our lives for yours, if none of you tell this business of ours. And it shall be, when the LORD has given us the land, that

we will deal kindly and truly with you."

15 Then she let them down by a rope through the window, for her house
*was* on the city wall; she dwelt on the wall. 16 And she said to them, "Get to
the mountain, lest the pursuers meet you. Hide there three days, until the
pursuers have returned. Afterward you may go your way."

17 So the men said to her: "We *will be* blameless of this oath of yours which
you have made us swear, 18 unless, *when* we come into the land, you bind this
line of scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down, and unless
you bring your father, your mother, your brothers, and all your father's
household to your own home. 19 So it shall be *that* whoever goes outside the
doors of your house into the street, his blood *shall be* on his own head, and
we *will be* guiltless. And whoever is with you in the house, his blood *shall be*
on our head if a hand is laid on him. 20 And if you tell this business of ours,
then we will be free from your oath which you made us swear."

21 Then she said, "According to your words, so *be* it." And she sent them
away, and they departed. And she bound the scarlet cord in the window.

22 They departed and went to the mountain, and stayed there three days
until the pursuers returned. The pursuers sought *them* all along the way, but
did not find *them.* 23 So the two men returned, descended from the mountain,
and crossed over; and they came to Joshua the son of Nun, and told him all
that had befallen them. 24 And they said to Joshua, "Truly the LORD has
delivered all the land into our hands, for indeed all the inhabitants of the
country are fainthearted because of us."

**SOUL NOTE**

**Included** *(2:1-16)* Courageous Rahab risked her life for the people of Israel. She was convinced that their God was "God in heaven above and on earth beneath"-the one true God (2:11). Her employment as a

harlot did not place her beyond God’s grace. All people are sinners and must come to God for forgiveness, regardless of their past. Rahab left her former life and joined the Israelites. She later appears in the genealogy of Jesus (Matt. 1:5). **Topic: Sin**

## ISRAEL CROSSES THE JORDAN

**3** Then Joshua rose early in the morning; and they set out from Acacia
Grove[a] and came to the Jordan, he and all the children of Israel, and
lodged there before they crossed over. [2]So it was, after three days, that the
officers went through the camp; [3]and they commanded the people, saying,
"When you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests,
the Levites, bearing it, then you shall set out from your place and go after it.
[4]Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by
measure. Do not come near it, that you may know the way by which you
must go, for you have not passed *this* way before."

[5]And Joshua said to the people, "Sanctify yourselves, for tomorrow the
LORD will do wonders among you." [6]Then Joshua spoke to the priests,
saying, "Take up the ark of the covenant and cross over before the people."

So they took up the ark of the covenant and went before the people.

[7]And the LORD said to Joshua, "This day I will begin to exalt you in the
sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, *so* I will be
with you. [8]You shall command the priests who bear the ark of the covenant,
saying, 'When you have come to the edge of the water of the Jordan, you
shall stand in the Jordan.' "

[9]So Joshua said to the children of Israel, "Come here, and hear the words
of the LORD your God." [10]And Joshua said, "By this you shall know that the
living God *is* among you, and *that* He will without fail drive out from before
you the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Hivites and the Perizzites and the
Girgashites and the Amorites and the Jebusites: [11]Behold, the ark of the
covenant of the Lord of all the earth is crossing over before you into the
Jordan. [12]Now therefore, take for yourselves twelve men from the tribes of
Israel, one man from every tribe. [13]And it shall come to pass, as soon as the
soles of the feet of the priests who bear the ark of the LORD, the Lord of all
the earth, shall rest in the waters of the Jordan, *that* the waters of the Jordan
shall be cut off, the waters that come down from upstream, and they shall
stand as a heap."

[14]So it was, when the people set out from their camp to cross over the

Jordan, with the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people, [15]and as those who bore the ark came to the Jordan, and the feet of the priests who bore the ark dipped in the edge of the water (for the Jordan overflows all its banks during the whole time of harvest), [16]that the waters which came down from upstream stood *still, and* rose in a heap very far away at Adam, the city that *is* beside Zaretan. So the waters that went down into the Sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, failed, *and* were cut off; and the people crossed over opposite Jericho. [17]Then the priests who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan; and all Israel crossed over on dry ground, until all the people had crossed completely over the Jordan.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Know the Way** *(3:4)* It could be said of every new day that we "have not passed this way before." Every day brings new experiences and new challenges that stretch our faith in God. Without God, people are left to wonder what direction to take. With God, believers can know that every new day is in His hands and He will guide according to His eternal plan. As the Israelites followed the ark in order to "know the way," so we can look to God and His Word in order to know the way He wants us to go. **Topic: Decision Making**

## THE MEMORIAL STONES

**4** And it came to pass, when all the people had completely crossed over the
Jordan, that the LORD spoke to Joshua, saying: [2]"Take for yourselves
twelve men from the people, one man from every tribe, [3]and command them,
saying, 'Take for yourselves twelve stones from here, out of the midst of the
Jordan, from the place where the priests' feet stood firm. You shall carry
them over with you and leave them in the lodging place where you lodge
tonight.' "

[4]Then Joshua called the twelve men whom he had appointed from the
children of Israel, one man from every tribe; [5]and Joshua said to them: "Cross
over before the ark of the LORD your God into the midst of the Jordan, and
each one of you take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of
the tribes of the children of Israel, [6]that this may be a sign among you when
your children ask in time to come, saying, 'What do these stones *mean* to
you?' [7]Then you shall answer them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off
before the ark of the covenant of the LORD; when it crossed over the Jordan,
the waters of the Jordan were cut off. And these stones shall be for a
memorial to the children of Israel forever."

[8]And the children of Israel did so, just as Joshua commanded, and took up
twelve stones from the midst of the Jordan, as the LORD had spoken to
Joshua, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel, and
carried them over with them to the place where they lodged, and laid them
down there. [9]Then Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of the Jordan, in
the place where the feet of the priests who bore the ark of the covenant stood;
and they are there to this day.

[10]So the priests who bore the ark stood in the midst of the Jordan until
everything was finished that the LORD had commanded Joshua to speak to the
people, according to all that Moses had commanded Joshua; and the people
hurried and crossed over. [11]Then it came to pass, when all the people had
completely crossed over, that the ark of the LORD and the priests crossed over
in the presence of the people. [12]And the men of Reuben, the men of Gad, and
half the tribe of Manasseh crossed over armed before the children of Israel, as

Moses had spoken to them. [13]About forty thousand prepared for war crossed over before the LORD for battle, to the plains of Jericho. [14]On that day the LORD exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel; and they feared him, as they had feared Moses, all the days of his life.

[15]Then the LORD spoke to Joshua, saying, [16]"Command the priests who bear the ark of the Testimony to come up from the Jordan." [17]Joshua therefore commanded the priests, saying, "Come up from the Jordan." [18]And it came to pass, when the priests who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD had come from the midst of the Jordan, *and* the soles of the priests' feet touched the dry land, that the waters of the Jordan returned to their place and overflowed all its banks as before.

[19]Now the people came up from the Jordan on the tenth *day* of the first month, and they camped in Gilgal on the east border of Jericho. [20]And those twelve stones which they took out of the Jordan, Joshua set up in Gilgal. [21]Then he spoke to the children of Israel, saying: "When your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, 'What *are* these stones?' [22]then you shall let your children know, saying, 'Israel crossed over this Jordan on dry land'; [23]for the LORD your God dried up the waters of the Jordan before you until you had crossed over, as the LORD your God did to the Red Sea, which He dried up before us until we had crossed over, [24]that all the peoples of the earth may know the hand of the LORD, that it *is* mighty, that you may fear the LORD your God forever."

**SOUL NOTE**

**Pass It On** *(4:19-24)* The memorial of twelve stones was to remind the people of God's miracles on their behalf. In the future, children who saw the memorial would ask their parents what it meant. Then the parents could tell how God dried up the Jordan River just as He had dried up the Red Sea, allowing the Israelites to cross both bodies

of water on dry land. It is the responsibility of parents to pass along to their children the stories of how God has worked in their lives. This will strengthen their children's faith. **Topic: Parenting**

## THE SECOND GENERATION CIRCUMCISED

**5** So it was, when all the kings of the Amorites who *were* on the west side of the Jordan, and all the kings of the Canaanites who *were* by the sea, heard that the LORD had dried up the waters of the Jordan from before the children of Israel until we[a] had crossed over, that their heart melted; and there was no spirit in them any longer because of the children of Israel.

2 At that time the LORD said to Joshua, "Make flint knives for yourself, and circumcise the sons of Israel again the second time." 3 So Joshua made flint knives for himself, and circumcised the sons of Israel at the hill of the foreskins.[a] 4 And this *is* the reason why Joshua circumcised them: All the people who came out of Egypt *who were* males, all the men of war, had died in the wilderness on the way, after they had come out of Egypt. 5 For all the people who came out had been circumcised, but all the people born in the wilderness, on the way as they came out of Egypt, had not been circumcised. 6 For the children of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, till all the people *who were* men of war, who came out of Egypt, were consumed, because they did not obey the voice of the LORD-to whom the LORD swore that He would not show them the land which the LORD had sworn to their fathers that He would give us, "a land flowing with milk and honey."[a] 7 Then Joshua circumcised their sons *whom* He raised up in their place; for they were uncircumcised, because they had not been circumcised on the way.

8 So it was, when they had finished circumcising all the people, that they stayed in their places in the camp till they were healed. 9 Then the LORD said to Joshua, "This day I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you." Therefore the name of the place is called Gilgal[a] to this day.

10 Now the children of Israel camped in Gilgal, and kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month at twilight on the plains of Jericho. 11 And they ate of the produce of the land on the day after the Passover, unleavened bread and parched grain, on the very same day. 12 Then the manna ceased on the day after they had eaten the produce of the land; and the children of Israel no longer had manna, but they ate the food of the land of Canaan that year.

**THE COMMANDER OF THE ARMY OF THE LORD**

13 And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted his eyes
and looked, and behold, a Man stood opposite him with His sword drawn in
His hand. And Joshua went to Him and said to Him, "*Are* You for us or for
our adversaries?"

14 So He said, "No, but *as* Commander of the army of the LORD I have now
come."

And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped, and said to Him,
"What does my Lord say to His servant?"

15 Then the Commander of the LORD's army said to Joshua, "Take your
sandal off your foot, for the place where you stand *is* holy." And Joshua did
so.

## THE DESTRUCTION OF JERICHO

**6** Now Jericho was securely shut up because of the children of Israel; none
went out, and none came in. 2And the LORD said to Joshua: "See! I have
given Jericho into your hand, its king, *and* the mighty men of valor. 3You
shall march around the city, all *you* men of war; you shall go all around the
city once. This you shall do six days. 4And seven priests shall bear seven
trumpets of rams' horns before the ark. But the seventh day you shall march
around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets. 5It shall
come to pass, when they make a long *blast* with the ram's horn, *and* when
you hear the sound of the trumpet, that all the people shall shout with a great
shout; then the wall of the city will fall down flat. And the people shall go up
every man straight before him."

6Then Joshua the son of Nun called the priests and said to them, "Take up
the ark of the covenant, and let seven priests bear seven trumpets of rams'
horns before the ark of the LORD." 7And he said to the people, "Proceed, and
march around the city, and let him who is armed advance before the ark of
the LORD."

8So it was, when Joshua had spoken to the people, that the seven priests
bearing the seven trumpets of rams' horns before the LORD advanced and
blew the trumpets, and the ark of the covenant of the LORD followed them.
9The armed men went before the priests who blew the trumpets, and the rear
guard came after the ark, while *the priests* continued blowing the trumpets.
10Now Joshua had commanded the people, saying, "You shall not shout or
make any noise with your voice, nor shall a word proceed out of your mouth,
until the day I say to you, 'Shout!' Then you shall shout." 11So he had the ark
of the LORD circle the city, going around *it* once. Then they came into the
camp and lodged in the camp.

12And Joshua rose early in the morning, and the priests took up the ark of
the LORD. 13Then seven priests bearing seven trumpets of rams' horns before
the ark of the LORD went on continually and blew with the trumpets. And the
armed men went before them. But the rear guard came after the ark of the
LORD, while *the priests* continued blowing the trumpets. 14And the second

day they marched around the city once and returned to the camp. So they did six days.

15 But it came to pass on the seventh day that they rose early, about the dawning of the day, and marched around the city seven times in the same manner. On that day only they marched around the city seven times. 16 And the seventh time it happened, when the priests blew the trumpets, that Joshua said to the people: “Shout, for the LORD has given you the city! 17 Now the city shall be doomed by the LORD to destruction, it and all who *are* in it. Only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all who *are* with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent. 18 And you, by all means abstain from the accursed things, lest you become accursed when you take of the accursed things, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it. 19 But all the silver and gold, and vessels of bronze and iron, *are* consecrated to the LORD; they shall come into the treasury of the LORD.”

20 So the people shouted when *the priests* blew the trumpets. And it happened when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat. Then the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city. 21 And they utterly destroyed all that *was* in the city, both man and woman, young and old, ox and sheep and donkey, with the edge of the sword.

22 But Joshua had said to the two men who had spied out the country, “Go into the harlot’s house, and from there bring out the woman and all that she has, as you swore to her.” 23 And the young men who had been spies went in and brought out Rahab, her father, her mother, her brothers, and all that she had. So they brought out all her relatives and left them outside the camp of Israel. 24 But they burned the city and all that *was* in it with fire. Only the silver and gold, and the vessels of bronze and iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the LORD. 25 And Joshua spared Rahab the harlot, her father’s household, and all that she had. So she dwells in Israel to this day, because she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.

26 Then Joshua charged *them* at that time, saying, “Cursed *be* the man before the LORD who rises up and builds this city Jericho; he shall lay its foundation with his firstborn, and with his youngest he shall set up its gates.”

[27]So the LORD was with Joshua, and his fame spread throughout all the country.

**DEFEAT AT AI**

**7** But the children of Israel committed a trespass regarding the accursed
things, for Achan the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi,[a] the son of Zerah, of
the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed things; so the anger of the LORD
burned against the children of Israel.

2Now Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which *is* beside Beth Aven, on
the east side of Bethel, and spoke to them, saying, "Go up and spy out the
country." So the men went up and spied out Ai. 3And they returned to Joshua
and said to him, "Do not let all the people go up, but let about two or three
thousand men go up and attack Ai. Do not weary all the people there, for *the
people of Ai are* few." 4So about three thousand men went up there from the
people, but they fled before the men of Ai. 5And the men of Ai struck down
about thirty-six men, for they chased them *from* before the gate as far as
Shebarim, and struck them down on the descent; therefore the hearts of the
people melted and became like water.

6Then Joshua tore his clothes, and fell to the earth on his face before the
ark of the LORD until evening, he and the elders of Israel; and they put dust
on their heads. 7And Joshua said, "Alas, Lord GOD, why have You brought
this people over the Jordan at all-to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites,
to destroy us? Oh, that we had been content, and dwelt on the other side of
the Jordan! 8O Lord, what shall I say when Israel turns its back before its
enemies? 9For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear *it*,
and surround us, and cut off our name from the earth. Then what will You do
for Your great name?"

**THE SIN OF ACHAN**

10So the LORD said to Joshua: "Get up! Why do you lie thus on your face?
11Israel has sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I
commanded them. For they have even taken some of the accursed things, and
have both stolen and deceived; and they have also put *it* among their own
stuff. 12Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies,
*but* turned *their* backs before their enemies, because they have become

doomed to destruction. Neither will I be with you anymore, unless you destroy the accursed from among you. [13]Get up, sanctify the people, and say, ‘Sanctify yourselves for tomorrow, because thus says the LORD God of Israel: “*There is* an accursed thing in your midst, O Israel; you cannot stand before your enemies until you take away the accursed thing from among you.” [14]In the morning therefore you shall be brought according to your tribes. And it shall be *that* the tribe which the LORD takes shall come according to families; and the family which the LORD takes shall come by households; and the household which the LORD takes shall come man by man. [15]Then it shall be *that* he who is taken with the accursed thing shall be burned with fire, he and all that he has, because he has transgressed the covenant of the LORD, and because he has done a disgraceful thing in Israel.’ ”

[16]So Joshua rose early in the morning and brought Israel by their tribes, and the tribe of Judah was taken. [17]He brought the clan of Judah, and he took the family of the Zarhites; and he brought the family of the Zarhites man by man, and Zabdi was taken. [18]Then he brought his household man by man, and Achan the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken.

[19]Now Joshua said to Achan, “My son, I beg you, give glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make confession to Him, and tell me now what you have done; do not hide *it* from me.”

[20]And Achan answered Joshua and said, “Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and this is what I have done: [21]When I saw among the spoils a beautiful Babylonian garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. And there they are, hidden in the earth in the midst of my tent, with the silver under it.”

[22]So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent; and there it was, hidden in his tent, with the silver under it. [23]And they took them from the midst of the tent, brought them to Joshua and to all the children of Israel, and laid them out before the LORD. [24]Then Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, the silver, the garment, the wedge of gold, his sons, his daughters, his oxen, his donkeys, his sheep, his tent, and all that he had,

and they brought them to the Valley of Achor. [25]And Joshua said, “Why have you troubled us? The LORD will trouble you this day.” So all Israel stoned him with stones; and they burned them with fire after they had stoned them with stones.

[26]Then they raised over him a great heap of stones, still there to this day. So the LORD turned from the fierceness of His anger. There fore the name of that place has been called the Valley of Achor[a] to this day.

**SOUL NOTE**

**It Hurts** *(7:22-25)* Achan sinned by taking some of the plunder from Jericho for himself, an act that had been forbidden (6:19). As a result, the Israelites lost the next battle. When Achan’s sin was discovered, he and his entire family paid the ultimate price. Sin always hurts the sinner and others. No one sins in a vacuum; sins always have consequences. Perhaps we would be more willing to turn away from sin if we could see the consequences that will affect not only us, but those dearest to us. **Topic: Sin**

## THE FALL OF AI

**8** Now the LORD said to Joshua: “Do not be afraid, nor be dismayed; take all
the people of war with you, and arise, go up to Ai. See, I have given into
your hand the king of Ai, his people, his city, and his land. 2And you shall do
to Ai and its king as you did to Jericho and its king. Only its spoil and its
cattle you shall take as booty for yourselves. Lay an ambush for the city
behind it.”

3So Joshua arose, and all the people of war, to go up against Ai; and
Joshua chose thirty thousand mighty men of valor and sent them away by
night. 4And he commanded them, saying: “Behold, you shall lie in ambush
against the city, behind the city. Do not go very far from the city, but all of
you be ready. 5Then I and all the people who *are* with me will approach the
city; and it will come about, when they come out against us as at the first, that
we shall flee before them. 6For they will come out after us till we have drawn
them from the city, for they will say, ‘*They are* fleeing before us as at the
first.’ Therefore we will flee before them. 7Then you shall rise from the
ambush and seize the city, for the LORD your God will deliver it into your
hand. 8And it will be, when you have taken the city, *that* you shall set the city
on fire. According to the commandment of the LORD you shall do. See, I have
commanded you.”

9Joshua therefore sent them out; and they went to lie in ambush, and stayed
between Bethel and Ai, on the west side of Ai; but Joshua lodged that night
among the people. 10Then Joshua rose up early in the morning and mustered
the people, and went up, he and the elders of Israel, before the people to Ai.
11And all the people of war who *were* with him went up and drew near; and
they came before the city and camped on the north side of Ai. Now a valley
*lay* between them and Ai. 12So he took about five thousand men and set them
in ambush between Bethel and Ai, on the west side of the city. 13And when
they had set the people, all the army that *was* on the north of the city, and its
rear guard on the west of the city, Joshua went that night into the midst of the
valley.

14Now it happened, when the king of Ai saw *it*, that the men of the city

hurried and rose early and went out against Israel to battle, he and all his people, at an appointed place before the plain. But he did not know that *there was* an ambush against him behind the city. [15]And Joshua and all Israel made as if they were beaten before them, and fled by the way of the wilderness. [16]So all the people who *were* in Ai were called together to pursue them. And they pursued Joshua and were drawn away from the city. [17]There was not a man left in Ai or Bethel who did not go out after Israel. So they left the city open and pursued Israel.

[18]Then the LORD said to Joshua, "Stretch out the spear that *is* in your hand toward Ai, for I will give it into your hand." And Joshua stretched out the spear that *was* in his hand toward the city. [19]So *those in* ambush arose quickly out of their place; they ran as soon as he had stretched out his hand, and they entered the city and took it, and hurried to set the city on fire. [20]And when the men of Ai looked behind them, they saw, and behold, the smoke of the city ascended to heaven. So they had no power to flee this way or that way, and the people who had fled to the wilderness turned back on the pursuers.

[21]Now when Joshua and all Israel saw that the ambush had taken the city and that the smoke of the city ascended, they turned back and struck down the men of Ai. [22]Then the others came out of the city against them; so they were *caught* in the midst of Israel, some on this side and some on that side. And they struck them down, so that they let none of them remain or escape. [23]But the king of Ai they took alive, and brought him to Joshua.

[24]And it came to pass when Israel had made an end of slaying all the inhabitants of Ai in the field, in the wilderness where they pursued them, and when they all had fallen by the edge of the sword until they were consumed, that all the Israelites returned to Ai and struck it with the edge of the sword. [25]So it was *that* all who fell that day, both men and women, *were* twelve thousand-all the people of Ai. [26]For Joshua did not draw back his hand, with which he stretched out the spear, until he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai. [27]Only the livestock and the spoil of that city Israel took as booty for themselves, according to the word of the LORD which He had commanded Joshua. [28]So Joshua burned Ai and made it a heap forever, a

desolation to this day. [29]And the king of Ai he hanged on a tree until evening. And as soon as the sun was down, Joshua commanded that they should take his corpse down from the tree, cast it at the entrance of the gate of the city, and raise over it a great heap of stones *that remains* to this day.

**JOSHUA RENEWS THE COVENANT**

[30]Now Joshua built an altar to the LORD God of Israel in Mount Ebal, [31]as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded the children of Israel, as it is written in the Book of the Law of Moses: “an altar of whole stones over which no man has wielded an iron *tool.*”[a] And they offered on it burnt offerings to the LORD, and sacrificed peace offerings. [32]And there, in the presence of the children of Israel, he wrote on the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he had written. [33]Then all Israel, with their elders and officers and judges, stood on either side of the ark before the priests, the Levites, who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD, the stranger as well as he who was born among them. Half of them *were* in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal, as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded before, that they should bless the people of Israel. [34]And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessings and the cursings, according to all that is written in the Book of the Law. [35]There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded which Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel, with the women, the little ones, and the strangers who were living among them.

## THE TREATY WITH THE GIBEONITES

**9** And it came to pass when all the kings who *were* on this side of the Jordan,
in the hills and in the lowland and in all the coasts of the Great Sea toward
Lebanon-the Hittite, the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and
the Jebusite-heard *about it,* [2]that they gathered together to fight with Joshua
and Israel with one accord.

[3]But when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to
Jericho and Ai, [4]they worked craftily, and went and pretended to be
ambassadors. And they took old sacks on their donkeys, old wineskins torn
and mended, [5]old and patched sandals on their feet, and old garments on
themselves; and all the bread of their provision was dry *and* moldy. [6]And
they went to Joshua, to the camp at Gilgal, and said to him and to the men of
Israel, "We have come from a far country; now therefore, make a covenant
with us."

[7]Then the men of Israel said to the Hivites, "Perhaps you dwell among us;
so how can we make a covenant with you?"

[8]But they said to Joshua, "We *are* your servants."

And Joshua said to them, "Who *are* you, and where do you come from?"

[9]So they said to him: "From a very far country your servants have come,
because of the name of the LORD your God; for we have heard of His fame,
and all that He did in Egypt, [10]and all that He did to the two kings of the
Amorites who *were* beyond the Jordan-to Sihon king of Heshbon, and Og
king of Bashan, who was at Ashtaroth. [11]Therefore our elders and all the
inhabitants of our country spoke to us, saying, 'Take provisions with you for
the journey, and go to meet them, and say to them, "We *are* your servants;
now therefore, make a covenant with us." ' [12]This bread of ours we took hot
*for* our provision from our houses on the day we departed to come to you.
But now look, it is dry and moldy. [13]And these wineskins which we filled
*were* new, and see, they are torn; and these our garments and our sandals
have become old because of the very long journey."

[14]Then the men of Israel took some of their provisions; but they did not ask

counsel of the LORD. [15]So Joshua made peace with them, and made a covenant with them to let them live; and the rulers of the congregation swore to them.

[16]And it happened at the end of three days, after they had made a covenant with them, that they heard that they *were* their neighbors who dwelt near them. [17]Then the children of Israel journeyed and came to their cities on the third day. Now their cities *were* Gibeon, Chephirah, Beeroth, and Kirjath Jearim. [18]But the children of Israel did not attack them, because the rulers of the congregation had sworn to them by the LORD God of Israel. And all the congregation complained against the rulers.

[19]Then all the rulers said to all the congregation, "We have sworn to them by the LORD God of Israel; now therefore, we may not touch them. [20]This we will do to them: We will let them live, lest wrath be upon us because of the oath which we swore to them." [21]And the rulers said to them, "Let them live, but let them be woodcutters and water carriers for all the congregation, as the rulers had promised them."

[22]Then Joshua called for them, and he spoke to them, saying, "Why have you deceived us, saying, 'We *are* very far from you,' when you dwell near us? [23]Now therefore, you *are* cursed, and none of you shall be freed from being slaves-woodcutters and water carriers for the house of my God."

[24]So they answered Joshua and said, "Because your servants were clearly told that the LORD your God commanded His servant Moses to give you all the land, and to destroy all the inhabitants of the land from before you; therefore we were very much afraid for our lives because of you, and have done this thing. [25]And now, here we are, in your hands; do with us as it seems good and right to do to us." [26]So he did to them, and delivered them out of the hand of the children of Israel, so that they did not kill them. [27]And that day Joshua made them woodcutters and water carriers for the congregation and for the altar of the LORD, in the place which He would choose, even to this day.

## SOUL NOTE

**Don’t Forget to Pray** *(9:14, 15)* The leaders of Israel did not pray and “ask counsel of the LORD” before they made their agreement with the Gibeonites. If they had prayed, God would have revealed the Gibeonites’ deception. Then Israel would not have been guilty of disobeying God’s command (Ex. 23:32). The Israelites had been victorious over many cities, but that success may have caused them to become lax in seeking guidance from God. When life is going well and we think we have everything under control, we must not forget to pray, continually seeking God’s guidance. **Topic: Prayer**

**THE SUN STANDS STILL**

**10** Now it came to pass when AdoniZedek king of Jerusalem heard how
Joshua had taken Ai and had utterly destroyed it-as he had done to
Jericho and its king, so he had done to Ai and its king-and how the
inhabitants of Gibeon had made peace with Israel and were among them,
2 that they feared greatly, because Gibeon *was* a great city, like one of the
royal cities, and because it *was* greater than Ai, and all its men *were* mighty.
3 Therefore AdoniZedek king of Jerusalem sent to Hoham king of Hebron,
Piram king of Jarmuth, Japhia king of Lachish, and Debir king of Eglon,
saying, 4 "Come up to me and help me, that we may attack Gibeon, for it has
made peace with Joshua and with the children of Israel." 5 Therefore the five
kings of the Amorites, the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of
Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, *and* the king of Eglon, gathered together and
went up, they and all their armies, and camped before Gibeon and made war
against it.

6 And the men of Gibeon sent to Joshua at the camp at Gilgal, saying, "Do
not forsake your servants; come up to us quickly, save us and help us, for all
the kings of the Amorites who dwell in the mountains have gathered together
against us."

7 So Joshua ascended from Gilgal, he and all the people of war with him,
and all the mighty men of valor. 8 And the LORD said to Joshua, "Do not fear
them, for I have delivered them into your hand; not a man of them shall stand
before you." 9 Joshua therefore came upon them suddenly, having marched all
night from Gilgal. 10 So the LORD routed them before Israel, killed them with
a great slaughter at Gibeon, chased them along the road that goes to Beth
Horon, and struck them down as far as Azekah and Makkedah. 11 And it
happened, as they fled before Israel *and* were on the descent of Beth Horon,
that the LORD cast down large hailstones from heaven on them as far as
Azekah, and they died. *There were* more who died from the hailstones than
the children of Israel killed with the sword.

12 Then Joshua spoke to the LORD in the day when the LORD delivered up
the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel:

"Sun, stand still over Gibeon;
And Moon, in the Valley of Aijalon."

13 So the sun stood still,
And the moon stopped,
Till the people had revenge
Upon their enemies.
*Is* this not written in the Book of Jasher? So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and did not hasten to go *down* for about a whole day. 14 And there has been no day like that, before it or after it, that the LORD heeded the voice of a man; for the LORD fought for Israel.

15 Then Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, to the camp at Gilgal.

**THE AMORITE KINGS EXECUTED**

16 But these five kings had fled and hidden themselves in a cave at Makkedah. 17 And it was told Joshua, saying, "The five kings have been found hidden in the cave at Makkedah."

18 So Joshua said, "Roll large stones against the mouth of the cave, and set men by it to guard them. 19 And do not stay *there* yourselves, *but* pursue your enemies, and attack their rear *guard*. Do not allow them to enter their cities, for the LORD your God has delivered them into your hand." 20 Then it happened, while Joshua and the children of Israel made an end of slaying them with a very great slaughter, till they had finished, that those who escaped entered fortified cities. 21 And all the people returned to the camp, to Joshua at Makkedah, in peace.

No one moved his tongue against any of the children of Israel.

22 Then Joshua said, "Open the mouth of the cave, and bring out those five kings to me from the cave." 23 And they did so, and brought out those five kings to him from the cave: the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, *and* the king of Eglon.

24 So it was, when they brought out those kings to Joshua, that Joshua called for all the men of Israel, and said to the captains of the men of war who went with him, "Come near, put your feet on the necks of these kings." And

they drew near and put their feet on their necks. [25]Then Joshua said to them, “Do not be afraid, nor be dismayed; be strong and of good courage, for thus the LORD will do to all your enemies against whom you fight.” [26]And afterward Joshua struck them and killed them, and hanged them on five trees; and they were hanging on the trees until evening. [27]So it was at the time of the going down of the sun *that* Joshua commanded, and they took them down from the trees, cast them into the cave where they had been hidden, and laid large stones against the cave’s mouth, *which remain* until this very day.

## CONQUEST OF THE SOUTHLAND

[28]On that day Joshua took Makkedah, and struck it and its king with the edge of the sword. He utterly destroyed them[a] -all the people who *were* in it. He let none remain. He also did to the king of Makkedah as he had done to the king of Jericho.

[29]Then Joshua passed from Makkedah, and all Israel with him, to Libnah; and they fought against Libnah. [30]And the LORD also delivered it and its king into the hand of Israel; he struck it and all the people who *were* in it with the edge of the sword. He let none remain in it, but did to its king as he had done to the king of Jericho.

[31]Then Joshua passed from Libnah, and all Israel with him, to Lachish; and they encamped against it and fought against it. [32]And the LORD delivered Lachish into the hand of Israel, who took it on the second day, and struck it and all the people who *were* in it with the edge of the sword, according to all that he had done to Libnah. [33]Then Horam king of Gezer came up to help Lachish; and Joshua struck him and his people, until he left him none remaining.

[34]From Lachish Joshua passed to Eglon, and all Israel with him; and they encamped against it and fought against it. [35]They took it on that day and struck it with the edge of the sword; all the people who *were* in it he utterly destroyed that day, according to all that he had done to Lachish.

[36]So Joshua went up from Eglon, and all Israel with him, to Hebron; and they fought against it. [37]And they took it and struck it with the edge of the sword-its king, all its cities, and all the people who *were* in it; he left none

remaining, according to all that he had done to Eglon, but utterly destroyed it and all the people who *were* in it.

[38]Then Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, to Debir; and they fought against it. [39]And he took it and its king and all its cities; they struck them with the edge of the sword and utterly destroyed all the people who *were* in it. He left none remaining; as he had done to Hebron, so he did to Debir and its king, as he had done also to Libnah and its king.

[40]So Joshua conquered all the land: the mountain country and the South[a] and the lowland and the wilderness slopes, and all their kings; he left none remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed, as the LORD God of Israel had commanded. [41]And Joshua conquered them from Kadesh Barnea as far as Gaza, and all the country of Goshen, even as far as Gibeon. [42]All these kings and their land Joshua took at one time, because the LORD God of Israel fought for Israel. [43]Then Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, to the camp at Gilgal.

## THE NORTHERN CONQUEST

**11** And it came to pass, when Jabin king of Hazor heard *these things*, that
he sent to Jobab king of Madon, to the king of Shimron, to the king of
Achshaph, 2and to the kings who *were* from the north, in the mountains, in
the plain south of Chinneroth, in the lowland, and in the heights of Dor on the
west, 3to the Canaanites in the east and in the west, the Amorite, the Hittite,
the Perizzite, the Jebusite in the mountains, and the Hivite below Hermon in
the land of Mizpah. 4So they went out, they and all their armies with them, *as*
many people *as* the sand that *is* on the seashore in multitude, with very many
horses and chariots. 5And when all these kings had met together, they came
and camped together at the waters of Merom to fight against Israel.

6But the LORD said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid because of them, for
tomorrow about this time I will deliver all of them slain before Israel. You
shall hamstring their horses and burn their chariots with fire." 7So Joshua and
all the people of war with him came against them suddenly by the waters of
Merom, and they attacked them. 8And the LORD delivered them into the hand
of Israel, who defeated them and chased them to Greater Sidon, to the Brook
Misrephoth,[a] and to the Valley of Mizpah eastward; they attacked them until
they left none of them remaining. 9So Joshua did to them as the LORD had
told him: he hamstrung their horses and burned their chariots with fire.

10Joshua turned back at that time and took Hazor, and struck its king with
the sword; for Hazor was formerly the head of all those kingdoms. 11And
they struck all the people who *were* in it with the edge of the sword, utterly
destroying *them.* There was none left breathing. Then he burned Hazor with
fire.

12So all the cities of those kings, and all their kings, Joshua took and struck
with the edge of the sword. He utterly destroyed them, as Moses the servant
of the LORD had commanded. 13But *as for* the cities that stood on their
mounds,[a] Israel burned none of them, except Hazor only, *which* Joshua
burned. 14And all the spoil of these cities and the livestock, the children of
Israel took as booty for themselves; but they struck every man with the edge
of the sword until they had destroyed them, and they left none breathing.

15 As the LORD had commanded Moses his servant, so Moses commanded
Joshua, and so Joshua did. He left nothing undone of all that the LORD had
commanded Moses.

## SUMMARY OF JOSHUA'S CONQUESTS

16 Thus Joshua took all this land: the mountain country, all the South, all
the land of Goshen, the lowland, and the Jordan plain[a] -the mountains of
Israel and its lowlands, 17 from Mount Halak and the ascent to Seir, even as
far as Baal Gad in the Valley of Lebanon below Mount Hermon. He captured
all their kings, and struck them down and killed them. 18 Joshua made war a
long time with all those kings. 19 There was not a city that made peace with
the children of Israel, except the Hivites, the inhabitants of Gibeon. All *the*
*others* they took in battle. 20 For it was of the LORD to harden their hearts, that
they should come against Israel in battle, that He might utterly destroy them,
*and* that they might receive no mercy, but that He might destroy them, as the
LORD had commanded Moses.

21 And at that time Joshua came and cut off the Anakim from the
mountains: from Hebron, from Debir, from Anab, from all the mountains of
Judah, and from all the mountains of Israel; Joshua utterly destroyed them
with their cities. 22 None of the Anakim were left in the land of the children of
Israel; they remained only in Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod.

23 So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the LORD had said to
Moses; and Joshua gave it as an inheritance to Israel according to their
divisions by their tribes. Then the land rested from war.

## THE KINGS CONQUERED BY MOSES

**12** These *are* the kings of the land whom the children of Israel defeated,
and whose land they possessed on the other side of the Jordan toward the
rising of the sun, from the River Arnon to Mount Hermon, and all the eastern
Jordan plain: 2*One king was* Sihon king of the Amorites, who dwelt in
Heshbon *and* ruled half of Gilead, from Aroer, which is on the bank of the
River Arnon, from the middle of that river, even as far as the River Jabbok,
*which is* the border of the Ammonites, 3and the eastern Jordan plain from the
Sea of Chinneroth as far as the Sea of the Arabah (the Salt Sea), the road to
Beth Jeshimoth, and southward below the slopes of Pisgah. 4*The other king
was* Og king of Bashan and his territory, *who was* of the remnant of the
giants, who dwelt at Ashtaroth and at Edrei, 5and reigned over Mount
Hermon, over Salcah, over all Bashan, as far as the border of the Geshurites
and the Maachathites, and over half of Gilead *to* the border of Sihon king of
Heshbon.

6These Moses the servant of the LORD and the children of Israel had
conquered; and Moses the servant of the LORD had given it *as* a possession to
the Reubenites, the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh.

## THE KINGS CONQUERED BY JOSHUA

7And these *are* the kings of the country which Joshua and the children of
Israel conquered on this side of the Jordan, on the west, from Baal Gad in the
Valley of Lebanon as far as Mount Halak and the ascent to Seir, which
Joshua gave to the tribes of Israel *as* a possession according to their divisions,
8in the mountain country, in the lowlands, in the *Jordan* plain, in the slopes,
in the wilderness, and in the South-the Hittites, the Amorites, the Canaanites,
the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites: 9the king of Jericho, one; the
king of Ai, which *is* beside Bethel, one; 10the king of Jerusalem, one; the king
of Hebron, one; 11the king of Jarmuth, one; the king of Lachish, one; 12the
king of Eglon, one; the king of Gezer, one; 13the king of Debir, one; the king
of Geder, one; 14the king of Hormah, one; the king of Arad, one; 15the king
of Libnah, one; the king of Adullam, one; 16the king of Makkedah, one; the
king of Bethel, one; 17the king of Tappuah, one; the king of Hepher, one;

[18]the king of Aphek, one; the king of Lasharon, one; [19]the king of Madon, one; the king of Hazor, one; [20]the king of Shimron Meron, one; the king of Achshaph, one; [21]the king of Taanach, one; the king of Megiddo, one; [22]the king of Kedesh, one; the king of Jokneam in Carmel, one; [23]the king of Dor in the heights of Dor, one; the king of the people of Gilgal, one; [24]the king of Tirzah, one-all the kings, thirty-one.

## REMAINING LAND TO BE CONQUERED

**13** Now Joshua was old, advanced in years. And the LORD said to him:
"You are old, advanced in years, and there remains very much land yet
to be possessed. 2This is the land that yet remains: all the territory of the
Philistines and all *that of* the Geshurites, 3from Sihor, which *is* east of Egypt,
as far as the border of Ekron northward (*which* is counted as Canaanite); the
five lords of the Philistines-the Gazites, the Ashdodites, the Ashkelonites, the
Gittites, and the Ekronites; also the Avites; 4from the south, all the land of the
Canaanites, and Mearah that belongs to the Sidonians as far as Aphek, to the
border of the Amorites; 5the land of the Gebalites,[a] and all Lebanon, toward
the sunrise, from Baal Gad below Mount Hermon as far as the entrance to
Hamath; 6all the inhabitants of the mountains from Lebanon as far as the
Brook Misrephoth,[a] *and* all the Sidonians-them I will drive out from before
the children of Israel; only divide it by lot to Israel as an inheritance, as I
have commanded you. 7Now therefore, divide this land as an inheritance to
the nine tribes and half the tribe of Manasseh."

## THE LAND DIVIDED EAST OF THE JORDAN

8With the other half-tribe the Reubenites and the Gadites received their
inheritance, which Moses had given them, beyond the Jordan eastward, as
Moses the servant of the LORD had given them: 9from Aroer which *is* on the
bank of the River Arnon, and the town that *is* in the midst of the ravine, and
all the plain of Medeba as far as Dibon; 10all the cities of Sihon king of the
Amorites, who reigned in Heshbon, as far as the border of the children of
Ammon; 11Gilead, and the border of the Geshurites and Maachathites, all
Mount Hermon, and all Bashan as far as Salcah; 12all the kingdom of Og in
Bashan, who reigned in Ashtaroth and Edrei, who remained of the remnant of
the giants; for Moses had defeated and cast out these.

13Nevertheless the children of Israel did not drive out the Geshurites or the
Maachathites, but the Geshurites and the Maachathites dwell among the
Israelites until this day.

14Only to the tribe of Levi he had given no inheritance; the sacrifices of the

LORD God of Israel made by fire *are* their inheritance, as He said to them.

**THE LAND OF REUBEN**

15 And Moses had given to the tribe of the children of Reuben *an*
*inheritance* according to their families. 16 Their territory was from Aroer,
which *is* on the bank of the River Ar-non, and the city that *is* in the midst of
the ravine, and all the plain by Medeba; 17 Heshbon and all its cities that *are*
in the plain: Dibon, Bamoth Baal, Beth Baal Meon, 18 Jahaza, Kedemoth,
Mephaath, 19 Kirjathaim, Sibmah, Zereth Shahar on the mountain of the
valley, 20 Beth Peor, the slopes of Pisgah, and Beth Jeshimoth- 21 all the cities
of the plain and all the kingdom of Sihon king of the Amorites, who reigned
in Heshbon, whom Moses had struck with the princes of Midian: Evi, Rekem,
Zur, Hur, and Reba, who *were* princes of Sihon dwelling in the country.
22 The children of Israel also killed with the sword Balaam the son of Beor,
the soothsayer, among those who were killed by them. 23 And the border of
the children of Reuben was the bank of the Jordan. This *was* the inheritance
of the children of Reuben according to their families, the cities and their
villages.

**THE LAND OF GAD**

24 Moses also had given *an inheritance* to the tribe of Gad, to the children
of Gad according to their families. 25 Their territory was Jazer, and all the
cities of Gilead, and half the land of the Ammonites as far as Aroer, which *is*
before Rabbah, 26 and from Heshbon to Ramath Mizpah and Betonim, and
from Mahanaim to the border of Debir, 27 and in the valley Beth Haram, Beth
Nimrah, Succoth, and Zaphon, the rest of the kingdom of Sihon king of
Heshbon, with the Jordan as *its* border, as far as the edge of the Sea of
Chinnereth, on the other side of the Jordan eastward. 28 This *is* the inheritance
of the children of Gad according to their families, the cities and their villages.

**HALF THE TRIBE OF MANASSEH (EAST)**

29 Moses also had given *an inheritance* to half the tribe of Manasseh; it was
for half the tribe of the children of Manasseh according to their families:
30 Their territory was from Mahanaim, all Bashan, all the kingdom of Og king

of Bashan, and all the towns of Jair which are in Bashan, sixty cities; [31]half of Gilead, and Ashtaroth and Edrei, cities of the kingdom of Og in Bashan, *were* for the children of Machir the son of Manasseh, for half of the children of Machir according to their families.

[32]These *are the areas* which Moses had distributed as an inheritance in the plains of Moab on the other side of the Jordan, by Jericho eastward. [33]But to the tribe of Levi Moses had given no inheritance; the LORD God of Israel *was* their inheritance, as He had said to them.

## THE LAND DIVIDED WEST OF THE JORDAN

**14** These *are the areas* which the children of Israel inherited in the land of
Canaan, which Eleazar the priest, Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads
of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel distributed as an
inheritance to them. 2Their inheritance *was* by lot, as the LORD had
commanded by the hand of Moses, for the nine tribes and the half-tribe. 3For
Moses had given the inheritance of the two tribes and the half-tribe on the
other side of the Jordan; but to the Levites he had given no inheritance among
them. 4For the children of Joseph were two tribes: Manasseh and Ephraim.
And they gave no part to the Levites in the land, except cities to dwell *in*,
with their common-lands for their livestock and their property. 5As the LORD
had commanded Moses, so the children of Israel did; and they divided the
land.

## CALEB INHERITS HEBRON

6Then the children of Judah came to Joshua in Gilgal. And Caleb the son
of Jephunneh the Kenizzite said to him: "You know the word which the LORD
said to Moses the man of God concerning you and me in Kadesh Barnea. 7I
*was* forty years old when Moses the servant of the LORD sent me from
Kadesh Barnea to spy out the land, and I brought back word to him as *it was*
in my heart. 8Nevertheless my brethren who went up with me made the heart
of the people melt, but I wholly followed the LORD my God. 9So Moses
swore on that day, saying, 'Surely the land where your foot has trodden shall
be your inheritance and your children's forever, because you have wholly
followed the LORD my God.' 10And now, behold, the LORD has kept me alive,
as He said, these forty-five years, ever since the LORD spoke this word to
Moses while Israel wandered in the wilderness; and now, here I am this day,
eighty-five years old. 11As yet I *am as* strong this day as on the day that
Moses sent me; just as my strength *was* then, so now *is* my strength for war,
both for going out and for coming in. 12Now therefore, give me this mountain
of which the LORD spoke in that day; for you heard in that day how the
Anakim *were* there, and *that* the cities *were* great *and* fortified. It may be that
the LORD *will be* with me, and I shall be able to drive them out as the LORD

said.”

13 And Joshua blessed him, and gave Hebron to Caleb the son of Jephunneh
as an inheritance. 14 Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb the son
of Jephunneh the Kenizzite to this day, because he wholly followed the LORD
God of Israel. 15 And the name of Hebron formerly was Kirjath Arba (*Arba*
*was* the greatest man among the Anakim).

Then the land had rest from war.

## GRACEFULLY GROWING OLDER

# DAVID SEAMANDS

## ( Joshua 14)

**G**rowing older is certainly no easy journey. The gray (or disappearing) hair, the new aches and pains, the need to slow down-all of these are natural, but unwanted, signs of aging. Western culture idolizes youthfulness and is constantly trying to reverse, or at least slow down, the aging process.

Life is often pictured as a bell-shaped journey. Beginning with birth, people climb through infancy and toward adulthood. It’s all an uphill climb until sometime around “midlife” when the slope begins its descent, and people are “over the hill.” At that point, many want to recapture those “upward” years, trying to look young, feel young, and act young. But nothing can stop the aging process and, too often, people become discontented and depressed.

With all the bad news, it is encouraging to discover that God sees aging very differently than we do. The Bible says that God is not someone we must wait to meet until after we grow old and reach the *end* of life. No, He had plans for us even before we *began* (Eph. 1:4), and will be with us at *every stage* of life (Deut. 33:25, 27). In this God's-eye view, aging is merely the final phase of an upward climb from earth to heaven.

With this encouragement, consider what the Bible teaches about how we should live as we grow older.

## STAY HEALTHY

Like all people of all ages, older people should take care of the physical body (1 Cor. 3:16, 17), mind (Phil. 4:8), and spirit (Rom. 12:1, 2). Taking proper care of the body through diet and regular physical activity, maintaining social relationships, and finding continuing meaning and purpose in life are vital contributions to healthy aging. The best medical research done by The MacArthur Foundation Consortium on Successful Aging confirms what the Bible says: The habits people form and the choices they make greatly influence how they fare in old age. Someone has said, "People don't really grow old, rather they get old because they stop growing." When people maintain the central purpose of life itself-to glorify God by loving Him and others-they can maintain their health whatever their age.

## KEEP SERVING

The prayer of all people should be for God to "teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom" (Ps. 90:12). As people age, they are a resource of wisdom and learning gained over many years. "Wisdom is with aged men, and with length of days, understanding" (Job 12:12). Younger Christians of new generations need counselors, mentors, and encouragers. When the Levites had completed their years of service in the tabernacle, their experience

and devotion was not lost to retirement at the age of fifty. Instead they were called to give assistance to the younger workers (Num. 8:26).

We should be realistic and understand that the wisdom gained by age will result in less *doing* and more *being*. Despite physical limitations and lifestyle changes, we always have the opportunity for a rich prayer life. Throughout their lives, people can be "not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality" (Rom. 12:11-13).

God promised Abraham that he would live to be "a good old age" (Gen. 15:15). The psalmist wrote, "With long life I will satisfy him, and show him My salvation" (Ps. 91:16). Solomon, in his wise proverbs, added, "The silver-haired head is a crown of glory, if it is found in the way of righteousness. . . . The splendor of old men is their gray head" (Prov. 16:31; 20:29). The elderly have a special place in God's plan. Far from being abandoned and useless, they have a lifetime of experience and wisdom to share with others.

**BE HOPEFUL**

The Bible is very realistic about the natural losses, special needs, and difficulties people may experience as they grow older. Psalm 90:10 sounds like the preface to a Medicare document: "The days of our lives are seventy years; and if by reason of strength they are eighty years, yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away." Or consider the description of old age in Ecclesiastes 12:1-7.

Well-known people in Scripture illustrate the pains, losses, and afflictions of the elderly. Isaac lost his eyesight (Gen. 27:1); David could not stay warm, and his failing strength required special care (1 Kin. 1:1-4). Paul referred to himself as "Paul, the aged" (Philem. 9). In 2 Timothy 4:9-21, Paul alludes to both the physical and emotional

pains of old age-feelings of abandonment and loneliness, being let down by fellow workers, and saying goodbye to friends he might not ever see again in this world.

As difficult and challenging as the physical life becomes, sufficient strength is promised: "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9). With the prospect of the end of life on earth there is the promise of eternal life: "We do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. . . . We do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:16, 18).

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of aging/elderly include:

- Ruth 4:15
- Psalms 37:25; 71:9, 18; 91:14-16; 92:12-15
- Proverbs 17:6; 23:22
- Lamentations 3:22, 23
- Luke 2:25-38
- 2 Corinthians 4:7-18
- Titus 2:1-5

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on aging/elderly at Psalm 71:9. See also the personality profile of Caleb The Graceful Aging Of Caleb.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# THE GRACEFUL AGING OF CALEB

## ( JOSHUA 14:6-15)

Caleb was a faithful warrior in the mold of Moses and Joshua, his contemporaries. Caleb and Joshua outlived the generation of Jews who escaped Egypt to enter and possess the Promised Land. Robust at the age of 85, Caleb remained an active and strong leader. He participated in the conquest of the Promised Land. Caleb received the special privilege of claiming the lands he and his progeny would possess. His actions always flowed from a bold and obedient faith.

The Bible identifies a key to Caleb's lifelong health, vitality, and special favor with God. He "wholly followed the LORD" ( Josh. 14:8). His career probably started with a significant role in the exodus from Egypt. Later, Caleb and Joshua gave the positive minority report among the twelve spies Moses had sent to scout the land. The other ten expressed fear and voted to turn back. Caleb and Joshua believed that God would deliver the land into their hands in spite of scary giants and fortified cities. Caleb and Joshua were outvoted, but when the rest of their generation died, because of their unbelief, in the wilderness, Caleb and Joshua were blessed by God to live in the Promised Land.

Caleb remembered the promise of God, spoken through Moses, that his inheritance would be grand and that he would be blessed. He is a wonderful model for the proposition that a faithful life-one that perseveres through every trial and hardship-is rewarded with blessings in old age.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about aging/elderly Gracefully Growing Older. See also the key passage note at Psalm 71:9.

## THE LAND OF JUDAH

**15** So *this* was the lot of the tribe of the children of Judah according to their families:

The border of Edom at the Wilderness of Zin southward *was* the extreme
southern boundary. 2And their southern border began at the shore of the Salt
Sea, from the bay that faces southward. 3Then it went out to the southern side
of the Ascent of Akrabbim, passed along to Zin, ascended on the south side
of Kadesh Barnea, passed along to Hezron, went up to Adar, and went around
to Karkaa. 4*From there* it passed toward Azmon and went out to the Brook of
Egypt; and the border ended at the sea. This shall be your southern border.

5The east border *was* the Salt Sea as far as the mouth of the Jordan.

And the border on the northern quarter *began* at the bay of the sea at the
mouth of the Jordan. 6The border went up to Beth Hoglah and passed north of
Beth Arabah; and the border went up to the stone of Bohan the son of
Reuben. 7Then the border went up toward Debir from the Valley of Achor,
and it turned northward toward Gilgal, which *is* before the Ascent of
Adummim, which *is* on the south side of the valley. The border continued
toward the waters of En Shemesh and ended at En Rogel. 8And the border
went up by the Valley of the Son of Hinnom to the southern slope of the
Jebusite *city* (which *is* Jerusalem). The border went up to the top of the
mountain that *lies* before the Valley of Hinnom westward, which *is* at the end
of the Valley of Rephaim[a] northward. 9Then the border went around from the
top of the hill to the fountain of the water of Nephtoah, and extended to the
cities of Mount Ephron. And the border went around to Baalah (which *is*
Kirjath Jearim). 10Then the border turned westward from Baalah to Mount
Seir, passed along to the side of Mount Jearim on the north (which *is*
Chesalon), went down to Beth Shemesh, and passed on to Timnah. 11And the
border went out to the side of Ekron northward. Then the border went around
to Shicron, passed along to Mount Baalah, and extended to Jabneel; and the
border ended at the sea.

12The west border *was* the coastline of the Great Sea. This *is* the boundary
of the children of Judah all around according to their families.

## CALEB OCCUPIES HEBRON AND DEBIR

13 Now to Caleb the son of Jephunneh he gave a share among the children
of Judah, according to the commandment of the LORD to Joshua, *namely,*
Kirjath Arba, which *is* Hebron (*Arba was* the father of Anak). 14 Caleb drove
out the three sons of Anak from there: Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmai, the
children of Anak. 15 Then he went up from there to the inhabitants of Debir
(formerly the name of Debir *was* Kirjath Sepher).

16 And Caleb said, "He who attacks Kirjath Sepher and takes it, to him I
will give Achsah my daughter as wife." 17 So Othniel the son of Kenaz, the
brother of Caleb, took it; and he gave him Achsah his daughter as wife.
18 Now it was so, when she came *to him,* that she persuaded him to ask her
father for a field. So she dismounted from *her* donkey, and Caleb said to her,
"What do you wish?" 19 She answered, "Give me a blessing; since you have
given me land in the South, give me also springs of water." So he gave her
the upper springs and the lower springs.

## THE CITIES OF JUDAH

20 This *was* the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Judah according to
their families:

21 The cities at the limits of the tribe of the children of Judah, toward the
border of Edom in the South, were Kabzeel, Eder, Jagur, 22 Kinah, Dimonah,
Adadah, 23 Kedesh, Hazor, Ithnan, 24 Ziph, Telem, Bealoth, 25 Hazor,
Hadattah, Kerioth, Hezron (which *is* Hazor), 26 Amam, Shema, Moladah,
27 Hazar Gaddah, Heshmon, Beth Pelet, 28 Hazar Shual, Beersheba,
Bizjothjah, 29 Baalah, Ijim, Ezem, 30 Eltolad, Chesil, Hormah, 31 Ziklag,
Madmannah, Sansannah, 32 Lebaoth, Shilhim, Ain, and Rimmon: all the cities
*are* twenty-nine, with their villages.

33 In the lowland: Eshtaol, Zorah, Ashnah, 34 Zanoah, En Gannim, Tappuah,
Enam, 35 Jarmuth, Adullam, Socoh, Azekah, 36 Sharaim, Adithaim, Gederah,
and Gederothaim: fourteen cities with their villages; 37 Zenan, Hadashah,
Migdal Gad, 38 Dilean, Mizpah, Joktheel, 39 Lachish, Bozkath, Eglon,
40 Cabbon, Lahmas,[a] Kithlish, 41 Gederoth, Beth Dagon, Naamah, and
Makkedah: sixteen cities with their villages; 42 Libnah, Ether, Ashan,

[43]Jiphtah, Ashnah, Nezib, [44]Keilah, Achzib, and Mareshah: nine cities with their villages; [45]Ekron, with its towns and villages; [46]from Ekron to the sea, all that *lay* near Ashdod, with their villages; [47]Ashdod with its towns and villages, Gaza with its towns and villages-as far as the Brook of Egypt and the Great Sea with *its* coastline.

[48]And in the mountain country: Shamir, Jattir, Sochoh, [49]Dannah, Kirjath Sannah (which *is* Debir), [50]Anab, Eshtemoh, Anim, [51]Goshen, Holon, and Giloh: eleven cities with their villages; [52]Arab, Dumah, Eshean, [53]Janum, Beth Tappuah, Aphekah, [54]Humtah, Kirjath Arba (which *is* Hebron), and Zior: nine cities with their villages; [55]Maon, Carmel, Ziph, Juttah, [56]Jezreel, Jokdeam, Zanoah, [57]Kain, Gibeah, and Timnah: ten cities with their villages; [58]Halhul, Beth Zur, Gedor, [59]Maarath, Beth Anoth, and Eltekon: six cities with their villages; [60]Kirjath Baal (which *is* Kirjath Jearim) and Rabbah: two cities with their villages.

[61]In the wilderness: Beth Arabah, Middin, Secacah, [62]Nibshan, the City of Salt, and En Gedi: six cities with their villages.

[63]As for the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out; but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem to this day.

## EPHRAIM AND WEST MANASSEH

**16** The lot fell to the children of Joseph from the Jordan, by Jericho, to the
waters of Jericho on the east, to the wilderness that goes up from Jericho
through the mountains to Bethel, 2 then went out from Bethel to Luz,[a] passed
along to the border of the Archites at Ataroth, 3 and went down westward to
the boundary of the Japhletites, as far as the boundary of Lower Beth Horon
to Gezer; and it ended at the sea.

4 So the children of Joseph, Manasseh and Ephraim, took their inheritance.

## THE LAND OF EPHRAIM

5 The border of the children of Ephraim, according to their families, was
*thus:* The border of their inheritance on the east side was Ataroth Addar as far
as Upper Beth Horon.

6 And the border went out toward the sea on the north side of Michmethath;
then the border went around eastward to Taanath Shiloh, and passed by it on
the east of Janohah. 7 Then it went down from Janohah to Ataroth and
Naarah,[a] reached to Jericho, and came out at the Jordan.

8 The border went out from Tappuah westward to the Brook Kanah, and it
ended at the sea. This *was* the inheritance of the tribe of the children of
Ephraim according to their families. 9 The separate cities for the children of
Ephraim *were* among the inheritance of the children of Manasseh, all the
cities with their villages.

10 And they did not drive out the Canaanites who dwelt in Gezer; but the
Canaanites dwell among the Ephraimites to this day and have become forced
laborers.

## THE OTHER HALF-TRIBE OF MANASSEH (WEST)

**17** There was also a lot for the tribe of Manasseh, for he *was* the firstborn of
Joseph: *namely* for Machir the firstborn of Manasseh, the father of
Gilead, because he was a man of war; therefore he was given Gilead and
Bashan. 2And there was *a lot* for the rest of the children of Manasseh
according to their families: for the children of Abiezer,[a] the children of
Helek, the children of Asriel, the children of Shechem, the children of
Hepher, and the children of Shemida; these *were* the male children of
Manasseh the son of Joseph according to their families.

3But Zelophehad the son of Hepher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir,
the son of Manasseh, had no sons, but only daughters. And these *are* the
names of his daughters: Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah. 4And
they came near before Eleazar the priest, before Joshua the son of Nun, and
before the rulers, saying, "The LORD commanded Moses to give us an
inheritance among our brothers." Therefore, according to the commandment
of the LORD, he gave them an inheritance among their father's brothers. 5Ten
shares fell to Manasseh, besides the land of Gilead and Bashan, which *were*
on the other side of the Jordan, 6because the daughters of Manasseh received
an inheritance among his sons; and the rest of Manasseh's sons had the land
of Gilead.

7And the territory of Manasseh was from Asher to Michmethath, that *lies*
east of She-chem; and the border went along south to the inhabitants of En
Tappuah. 8Manasseh had the land of Tappuah, but Tappuah on the border of
Manasseh *belonged* to the children of Ephraim. 9And the border descended to
the Brook Kanah, southward to the brook. These cities of Ephraim *are* among
the cities of Manasseh. The border of Manasseh *was* on the north side of the
brook; and it ended at the sea.

10Southward *it was* Ephraim's, northward *it was* Manasseh's, and the sea
was its border. Manasseh's territory was adjoining Asher on the north and
Issachar on the east. 11And in Issachar and in Asher, Manasseh had Beth
Shean and its towns, Ibleam and its towns, the inhabitants of Dor and its
towns, the inhabitants of En Dor and its towns, the inhabitants of Taanach

and its towns, and the inhabitants of Megiddo and its towns-three hilly regions. [12]Yet the children of Manasseh could not drive out *the inhabitants of* those cities, but the Canaanites were determined to dwell in that land. [13]And it happened, when the children of Israel grew strong, that they put the Canaanites to forced labor, but did not utterly drive them out.

## MORE LAND FOR EPHRAIM AND MANASSEH

[14]Then the children of Joseph spoke to Joshua, saying, "Why have you given us *only* one lot and one share to inherit, since we *are* a great people, inasmuch as the LORD has blessed us until now?"

[15]So Joshua answered them, "If you *are* a great people, *then* go up to the forest *country* and clear a place for yourself there in the land of the Perizzites and the giants, since the mountains of Ephraim are too confined for you."

[16]But the children of Joseph said, "The mountain country is not enough for us; and all the Canaanites who dwell in the land of the valley have chariots of iron, *both those* who *are* of Beth Shean and its towns and *those* who *are* of the Valley of Jezreel."

[17]And Joshua spoke to the house of Joseph-to Ephraim and Manasseh-saying, "You *are* a great people and have great power; you shall not have *only* one lot, [18]but the mountain country shall be yours. Although it *is* wooded, you shall cut it down, and its farthest extent shall be yours; for you shall drive out the Canaanites, though they have iron chariots *and* are strong."

## THE REMAINDER OF THE LAND DIVIDED

**18** Now the whole congregation of the children of Israel assembled together
at Shiloh, and set up the tabernacle of meeting there. And the land was
subdued before them. 2But there remained among the children of Israel seven
tribes which had not yet received their inheritance.

3Then Joshua said to the children of Israel: "How long will you neglect to
go and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers has given you?
4Pick out from among you three men for *each* tribe, and I will send them;
they shall rise and go through the land, survey it according to their
inheritance, and come *back* to me. 5And they shall divide it into seven parts.
Judah shall remain in their territory on the south, and the house of Joseph
shall remain in their territory on the north. 6You shall therefore survey the
land in seven parts and bring *the survey* here to me, that I may cast lots for
you here before the LORD our God. 7But the Levites have no part among you,
for the priesthood of the LORD *is* their inheritance. And Gad, Reuben, and
half the tribe of Manasseh have received their inheritance beyond the Jordan
on the east, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave them."

8Then the men arose to go away; and Joshua charged those who went to
survey the land, saying, "Go, walk through the land, survey it, and come back
to me, that I may cast lots for you here before the LORD in Shiloh." 9So the
men went, passed through the land, and wrote the survey in a book in seven
parts by cities; and they came to Joshua at the camp in Shiloh. 10Then Joshua
cast lots for them in Shiloh before the LORD, and there Joshua divided the
land to the children of Israel according to their divisions.

## THE LAND OF BENJAMIN

11Now the lot of the tribe of the children of Benjamin came up according
to their families, and the territory of their lot came out between the children
of Judah and the children of Joseph. 12Their border on the north side began at
the Jordan, and the border went up to the side of Jericho on the north, and
went up through the mountains westward; it ended at the Wilderness of Beth
Aven. 13The border went over from there toward Luz, to the side of Luz

(which *is* Bethel) southward; and the border descended to Ataroth Addar, near the hill that *lies* on the south side of Lower Beth Horon.

14 Then the border extended around the west side to the south, from the hill that *lies* before Beth Horon southward; and it ended at Kirjath Baal (which *is* Kirjath Jearim), a city of the children of Judah. This *was* the west side.

15 The south side *began* at the end of Kirjath Jearim, and the border extended on the west and went out to the spring of the waters of Nephtoah. 16 Then the border came down to the end of the mountain that *lies* before the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, which *is* in the Valley of the Rephaim[a] on the north, descended to the Valley of Hinnom, to the side of the Jebusite *city* on the south, and descended to En Rogel. 17 And it went around from the north, went out to En Shemesh, and extended toward Geliloth, which is before the Ascent of Adummim, and descended to the stone of Bohan the son of Reuben. 18 Then it passed along toward the north side of Arabah,[a] and went down to Arabah. 19 And the border passed along to the north side of Beth Hoglah; then the border ended at the north bay at the Salt Sea, at the south end of the Jordan. This *was* the southern boundary.

20 The Jordan was its border on the east side. This *was* the inheritance of the children of Benjamin, according to its boundaries all around, according to their families.

21 Now the cities of the tribe of the children of Benjamin, according to their families, were Jericho, Beth Hoglah, Emek Keziz, 22 Beth Arabah, Zemaraim, Bethel, 23 Avim, Parah, Ophrah, 24 Chephar Haammoni, Ophni, and Gaba: twelve cities with their villages; 25 Gibeon, Ramah, Beeroth, 26 Mizpah, Chephirah, Mozah, 27 Rekem, Irpeel, Taralah, 28 Zelah, Eleph, Jebus (which *is* Jerusalem), Gibeath, *and* Kirjath: fourteen cities with their villages. This was the inheritance of the children of Benjamin according to their families.

## SIMEON'S INHERITANCE WITH JUDAH

**19** The second lot came out for Simeon, for the tribe of the children of
Simeon according to their families. And their inheritance was within the
inheritance of the children of Judah. 2They had in their inheritance Beersheba
(Sheba), Moladah, 3Hazar Shual, Balah, Ezem, 4Eltolad, Bethul, Hormah,
5Ziklag, Beth Marcaboth, Hazar Susah, 6Beth Lebaoth, and Sharuhen:
thirteen cities and their villages; 7Ain, Rimmon, Ether, and Ashan: four cities
and their villages; 8and all the villages that *were* all around these cities as far
as Baalath Beer, Ramah of the South. This *was* the inheritance of the tribe of
the children of Simeon according to their families.

9The inheritance of the children of Simeon *was included* in the share of the
children of Judah, for the share of the children of Judah was too much for
them. Therefore the children of Simeon had *their* inheritance within the
inheritance of that people.

## THE LAND OF ZEBULUN

10The third lot came out for the children of Zebulun according to their
families, and the border of their inheritance was as far as Sarid. 11Their
border went toward the west and to Maralah, went to Dabbasheth, and
extended along the brook that is east of Jokneam. 12Then from Sarid it went
eastward toward the sunrise along the border of Chisloth Tabor, and went out
toward Daberath, bypassing Japhia. 13And from there it passed along on the
east of Gath Hepher, toward Eth Kazin, and extended to Rimmon, which
borders on Neah. 14Then the border went around it on the north side of
Hannathon, and it ended in the Valley of Jiphthah El. 15Included were
Kattath, Nahallal, Shimron, Idalah, and Bethlehem: twelve cities with their
villages. 16This *was* the inheritance of the children of Zebulun according to
their families, these cities with their villages.

## THE LAND OF ISSACHAR

17The fourth lot came out to Issachar, for the children of Issachar according
to their families. 18And their territory went to Jezreel, and *included*

Chesulloth, Shunem, [19]Haphraim, Shion, Anaharath, [20]Rabbith, Kishion, Abez, [21]Remeth, En Gannim, En Haddah, and Beth Pazzez. [22]And the border reached to Tabor, Shahazimah, and Beth Shemesh; their border ended at the Jordan: sixteen cities with their villages. [23]This *was* the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Issachar according to their families, the cities and their villages.

**THE LAND OF ASHER**

[24]The fifth lot came out for the tribe of the children of Asher according to their families. [25]And their territory included Helkath, Hali, Beten, Achshaph, [26]Alammelech, Amad, and Mishal; it reached to Mount Carmel westward, along *the Brook* Shihor Libnath. [27]It turned toward the sunrise to Beth Dagon; and it reached to Zebulun and to the Valley of Jiphthah El, then northward beyond Beth Emek and Neiel, bypassing Cabul *which was* on the left, [28]including Ebron,[a] Rehob, Hammon, and Kanah, as far as Greater Sidon. [29]And the border turned to Ramah and to the fortified city of Tyre; then the border turned to Hosah, and ended at the sea by the region of Achzib. [30]Also Ummah, Aphek, and Rehob were included: twenty-two cities with their villages. [31]This was the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Asher according to their families, these cities with their villages.

**THE LAND OF NAPHTALI**

[32]The sixth lot came out to the children of Naphtali, for the children of Naphtali according to their families. [33]And their border began at Heleph, enclosing the territory from the terebinth tree in Zaanannim, Adami Nekeb, and Jabneel, as far as Lakkum; it ended at the Jordan. [34]From Heleph the border extended westward to Aznoth Tabor, and went out from there toward Hukkok; it adjoined Zebulun on the south side and Asher on the west side, and ended at Judah by the Jordan toward the sunrise. [35]And the fortified cities are Ziddim, Zer, Hammath, Rakkath, Chinnereth, [36]Adamah, Ramah, Hazor, [37]Kedesh, Edrei, En Hazor, [38]Iron, Migdal El, Horem, Beth Anath, and Beth Shemesh: nineteen cities with their villages. [39]This was the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Naphtali according to their families, the cities and their villages.

## THE LAND OF DAN

40 The seventh lot came out for the tribe of the children of Dan according to
their families. 41 And the territory of their inheritance was Zorah, Eshtaol, Ir
Shemesh, 42 Shaalabbin, Aijalon, Jethlah, 43 Elon, Timnah, Ekron, 44 Eltekeh,
Gibbethon, Baalath, 45 Jehud, Bene Berak, Gath Rimmon, 46 Me Jarkon, and
Rakkon, with the region near Joppa. 47 And the border of the children of Dan
went beyond these, because the children of Dan went up to fight against
Leshem and took it; and they struck it with the edge of the sword, took
possession of it, and dwelt in it. They called Leshem, Dan, after the name of
Dan their father. 48 This is the inheritance of the tribe of the children of Dan
according to their families, these cities with their villages.

## JOSHUA'S INHERITANCE

49 When they had made an end of dividing the land as an inheritance
according to their borders, the children of Israel gave an inheritance among
them to Joshua the son of Nun. 50 According to the word of the LORD they
gave him the city which he asked for, Timnath Serah in the mountains of
Ephraim; and he built the city and dwelt in it.

51 These *were* the inheritances which Eleazar the priest, Joshua the son of
Nun, and the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel divided
as an inheritance by lot in Shiloh before the LORD, at the door of the
tabernacle of meeting. So they made an end of dividing the country.

## THE CITIES OF REFUGE

**20** The LORD also spoke to Joshua, saying, 2"Speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'Appoint for yourselves cities of refuge, of which I spoke to you through Moses, 3that the slayer who kills a person accidentally *or* unintentionally may flee there; and they shall be your refuge from the avenger of blood. 4And when he flees to one of those cities, and stands at the entrance of the gate of the city, and declares his case in the hearing of the elders of that city, they shall take him into the city as one of them, and give him a place, that he may dwell among them. 5Then if the avenger of blood pursues him, they shall not deliver the slayer into his hand, because he struck his neighbor unintentionally, but did not hate him beforehand. 6And he shall dwell in that city until he stands before the congregation for judgment, *and* until the death of the one who is high priest in those days. Then the slayer may return and come to his own city and his own house, to the city from which he fled.' "

7So they appointed Kedesh in Galilee, in the mountains of Naphtali, Shechem in the mountains of Ephraim, and Kirjath Arba (which *is* Hebron) in the mountains of Judah. 8And on the other side of the Jordan, by Jericho eastward, they assigned Bezer in the wilderness on the plain, from the tribe of Reuben, Ra-moth in Gilead, from the tribe of Gad, and Golan in Bashan, from the tribe of Manasseh. 9These were the cities appointed for all the children of Israel and for the stranger who dwelt among them, that whoever killed a person accidentally might flee there, and not die by the hand of the avenger of blood until he stood before the congregation.

## CITIES OF THE LEVITES

**21** Then the heads of the fathers' *houses* of the Levites came near to Eleazar
the priest, to Joshua the son of Nun, and to the heads of the fathers'
*houses* of the tribes of the children of Israel. 2And they spoke to them at
Shiloh in the land of Canaan, saying, "The LORD commanded through Moses
to give us cities to dwell in, with their common-lands for our livestock." 3So
the children of Israel gave to the Levites from their inheritance, at the
commandment of the LORD, these cities and their common-lands:

4Now the lot came out for the families of the Kohathites. And the children
of Aaron the priest, *who were* of the Levites, had thirteen cities by lot from
the tribe of Judah, from the tribe of Simeon, and from the tribe of Benjamin.
5The rest of the children of Kohath had ten cities by lot from the families of
the tribe of Ephraim, from the tribe of Dan, and from the half-tribe of
Manasseh.

6And the children of Gershon had thirteen cities by lot from the families of
the tribe of Issachar, from the tribe of Asher, from the tribe of Naphtali, and
from the half-tribe of Manasseh in Bashan.

7The children of Merari according to their families had twelve cities from
the tribe of Reuben, from the tribe of Gad, and from the tribe of Zebulun.

8And the children of Israel gave these cities with their common-lands by
lot to the Levites, as the LORD had commanded by the hand of Moses.

9So they gave from the tribe of the children of Judah and from the tribe of
the children of Simeon these cities which are designated by name, 10which
were for the children of Aaron, one of the families of the Kohathites, *who
were* of the children of Levi; for the lot was theirs first. 11And they gave them
Kirjath Arba (*Arba was* the father of Anak), which *is* Hebron, in the
mountains of Judah, with the common-land surrounding it. 12But the fields of
the city and its villages they gave to Caleb the son of Jephunneh as his
possession.

13Thus to the children of Aaron the priest they gave Hebron with its
common-land (a city of refuge for the slayer), Libnah with its common-land,

14 Jattir with its common-land, Eshtemoa with its common-land, 15 Holon with
its common-land, Debir with its common-land, 16 Ain with its common-land,
Juttah with its common-land, and Beth Shemesh with its common-land: nine
cities from those two tribes; 17 and from the tribe of Benjamin, Gibeon with
its common-land, Geba with its common-land, 18 Anathoth with its common-
land, and Almon with its common-land: four cities. 19 All the cities of the
children of Aaron, the priests, *were* thirteen cities with their common-lands.

20 And the families of the children of Kohath, the Levites, the rest of the
children of Kohath, even they had the cities of their lot from the tribe of
Ephraim. 21 For they gave them She-chem with its common-land in the
mountains of Ephraim (a city of refuge for the slayer), Gezer with its
common-land, 22 Kibzaim with its common-land, and Beth Horon with its
common-land: four cities; 23 and from the tribe of Dan, Eltekeh with its
common-land, Gibbethon with its common-land, 24 Aijalon with its common-
land, *and* Gath Rimmon with its common-land: four cities; 25 and from the
half-tribe of Manasseh, Tanach with its common-land and Gath Rimmon with
its common-land: two cities. 26 All the ten cities with their common-lands
were for the rest of the families of the children of Kohath.

27 Also to the children of Gershon, of the families of the Levites, from the
*other* half-tribe of Manasseh, *they gave* Golan in Bashan with its common-
land (a city of refuge for the slayer), and Be Eshterah with its common-land:
two cities; 28 and from the tribe of Issachar, Kishion with its common-land,
Daberath with its common-land, 29 Jarmuth with its common-land, *and* En
Gannim with its common-land: four cities; 30 and from the tribe of Asher,
Mishal with its common-land, Ab-don with its common-land, 31 Helkath with
its common-land, and Rehob with its common-land: four cities; 32 and from
the tribe of Naphtali, Kedesh in Galilee with its common-land (a city of
refuge for the slayer), Hammoth Dor with its common-land, and Kartan with
its common-land: three cities. 33 All the cities of the Gershonites according to
their families *were* thirteen cities with their common-lands.

34 And to the families of the children of Merari, the rest of the Levites, from
the tribe of Zebulun, Jokneam with its common-land, Kartah with its
common-land, 35 Dimnah with its common-land, *and* Nahalal with its

common-land: four cities; [36]and from the tribe of Reuben, Bezer with its common-land, Jahaz with its common-land, [37]Kedemoth with its common-land, and Mephaath with its common- land: four cities;[a] [38]and from the tribe of Gad, Ramoth in Gilead with its common-land (a city of refuge for the slayer), Mahanaim with its common-land, [39]Heshbon with its common-land, *and* Jazer with its common-land: four cities in all. [40]So all the cities for the children of Merari according to their families, the rest of the families of the Levites, were *by* their lot twelve cities.

[41]All the cities of the Levites within the possession of the children of Israel *were* forty-eight cities with their common-lands. [42]Every one of these cities had its common-land surrounding it; thus *were* all these cities.

**THE PROMISE FULFILLED**

[43]So the LORD gave to Israel all the land of which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they took possession of it and dwelt in it. [44]The LORD gave them rest all around, according to all that He had sworn to their fathers. And not a man of all their enemies stood against them; the LORD delivered all their enemies into their hand. [45]Not a word failed of any good thing which the LORD had spoken to the house of Israel. All came to pass.

## EASTERN TRIBES RETURN TO THEIR LANDS

**22** Then Joshua called the Reubenites, the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh, 2and said to them: "You have kept all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, and have obeyed my voice in all that I commanded you. 3You have not left your brethren these many days, up to this day, but have kept the charge of the commandment of the LORD your God. 4And now the LORD your God has given rest to your brethren, as He promised them; now therefore, return and go to your tents *and* to the land of your possession, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave you on the other side of the Jordan. 5But take careful heed to do the commandment and the law which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, to love the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways, to keep His commandments, to hold fast to Him, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul." 6So Joshua blessed them and sent them away, and they went to their tents. 7Now to half the tribe of Manasseh Moses had given a possession in Bashan, but to the *other* half of it Joshua gave *a possession* among their brethren on this side of the Jordan, westward. And indeed, when Joshua sent them away to their tents, he blessed them, 8and spoke to them, saying, "Return with much riches to your tents, with very much livestock, with silver, with gold, with bronze, with iron, and with very much clothing. Divide the spoil of your enemies with your brethren."

9So the children of Reuben, the children of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh returned, and departed from the children of Israel at Shiloh, which *is* in the land of Canaan, to go to the country of Gilead, to the land of their possession, which they had obtained according to the word of the LORD by the hand of Moses.

> "But take careful heed to do the commandment and the law which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, to love the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways, to keep His commandments, to hold fast to Him, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul."
> JOSHUA 22:5

**AN ALTAR BY THE JORDAN**

10 And when they came to the region of the Jordan which *is* in the land of
Canaan, the children of Reuben, the children of Gad, and half the tribe of
Manasseh built an altar there by the Jordan-a great, impressive altar. 11 Now
the children of Israel heard *someone* say, "Behold, the children of Reuben,
the children of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh have built an altar on the
frontier of the land of Canaan, in the region of the Jordan-on the children of
Israel's side." 12 And when the children of Israel heard *of it*, the whole
congregation of the children of Israel gathered together at Shiloh to go to war
against them.

13 Then the children of Israel sent Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest to
the children of Reuben, to the children of Gad, and to half the tribe of
Manasseh, into the land of Gilead, 14 and with him ten rulers, one ruler each
from the chief house of every tribe of Israel; and each one *was* the head of the
house of his father among the divisions[a] of Israel. 15 Then they came to the
children of Reuben, to the children of Gad, and to half the tribe of Manasseh,
to the land of Gilead, and they spoke with them, saying, 16 "Thus says the
whole congregation of the LORD: 'What treachery *is* this that you have
committed against the God of Israel, to turn away this day from following the
LORD, in that you have built for yourselves an altar, that you might rebel this
day against the LORD? 17 *Is* the iniquity of Peor not enough for us, from which
we are not cleansed till this day, although there was a plague in the
congregation of the LORD, 18 but that you must turn away this day from
following the LORD? And it shall be, if you rebel today against the LORD, that
tomorrow He will be angry with the whole congregation of Israel.
19 Nevertheless, if the land of your possession *is* unclean, *then* cross over to
the land of the possession of the LORD, where the LORD's tabernacle stands,
and take possession among us; but do not rebel against the LORD, nor rebel
against us, by building yourselves an altar besides the altar of the LORD our
God. 20 Did not Achan the son of Zerah commit a trespass in the accursed
thing, and wrath fell on all the congregation of Israel? And that man did not
perish alone in his iniquity.' "

21 Then the children of Reuben, the children of Gad, and half the tribe of
Manasseh answered and said to the heads of the divisions[a] of Israel: 22 "The

LORD God of gods, the LORD God of gods, He knows, and let Israel itself know-if *it is* in rebellion, or if in treachery against the LORD, do not save us this day. 23If we have built ourselves an altar to turn from following the LORD, or if to offer on it burnt offerings or grain offerings, or if to offer peace offerings on it, let the LORD Himself require *an account.* 24But in fact we have done it for fear, for a reason, saying, 'In time to come your descendants may speak to our descendants, saying, "What have you to do with the LORD God of Israel? 25For the LORD has made the Jordan a border between you and us, *you* children of Reuben and children of Gad. You have no part in the LORD." So your descendants would make our descendants cease fearing the LORD.' 26Therefore we said, 'Let us now prepare to build ourselves an altar, not for burnt offering nor for sacrifice, 27but *that* it *may be* a witness between you and us and our generations after us, that we may perform the service of the LORD before Him with our burnt offerings, with our sacrifices, and with our peace offerings; that your descendants may not say to our descendants in time to come, "You have no part in the LORD." ' 28Therefore we said that it will be, when they say *this* to us or to our generations in time to come, that we may say, 'Here is the replica of the altar of the LORD which our fathers made, though not for burnt offerings nor for sacrifices; but it *is* a witness between you and us.' 29Far be it from us that we should rebel against the LORD, and turn from following the LORD this day, to build an altar for burnt offerings, for grain offerings, or for sacrifices, besides the altar of the LORD our God which *is* before His tabernacle."

30Now when Phinehas the priest and the rulers of the congregation, the heads of the divisions[a] of Israel who *were* with him, heard the words that the children of Reuben, the children of Gad, and the children of Manasseh spoke, it pleased them. 31Then Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest said to the children of Reuben, the children of Gad, and the children of Manasseh, "This day we perceive that the LORD *is* among us, because you have not committed this treachery against the LORD. Now you have delivered the children of Israel out of the hand of the LORD."

32And Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, and the rulers, returned from the children of Reuben and the children of Gad, from the land of Gilead to the land of Canaan, to the children of Israel, and brought back word to them.

33So the thing pleased the children of Israel, and the children of Israel blessed God; they spoke no more of going against them in battle, to destroy the land where the children of Reuben and Gad dwelt.

34The children of Reuben and the children of Gad[a] called the altar, *Witness,* "For *it is* a witness between us that the LORD *is* God."

## JOSHUA'S FAREWELL ADDRESS

**23** Now it came to pass, a long time after the LORD had given rest to Israel
from all their enemies round about, that Joshua was old, advanced in
age. 2 And Joshua called for all Israel, for their elders, for their heads, for their
judges, and for their officers, and said to them:

"I am old, advanced in age. 3 You have seen all that the LORD your God has
done to all these nations because of you, for the LORD your God *is* He who
has fought for you. 4 See, I have divided to you by lot these nations that
remain, to be an inheritance for your tribes, from the Jordan, with all the
nations that I have cut off, as far as the Great Sea westward. 5 And the LORD
your God will expel them from before you and drive them out of your sight.
So you shall possess their land, as the LORD your God promised you.
6 Therefore be very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the
Book of the Law of Moses, lest you turn aside from it to the right hand or to
the left, 7 *and* lest you go among these nations, these who remain among you.
You shall not make mention of the name of their gods, nor cause *anyone* to
swear *by them;* you shall not serve them nor bow down to them, 8 but you
shall hold fast to the LORD your God, as you have done to this day. 9 For the
LORD has driven out from before you great and strong nations; but *as for* you,
no one has been able to stand against you to this day. 10 One man of you shall
chase a thousand, for the LORD your God *is* He who fights for you, as He
promised you. 11 Therefore take careful heed to yourselves, that you love the
LORD your God. 12 Or else, if indeed you do go back, and cling to the remnant
of these nations-these that remain among you-and make marriages with them,
and go in to them and they to you, 13 know for certain that the LORD your God
will no longer drive out these nations from before you. But they shall be
snares and traps to you, and scourges on your sides and thorns in your eyes,
until you perish from this good land which the LORD your God has given you.

14 "Behold, this day I *am* going the way of all the earth. And you know in
all your hearts and in all your souls that not one thing has failed of all the
good things which the LORD your God spoke concerning you. All have come
to pass for you; not one word of them has failed. 15 Therefore it shall come to
pass, that as all the good things have come upon you which the LORD your

God promised you, so the LORD will bring upon you all harmful things, until He has destroyed you from this good land which the LORD your God has given you. [16]When you have transgressed the covenant of the LORD your God, which He commanded you, and have gone and served other gods, and bowed down to them, then the anger of the LORD will burn against you, and you shall perish quickly from the good land which He has given you."

## THE COVENANT AT SHECHEM

**24** Then Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem and called for
the elders of Israel, for their heads, for their judges, and for their
officers; and they presented themselves before God. 2And Joshua said to all
the people, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'Your fathers, *including*
Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, dwelt on the other side
of the River[a] in old times; and they served other gods. 3Then I took your
father Abraham from the other side of the River, led him throughout all the
land of Canaan, and multiplied his descendants and gave him Isaac. 4To Isaac
I gave Jacob and Esau. To Esau I gave the mountains of Seir to possess, but
Jacob and his children went down to Egypt. 5Also I sent Moses and Aaron,
and I plagued Egypt, according to what I did among them. Afterward I
brought you out.

6'Then I brought your fathers out of Egypt, and you came to the sea; and
the Egyptians pursued your fathers with chariots and horsemen to the Red
Sea. 7So they cried out to the LORD; and He put darkness between you and
the Egyptians, brought the sea upon them, and covered them. And your eyes
saw what I did in Egypt. Then you dwelt in the wilderness a long time. 8And
I brought you into the land of the Amorites, who dwelt on the other side of
the Jordan, and they fought with you. But I gave them into your hand, that
you might possess their land, and I destroyed them from before you. 9Then
Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose to make war against Israel, and
sent and called Balaam the son of Beor to curse you. 10But I would not listen
to Balaam; therefore he continued to bless you. So I delivered you out of his
hand. 11Then you went over the Jordan and came to Jericho. And the men of
Jericho fought against you-*also* the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites,
the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. But I delivered
them into your hand. 12I sent the hornet before you which drove them out
from before you, *also* the two kings of the Amorites, *but* not with your sword
or with your bow. 13I have given you a land for which you did not labor, and
cities which you did not build, and you dwell in them; you eat of the
vineyards and olive groves which you did not plant.'

14"Now therefore, fear the LORD, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and

put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the LORD! [15]And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that *were* on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

[16]So the people answered and said: "Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods; [17]for the LORD our God *is* He who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, who did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way that we went and among all the people through whom we passed. [18]And the LORD drove out from before us all the people, including the Amorites who dwelt in the land. We also will serve the LORD, for He *is* our God."

"Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve. . . . But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."
JOSHUA 24:15

[19]But Joshua said to the people, "You cannot serve the LORD, for He *is* a holy God. He *is* a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins. [20]If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, then He will turn and do you harm and consume you, after He has done you good."

[21]And the people said to Joshua, "No, but we will serve the LORD!"

[22]So Joshua said to the people, "You *are* witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the LORD for yourselves, to serve Him."

And they said, "*We are* witnesses!"

[23]"Now therefore," *he said,* "put away the foreign gods which *are* among you, and incline your heart to the LORD God of Israel."

[24]And the people said to Joshua, "The LORD our God we will serve, and His voice we will obey!"

[25]So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and made for them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem.

[26]Then Joshua wrote these words in the Book of the Law of God. And he took a large stone, and set it up there under the oak that *was* by the sanctuary of the LORD. [27]And Joshua said to all the people, “Behold, this stone shall be a witness to us, for it has heard all the words of the LORD which He spoke to us. It shall therefore be a witness to you, lest you deny your God.” [28]So Joshua let the people depart, each to his own inheritance.

**DEATH OF JOSHUA AND ELEAZAR**

[29]Now it came to pass after these things that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, *being* one hundred and ten years old. [30]And they buried him within the border of his inheritance at Timnath Serah, which *is* in the mountains of Ephraim, on the north side of Mount Gaash.

[31]Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had known all the works of the LORD which He had done for Israel.

[32]The bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel had brought up out of Egypt, they buried at Shechem, in the plot of ground which Jacob had bought from the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for one hundred pieces of silver, and which had become an inheritance of the children of Joseph.

[33]And Eleazar the son of Aaron died. They buried him in a hill *belonging to* Phinehas his son, which was given to him in the mountains of Ephraim.

Family Life

**STRONG FAMILIES**

NICK STINNETT

( Joshua 24:15)

**T**hink about it for a moment. If you faced a situation-a disease, a house ablaze, a tornado-that created within you the fear that you were about to die, what would be your last thoughts? Your job? Bank account? Prestige? Dirty dishes in the sink? Your upcoming vacation?

Probably not! You would be like many others in concluding that, next to your relationship with God, the bottom line of life is family. Our family is our most important responsibility, achievement, and legacy. We are confronted daily with evidence that the quality of family life is crucial to our happiness, emotional well-being, and mental health.

Healthy, happy families have six common characteristics.

## COMMITMENT

Commitment creates the warm, loving environment in which family members grow. It offers a harbor that shelters family members from the destructive forces of fear, anxiety, and loneliness.

At the heart of commitment to the family unit is dedication to the marriage relationship. God sees the commitment of husband and wife to each other as so crucial to families that He robustly condemns any violation of that marital commitment (Mal. 2:13-16; Matt. 19:8, 9; Eph. 5:25, 28; Titus 2:4). Commitment means to be there and not abandon each other. But it goes further. It says, “We will do whatever it takes to love each other as we should.”

## APPRECIATION

Expressions of appreciation and affection permeate relationships in strong families. God has made it known that He wants to be appreciated and told of that appreciation. On one occasion, Jesus heard the pleas of ten lepers who cried out for healing. All ten were healed, but only one came back to say thank you. Jesus was clearly pleased with the one who came back to show gratitude and just as

clearly disappointed in the nine who did not (Luke 17:11-19).

Members of strong families express appreciation to each other by thanking each other for everyday things (as well as the big stuff), by seeing the good qualities in each other, by encouraging each other, and by sharing gentle humor and affection. They are sincere and lavish in their affirmations of each other.

## COMMUNICATION

No one wants to feel all alone in the world. Elijah became despondent when he thought he was the only one who stood up for God. Feeling all alone carries a mixture of terror and despair. But God assured Elijah that he was not alone (1 Kin. 19:10-18).

Every person needs to know that he or she is part of a whole: Communication is the process through which this sense of belonging is related. Communication helps us feel connected to other people through the exchange of information. It also helps with solving problems and resolving conflicts in constructive ways.

## TIME TOGETHER

Chances are, our best memories are of simple times shared with our family and friends-times that probably did not require lots of money or elaborate preparations. Read in Ecclesiastes and hear Solomon's view that most of us waste time. Solomon tried pleasure, riches, fame, sex, and all the other pursuits common to mankind. He finally concluded that we should live simply, concentrating on those things that are truly important.

Members of strong families spend much time together playing, working, talking, having fun, and just hanging out together. They have resolved the current debate over quality time versus quantity of time. Families need both: Families need large quantities of good quality time to flourish. Many things demand our time; therefore, that

time becomes a precious gift we give to our loved ones.

## ABILITY TO COPE WITH STRESS AND CRISES

People in strong families still live in a real world. They encounter the same daily strains and frustrations as everyone else; they also experience the major crises of life such as serious illness, loss of a job, death, or natural disaster. They have an ability to deal with both stress and crises in ways that are effective. They manage to make it through.

People in strong families call on their commitment to each other and their good communication skills to help them work out ways to get through their difficulties. They pull together. They manage to see some good in the situation-no matter how bleak it may be. Sometimes, the only good in the situation is that they have each other to rely on. They rely heavily on their faith in God in difficult times.

## SPIRITUAL WELL-BEING

The importance of a spiritual center cannot be overstated when it comes to strong families. Reliance upon a power above and beyond themselves is the glue that holds families together and makes them strong. Jesus talked about the importance of building our “house” on the right foundation (Matt. 7:24, 25). Spiritual foundations give meaning and purpose to life: freedom from anxiety, guilt, fear, and low self-esteem as well as a hopeful, confident outlook. Connections with other people who share our religious beliefs give support and encouragement during difficult times. Spiritual foundations offer many guidelines for daily living. Forgiveness, patience, kindness, honesty, and helping others are all taught as virtues. Families with strong spiritual well-being know that God is there watching, caring, loving, and guiding. They know they can turn to God at any time for guidance (James 1:5). When people believe in these basic truths and abide by them, their lives have direction and they can know what is right and what is wrong. They have learned the value of putting

God's Word into practice. As James said, "Be doers of the word, and not hearers only" (James 1:22).

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of family life include:

- Genesis 12:3
- Exodus 20:12
- Psalms 68:6; 107:41
- Acts 16:33

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on family life at Psalm 127:3-5 . See also the personality profile of Timothy: A Godly Heritage.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# THE GODLY DECISION MAKING OF JOSHUA

## ( JOSHUA 24:14, 15)

Joshua was the successor of Moses, training under his leadership and watching his example for many years. Born in Egypt under slavery, Joshua witnessed the miracles of deliverance. Moses and Joshua shared an unquenchable faith in God. They sojourned together in the wilderness for decades, set their sights together on the land of Canaan, and served the Israelite people with grace and justice. And, although Moses led the people out of Egypt, Joshua led them into the

Promised Land.

Joshua acknowledged God in his decision making. Although God's battle plan for Jericho probably sounded unmilitary to the soldier in Joshua, he followed the instructions precisely. He sought God's direction and obeyed it even when it didn't match his own hunches. He practiced the priceless lesson that God does not offer guidance as an optional suggestion. God's ways are *the* way.

Even with extensive victories behind him, Joshua still faced constant challenges in godly decision making. Great faith was needed to live in Palestine and remain true to the God of Abraham. The Canaanites believed in numerous nature gods and worshiped many idols. The Israelites were constantly tempted to yield to the prevailing pagan rites. Joshua demonstrated a finely honed resistance to these temptations and often delivered sharp exhortations against pagan idolatry. Joshua made the decision to remain faithful. "As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" became a powerful statement of his allegiance to God ( Josh. 24:15). Today, when siren calls to pleasure, power, and riches are all around us, we need to decide to follow and honor God deliberately-and we need to repeat that decision every day.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about decision making Decision Making And The Will Of God. See also the key passage note at 1 John 5:14.

**SOUL NOTE**

**We Will Serve the Lord** *(24:14, 15)* As the people began settling the Promised Land, Joshua told them that they would need to make a choice between their God and the gods of the land. His challenge to the families of Israel rings down through the centuries. All people

must make this choice, beginning with parents who are responsible for their families. Joshua made his choice clear: “As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.” Effective leadership of your family begins with making that same choice and leading by example. **Topic: Family Life**

# Judges



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# Judges

It's one of the most important, and yet most overlooked laws of life: We are most vulnerable to trouble immediately following great triumph. This is the legacy of the nation of Israel during the dismal time of the judges.

After conquering and settling the Promised Land, the Israelites let down their guard. Chronic disregard for God and His Law led to a "dark age" of spiritual decline and civil anarchy. One of the constant problems in the Book of Judges was idolatry. Israel was surrounded by pagan nations who worshiped false gods. In time, the Israelites gave in to the cultural pressure to acknowledge gods like Baal and Asherah as their own, causing religious confusion, moral depravity, and civil catastrophe.

This depressing record (written by an unknown author) documents six cycles of national rebellion, repentance, and restoration. Each time Israel plunged into sin, they were conquered by a neighboring nation. In each moment of crisis, God raised up a military leader who would judge the nation, call them to renewed faith in God, and deliver them from oppression.

The last verse in the book acts as a fitting summary for the entire period: "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (21:25). We live in a similar era, where the operating credo is "do your own thing." How important, then, for us to heed the warning of Judges: The results of soul neglect are very ugly indeed!

**SOUL CONCERNS IN**

## JUDGES

EATING DISORDERS (3:17)

SUICIDE (16:28-30)

ABUSE (19:25)

## THE CONTINUING CONQUEST OF CANAAN

**1** Now after the death of Joshua it came to pass that the children of Israel asked the LORD, saying, “Who shall be first to go up for us against the Canaanites to fight against them?”

2 And the LORD said, “Judah shall go up. Indeed I have delivered the land into his hand.”

3 So Judah said to Simeon his brother, “Come up with me to my allotted territory, that we may fight against the Canaanites; and I will likewise go with you to your allotted territory.” And Simeon went with him. 4 Then Judah went up, and the LORD delivered the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand; and they killed ten thousand men at Bezek. 5 And they found Adoni-Bezek in Bezek, and fought against him; and they defeated the Canaanites and the Perizzites. 6 Then Adoni-Bezek fled, and they pursued him and caught him and cut off his thumbs and big toes. 7 And Adoni-Bezek said, “Seventy kings with their thumbs and big toes cut off used to gather *scraps* under my table; as I have done, so God has repaid me.” Then they brought him to Jerusalem, and there he died.

8 Now the children of Judah fought against Jerusalem and took it; they struck it with the edge of the sword and set the city on fire. 9 And afterward the children of Judah went down to fight against the Canaanites who dwelt in the mountains, in the South,[a] and in the lowland. 10 Then Judah went against the Canaanites who dwelt in Hebron. (Now the name of Hebron *was* formerly Kirjath Arba.) And they killed Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmai.

11 From there they went against the inhabitants of Debir. (The name of Debir *was* formerly Kirjath Sepher.)

12 Then Caleb said, “Whoever attacks Kirjath Sepher and takes it, to him I will give my daughter Achsah as wife.” 13 And Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb’s younger brother, took it; so he gave him his daughter Achsah as wife. 14 Now it happened, when she came *to him*, that she urged him[a] to ask her father for a field. And she dismounted from *her* donkey, and Caleb said to her, “What do you wish?” 15 So she said to him, “Give me a blessing; since you have given me land in the South, give me also springs of water.”

And Caleb gave her the upper springs and the lower springs.

16 Now the children of the Kenite, Moses' father-in-law, went up from the
City of Palms with the children of Judah into the Wilderness of Judah, which
*lies* in the South *near* Arad; and they went and dwelt among the people.
17 And Judah went with his brother Simeon, and they attacked the Canaanites
who inhabited Zephath, and utterly destroyed it. So the name of the city was
called Hormah. 18 Also Judah took Gaza with its territory, Ashkelon with its
territory, and Ekron with its territory. 19 So the LORD was with Judah. And
they drove out the mountaineers, but they could not drive out the inhabitants
of the lowland, because they had chariots of iron. 20 And they gave Hebron to
Caleb, as Moses had said. Then he expelled from there the three sons of
Anak. 21 But the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites who
inhabited Jerusalem; so the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin in
Jerusalem to this day.

22 And the house of Joseph also went up against Bethel, and the LORD *was*
with them. 23 So the house of Joseph sent men to spy out Bethel. (The name
of the city *was* formerly Luz.) 24 And when the spies saw a man coming out of
the city, they said to him, "Please show us the entrance to the city, and we
will show you mercy." 25 So he showed them the entrance to the city, and they
struck the city with the edge of the sword; but they let the man and all his
family go. 26 And the man went to the land of the Hittites, built a city, and
called its name Luz, which *is* its name to this day.

**INCOMPLETE CONQUEST OF THE LAND**

27 However, Manasseh did not drive out *the inhabitants of* Beth Shean and
its villages, or Taanach and its villages, or the inhabitants of Dor and its
villages, or the inhabitants of Ibleam and its villages, or the inhabitants of
Megiddo and its villages; for the Canaanites were determined to dwell in that
land. 28 And it came to pass, when Israel was strong, that they put the
Canaanites under tribute, but did not completely drive them out.

29 Nor did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites who dwelt in Gezer; so the
Canaanites dwelt in Gezer among them.

30 Nor did Zebulun drive out the inhabitants of Kitron or the inhabitants of

Nahalol; so the Canaanites dwelt among them, and were put under tribute.

31 Nor did Asher drive out the inhabitants of Acco or the inhabitants of
Sidon, or of Ahlab, Achzib, Helbah, Aphik, or Rehob. 32 So the Asherites
dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land; for they did not
drive them out.

33 Nor did Naphtali drive out the inhabitants of Beth Shemesh or the
inhabitants of Beth Anath; but they dwelt among the Canaanites, the
inhabitants of the land. Nevertheless the inhabitants of Beth Shemesh and
Beth Anath were put under tribute to them.

34 And the Amorites forced the children of Dan into the mountains, for they
would not allow them to come down to the valley; 35 and the Amorites were
determined to dwell in Mount Heres, in Aijalon, and in Shaalbim;[a] yet when
the strength of the house of Joseph became greater, they were put under
tribute.

36 Now the boundary of the Amorites *was* from the Ascent of Akrabbim,
from Sela, and upward.

## ISRAEL'S DISOBEDIENCE

**2** Then the Angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said: "I
led you up from Egypt and brought you to the land of which I swore to
your fathers; and I said, 'I will never break My covenant with you. [2]And you
shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall tear down
their altars.' But you have not obeyed My voice. Why have you done this?
[3]Therefore I also said, 'I will not drive them out before you; but they shall be
*thorns* in your side,[a] and their gods shall be a snare to you.' " [4]So it was,
when the Angel of the LORD spoke these words to all the children of Israel,
that the people lifted up their voices and wept.

[5]Then they called the name of that place Bochim;[a] and they sacrificed
there to the LORD. [6]And when Joshua had dismissed the people, the children
of Israel went each to his own inheritance to possess the land.

## DEATH OF JOSHUA

[7]So the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of
the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD
which He had done for Israel. [8]Now Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the
LORD, died *when he was* one hundred and ten years old. [9]And they buried
him within the border of his inheritance at Timnath Heres, in the mountains
of Ephraim, on the north side of Mount Gaash. [10]When all that generation
had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them who
did not know the LORD nor the work which He had done for Israel.

## ISRAEL'S UNFAITHFULNESS

[11]Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served
the Baals; [12]and they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, who had brought
them out of the land of Egypt; and they followed other gods from *among* the
gods of the people who *were* all around them, and they bowed down to them;
and they provoked the LORD to anger. [13]They forsook the LORD and served
Baal and the Ashtoreths.[a] [14]And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel.
So He delivered them into the hands of plunderers who despoiled them; and

He sold them into the hands of their enemies all around, so that they could no longer stand before their enemies. [15]Wherever they went out, the hand of the LORD was against them for calamity, as the LORD had said, and as the LORD had sworn to them. And they were greatly distressed.

[16]Nevertheless, the LORD raised up judges who delivered them out of the hand of those who plundered them. [17]Yet they would not listen to their judges, but they played the harlot with other gods, and bowed down to them. They turned quickly from the way in which their fathers walked, in obeying the commandments of the LORD; they did not do so. [18]And when the LORD raised up judges for them, the LORD was with the judge and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge; for the LORD was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who oppressed them and harassed them. [19]And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they reverted and behaved more corruptly than their fathers, by following other gods, to serve them and bow down to them. They did not cease from their own doings nor from their stubborn way.

[20]Then the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel; and He said, "Because this nation has transgressed My covenant which I commanded their fathers, and has not heeded My voice, [21]I also will no longer drive out before them any of the nations which Joshua left when he died, [22]so that through them I may test Israel, whether they will keep the ways of the LORD, to walk in them as their fathers kept *them*, or not." [23]Therefore the LORD left those nations, without driving them out immediately; nor did He deliver them into the hand of Joshua.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Tell the Stories** *(2:10)* Israel had flourished under Joshua's leadership. At some point, however, the older generation had stopped telling the stories of God and His faithfulness to their children. The

sad result was that “another generation arose after them who did not know the LORD nor the work which He had done for Israel.” A major part of children’s development involves spiritual training-and parents are the main source of their information. Will our children know of God’s mighty works throughout the Bible and in our lives? Or will they “not know the LORD nor the work” that He has done for us?
**Topic:** **Child Development**

## THE NATIONS REMAINING IN THE LAND

**3** Now these *are* the nations which the LORD left, that He might test Israel by them, *that is,* all who had not known any of the wars in Canaan [2](*this was* only so that the generations of the children of Israel might be taught to know war, at least those who had not formerly known it), [3]*namely,* five lords of the Philistines, all the Canaanites, the Sidonians, and the Hivites who dwelt in Mount Lebanon, from Mount Baal Hermon to the entrance of Hamath. [4]And they were *left, that He might* test Israel by them, to know whether they would obey the commandments of the LORD, which He had commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses.

[5]Thus the children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. [6]And they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their daughters to their sons; and they served their gods.

> When the children of Israel cried out to the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer.
> JUDGES 3:9

## OTHNIEL

[7]So the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD. They forgot the LORD their God, and served the Baals and Asherahs.[a] [8]Therefore the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and He sold them into the hand of Cushan-Rishathaim king of Mesopotamia; and the children of Israel served Cushan-Rishathaim eight years. [9]When the children of Israel cried out to the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer for the children of Israel, who delivered them: Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother. [10]The Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he judged Israel. He went out to war, and the LORD delivered Cushan-Rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand; and his hand prevailed over Cushan-Rishathaim. [11]So the land had rest for forty years. Then Othniel the son of Kenaz died.

## EHUD

[12]And the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD. So the LORD strengthened Eglon king of Moab against Israel, because they had done evil in the sight of the LORD. [13]Then he gathered to himself the people of Ammon and Amalek, went and defeated Israel, and took possession of the City of Palms. [14]So the children of Israel served Eglon king of Moab eighteen years.

[15]But when the children of Israel cried out to the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer for them: Ehud the son of Gera, the Benjamite, a left-handed man. By him the children of Israel sent tribute to Eglon king of Moab. [16]Now Ehud made himself a dagger (it was double-edged and a cubit in length) and fastened it under his clothes on his right thigh. [17]So he brought the tribute to Eglon king of Moab. (Now Eglon *was* a very fat man.) [18]And when he had finished presenting the tribute, he sent away the people who had carried the tribute. [19]But he himself turned back from the stone images that *were* at Gilgal, and said, “I have a secret message for you, O king.”

He said, “Keep silence!” And all who attended him went out from him.

[20]So Ehud came to him (now he was sitting upstairs in his cool private chamber). Then Ehud said, “I have a message from God for you.” So he arose from *his* seat. [21]Then Ehud reached with his left hand, took the dagger from his right thigh, and thrust it into his belly. [22]Even the hilt went in after the blade, and the fat closed over the blade, for he did not draw the dagger out of his belly; and his entrails came out. [23]Then Ehud went out through the porch and shut the doors of the upper room behind him and locked them.

[24]When he had gone out, *Eglon’s*[a] servants came to look, and *to their* surprise, the doors of the upper room were locked. So they said, “He is probably attending to his needs in the cool chamber.” [25]So they waited till they were embarrassed, and still he had not opened the doors of the upper room. Therefore they took the key and opened *them.* And there was their master, fallen dead on the floor.

[26]But Ehud had escaped while they delayed, and passed beyond the stone images and escaped to Seirah. [27]And it happened, when he arrived, that he blew the trumpet in the mountains of Ephraim, and the children of Israel went down with him from the mountains; and he led them. [28]Then he said to them,

“Follow *me,* for the LORD has delivered your enemies the Moabites into your hand.” So they went down after him, seized the fords of the Jordan leading to Moab, and did not allow anyone to cross over. [29]And at that time they killed about ten thousand men of Moab, all stout men of valor; not a man escaped. [30]So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel. And the land had rest for eighty years.

**SHAMGAR**

[31]After him was Shamgar the son of Anath, who killed six hundred men of the Philistines with an ox goad; and he also delivered Israel.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Cycles** *(3:7, 8)* The Book of Judges describes cycles of sin and judgment in Israel. When everything was going great, the nation would forget God and turn to idols. God would punish them for it, then they would cry out to Him in repentance, and He would send a deliverer (judge) to help them against their oppressors (3:7, 12; 4:1; 6:1; 8:33; 10:6; 13:1). When the people sinned, they were held accountable and were punished for breaking their covenant with God. While God is rich in mercy, He still holds people accountable for their sins and allows them to face the consequences of their behavior in their lives. **Topic: Accountability**

**EATING DISORDERS: ANOREXIA AND BULIMIA**

**NERVOSA**

# JESSE DILLINGER AND GREGORY L. JANTZ

## ( Judges 3:17)

**I**n today's society, one can't be too beautiful or too thin. The message of the prime importance of external beauty is warped and dangerous! The pressures to look or be a certain way provide big business, though not without great cost to the consumer. The message of perfection as being thinner and better often results in women and men using harmful means to reach that perceived level of perfection.

The eating disorders called anorexia and bulimia nervosa are two life struggles that have recently emerged within our culture and have caused much suffering.

### BRIEF EXPLANATIONS

*Bulimia Nervosa*

People who have bulimia consume large amounts of food in a short period of time (bingeing), then feel out of control and unable to stop eating. Bingeing is often followed by various methods to expel the food from the body-vomiting, diuretics, laxatives, or excessive exercise. While their bodies are usually normal in size, people with bulimia often base their self-worth on their weight and shape, feeling that they must be thinner.

The exact cause of bulimia is unknown. Culture and glamorized norms certainly contribute. Bulimia can be impacted by stress or be a response to trauma. In most cases, bulimia begins during high school or college.

Some common warning signs include: secretive behavior coupled

with trips to the bathroom after eating, laxative or diuretic abuse, heart palpitations, depression, social withdrawal, restrictive dieting, frequent and obvious weight fluctuations, and a preoccupation with body weight and appearance.

There are many reasons why bulimia is serious, including the possibility of esophageal tears, gastric ruptures, and dehydration. In addition, psychological, social, and emotional damage are often experienced by those struggling with bulimia.

*Anorexia*

Where bulimia is a battle with excessive eating, anorexia involves a pattern of not eating enough. Those affected by it are in a battle for control. If they cannot control other parts of their lives, they will control their food intake. People with anorexia refuse to keep their body weight at a normal level because they are unable to accurately view the shape and size of their own bodies. They may be very thin, but still think they are fat. They try to continue to lose weight through a much lower level of food intake, often coupled with extreme amounts of exercise. Similar to bulimia, their body weight affects their self-esteem.

The daily grind of those who experience anorexia is exhausting. Food is meticulously prepared and calories counted. Much time is spent on the scale and in front of the mirror. On top of that, hours can be spent exercising. Essentially, people who suffer with this disease are starving themselves to death. The underlying futile attempt at perfection lurks continuously. This attempt at perfection is fueled by several fears: fear of fat, fear of failure, fear of being less than perfect, fear of rejection, or fear of losing control.

## TREATMENT CONCERNS

*How to Be Helpful*

It is vital to understand the presence of the symptoms of bulimia and anorexia in order to help those who suffer. Seldom will the person suffering initiate the process of healing, which often begins with hospitalization. The prospects of facing the problem and getting help are extremely threatening.

Helping someone who suffers with either of these life struggles requires large amounts of love and patience. Just as these patterns are intense and severe, so also does our love need to be. First John 4:18 reminds us that “perfect love casts out fear”-even the fears described above. Healing relationships with people and with God is essential. People who desire to help must be willing to speak the truth. Self-deception often drives those with one of these disorders to downplay the seriousness of the problem and even to make promises to stop their destructive behavior. Though it may be tempting to give them some slack and time to change on their own, it is not advisable. Just as lies fuel bulimia and anorexia, lies will be used to avoid getting the proper help. Love, patience, persistence, and discernment are vital to offering help and encouragement to people in these situations.

*Spiritual Encouragement*

Since these struggles are both spiritual and psychological, they must be dealt with in like fashion. The behaviors that comprise these difficulties are illegitimate attempts to deal with anxiety and stress. Failing to deal with the underlying factors that are driving the discomfort will not lead to healing, but will provide only surface-level “bandaids” that will eventually fail.

People dealing with these struggles can benefit from prayer and Scripture reading to help them alter the way that they see themselves. God is powerful enough to break through their defenses and chains of bondage. From Christ, believers gain their righteousness, their perfection, before God. Perfection is found only in Christ and is a work of the Spirit, not accomplished through their own efforts. God’s grace is sufficient to cover imperfection. People facing these

difficulties need to see perfection not in the mirror or on the scale, but in the blood of Christ shed for them.

*Psychological Treatment*

The seriousness of bulimia and anorexia must not be taken lightly. Of course, God is all-powerful, but people who suffer from these diseases need to also seek professional help. Psychologists and psychiatrists who are believers and have been trained in this area know the best methods for treatment. This process can be long, but with a focus on God, the support of others, and the endurance and determination to fight, healing is attainable. Recognizing the symptoms and instilling hope are the beginning steps toward wholeness.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of eating disorders include:

- Proverbs 23:21
- Romans 14:14-23
- 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20
- Colossians 3:17

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on eating disorders at Proverbs 23:2. See also the personality profile of Eli: Unbridled Appetites.

**DEBORAH**

**4** When Ehud was dead, the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of
the LORD. 2So the LORD sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan,
who reigned in Hazor. The commander of his army *was* Sisera, who dwelt in
Harosheth Hagoyim. 3And the children of Israel cried out to the LORD; for
Jabin had nine hundred chariots of iron, and for twenty years he had harshly
oppressed the children of Israel.

4Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, was judging Israel at
that time. 5And she would sit under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah
and Bethel in the mountains of Ephraim. And the children of Israel came up
to her for judgment. 6Then she sent and called for Barak the son of Abinoam
from Kedesh in Naphtali, and said to him, "Has not the LORD God of Israel
commanded, 'Go and deploy *troops* at Mount Tabor; take with you ten
thousand men of the sons of Naphtali and of the sons of Zebulun; 7and
against you I will deploy Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, with his
chariots and his multitude at the River Kishon; and I will deliver him into
your hand'?"

8And Barak said to her, "If you will go with me, then I will go; but if you
will not go with me, I will not go!"

9So she said, "I will surely go with you; nevertheless there will be no glory
for you in the journey you are taking, for the LORD will sell Sisera into the
hand of a woman." Then Deborah arose and went with Barak to Kedesh.
10And Barak called Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh; he went up with ten
thousand men under his command,[a] and Deborah went up with him.

11Now Heber the Kenite, of the children of Hobab the father-in-law of
Moses, had separated himself from the Kenites and pitched his tent near the
terebinth tree at Zaanaim, which *is* beside Kedesh.

12And they reported to Sisera that Barak the son of Abinoam had gone up
to Mount Tabor. 13So Sisera gathered together all his chariots, nine hundred
chariots of iron, and all the people who *were* with him, from Harosheth
Hagoyim to the River Kishon.

14 Then Deborah said to Barak, “Up! For this *is* the day in which the LORD
has delivered Sis-era into your hand. Has not the LORD gone out before you?”
So Barak went down from Mount Tabor with ten thousand men following
him. 15 And the LORD routed Sisera and all *his* chariots and all *his* army with
the edge of the sword before Barak; and Sisera alighted from *his* chariot and
fled away on foot. 16 But Barak pursued the chariots and the army as far as
Harosheth Hagoyim, and all the army of Sisera fell by the edge of the sword;
not a man was left.

17 However, Sisera had fled away on foot to the tent of Jael, the wife of
Heber the Kenite; for *there was* peace between Jabin king of Ha-zor and the
house of Heber the Kenite. 18 And Jael went out to meet Sisera, and said to
him, “Turn aside, my lord, turn aside to me; do not fear.” And when he had
turned aside with her into the tent, she covered him with a blanket.

19 Then he said to her, “Please give me a little water to drink, for I am
thirsty.” So she opened a jug of milk, gave him a drink, and covered him.
20 And he said to her, “Stand at the door of the tent, and if any man comes and
inquires of you, and says, ‘Is there any man here?’ you shall say, ‘No.’ ”

21 Then Jael, Heber’s wife, took a tent peg and took a hammer in her hand,
and went softly to him and drove the peg into his temple, and it went down
into the ground; for he was fast asleep and weary. So he died. 22 And then, as
Barak pursued Sisera, Jael came out to meet him, and said to him, “Come, I
will show you the man whom you seek.” And when he went into her *tent*,
there lay Sisera, dead with the peg in his temple.

23 So on that day God subdued Jabin king of Canaan in the presence of the
children of Israel. 24 And the hand of the children of Israel grew stronger and
stronger against Jabin king of Canaan, until they had destroyed Jabin king of
Canaan.

**SOUL NOTE**

**She Saved the Day** *(4:4-10)* Deborah, who was a prophet, was also the only woman judge mentioned in Judges. Her spiritual influence and practical leadership saved Israel in a time of crisis. Barak hesitated to lead the nation into battle and would go only if Deborah accompanied him. Deborah predicted that the battle would be won at the "hand of a woman" (4:9). This woman turned out to be Jael, who killed the enemy's commander. These women were both rescuers for their nation. God uses anyone-man or woman-who trusts in Him.
**Topic: Women's Issues**

## THE SONG OF DEBORAH

**5** Then Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam sang on that day, saying:

2 “When leaders lead in Israel,
When the people willingly offer themselves,
Bless the LORD!
3 “Hear, O kings! Give ear, O princes!
I, *even* I, will sing to the LORD;
I will sing praise to the LORD God of Israel.
4 “LORD, when You went out from Seir,
When You marched from the field of Edom,
The earth trembled and the heavens poured,
The clouds also poured water;
5 The mountains gushed before the LORD,
This Sinai, before the LORD God of Israel.
6 “In the days of Shamgar, son of Anath,
In the days of Jael,
The highways were deserted,
And the travelers walked along the byways.
7 Village life ceased, it ceased in Israel,
Until I, Deborah, arose,
Arose a mother in Israel.
8 They chose new gods;
Then *there was* war in the gates;
Not a shield or spear was seen among forty thousand in Israel.
9 My heart *is* with the rulers of Israel
Who offered themselves willingly with the people.
Bless the LORD!
10 “Speak, you who ride on white donkeys,
Who sit in judges’ attire,
And who walk along the road.
11 Far from the noise of the archers, among the watering places,
There they shall recount the righteous acts of the LORD,
The righteous acts *for* His villagers in Israel;

Then the people of the LORD shall go down to the gates.
12 “Awake, awake, Deborah!
Awake, awake, sing a song!
Arise, Barak, and lead your captives away,
O son of Abinoam!
13 “Then the survivors came down, the people against the nobles;
The LORD came down for me against the mighty.
14 From Ephraim *were* those whose roots were in Amalek.
After you, Benjamin, with your peoples,
From Machir rulers came down,
And from Zebulun those who bear the recruiter’s staff.
15 And the princes of Issachar[a] *were* with Deborah;
As Issachar, so *was* Barak
Sent into the valley under his command;[b]
Among the divisions of Reuben *There were* great resolves of heart.
16 Why did you sit among the sheepfolds,
To hear the pipings for the flocks?
The divisions of Reuben have great searchings of heart.
17 Gilead stayed beyond the Jordan,
And why did Dan remain on ships?[a]
Asher continued at the seashore,
And stayed by his inlets.
18 Zebulun *is* a people *who* jeopardized their lives to the point of death,
Naphtali also, on the heights of the battlefield.
19 “The kings came *and* fought,
Then the kings of Canaan fought In Taanach, by the waters of Megiddo;
They took no spoils of silver.
20 They fought from the heavens;
The stars from their courses fought against Sisera.
21 The torrent of Kishon swept them away,
That ancient torrent, the torrent of Kishon.
O my soul, march on in strength!
22 Then the horses’ hooves pounded,
The galloping, galloping of his steeds.

23 ‘Curse Meroz,’ said the angel[a] of the LORD,
‘Curse its inhabitants bitterly,
Because they did not come to the help of the LORD,
To the help of the LORD against the mighty.’
24 “Most blessed among women is Jael,
The wife of Heber the Kenite;
Blessed is she among women in tents.
25 He asked for water, she gave milk;
She brought out cream in a lordly bowl.
26 She stretched her hand to the tent peg,
Her right hand to the workmen’s hammer;
She pounded Sisera, she pierced his head,
She split and struck through his temple.
27 At her feet he sank, he fell, he lay still;
At her feet he sank, he fell;
Where he sank, there he fell dead.
28 “The mother of Sisera looked through the window,
And cried out through the lattice,
‘Why is his chariot *so* long in coming?
Why tarries the clatter of his chariots?’
29 Her wisest ladies answered her,
Yes, she answered herself,
30 ‘Are they not finding and dividing the spoil:
To every man a girl *or* two;
For Sisera, plunder of dyed garments,
Plunder of garments embroidered and dyed,
Two pieces of dyed embroidery for the neck of the looter?’
31 “Thus let all Your enemies perish, O LORD!
But *let* those who love Him *be* like the sun When it comes out in full strength.”

“Thus let all Your enemies perish, O LORD! But let those who love Him be like the sun when it comes out in full strength.”
JUDGES 5:31

So the land had rest for forty years.

## MIDIANITES OPPRESS ISRAEL

**6** Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD. So the LORD
delivered them into the hand of Midian for seven years, [2]and the hand of
Midian prevailed against Israel. Because of the Midianites, the children of
Israel made for themselves the dens, the caves, and the strongholds which *are*
in the mountains. [3]So it was, whenever Israel had sown, Midianites would
come up; also Ama-lekites and the people of the East would come up against
them. [4]Then they would encamp against them and destroy the produce of the
earth as far as Gaza, and leave no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep nor ox
nor donkey. [5]For they would come up with their livestock and their tents,
coming in as numerous as locusts; both they and their camels were without
number; and they would enter the land to destroy it. [6]So Israel was greatly
impoverished because of the Midianites, and the children of Israel cried out
to the LORD.

[7]And it came to pass, when the children of Israel cried out to the LORD
because of the Midianites, [8]that the LORD sent a prophet to the children of
Israel, who said to them, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'I brought you
up from Egypt and brought you out of the house of bondage; [9]and I delivered
you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of all who oppressed
you, and drove them out before you and gave you their land. [10]Also I said to
you, "I *am* the LORD your God; do not fear the gods of the Amorites, in
whose land you dwell." But you have not obeyed My voice.' "

## GIDEON

[11]Now the Angel of the LORD came and sat under the terebinth tree which
*was* in Ophrah, which *belonged* to Joash the Abiezrite, while his son Gideon
threshed wheat in the winepress, in order to hide *it* from the Midianites.
[12]And the Angel of the LORD appeared to him, and said to him, "The LORD *is*
with you, you mighty man of valor!"

[13]Gideon said to Him, "O my lord,[a] if the LORD is with us, why then has all
this happened to us? And where *are* all His miracles which our fathers told us
about, saying, 'Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?' But now the LORD
has forsaken us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites."

14 Then the LORD turned to him and said, “Go in this might of yours, and
you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have I not sent you?”

15 So he said to Him, “O my Lord,[a] how can I save Israel? Indeed my clan
*is* the weakest in Manasseh, and I *am* the least in my father’s house.”

16 And the LORD said to him, “Surely I will be with you, and you shall
defeat the Midianites as one man.”

17 Then he said to Him, “If now I have found favor in Your sight, then
show me a sign that it is You who talk with me. 18 Do not depart from here, I
pray, until I come to You and bring out my offering and set *it* before You.”

And He said, “I will wait until you come back.”

19 So Gideon went in and prepared a young goat, and unleavened bread
from an ephah of flour. The meat he put in a basket, and he put the broth in a
pot; and he brought *them* out to Him under the terebinth tree and presented
*them.* 20 The Angel of God said to him, “Take the meat and the unleavened
bread and lay *them* on this rock, and pour out the broth.” And he did so.

21 Then the Angel of the LORD put out the end of the staff that *was* in His
hand, and touched the meat and the unleavened bread; and fire rose out of the
rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened bread. And the Angel of the
LORD departed out of his sight.

22 Now Gideon perceived that He *was* the Angel of the LORD. So Gideon
said, “Alas, O Lord GOD! For I have seen the Angel of the LORD face to
face.”

23 Then the LORD said to him, “Peace *be* with you; do not fear, you shall not
die.” 24 So Gideon built an altar there to the LORD, and called it The-LORD-*Is*-
Peace.[a] To this day it *is* still in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

25 Now it came to pass the same night that the LORD said to him, “Take
your father’s young bull, the second bull of seven years old, and tear down
the altar of Baal that your father has, and cut down the wooden image[a] that *is*
beside it; 26 and build an altar to the LORD your God on top of this rock in the
proper arrangement, and take the second bull and offer a burnt sacrifice with
the wood of the image which you shall cut down.” 27 So Gideon took ten men
from among his servants and did as the LORD had said to him. But because he

feared his father's household and the men of the city too much to do *it* by day, he did *it* by night.

**GIDEON DESTROYS THE ALTAR OF BAAL**

[28]And when the men of the city arose early in the morning, there was the altar of Baal, torn down; and the wooden image that *was* beside it was cut down, and the second bull was being offered on the altar *which had been* built. [29]So they said to one another, "Who has done this thing?" And when they had inquired and asked, they said, "Gideon the son of Joash has done this thing." [30]Then the men of the city said to Joash, "Bring out your son, that he may die, because he has torn down the altar of Baal, and because he has cut down the wooden image that *was* beside it."

[31]But Joash said to all who stood against him, "Would you plead for Baal? Would you save him? Let the one who would plead for him be put to death by morning! If he *is* a god, let him plead for himself, because his altar has been torn down!" [32]Therefore on that day he called him Jerubbaal,[a] saying, "Let Baal plead against him, because he has torn down his altar."

[33]Then all the Midianites and Amalekites, the people of the East, gathered together; and they crossed over and encamped in the Valley of Jezreel. [34]But the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon; then he blew the trumpet, and the Abiezrites gathered behind him. [35]And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh, who also gathered behind him. He also sent messengers to Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali; and they came up to meet them.

**THE SIGN OF THE FLEECE**

[36]So Gideon said to God, "If You will save Israel by my hand as You have said- [37]look, I shall put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor; if there is dew on the fleece only, and *it is* dry on all the ground, then I shall know that You will save Israel by my hand, as You have said." [38]And it was so. When he rose early the next morning and squeezed the fleece together, he wrung the dew out of the fleece, a bowlful of water. [39]Then Gideon said to God, "Do not be angry with me, but let me speak just once more: Let me test, I pray, just once more with the fleece; let it now be dry only on the fleece, but on all

the ground let there be dew." [40]And God did so that night. It was dry on the fleece only, but there was dew on all the ground.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# GIDEON AND THE FEAR OF GOD

## ( JUDGES 6)

Gideon knew fear. He wasn't cowardly, just cautious. His courage had a strong component of fear that actually made him an effective warrior. He figured the odds. He took risks but planned to survive. He demonstrated a willingness to resist a superior enemy-with caution. That is why God's messenger found Gideon in concealment. That is why Gideon tested God's guidance. And that is also why Gideon had to learn a new lesson about fear-the fear of God.

God reached Gideon during a military mission. Gideon was conducting a wheat threshing operation under the camouflage of a winepress. His act of resistance included a fair amount of desperation and danger. The people of Israel had been driven underground for almost seven years by the repeated pillaging of their Midianite oppressors. Obtaining wheat had become a dangerous enterprise. For Gideon and his men, discovery by their enemies would have meant losing the wheat and probably their lives. These factors explain Gideon's response to the stranger he noticed sitting under the tree that overlooked the winepress.

When God's messenger greeted Gideon with a compliment, he

brushed it aside and expressed a complaint about God. “If the LORD is with us,” asked Gideon, “why then has all this happened to us?” (Judg. 6:13). Instead of an answer, God gave Gideon a command. Gideon responded with an offering. God then replied with a miracle and specific directions. Gideon obeyed by destroying a Baal altar and starting a war. Thirty-two thousand Israelites joined Gideon to fight, but they were no match for the huge army of the Midianites. Faced with apparent annihilation, Gideon asked for further confirmation of God’s blessing: He put out a fleece as a means of getting a signal from God.

God confirmed both Gideon’s blessing and His own role in the outcome of the battle. He downsized Gideon’s fighting force to a mere 300 warriors. They did little more than light up the scene while God insured that the Midianites slaughtered one another. In all these events, Gideon’s fear affected his behavior. But fear didn’t prevent him from obeying or acting courageously. Fear actually clarified the choices and pointed to God as the real source of victory. Gideon discovered a deeper courage in respecting God’s commands.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about fear/fear of God On Fearing God. See also the key passage note at Proverbs 1:7.

## GIDEON'S VALIANT THREE HUNDRED

7 Then Jerubbaal (that *is,* Gideon) and all the people who *were* with him
rose early and encamped beside the well of Harod, so that the camp of the
Midianites was on the north side of them by the hill of Moreh in the valley.

2 And the LORD said to Gideon, "The people who *are* with you *are* too
many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel claim glory
for itself against Me, saying, 'My own hand has saved me.' 3 Now therefore,
proclaim in the hearing of the people, saying, 'Whoever *is* fearful and afraid,
let him turn and depart at once from Mount Gilead.' " And twenty-two
thousand of the people returned, and ten thousand remained.

4 But the LORD said to Gideon, "The people *are* still *too* many; bring them
down to the water, and I will test them for you there. Then it will be, *that* of
whom I say to you, 'This one shall go with you,' the same shall go with you;
and of whomever I say to you, 'This one shall not go with you,' the same
shall not go." 5 So he brought the people down to the water. And the LORD
said to Gideon, "Everyone who laps from the water with his tongue, as a dog
laps, you shall set apart by himself; likewise everyone who gets down on his
knees to drink." 6 And the number of those who lapped, *putting* their hand to
their mouth, was three hundred men; but all the rest of the people got down
on their knees to drink water. 7 Then the LORD said to Gideon, "By the three
hundred men who lapped I will save you, and deliver the Midianites into your
hand. Let all the *other* people go, every man to his place." 8 So the people
took provisions and their trumpets in their hands. And he sent away all *the
rest of* Israel, every man to his tent, and retained those three hundred men.
Now the camp of Midian was below him in the valley.

9 It happened on the same night that the LORD said to him, "Arise, go down
against the camp, for I have delivered it into your hand. 10 But if you are
afraid to go down, go down to the camp with Purah your servant, 11 and you
shall hear what they say; and afterward your hands shall be strengthened to
go down against the camp." Then he went down with Purah his servant to the
outpost of the armed men who *were* in the camp. 12 Now the Midianites and
Amalekites, all the people of the East, were lying in the valley as numerous

as locusts; and their camels *were* without number, as the sand by the seashore in multitude.

13 And when Gideon had come, there was a man telling a dream to his companion. He said, “I have had a dream: *To my* surprise, a loaf of barley bread tumbled into the camp of Midian; it came to a tent and struck it so that it fell and overturned, and the tent collapsed.”

14 Then his companion answered and said, “This *is* nothing else but the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel! Into his hand God has delivered Midian and the whole camp.”

15 And so it was, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream and its interpretation, that he worshiped. He returned to the camp of Israel, and said, “Arise, for the LORD has delivered the camp of Midian into your hand.” 16 Then he divided the three hundred men *into* three companies, and he put a trumpet into every man’s hand, with empty pitchers, and torches inside the pitchers. 17 And he said to them, “Look at me and do likewise; watch, and when I come to the edge of the camp you shall do as I do: 18 When I blow the trumpet, I and all who *are* with me, then you also blow the trumpets on every side of the whole camp, and say, ‘*The sword of* the LORD and of Gideon!’ ”

19 So Gideon and the hundred men who *were* with him came to the outpost of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, just as they had posted the watch; and they blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers that *were* in their hands. 20 Then the three companies blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers-they held the torches in their left hands and the trumpets in their right hands for blowing-and they cried, “The sword of the LORD and of Gideon!” 21 And every man stood in his place all around the camp; and the whole army ran and cried out and fled. 22 When the three hundred blew the trumpets, the LORD set every man’s sword against his companion throughout the whole camp; and the army fled to Beth Acacia,[a] toward Zererah, as far as the border of Abel Meholah, by Tabbath.

23 And the men of Israel gathered together from Naphtali, Asher, and all Manasseh, and pursued the Midianites.

24 Then Gideon sent messengers throughout all the mountains of Ephraim, saying, “Come down against the Midianites, and seize from them the

watering places as far as Beth Barah and the Jordan.” Then all the men of Ephraim gathered together and seized the watering places as far as Beth Barah and the Jordan. [25]And they captured two princes of the Midi-anites, Oreb and Zeeb. They killed Oreb at the rock of Oreb, and Zeeb they killed at the winepress of Zeeb. They pursued Midian and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon on the other side of the Jordan.

## GIDEON SUBDUES THE MIDIANITES

**8** Now the men of Ephraim said to him, “Why have you done this to us by
not calling us when you went to fight with the Midianites?” And they
reprimanded him sharply.

2So he said to them, “What have I done now in comparison with you? *Is*
not the gleaning *of the grapes* of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer?
3God has delivered into your hands the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb.
And what was I able to do in comparison with you?” Then their anger toward
him subsided when he said that.

4When Gideon came to the Jordan, he and the three hundred men who
*were* with him crossed over, exhausted but still in pursuit. 5Then he said to
the men of Succoth, “Please give loaves of bread to the people who follow
me, for they are exhausted, and I am pursuing Zebah and Zalmunna, kings of
Midian.”

6And the leaders of Succoth said, “*Are* the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna
now in your hand, that we should give bread to your army?”

7So Gideon said, “For this cause, when the LORD has delivered Zebah and
Zalmunna into my hand, then I will tear your flesh with the thorns of the
wilderness and with briers!” 8Then he went up from there to Penuel and
spoke to them in the same way. And the men of Penuel answered him as the
men of Succoth had answered. 9So he also spoke to the men of Penuel,
saying, “When I come back in peace, I will tear down this tower!”

10Now Zebah and Zalmunna *were* at Karkor, and their armies with them,
about fifteen thousand, all who were left of all the army of the people of the
East; for one hundred and twenty thousand men who drew the sword had
fallen. 11Then Gideon went up by the road of those who dwell in tents on the
east of No-bah and Jogbehah; and he attacked the army while the camp felt
secure. 12When Zebah and Zalmunna fled, he pursued them; and he took the
two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, and routed the whole army.

13Then Gideon the son of Joash returned from battle, from the Ascent of
Heres. 14And he caught a young man of the men of Succoth and interrogated

him; and he wrote down for him the leaders of Succoth and its elders, seventy-seven men. [15]Then he came to the men of Succoth and said, “Here are Zebah and Zalmunna, about whom you ridiculed me, saying, ‘*Are* the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in your hand, that we should give bread to your weary men?’ ” [16]And he took the elders of the city, and thorns of the wilderness and briers, and with them he taught the men of Succoth. [17]Then he tore down the tower of Penuel and killed the men of the city.

[18]And he said to Zebah and Zalmunna, “What kind of men *were they* whom you killed at Tabor?”

So they answered, “As you *are*, so *were* they; each one resembled the son of a king.”

[19]Then he said, “They *were* my brothers, the sons of my mother. *As* the LORD lives, if you had let them live, I would not kill you.” [20]And he said to Jether his firstborn, “Rise, kill them!” But the youth would not draw his sword; for he was afraid, because he *was* still a youth.

[21]So Zebah and Zalmunna said, “Rise yourself, and kill us; for as a man *is, so is* his strength.” So Gideon arose and killed Zebah and Zalmunna, and took the crescent ornaments that *were* on their camels’ necks.

## GIDEON’S EPHOD

[22]Then the men of Israel said to Gideon, “Rule over us, both you and your son, and your grandson also; for you have delivered us from the hand of Midian.”

[23]But Gideon said to them, “I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you; the LORD shall rule over you.” [24]Then Gideon said to them, “I would like to make a request of you, that each of you would give me the earrings from his plunder.” For they had golden earrings, because they *were* Ishmaelites.

[25]So they answered, “We will gladly give *them.*” And they spread out a garment, and each man threw into it the earrings from his plunder. [26]Now the weight of the gold earrings that he requested was one thousand seven hundred *shekels* of gold, besides the crescent ornaments, pendants, and purple robes which *were* on the kings of Midian, and besides the chains that *were*

around their camels' necks. [27]Then Gideon made it into an ephod and set it up in his city, Ophrah. And all Israel played the harlot with it there. It became a snare to Gideon and to his house.

[28]Thus Midian was subdued before the children of Israel, so that they lifted their heads no more. And the country was quiet for forty years in the days of Gideon.

**DEATH OF GIDEON**

[29]Then Jerubbaal the son of Joash went and dwelt in his own house. [30]Gideon had seventy sons who were his own offspring, for he had many wives. [31]And his concubine who *was* in Shechem also bore him a son, whose name he called Abimelech. [32]Now Gideon the son of Joash died at a good old age, and was buried in the tomb of Joash his father, in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

[33]So it was, as soon as Gideon was dead, that the children of Israel again played the harlot with the Baals, and made Baal-Berith their god. [34]Thus the children of Israel did not remember the LORD their God, who had delivered them from the hands of all their enemies on every side; [35]nor did they show kindness to the house of Jerubbaal (Gideon) in accordance with the good he had done for Israel.

## ABIMELECH'S CONSPIRACY

**9** Then Abimelech the son of Jerubbaal went to Shechem, to his mother's
brothers, and spoke with them and with all the family of the house of his
mother's father, saying, [2]"Please speak in the hearing of all the men of
Shechem: 'Which is better for you, that all seventy of the sons of Jerubbaal
reign over you, or that one reign over you?' Remember that I *am* your own
flesh and bone."

[3]And his mother's brothers spoke all these words concerning him in the
hearing of all the men of Shechem; and their heart was inclined to follow
Abimelech, for they said, "He is our brother." [4]So they gave him seventy
*shekels* of silver from the temple of Baal-Berith, with which Abimelech hired
worthless and reckless men; and they followed him. [5]Then he went to his
father's house at Ophrah and killed his brothers, the seventy sons of
Jerubbaal, on one stone. But Jotham the youngest son of Jerubbaal was left,
because he hid himself. [6]And all the men of Shechem gathered together, all
of Beth Millo, and they went and made Abimelech king beside the terebinth
tree at the pillar that *was* in Shechem.

## THE PARABLE OF THE TREES

[7]Now when they told Jotham, he went and stood on top of Mount Gerizim,
and lifted his voice and cried out. And he said to them:

"Listen to me, you men of Shechem,
That God may listen to you!

[8] "The trees once went forth to anoint a king over them.
And they said to the olive tree,
'Reign over us!'
[9] But the olive tree said to them,
'Should I cease giving my oil,
With which they honor God and men,
And go to sway over trees?'
[10] "Then the trees said to the fig tree,

‘You come *and* reign over us!’
11 But the fig tree said to them,
‘Should I cease my sweetness and my good fruit,
And go to sway over trees?’
12 “Then the trees said to the vine,
‘You come *and* reign over us!’
13 But the vine said to them,
‘Should I cease my new wine,
Which cheers *both* God and men,
And go to sway over trees?’
14 “Then all the trees said to the bramble,
‘You come *and* reign over us!’
15 And the bramble said to the trees,
‘ If in truth you anoint me as king over you,
*Then* come *and* take shelter in my shade;
But if not, let fire come out of the bramble
And devour the cedars of Lebanon!’
16“Now therefore, if you have acted in truth and sincerity in making Abimelech king, and if you have dealt well with Jerubbaal and his house, and have done to him as he deserves-17for my father fought for you, risked his life, and delivered you out of the hand of Midian; 18but you have risen up against my father’s house this day, and killed his seventy sons on one stone, and made Abimelech, the son of his female servant, king over the men of She-chem, because he is your brother- 19if then you have acted in truth and sincerity with Jerubbaal and with his house this day, *then* rejoice in Abimelech, and let him also rejoice in you. 20But if not, let fire come from Abimelech and devour the men of Shechem and Beth Millo; and let fire come from the men of She-chem and from Beth Millo and devour Abimelech!” 21And Jotham ran away and fled; and he went to Beer and dwelt there, for fear of Abimelech his brother.

**DOWNFALL OF ABIMELECH**

22After Abimelech had reigned over Israel three years, 23God sent a spirit of ill will between Abimelech and the men of Shechem; and the men of

Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech, [24]that the crime *done* to the seventy sons of Jerubbaal might be settled and their blood be laid on Abimelech their brother, who killed them, and on the men of Shechem, who aided him in the killing of his brothers. [25]And the men of Shechem set men in ambush against him on the tops of the mountains, and they robbed all who passed by them along that way; and it was told Abimelech.

[26]Now Gaal the son of Ebed came with his brothers and went over to Shechem; and the men of Shechem put their confidence in him. [27]So they went out into the fields, and gathered *grapes* from their vineyards and trod *them,* and made merry. And they went into the house of their god, and ate and drank, and cursed Abim-elech. [28]Then Gaal the son of Ebed said, "Who *is* Abimelech, and who *is* Shechem, that we should serve him? *Is he* not the son of Jerubbaal, and *is not* Zebul his officer? Serve the men of Hamor the father of Shechem; but why should we serve him? [29]If only this people were under my authority![a] Then I would remove Abimelech." So he[b] said to Abimelech, "Increase your army and come out!"

[30]When Zebul, the ruler of the city, heard the words of Gaal the son of Ebed, his anger was aroused. [31]And he sent messengers to Abimelech secretly, saying, "Take note! Gaal the son of Ebed and his brothers have come to Shechem; and here they are, fortifying the city against you. [32]Now therefore, get up by night, you and the people who *are* with you, and lie in wait in the field. [33]And it shall be, as soon as the sun is up in the morning, *that* you shall rise early and rush upon the city; and *when* he and the people who are with him come out against you, you may then do to them as you find opportunity."

[34]So Abimelech and all the people who *were* with him rose by night, and lay in wait against Shechem in four companies. [35]When Gaal the son of Ebed went out and stood in the entrance to the city gate, Abimelech and the people who *were* with him rose from lying in wait. [36]And when Gaal saw the people, he said to Zebul, "Look, people are coming down from the tops of the mountains!"

But Zebul said to him, "You see the shadows of the mountains as *if they were* men."

[37]So Gaal spoke again and said, “See, people are coming down from the center of the land, and another company is coming from the Diviners’[a] Terebinth Tree.”

[38]Then Zebul said to him, “Where indeed *is* your mouth now, with which you said, ‘Who is Abimelech, that we should serve him?’ *Are* not these the people whom you despised? Go out, if you will, and fight with them now.”

[39]So Gaal went out, leading the men of She-chem, and fought with Abimelech. [40]And Abimelech chased him, and he fled from him; and many fell wounded, to the *very* entrance of the gate. [41]Then Abimelech dwelt at Arumah, and Zebul drove out Gaal and his brothers, so that they would not dwell in Shechem.

[42]And it came about on the next day that the people went out into the field, and they told Abimelech. [43]So he took his people, divided them into three companies, and lay in wait in the field. And he looked, and there were the people, coming out of the city; and he rose against them and attacked them. [44]Then Abimelech and the company that *was* with him rushed forward and stood at the entrance of the gate of the city; and the *other* two companies rushed upon all who *were* in the fields and killed them. [45]So Abimelech fought against the city all that day; he took the city and killed the people who *were* in it; and he demolished the city and sowed it with salt.

[46]Now when all the men of the tower of Shechem had heard *that,* they entered the stronghold of the temple of the god Berith. [47]And it was told Abimelech that all the men of the tower of Shechem were gathered together. [48]Then Abimelech went up to Mount Zalmon, he and all the people who *were* with him. And Abimelech took an ax in his hand and cut down a bough from the trees, and took it and laid *it* on his shoulder; then he said to the people who were with him, “What you have seen me do, make haste *and* do as I *have done*.” [49]So each of the people likewise cut down his own bough and followed Abimelech, put *them* against the stronghold, and set the stronghold on fire above them, so that all the people of the tower of Shechem died, about a thousand men and women.

[50]Then Abimelech went to Thebez, and he encamped against Thebez and took it. [51]But there was a strong tower in the city, and all the men and

women-all the people of the city-fled there and shut themselves in; then they went up to the top of the tower. [52]So Abimelech came as far as the tower and fought against it; and he drew near the door of the tower to burn it with fire. [53]But a certain woman dropped an upper millstone on Abimelech's head and crushed his skull. [54]Then he called quickly to the young man, his armorbearer, and said to him, "Draw your sword and kill me, lest men say of me, 'A woman killed him.' " So his young man thrust him through, and he died. [55]And when the men of Israel saw that Abimelech was dead, they departed, every man to his place.

[56]Thus God repaid the wickedness of Abimelech, which he had done to his father by killing his seventy brothers. [57]And all the evil of the men of Shechem God returned on their own heads, and on them came the curse of Jotham the son of Jerubbaal.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Self-Destruction** *(9:5)* The tragic story of Abimelech pictures extreme violence used for selfish reasons. This illegitimate son of Gideon and a concubine (8:29-31) brought disaster upon the rest of Gideon's family. Conspiring to take his father's place of leadership in Israel, Abimelech "hired worthless and reckless men" (9:4) to follow him and help him kill all seventy of his half brothers. Violence and murder became his way of dealing with all threats to his power (9:22-49). In the end, however, his violent ways resulted in his own destruction (9:50-56). Violence doesn't really resolve anything, and ultimately leads to more violence. **Topic: Violence**

**TOLA**

**10** After Abimelech there arose to save Israel Tola the son of Puah, the son
of Dodo, a man of Issachar; and he dwelt in Shamir in the mountains of
Ephraim. 2He judged Israel twenty-three years; and he died and was buried in
Shamir.

**JAIR**

3After him arose Jair, a Gileadite; and he judged Israel twenty-two years.
4Now he had thirty sons who rode on thirty donkeys; they also had thirty
towns, which are called "Havoth Jair"[a] to this day, which *are* in the land of
Gilead. 5And Jair died and was buried in Camon.

**ISRAEL OPPRESSED AGAIN**

6Then the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD, and
served the Baals and the Ashtoreths, the gods of Syria, the gods of Sidon, the
gods of Moab, the gods of the people of Ammon, and the gods of the
Philistines; and they forsook the LORD and did not serve Him. 7So the anger
of the LORD was hot against Israel; and He sold them into the hands of the
Philistines and into the hands of the people of Ammon. 8From that year they
harassed and oppressed the children of Israel for eighteen years-all the
children of Israel who *were* on the other side of the Jordan in the land of the
Amorites, in Gilead. 9Moreover the people of Ammon crossed over the
Jordan to fight against Judah also, against Benjamin, and against the house of
Ephraim, so that Israel was severely distressed.

10And the children of Israel cried out to the LORD, saying, "We have sinned
against You, because we have both forsaken our God and served the Baals!"

11So the LORD said to the children of Israel, "*Did I* not *deliver you* from the
Egyptians and from the Amorites and from the people of Ammon and from
the Philistines? 12Also the Sidonians and Amalekites and Maonites[a]
oppressed you; and you cried out to Me, and I delivered you from their hand.
13Yet you have forsaken Me and served other gods. Therefore I will deliver
you no more. 14Go and cry out to the gods which you have chosen; let them

deliver you in your time of distress.”

15 And the children of Israel said to the LORD, “We have sinned! Do to us
whatever seems best to You; only deliver us this day, we pray.” 16 So they put
away the foreign gods from among them and served the LORD. And His soul
could no longer endure the misery of Israel.

17 Then the people of Ammon gathered together and encamped in Gilead.
And the children of Israel assembled together and encamped in Mizpah.
18 And the people, the leaders of Gilead, said to one another, “Who *is* the man
who will begin the fight against the people of Ammon? He shall be head over
all the inhabitants of Gilead.”

**JEPHTHAH**

**11** Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty man of valor, but he *was* the
son of a harlot; and Gilead begot Jephthah. 2Gilead's wife bore sons; and
when his wife's sons grew up, they drove Jephthah out, and said to him,
"You shall have no inheritance in our father's house, for you *are* the son of
another woman." 3Then Jephthah fled from his brothers and dwelt in the land
of Tob; and worthless men banded together with Jephthah and went out
*raiding* with him.

4It came to pass after a time that the people of Ammon made war against
Israel. 5And so it was, when the people of Ammon made war against Israel,
that the elders of Gilead went to get Jephthah from the land of Tob. 6Then
they said to Jephthah, "Come and be our commander, that we may fight
against the people of Ammon."

7So Jephthah said to the elders of Gilead, "Did you not hate me, and expel
me from my father's house? Why have you come to me now when you are in
distress?"

8And the elders of Gilead said to Jephthah, "That is why we have turned
again to you now, that you may go with us and fight against the people of
Ammon, and be our head over all the inhabitants of Gilead."

9So Jephthah said to the elders of Gilead, "If you take me back home to
fight against the people of Ammon, and the LORD delivers them to me, shall I
be your head?"

10And the elders of Gilead said to Jephthah, "The LORD will be a witness
between us, if we do not do according to your words." 11Then Jephthah went
with the elders of Gilead, and the people made him head and commander
over them; and Jephthah spoke all his words before the LORD in Mizpah.

12Now Jephthah sent messengers to the king of the people of Ammon,
saying, "What do you have against me, that you have come to fight against
me in my land?"

13And the king of the people of Ammon answered the messengers of
Jephthah, "Because Israel took away my land when they came up out of

Egypt, from the Arnon as far as the Jab-bok, and to the Jordan. Now therefore, restore those *lands* peaceably."

14So Jephthah again sent messengers to the king of the people of Ammon,
15and said to him, "Thus says Jephthah: 'Israel did not take away the land of
Moab, nor the land of the people of Ammon; 16for when Israel came up from
Egypt, they walked through the wilderness as far as the Red Sea and came to
Kadesh. 17Then Israel sent messengers to the king of Edom, saying, "Please
let me pass through your land." But the king of Edom would not heed. And in
like manner they sent to the king of Moab, but he would not *consent.* So
Israel remained in Kadesh. 18And they went along through the wilderness and
bypassed the land of Edom and the land of Moab, came to the east side of the
land of Moab, and encamped on the other side of the Arnon. But they did not
enter the border of Moab, for the Arnon *was* the border of Moab. 19Then
Israel sent messengers to Sihon king of the Amorites, king of Heshbon; and
Israel said to him, "Please let us pass through your land into our place." 20But
Sihon did not trust Israel to pass through his territory. So Sihon gathered all
his people together, encamped in Jahaz, and fought against Israel. 21And the
LORD God of Israel delivered Sihon and all his people into the hand of Israel,
and they defeated them. Thus Israel gained possession of all the land of the
Amorites, who inhabited that country. 22They took possession of all the
territory of the Amorites, from the Arnon to the Jabbok and from the
wilderness to the Jordan.

23'And now the LORD God of Israel has dispossessed the Amorites from
before His people Israel; should you then possess it? 24Will you not possess
whatever Chemosh your god gives you to possess? So whatever the LORD our
God takes possession of before us, we will possess. 25And now, *are* you any
better than Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab? Did he ever strive against
Israel? Did he ever fight against them? 26While Israel dwelt in Heshbon and
its villages, in Aroer and its villages, and in all the cities along the banks of
the Arnon, for three hundred years, why did you not recover *them* within that
time? 27Therefore I have not sinned against you, but you wronged me by
fighting against me. May the LORD, the Judge, render judgment this day
between the children of Israel and the people of Ammon.' " 28However, the
king of the people of Ammon did not heed the words which Jephthah sent

him.

## JEPHTHAH'S VOW AND VICTORY

29 Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah, and he passed through
Gilead and Manasseh, and passed through Mizpah of Gilead; and from
Mizpah of Gilead he advanced *toward* the people of Ammon. 30 And Jephthah
made a vow to the LORD, and said, "If You will indeed deliver the people of
Ammon into my hands, 31 then it will be that whatever comes out of the doors
of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the people of Ammon,
shall surely be the LORD's, and I will offer it up as a burnt offering."

32 So Jephthah advanced toward the people of Ammon to fight against
them, and the LORD delivered them into his hands. 33 And he defeated them
from Aroer as far as Minnith-twenty cities-and to Abel Keramim,[a] with a
very great slaughter. Thus the people of Am-mon were subdued before the
children of Israel.

## JEPHTHAH'S DAUGHTER

34 When Jephthah came to his house at Mizpah, there was his daughter,
coming out to meet him with timbrels and dancing; and she *was his* only
child. Besides her he had neither son nor daughter. 35 And it came to pass,
when he saw her, that he tore his clothes, and said, "Alas, my daughter! You
have brought me very low! You are among those who trouble me! For I have
given my word to the LORD, and I cannot go back on it."

36 So she said to him, "My father, *if* you have given your word to the LORD,
do to me according to what has gone out of your mouth, because the LORD
has avenged you of your enemies, the people of Ammon." 37 Then she said to
her father, "Let this thing be done for me: let me alone for two months, that I
may go and wander on the mountains and bewail my virginity, my friends
and I."

38 So he said, "Go." And he sent her away *for* two months; and she went
with her friends, and bewailed her virginity on the mountains. 39 And it was
so at the end of two months that she returned to her father, and he carried out
his vow with her which he had vowed. She knew no man.

And it became a custom in Israel [40]*that* the daughters of Israel went four days each year to lament the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Rejected** *(11:1-3)* Jephthah was rejected by the rest of his family because his mother was a harlot (prostitute). His half brothers' prejudice against him was so intense that they drove him out of their home. People face prejudice for all kinds of reasons, such as skin color, race, or disabilities. Prejudice can cause people to turn away from what could otherwise be a good friendship or working relationship. In fact, these people who had driven Jephthah out later realized they needed him (11:4-8). The Bible teaches that we should not be prejudiced against anyone, for all people are created by God and all are one in Christ (Gal. 3:26-28). **Topic: Prejudice**

## JEPHTHAH'S CONFLICT WITH EPHRAIM

**12** Then the men of Ephraim gathered together, crossed over toward Zaphon, and said to Jephthah, "Why did you cross over to fight against the people of Ammon, and did not call us to go with you? We will burn your house down on you with fire!"

2 And Jephthah said to them, "My people and I were in a great struggle with the people of Ammon; and when I called you, you did not deliver me out of their hands. 3 So when I saw that you would not deliver *me*, I took my life in my hands and crossed over against the people of Ammon; and the LORD delivered them into my hand. Why then have you come up to me this day to fight against me?" 4 Now Jephthah gathered together all the men of Gilead and fought against Ephraim. And the men of Gilead defeated Ephraim, because they said, "You Gileadites *are* fugitives of Ephraim among the Ephraimites *and* among the Ma-nassites." 5 The Gileadites seized the fords of the Jordan before the Ephraimites *arrived.* And when *any* Ephraimite who escaped said, "Let me cross over," the men of Gilead would say to him, "*Are* you an Ephraimite?" If he said, "No," 6 then they would say to him, "Then say, 'Shibboleth'!" And he would say, "Sibboleth," for he could not pronounce *it* right. Then they would take him and kill him at the fords of the Jordan. There fell at that time forty-two thousand Ephraimites.

7 And Jephthah judged Israel six years. Then Jephthah the Gileadite died and was buried among the cities of Gilead.

## IBZAN, ELON, AND ABDON

8 After him, Ibzan of Bethlehem judged Israel. 9 He had thirty sons. And he gave away thirty daughters in marriage, and brought in thirty daughters from elsewhere for his sons. He judged Israel seven years. 10 Then Ibzan died and was buried at Bethlehem.

11 After him, Elon the Zebulunite judged Israel. He judged Israel ten years. 12 And Elon the Zebulunite died and was buried at Aijalon in the country of Zebulun.

13 After him, Abdon the son of Hillel the Pirathonite judged Israel. 14 He

had forty sons and thirty grandsons, who rode on seventy young donkeys. He judged Israel eight years. [15]Then Abdon the son of Hillel the Pirathonite died and was buried in Pirathon in the land of Ephraim, in the mountains of the Amalekites.

**THE BIRTH OF SAMSON**

**13** Again the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD delivered them into the hand of the Philistines for forty years.

2 Now there was a certain man from Zorah, of the family of the Danites,
whose name *was* Manoah; and his wife *was* barren and had no children. 3 And
the Angel of the LORD appeared to the woman and said to her, "Indeed now,
you are barren and have borne no children, but you shall conceive and bear a
son. 4 Now therefore, please be careful not to drink wine or *similar* drink, and
not to eat anything unclean. 5 For behold, you shall conceive and bear a son.
And no razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazirite to
God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of
the Philistines."

6 So the woman came and told her husband, saying, "A Man of God came
to me, and His countenance *was* like the countenance of the Angel of God,
very awesome; but I did not ask Him where He *was* from, and He did not tell
me His name. 7 And He said to me, 'Behold, you shall conceive and bear a
son. Now drink no wine or *similar* drink, nor eat anything unclean, for the
child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb to the day of his death.' "

8 Then Manoah prayed to the LORD, and said, "O my Lord, please let the
Man of God whom You sent come to us again and teach us what we shall do
for the child who will be born."

9 And God listened to the voice of Manoah, and the Angel of God came to
the woman again as she was sitting in the field; but Manoah her husband *was*
not with her. 10 Then the woman ran in haste and told her husband, and said to
him, "Look, the Man who came to me the *other* day has just now appeared to
me!"

11 So Manoah arose and followed his wife. When he came to the Man, he
said to Him, "Are You the Man who spoke to this woman?"

And He said, "I *am.*"

12 Manoah said, "Now let Your words come *to pass!* What will be the boy's
rule of life, and his work?"

13 So the Angel of the LORD said to Manoah, “Of all that I said to the
woman let her be careful. 14 She may not eat anything that comes from the
vine, nor may she drink wine or *similar* drink, nor eat anything unclean. All
that I commanded her let her observe.”

15 Then Manoah said to the Angel of the LORD, “Please let us detain You,
and we will prepare a young goat for You.”

16 And the Angel of the LORD said to Manoah, “Though you detain Me, I
will not eat your food. But if you offer a burnt offering, you must offer it to
the LORD.” (For Manoah did not know He *was* the Angel of the LORD.)

17 Then Manoah said to the Angel of the LORD, “What *is* Your name, that
when Your words come *to pass* we may honor You?”

18 And the Angel of the LORD said to him, “Why do you ask My name,
seeing it *is* wonderful?”

19 So Manoah took the young goat with the grain offering, and offered it
upon the rock to the LORD. And He did a wondrous thing while Manoah and
his wife looked on- 20 it happened as the flame went up toward heaven from
the altar-the Angel of the LORD ascended in the flame of the altar! When
Manoah and his wife saw *this,* they fell on their faces to the ground. 21 When
the Angel of the LORD appeared no more to Manoah and his wife, then
Manoah knew that He *was* the Angel of the LORD.

22 And Manoah said to his wife, “We shall surely die, because we have
seen God!”

23 But his wife said to him, “If the LORD had desired to kill us, He would
not have accepted a burnt offering and a grain offering from our hands, nor
would He have shown us all these *things,* nor would He have told us *such
things* as these at this time.”

24 So the woman bore a son and called his name Samson; and the child
grew, and the LORD blessed him. 25 And the Spirit of the LORD began to move
upon him at Mahaneh Dan[a] between Zorah and Eshtaol.

## SOUL NOTE

**Good Insights** *(13:2-24)* Manoah's wife is not named, but her faith shines through this passage. She was childless, but one day the Angel of the Lord appeared and promised a son. She and Manoah sought God's guidance, listened to God's rules for them and their son, and brought an offering in thanks. Manoah became afraid when he realized that they had "seen God," but his wife's good insight revealed her trust in God (13:22, 23). At times, one spouse may have insights that the other does not. Manoah's wife trusted God and helped Manoah do the same. **Topic: Marital Communication**

**14** Now Samson went down to Timnah, and saw a woman in Timnah of the
daughters of the Philistines. 2So he went up and told his father and
mother, saying, “I have seen a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the
Philistines; now therefore, get her for me as a wife.”

3Then his father and mother said to him, “*Is there* no woman among the
daughters of your brethren, or among all my people, that you must go and get
a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?”

And Samson said to his father, “Get her for me, for she pleases me well.”

4But his father and mother did not know that it was of the LORD-that He
was seeking an occasion to move against the Philistines. For at that time the
Philistines had dominion over Israel.

5So Samson went down to Timnah with his father and mother, and came to
the vineyards of Timnah.

Now *to his* surprise, a young lion *came* roaring against him. 6And the
Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and he tore the lion apart as one
would have torn apart a young goat, though *he had* nothing in his hand. But
he did not tell his father or his mother what he had done.

7Then he went down and talked with the woman; and she pleased Samson
well. 8After some time, when he returned to get her, he turned aside to see the
carcass of the lion. And behold, a swarm of bees and honey *were* in the
carcass of the lion. 9He took some of it in his hands and went along, eating.
When he came to his father and mother, he gave *some* to them, and they also
ate. But he did not tell them that he had taken the honey out of the carcass of
the lion.

10So his father went down to the woman. And Samson gave a feast there,
for young men used to do so. 11And it happened, when they saw him, that
they brought thirty companions to be with him.

12Then Samson said to them, “Let me pose a riddle to you. If you can
correctly solve and explain it to me within the seven days of the feast, then I
will give you thirty linen garments and thirty changes of clothing. 13But if
you cannot explain *it* to me, then you shall give me thirty linen garments and
thirty changes of clothing.”

And they said to him, “Pose your riddle, that we may hear it.”

14So he said to them:

“Out of the eater came something to eat,
And out of the strong came something sweet.”

Now for three days they could not explain the riddle.

15But it came to pass on the seventh[a] day that they said to Samson’s wife, “Entice your husband, that he may explain the riddle to us, or else we will burn you and your father’s house with fire. Have you invited us in order to take what is ours? *Is that* not *so?*”

16Then Samson’s wife wept on him, and said, “You only hate me! You do not love me! You have posed a riddle to the sons of my people, but you have not explained *it* to me.”

And he said to her, “Look, I have not explained *it* to my father or my mother; so should I explain *it* to you?” 17Now she had wept on him the seven days while their feast lasted. And it happened on the seventh day that he told her, because she pressed him so much. Then she explained the riddle to the sons of her people. 18So the men of the city said to him on the seventh day before the sun went down:

“What *is* sweeter than honey?
And what *is* stronger than a lion?”

And he said to them:

“If you had not plowed with my heifer,
You would not have solved my riddle!”

19Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon him mightily, and he went down to Ashkelon and killed thirty of their men, took their apparel, and gave the changes *of clothing* to those who had explained the riddle. So his anger was aroused, and he went back up to his father’s house. 20And Samson’s wife was *given* to his companion, who had been his best man.

**SAMSON DEFEATS THE PHILISTINES**

**15** After a while, in the time of wheat harvest, it happened that Samson visited his wife with a young goat. And he said, “Let me go in to my wife, into *her* room.” But her father would not permit him to go in.

2 Her father said, “I really thought that you thoroughly hated her; therefore I gave her to your companion. *Is* not her younger sister better than she? Please, take her instead.”

3 And Samson said to them, “This time I shall be blameless regarding the Philistines if I harm them!” 4 Then Samson went and caught three hundred foxes; and he took torches, turned *the foxes* tail to tail, and put a torch between each pair of tails. 5 When he had set the torches on fire, he let *the foxes* go into the standing grain of the Philistines, and burned up both the shocks and the standing grain, as well as the vineyards *and* olive groves.

6 Then the Philistines said, “Who has done this?”

And they answered, “Samson, the son-in-law of the Timnite, because he has taken his wife and given her to his companion.” So the Philistines came up and burned her and her father with fire.

7 Samson said to them, “Since you would do a thing like this, I will surely take revenge on you, and after that I will cease.” 8 So he attacked them hip and thigh with a great slaughter; then he went down and dwelt in the cleft of the rock of Etam.

9 Now the Philistines went up, encamped in Judah, and deployed themselves against Lehi. 10 And the men of Judah said, “Why have you come up against us?”

So they answered, “We have come up to arrest Samson, to do to him as he has done to us.”

11 Then three thousand men of Judah went down to the cleft of the rock of Etam, and said to Samson, “Do you not know that the Philistines rule over us? What *is* this you have done to us?”

And he said to them, “As they did to me, so I have done to them.”

12 But they said to him, “We have come down to arrest you, that we may
deliver you into the hand of the Philistines.”

Then Samson said to them, “Swear to me that you will not kill me
yourselves.”

13 So they spoke to him, saying, “No, but we will tie you securely and
deliver you into their hand; but we will surely not kill you.” And they bound
him with two new ropes and brought him up from the rock.

14 When he came to Lehi, the Philistines came shouting against him. Then
the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him; and the ropes that *were* on
his arms became like flax that is burned with fire, and his bonds broke loose
from his hands. 15 He found a fresh jawbone of a donkey, reached out his
hand and took it, and killed a thousand men with it. 16 Then Samson said:

> “With the jawbone of a donkey,
> Heaps upon heaps,
> With the jawbone of a donkey
> I have slain a thousand men!”

17 And so it was, when he had finished speaking, that he threw the jawbone
from his hand, and called that place Ramath Lehi.[a]

18 Then he became very thirsty; so he cried out to the LORD and said, “You
have given this great deliverance by the hand of Your servant; and now shall
I die of thirst and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised?” 19 So God split the
hollow place that *is* in Lehi,[a] and water came out, and he drank; and his spirit
returned, and he revived. Therefore he called its name En Hakkore,[b] which is
in Lehi to this day. 20 And he judged Israel twenty years in the days of the
Philistines.

**SAMSON AND DELILAH**

**16** Now Samson went to Gaza and saw a harlot there, and went in to her.
2 *When* the Gazites *were told*, “Samson has come here!” they surrounded *the place* and lay in wait for him all night at the gate of the city. They were quiet all night, saying, “In the morning, when it is daylight, we will kill him.”
3 And Samson lay *low* till midnight; then he arose at midnight, took hold of the doors of the gate of the city and the two gateposts, pulled them up, bar and all, put *them* on his shoulders, and carried them to the top of the hill that faces Hebron.

4 Afterward it happened that he loved a woman in the Valley of Sorek, whose name *was* Delilah. 5 And the lords of the Philistines came up to her and said to her, “Entice him, and find out where his great strength *lies*, and by what *means* we may overpower him, that we may bind him to afflict him; and every one of us will give you eleven hundred *pieces* of silver.”

6 So Delilah said to Samson, “Please tell me where your great strength *lies*, and with what you may be bound to afflict you.”

7 And Samson said to her, “If they bind me with seven fresh bowstrings, not yet dried, then I shall become weak, and be like any *other* man.”

8 So the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven fresh bowstrings, not yet dried, and she bound him with them. 9 Now *men were* lying in wait, staying with her in the room. And she said to him, “The Philistines *are* upon you, Samson!” But he broke the bowstrings as a strand of yarn breaks when it touches fire. So the secret of his strength was not known.

10 Then Delilah said to Samson, “Look, you have mocked me and told me lies. Now, please tell me what you may be bound with.”

11 So he said to her, “If they bind me securely with new ropes that have never been used, then I shall become weak, and be like any *other* man.”

12 Therefore Delilah took new ropes and bound him with them, and said to him, “The Philistines *are* upon you, Samson!” And *men were* lying in wait, staying in the room. But he broke them off his arms like a thread.

13 Delilah said to Samson, “Until now you have mocked me and told me

lies. Tell me what you may be bound with."

And he said to her, "If you weave the seven locks of my head into the web of the loom"-

14So she wove *it* tightly with the batten of the loom, and said to him, "The Philistines *are* upon you, Samson!" But he awoke from his sleep, and pulled out the batten and the web from the loom.

15Then she said to him, "How can you say, 'I love you,' when your heart *is* not with me? You have mocked me these three times, and have not told me where your great strength *lies.*" 16And it came to pass, when she pestered him daily with her words and pressed him, *so* that his soul was vexed to death, 17that he told her all his heart, and said to her, "No razor has ever come upon my head, for I *have been* a Nazirite to God from my mother's womb. If I am shaven, then my strength will leave me, and I shall become weak, and be like any *other* man."

18When Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, "Come up once more, for he has told me all his heart." So the lords of the Philistines came up to her and brought the money in their hand. 19Then she lulled him to sleep on her knees, and called for a man and had him shave off the seven locks of his head. Then she began to torment him,[a] and his strength left him. 20And she said, "The Philistines *are* upon you, Samson!" So he awoke from his sleep, and said, "I will go out as before, at other times, and shake myself free!" But he did not know that the LORD had departed from him.

21Then the Philistines took him and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza. They bound him with bronze fetters, and he became a grinder in the prison. 22However, the hair of his head began to grow again after it had been shaven.

**SAMSON DIES WITH THE PHILISTINES**

23Now the lords of the Philistines gathered together to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god, and to rejoice. And they said:

"Our god has delivered into our hands Samson our enemy!"

[24]When the people saw him, they praised their god; for they said:

> “Our god has delivered into our hands our enemy,
> The destroyer of our land,
> And the one who multiplied our dead.”

[25]So it happened, when their hearts were merry, that they said, “Call for Samson, that he may perform for us.” So they called for Samson from the prison, and he performed for them. And they stationed him between the pillars. [26]Then Samson said to the lad who held him by the hand, “Let me feel the pillars which support the temple, so that I can lean on them.” [27]Now the temple was full of men and women. All the lords of the Philistines *were* there-about three thousand men and women on the roof watching while Samson performed.

[28]Then Samson called to the LORD, saying, “O Lord GOD, remember me, I pray! Strengthen me, I pray, just this once, O God, that I may with one *blow* take vengeance on the Philistines for my two eyes!” [29]And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars which supported the temple, and he braced himself against them, one on his right and the other on his left. [30]Then Samson said, “Let me die with the Philistines!” And he pushed with *all his* might, and the temple fell on the lords and all the people who *were* in it. So the dead that he killed at his death were more than he had killed in his life.

[31]And his brothers and all his father’s household came down and took him, and brought *him* up and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the tomb of his father Manoah. He had judged Israel twenty years.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# SAMSON: YIELDING TO TEMPTATION

# ( JUDGES 16)

Samson, one of history's strongest men, displayed remarkable weakness when it came to temptation. His astonishing physical abilities were unfortunately not matched by his moral qualities. He fooled himself into thinking that his great strength could save him from any predicament. Samson squandered God's gift on thoughtless actions and petty offenses. He was so busy delivering himself from trouble that achieving the temporary deliverance of his people came about almost as an accident.

Samson impulsively married a Philistine woman who was coerced into betraying him. This folly led to a series of confrontations that resulted in temporary relief for Israel from the oppression of the Philistines. Years later, he visited a prostitute in Gaza and almost fell into an ambush. Then he fell for Delilah who then was bribed to betray Samson. He failed to realize the danger behind her efforts to discover the key to his power. He toyed with her temptations. But Samson's physical strength was no match for Delilah's persistence, and he eventually betrayed himself by telling her the secret of his strength.

Samson temporarily lost his strength when his hair was shorn. His captors then destroyed his eyes. Samson was left with little else but a determination to serve God.

In Samson's life we find a gold mine of valuable lessons about temptation. Among the treasures are these:

- Strength and success in one area will not make us immune to temptation in another.
- Unbroken patterns lead us downward or upward-temptation returns wherever it has any success.
- Flirting with temptation makes our defeat almost certain.
- Temptation and failure may limit our usefulness to God, but it

doesn’t cut us off from His grace.

• No matter how bad things get, let the last word be a prayer!

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about temptation The Whispers Of Temptation. See also the key passage note at Matthew 4:1-11.

**SOUL NOTE**

**True Love?** *(16:15)* Samson had lied to Delilah three times, and Delilah had shown three times that she was willing to betray him to the Philistines. “How can you say, ‘I love you?’ ” she asked, when he would not tell her the truth about his strength. Samson lied to Delilah; Delilah lied to Samson and was willing to sell him out for eleven hundred pieces of silver (16:5). Both supposedly were in love with each other. Whatever these two had going on, it was not love. True love “does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth” (1 Cor. 13:6). **Topic: Love**

**CHOOSE LIFE**

# GARY P. STEWART

## ( Judges 16:28-30)

**S**ome have described suicide as a permanent solution to a temporary problem. From a Christian perspective, however, suicide is

not permanent and solves nothing. Each individual is created in the image of God and is, therefore, an immortal being with responsibilities and accountability beyond the grave.

In reality, suicide is a *selfish* action taken against oneself in order to eliminate what is experienced as unrelenting pain. It is the tragic and lethal culmination of a psychological process that results from unresolved events that create depression and hopelessness. Someone who commits suicide often cannot see any hope that the future will be different than the painful past or present. People who end their lives are generally burdened by a number of unresolved events or problems that are mostly, if not always, resolvable. Without coping skills and without the help of friends, professional assistance, or loved ones, unresolved burdens grow heavier until the weight becomes unbearable and the individual is weakened to the point of despair. The problem is not that such despairing people want to die; it is that they do not know how to live.

The relatives and friends of the person who commits suicide are also victims. They must deal with loss, pain, and perhaps even guilt as a result of the suicide.

## SUICIDES IN THE BIBLE

Samson's death, recorded in Judges 16:28-30, occurred in association with an act of war that both avenged his humiliation at the hands of the Philistines and was accomplished with direct permission from God. Although Samson technically caused his own death, his selfless and contrite act is similar to those who, when facing an enemy, are willing to sacrifice their own lives for a cause that is greater than themselves. Samson's choice to sacrifice his life is very different from the decision of those who choose to take their lives because of personal loss, disappointment, and despair.

There are six instances of suicide in the Bible, five in the Old Testament (excluding Samson) and one in the New Testament. The

one suicide recorded in the New Testament was that of Judas Iscariot, who hanged himself after betraying Jesus (Matt. 27:5). Two of the suicides recorded in the Old Testament, those of Abimelech and Saul, occurred after each was seriously wounded in battle (Judg. 9:50-55; 1 Sam. 31:1-6). Ahithophel took his own life when Absalom did not receive his counsel (2 Sam. 17:23). Zimri, king of Israel, chose to burn his palace and kill himself rather than be captured by his enemies (1 Kin. 16:18).

It is important to note that none of these six suicides was viewed favorably or as a legitimate option, even in the most difficult of times.

## THE BIBLICAL RESPONSE TO SUICIDE

A biblical understanding of God and life inspires hope while it diminishes despair. Each human being will suffer whether a child of God or not. A believer's knowledge and love for God gives hope that suffering is never without a purpose. So rather than curse or blame God for the troubles of life, we choose to live by faith in Him.

Too often in the church, believers are unresponsive to their brothers and sisters who struggle in their faith, and sometimes too busy to involve themselves in the lives of their neighbors. It is the responsibility of mature Christians to be sensitive to the needs of those around them and to gently encourage and support those who are struggling. In so doing, they assist others in carrying their burdens (Gal. 6:1-3) and so fulfill the law of Christ which is to love God and one's neighbor (Matt. 22:37-40). The church can be a safe place where people can really talk about their problems, build trust, and learn from each other. Isolation, whether initiated by someone who is struggling or by those too busy to care, only heightens the possibility that thoughts about and attempts at suicide will occur.

When someone is struggling with despair or depression, and certainly when someone admits to having thoughts of taking his or her life, then professional help is needed. It is the responsibility of the

caring friend to not carry that burden alone, but to take action to make sure that the friend gets help quickly.

**IN CONCLUSION**

Each of us plays a small, though vital, role in God's comprehensive plan to redeem the world. As believers, we are images (reflections) of God's will and character in a dark and depraved world. The more we understand and trust in the God of Scripture, the better we project faith, hope, and love to the world. The greater understanding each of us has of God and His will, the less despair each of us will experience in our lives.

An important element of faith is the knowledge or awareness that our understanding of God is incomplete. Knowing God intimately is a lifetime endeavor that includes both lows and highs emotionally and physically. We are spiritually, physically, and emotionally broken and wounded people living in a broken and wounded society. God is the mender no matter what the circumstances. As God told the people of Israel through His servant, Moses, "I have set before you life and death . . . therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; that you may love the LORD your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days" (Deut. 30:19, 20).

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of suicide include:

- Psalm 40:1-3; 119:116
- Proverbs 13:12
- Jeremiah 29:11
- Ephesians 1:15-21

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on suicide at 1 Samuel 31:4. See also the personality profile of Judas The Suicide Of Judas.

## SOUL NOTE

**Never Too Late** *(16:28-30)* Samson once had great potential. He had been set apart by God to "begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines" (13:5). Yet at the end of his life, he was a blinded prisoner, chained in a Philistine temple. Samson had failed God in many ways, but in the end, God still used him to accomplish His purposes. As the pagan temple crashed down, Samson killed many Philistines and began to free Israel from them. No matter how badly we have failed God, it is never too late to return to Him and let Him work through us. **Topic: Failure**

## MICAH'S IDOLATRY

**17** Now there was a man from the mountains of Ephraim, whose name *was* Micah. 2 And he said to his mother, "The eleven hundred *shekels* of silver that were taken from you, and on which you put a curse, even saying it in my ears-here *is* the silver with me; I took it."

And his mother said, "*May you be* blessed by the LORD, my son!" 3 So when he had returned the eleven hundred *shekels* of silver to his mother, his mother said, "I had wholly dedicated the silver from my hand to the LORD for my son, to make a carved image and a molded image; now therefore, I will return it to you." 4 Thus he returned the silver to his mother. Then his mother took two hundred *shekels* of silver and gave them to the silversmith, and he made it into a carved image and a molded image; and they were in the house of Micah.

5 The man Micah had a shrine, and made an ephod and household idols;[a] and he consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest. 6 In those days *there was* no king in Israel; everyone did *what was* right in his own eyes.

7 Now there was a young man from Bethlehem in Judah, of the family of Judah; he *was* a Levite, and was staying there. 8 The man departed from the city of Bethlehem in Judah to stay wherever he could find *a place*. Then he came to the mountains of Ephraim, to the house of Micah, as he journeyed. 9 And Micah said to him, "Where do you come from?"

So he said to him, "I *am* a Levite from Bethlehem in Judah, and I am on my way to find *a place* to stay."

10 Micah said to him, "Dwell with me, and be a father and a priest to me, and I will give you ten *shekels* of silver per year, a suit of clothes, and your sustenance." So the Levite went in. 11 Then the Levite was content to dwell with the man; and the young man became like one of his sons to him. 12 So Micah consecrated the Levite, and the young man became his priest, and lived in the house of Micah. 13 Then Micah said, "Now I know that the LORD will be good to me, since I have a Levite as priest!"

## THE DANITES ADOPT MICAH'S IDOLATRY

**18** In those days *there was* no king in Israel. And in those days the tribe of the Danites was seeking an inheritance for itself to dwell in; for until that day *their* inheritance among the tribes of Israel had not fallen to them. 2So the children of Dan sent five men of their family from their territory, men of valor from Zorah and Eshtaol, to spy out the land and search it. They said to them, "Go, search the land." So they went to the mountains of Ephraim, to the house of Micah, and lodged there. 3While they *were* at the house of Micah, they recognized the voice of the young Levite. They turned aside and said to him, "Who brought you here? What are you doing in this *place?* What do you have here?"

4He said to them, "Thus and so Micah did for me. He has hired me, and I have become his priest."

5So they said to him, "Please inquire of God, that we may know whether the journey on which we go will be prosperous."

6And the priest said to them, "Go in peace. The presence of the LORD *be* with you on your way."

7So the five men departed and went to Laish. They saw the people who *were* there, how they dwelt safely, in the manner of the Sidonians, quiet and secure. *There were* no rulers in the land who might put *them* to shame for anything. They *were* far from the Sidonians, and they had no ties with anyone.[a]

8Then *the spies* came back to their brethren at Zorah and Eshtaol, and their brethren said to them, "What *is* your *report?*"

9So they said, "Arise, let us go up against them. For we have seen the land, and indeed it *is* very good. *Would* you *do* nothing? Do not hesitate to go, *and* enter to possess the land. 10When you go, you will come to a secure people and a large land. For God has given it into your hands, a place where *there is* no lack of anything that *is* on the earth."

11And six hundred men of the family of the Danites went from there, from Zorah and Eshtaol, armed with weapons of war. 12Then they went up and

encamped in Kirjath Jearim in Judah. (Therefore they call that place Mahaneh Dan[a] to this day. There *it is,* west of Kirjath Jearim.) 13And they passed from there to the mountains of Ephraim, and came to the house of Micah.

14Then the five men who had gone to spy out the country of Laish answered and said to their brethren, “Do you know that there are in these houses an ephod, household idols, a carved image, and a molded image? Now therefore, consider what you should do.” 15So they turned aside there, and came to the house of the young Levite man-to the house of Micah-and greeted him. 16The six hundred men armed with their weapons of war, who *were* of the children of Dan, stood by the entrance of the gate. 17Then the five men who had gone to spy out the land went up. Entering there, they took the carved image, the ephod, the household idols, and the molded image. The priest stood at the entrance of the gate with the six hundred men *who were* armed with weapons of war.

18When these went into Micah’s house and took the carved image, the ephod, the household idols, and the molded image, the priest said to them, “What are you doing?”

19And they said to him, “Be quiet, put your hand over your mouth, and come with us; be a father and a priest to us. *Is it* better for you to be a priest to the household of one man, or that you be a priest to a tribe and a family in Israel?” 20So the priest’s heart was glad; and he took the ephod, the household idols, and the carved image, and took his place among the people.

21Then they turned and departed, and put the little ones, the livestock, and the goods in front of them. 22When they were a good way from the house of Micah, the men who *were* in the houses near Micah’s house gathered together and overtook the children of Dan. 23And they called out to the children of Dan. So they turned around and said to Micah, “What ails you, that you have gathered such a company?”

24So he said, “You have taken away my gods which I made, and the priest, and you have gone away. Now what more do I have? How can you say to me, ‘What ails you?’ ”

25And the children of Dan said to him, “Do not let your voice be heard among us, lest angry men fall upon you, and you lose your life, with the lives

of your household!” [26]Then the children of Dan went their way. And when Micah saw that they *were* too strong for him, he turned and went back to his house.

**DANITES SETTLE IN LAISH**

[27]So they took *the things* Micah had made, and the priest who had belonged to him, and went to Laish, to a people quiet and secure; and they struck them with the edge of the sword and burned the city with fire. [28]*There was* no deliverer, because it *was* far from Si-don, and they had no ties with anyone. It was in the valley that belongs to Beth Rehob. So they rebuilt the city and dwelt there. [29]And they called the name of the city Dan, after the name of Dan their father, who was born to Israel. However, the name of the city formerly *was* Laish.

[30]Then the children of Dan set up for themselves the carved image; and Jonathan the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh,[a] and his sons were priests to the tribe of Dan until the day of the captivity of the land. [31]So they set up for themselves Micah’s carved image which he made, all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh.

**THE LEVITE'S CONCUBINE**

**19** And it came to pass in those days, when *there was* no king in Israel, that there was a certain Levite staying in the remote mountains of Ephraim. He took for himself a concubine from Bethlehem in Judah. 2But his concubine played the harlot against him, and went away from him to her father's house at Bethlehem in Judah, and was there four whole months. 3Then her husband arose and went after her, to speak kindly to her *and* bring her back, having his servant and a couple of donkeys with him. So she brought him into her father's house; and when the father of the young woman saw him, he was glad to meet him. 4Now his father-in-law, the young woman's father, detained him; and he stayed with him three days. So they ate and drank and lodged there.

5Then it came to pass on the fourth day that they arose early in the morning, and he stood to depart; but the young woman's father said to his son-in-law, "Refresh your heart with a morsel of bread, and afterward go your way."

6So they sat down, and the two of them ate and drank together. Then the young woman's father said to the man, "Please be content to stay all night, and let your heart be merry." 7And when the man stood to depart, his father-in-law urged him; so he lodged there again. 8Then he arose early in the morning on the fifth day to depart, but the young woman's father said, "Please refresh your heart." So they delayed until afternoon; and both of them ate.

9And when the man stood to depart-he and his concubine and his servant-his father-in-law, the young woman's father, said to him, "Look, the day is now drawing toward evening; please spend the night. See, the day is coming to an end; lodge here, that your heart may be merry. Tomorrow go your way early, so that you may get home."

10However, the man was not willing to spend that night; so he rose and departed, and came opposite Jebus (that *is*, Jerusalem). With him were the two saddled donkeys; his concubine *was* also with him. 11They *were* near Jebus, and the day was far spent; and the servant said to his master, "Come,

please, and let us turn aside into this city of the Jebusites and lodge in it."

12 But his master said to him, "We will not turn aside here into a city of
foreigners, who *are* not of the children of Israel; we will go on to Gibeah."
13 So he said to his servant, "Come, let us draw near to one of these places,
and spend the night in Gibeah or in Ramah." 14 And they passed by and went
their way; and the sun went down on them near Gibeah, which belongs to
Benjamin. 15 They turned aside there to go in to lodge in Gibeah. And when
he went in, he sat down in the open square of the city, for no one would take
them into *his* house to spend the night.

16 Just then an old man came in from his work in the field at evening, who
also *was* from the mountains of Ephraim; he was staying in Gibeah, whereas
the men of the place *were* Benjamites. 17 And when he raised his eyes, he saw
the traveler in the open square of the city; and the old man said, "Where are
you going, and where do you come from?"

18 So he said to him, "We *are* passing from Bethlehem in Judah toward the
remote mountains of Ephraim; I *am* from there. I went to Bethlehem in
Judah; *now* I am going to the house of the LORD. But there *is* no one who will
take me into his house, 19 although we have both straw and fodder for our
donkeys, and bread and wine for myself, for your female servant, and for the
young man *who is* with your servant; *there is* no lack of anything."

20 And the old man said, "Peace *be* with you! However, *let* all your needs
*be* my responsibility; only do not spend the night in the open square." 21 So he
brought him into his house, and gave fodder to the donkeys. And they washed
their feet, and ate and drank.

## GIBEAH'S CRIME

22 As they were enjoying themselves, suddenly certain men of the city,
perverted men,[a] surrounded the house *and* beat on the door. They spoke to
the master of the house, the old man, saying, "Bring out the man who came to
your house, that we may know him *carnally!* "

23 But the man, the master of the house, went out to them and said to them,
"No, my brethren! I beg you, do not act *so* wickedly! Seeing this man has
come into my house, do not commit this outrage. 24 Look, *here is* my virgin

daughter and *the man's*[a] concubine; let me bring them out now. Humble them, and do with them as you please; but to this man do not do such a vile thing!" [25]But the men would not heed him. So the man took his concubine and brought *her* out to them. And they knew her and abused her all night until morning; and when the day began to break, they let her go.

[26]Then the woman came as the day was dawning, and fell down at the door of the man's house where her master *was*, till it was light.

[27]When her master arose in the morning, and opened the doors of the house and went out to go his way, there was his concubine, fallen *at* the door of the house with her hands on the threshold. [28]And he said to her, "Get up and let us be going." But there was no answer. So the man lifted her onto the donkey; and the man got up and went to his place.

[29]When he entered his house he took a knife, laid hold of his concubine, and divided her into twelve pieces, limb by limb,[a] and sent her throughout all the territory of Israel. [30]And so it was that all who saw it said, "No such deed has been done or seen from the day that the children of Israel came up from the land of Egypt until this day. Consider it, confer, and speak up!"

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# THE LEVITE'S CONCUBINE

## ( JUDGES 19)

Whether abusive acts have to do with power, things, or people, the results lead to destruction. When the writer of Judges concluded this journal about a nation in disarray, he summarized the chaos with these words, "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did

what was right in his own eyes" ( Judg. 21:25). No pattern of behavior leads to horrific abuses more quickly than when each person does whatever they want to do without regard to some external standard. The account of the woman abused by her husband and by strangers demonstrates this.

When the man from Ephraim took a concubine from Bethlehem, he ignored God's rules for relationships. She wasn't allowed to be a marriage partner; she was property. Her rebellion was a cry for dignity.

The Levite's trip to Bethlehem to retrieve his concubine turned into a tragedy of errors. On the return trip, the couple found themselves under the narrow hospitality of a man from Gibeah-wide enough to guarantee the Levite's safety even at the cost of his host's daughter, but utterly excluding the concubine. She was eventually offered as a sexual diversion to a mob that surrounded the house. Their intended homosexual assault on the Levite became a vicious gang rape of the concubine, resulting in her death.

Apparently oblivious to his own cowardice and abuse, the Levite dismembered the woman's body and sent parts throughout Israel, demanding justice. Even though the nation of Israel acted to exact justice on Gibeah, they also had to suffer as a result of the pervasive atmosphere of sin among the people. Sinful abuses not only led to death; almost as many Israelites as Benjamites died during the judgment of Gibeah. The nation had to be shocked and horrified into realizing the spreading effects of the abuse of God's law and the resulting abuses of persons created in His image.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about abuse Hope For Healing. See also the key passage note at Genesis 19:4-9.

**HOPE FOR HEALING**

# DIANE LANGBERG

## ( Judges 19:25)

**N**o one wants to think about sexual abuse-especially abuse of children or young people. However, statistics show that one in four females and one in six males are sexually molested prior to the age of eighteen. Such numbers indicate that many people are looking at life and spiritual matters through the lens of sexual abuse. And with such numbers, it is also certain that our church congregations include many people who are aching from having been sexually abused.

### SEXUAL ABUSE DEFINED

Sexual abuse occurs when an older person sexually exploits a child in order to satisfy the abuser's needs. It consists of any sexual activity-verbal, visual, or physical-engaged in with a minor. Verbal sexual abuse includes comments about a person's body, lewd remarks, and the discussion of sexual activity. Visual sexual abuse includes pornography and being forced to view sexual activity of any kind. Physical abuse includes fondling or sexual contact.

Sexual abuse is most often perpetrated by an adult who has ready access to the child by virtue of authority or kinship. It can be a one-time occurrence or span many years. The majority of abusers of both male and female victims are male. When sexual abuse begins, the average age of the child is between six and twelve. The child is

considered unable to consent due to developmental immaturity and an inability to understand sexual behavior. Sexual abuse is illegal in all fifty states.

## SCRIPTURE AND SEXUAL ABUSE

Scripture says much that relates to the topic of sexual abuse. Except within the context of a marriage, all sexual relationships are wrong. Scripture constantly demonstrates God's love and care for children as an example for all people to emulate.

Scripture also has direct references to sexual abuse. Tamar was raped by her half brother Amnon, and from that point on "remained desolate in her brother Absalom's house" (2 Sam. 13:20). Judges 19 describes a woman's gang-rape by a group of crazed men. That hideous abuse and the protection of the abusers by the Benjamites caused a terrible war in Israel that cost 40,000 men their lives.

## HOPE FOR HEALING

To be abused is to be touched by evil. Evil, like good, has an impact. There are many things that contribute to the impact of sexual abuse in a life. No two people are alike.

It is important for people to understand how the abuse has impacted them. What has it taught them? Where has it harmed them? Healing is applied knowledgeably only when a wound is understood. It is also crucial to know that no matter what the extent of the damage, no matter how badly one has been wounded, there is hope for healing.

Abuse that is frequent and of long duration has more severe effects. The more closely related the perpetrator and the victim, and the wider the age difference, the more severe the effects. Abuse by males is often considered more harmful, as is abuse involving penetrations of any kind, or abuse that is sadistic or violent.

Chronic childhood abuse does damage to the body, the mind, the emotions, and the ability to relate to another person. The damage is multiplied over and over again during the essential developmental time when the child is forming a foundation for adulthood. Just as a young sapling can be trained to grow straight and tall or misshapen and twisted during its formative years, so a child can be impacted by life's early experiences.

People who have been chronically abused learn that bodies are for hurting and believe they have no choice about what happens to them. Healing will mean learning how to care for their bodies-to protect them from harm and maintain their integrity. It is very healing for survivors to see that Jesus lived in a body that was also abused. He was hit, spit on, humiliated, and left naked in front of others. The Healer, who is scarred for all eternity, knows the pain of abuse.

Sexual abuse also results in damage to the emotions-fear, grief, anger, and guilt often govern abused people's lives. It will take hard work to learn to deal with these emotions. But it can be done. Nothing is outside of God's power to heal and control.

Sexual abuse also damages people's thinking. Abused people lie to themselves that the abuse was not really bad, that the abuse was their fault, or that the abuse occurred because they are worthless. God hates abuse because He hates all evil. But He does not hate the victims. Abuse is the fault of the abusers, not the victims. Abuse victims will need help to hear God's truth speak louder than the lies of abuse.

Sexual abuse also deeply damages victims' spirits and ability to relate to God. Abuse hinders their ability to hope, may make them afraid of God, or make them unable to trust Him. Victims often struggle to understand why God allowed the abuse to occur.

We can help victims of abuse by helping them to focus on the character of God. The person of Christ and the Word of God teach the

truth about who God is. As they learn more about God's power and ability to heal, they can place their past *and* their future in God's hands.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of abuse include:

- Genesis 50:20
- Psalms 11; 27; 119:50, 73-88
- 2 Corinthians 1:3-7
- 1 Thessalonians 5:14

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on abuse at Genesis 19:4-9. See also the personality profile of The Levite's Concubine.

## ISRAEL'S WAR WITH THE BENJAMITES

**20** So all the children of Israel came out, from Dan to Beersheba, as well as
from the land of Gilead, and the congregation gathered together as one
man before the LORD at Mizpah. 2And the leaders of all the people, all the
tribes of Israel, presented themselves in the assembly of the people of God,
four hundred thousand foot soldiers who drew the sword. 3(Now the children
of Benjamin heard that the children of Israel had gone up to Mizpah.)

Then the children of Israel said, "Tell *us,* how did this wicked deed
happen?"

4So the Levite, the husband of the woman who was murdered, answered
and said, "My concubine and I went into Gibeah, which belongs to Benjamin,
to spend the night. 5And the men of Gibeah rose against me, and surrounded
the house at night because of me. They intended to kill me, but instead they
ravished my concubine so that she died. 6So I took hold of my concubine, cut
her in pieces, and sent her throughout all the territory of the inheritance of
Israel, because they committed lewdness and outrage in Israel. 7Look! All of
you *are* children of Israel; give your advice and counsel here and now!"

8So all the people arose as one man, saying, "None *of us* will go to his tent,
nor will any turn back to his house; 9but now this *is* the thing which we will
do to Gibeah: *We will go up* against it by lot. 10We will take ten men out of
*every* hundred throughout all the tribes of Israel, a hundred out of *every*
thousand, and a thousand out of *every* ten thousand, to make provisions for
the people, that when they come to Gibeah in Benjamin, they may repay all
the vileness that they have done in Israel." 11So all the men of Israel were
gathered against the city, united together as one man.

12Then the tribes of Israel sent men through all the tribe of Benjamin,
saying, "What *is* this wickedness that has occurred among you? 13Now
therefore, deliver up the men, the perverted men[a] who *are* in Gibeah, that we
may put them to death and remove the evil from Israel!" But the children of
Benjamin would not listen to the voice of their brethren, the children of
Israel. 14Instead, the children of Benjamin gathered together from their cities
to Gibeah, to go to battle against the children of Israel. 15And from their cities

at that time the children of Benjamin numbered twenty-six thousand men who drew the sword, besides the inhabitants of Gibeah, who numbered seven hundred select men. 16Among all this people *were* seven hundred select men *who were* left-handed; every one could sling a stone at a hair's *breadth* and not miss. 17Now besides Benjamin, the men of Israel numbered four hundred thousand men who drew the sword; all of these *were* men of war.

18Then the children of Israel arose and went up to the house of God[a] to inquire of God. They said, "Which of us shall go up first to battle against the children of Benjamin?"

The LORD said, "Judah first!"

19So the children of Israel rose in the morning and encamped against Gibeah. 20And the men of Israel went out to battle against Benjamin, and the men of Israel put themselves in battle array to fight against them at Gibeah. 21Then the children of Benjamin came out of Gibeah, and on that day cut down to the ground twenty-two thousand men of the Israelites. 22And the people, that is, the men of Israel, encouraged themselves and again formed the battle line at the place where they had put themselves in array on the first day. 23Then the children of Israel went up and wept before the LORD until evening, and asked counsel of the LORD, saying, "Shall I again draw near for battle against the children of my brother Benjamin?"

And the LORD said, "Go up against him."

24So the children of Israel approached the children of Benjamin on the second day. 25And Benjamin went out against them from Gibeah on the second day, and cut down to the ground eighteen thousand more of the children of Israel; all these drew the sword.

26Then all the children of Israel, that is, all the people, went up and came to the house of God[a] and wept. They sat there before the LORD and fasted that day until evening; and they offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD. 27So the children of Israel inquired of the LORD (the ark of the covenant of God *was* there in those days, 28and Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, stood before it in those days), saying, "Shall I yet again go out to battle against the children of my brother Benjamin, or shall I cease?"

And the LORD said, “Go up, for tomorrow I will deliver them into your hand.”

29 Then Israel set men in ambush all around Gibeah. 30 And the children of
Israel went up against the children of Benjamin on the third day, and put
themselves in battle array against Gibeah as at the other times. 31 So the
children of Benjamin went out against the people, *and* were drawn away from
the city. They began to strike down *and* kill some of the people, as at the
other times, in the highways (one of which goes up to Bethel and the other to
Gibeah) and in the field, about thirty men of Israel. 32 And the children of
Benjamin said, “They *are* defeated before us, as at first.”

But the children of Israel said, “Let us flee and draw them away from the
city to the highways.” 33 So all the men of Israel rose from their place and put
themselves in battle array at Baal Tamar. Then Israel’s men in ambush burst
forth from their position in the plain of Geba. 34 And ten thousand select men
from all Israel came against Gibeah, and the battle was fierce. But *the*
*Benjamites*[a] did not know that disaster *was* upon them. 35 The LORD defeated
Benjamin before Israel. And the children of Israel destroyed that day twenty-
five thousand one hundred Benjamites; all these drew the sword.

36 So the children of Benjamin saw that they were defeated. The men of
Israel had given ground to the Benjamites, because they relied on the men in
ambush whom they had set against Gibeah. 37 And the men in ambush quickly
rushed upon Gibeah; the men in ambush spread out and struck the whole city
with the edge of the sword. 38 Now the appointed signal between the men of
Israel and the men in ambush was that they would make a great cloud of
smoke rise up from the city, 39 whereupon the men of Israel would turn in
battle. Now Benjamin had begun to strike *and* kill about thirty of the men of
Israel. For they said, “Surely they are defeated before us, as *in* the first
battle.” 40 But when the cloud began to rise from the city in a column of
smoke, the Benjamites looked behind them, and there was the whole city
going up *in smoke* to heaven. 41 And when the men of Israel turned back, the
men of Benjamin panicked, for they saw that disaster had come upon them.
42 Therefore they turned *their backs* before the men of Israel in the direction
of the wilderness; but the battle overtook them, and whoever *came* out of the

cities they destroyed in their midst. [43]They surrounded the Benjamites, chased them, *and* easily trampled them down as far as the front of Gibeah toward the east. [44]And eighteen thousand men of Benjamin fell; all these *were* men of valor. [45]Then they[a] turned and fled toward the wilderness to the rock of Rimmon; and they cut down five thousand of them on the highways. Then they pursued them relentlessly up to Gidom, and killed two thousand of them. [46]So all who fell of Benjamin that day were twenty-five thousand men who drew the sword; all these *were* men of valor.

[47]But six hundred men turned and fled toward the wilderness to the rock of Rimmon, and they stayed at the rock of Rimmon for four months. [48]And the men of Israel turned back against the children of Benjamin, and struck them down with the edge of the sword-from *every* city, men and beasts, all who were found. They also set fire to all the cities they came to.

## WIVES PROVIDED FOR THE BENJAMITES

**21** Now the men of Israel had sworn an oath at Mizpah, saying, “None of us
shall give his daughter to Benjamin as a wife.” 2Then the people came to
the house of God,[a] and remained there before God till evening. They lifted up
their voices and wept bitterly, 3and said, “O LORD God of Israel, why has this
come to pass in Israel, that today there should be one tribe *missing* in Israel?”

4So it was, on the next morning, that the people rose early and built an altar
there, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. 5The children of Israel
said, “Who *is there* among all the tribes of Israel who did not come up with
the assembly to the LORD?” For they had made a great oath concerning
anyone who had not come up to the LORD at Mizpah, saying, “He shall surely
be put to death.” 6And the children of Israel grieved for Benjamin their
brother, and said, “One tribe is cut off from Israel today. 7What shall we do
for wives for those who remain, seeing we have sworn by the LORD that we
will not give them our daughters as wives?”

8And they said, “What one *is there* from the tribes of Israel who did not
come up to Mizpah to the LORD?” And, in fact, no one had come to the camp
from Jabesh Gilead to the assembly. 9For when the people were counted,
indeed, not one of the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead *was* there. 10So the
congregation sent out there twelve thousand of their most valiant men, and
commanded them, saying, “Go and strike the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead
with the edge of the sword, including the women and children. 11And this *is*
the thing that you shall do: You shall utterly destroy every male, and every
woman who has known a man intimately.” 12So they found among the
inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead four hundred young virgins who had not known
a man intimately; and they brought them to the camp at Shiloh, which is in
the land of Canaan.

13Then the whole congregation sent *word* to the children of Benjamin who
*were* at the rock of Rimmon, and announced peace to them. 14So Benjamin
came back at that time, and they gave them the women whom they had saved
alive of the women of Jabesh Gilead; and yet they had not found enough for
them.

15 And the people grieved for Benjamin, because the LORD had made a void
in the tribes of Israel.

16 Then the elders of the congregation said, “What shall we do for wives for
those who remain, since the women of Benjamin have been destroyed?”
17 And they said, “*There must be* an inheritance for the survivors of Benjamin,
that a tribe may not be destroyed from Israel. 18 However, we cannot give
them wives from our daughters, for the children of Israel have sworn an oath,
saying, ‘Cursed *be* the one who gives a wife to Benjamin.’ ” 19 Then they
said, “In fact, *there is* a yearly feast of the LORD in Shiloh, which *is* north of
Bethel, on the east side of the highway that goes up from Bethel to Shechem,
and south of Lebonah.”

20 Therefore they instructed the children of Benjamin, saying, “Go, lie in
wait in the vineyards, 21 and watch; and just when the daughters of Shiloh
come out to perform their dances, then come out from the vineyards, and
every man catch a wife for himself from the daughters of Shiloh; then go to
the land of Benjamin. 22 Then it shall be, when their fathers or their brothers
come to us to complain, that we will say to them, ‘Be kind to them for our
sakes, because we did not take a wife for any of them in the war; for *it is* not
*as though* you have given the *women* to them at this time, making yourselves
guilty of your oath.’ ”

23 And the children of Benjamin did so; they took enough wives for their
number from those who danced, whom they caught. Then they went and
returned to their inheritance, and they rebuilt the cities and dwelt in them.
24 So the children of Israel departed from there at that time, every man to his
tribe and family; they went out from there, every man to his inheritance.

25 In those days *there was* no king in Israel; everyone did *what was* right in
his own eyes.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Whatever Seems Right** *(21:25)* The Israelites had no king and no commitment to God. Thus they did whatever seemed right in their own eyes. When people remove God from life, they are left with no guidelines other than what *they* think is right. Our culture today says we must be tolerant of everything-even blatant sin. Israel's tolerance of sin turned them away from God. Christians should be tolerant of different viewpoints, but should not condone beliefs or practices that would lead away from God's standards. We must be completely intolerant of sin and remove it from our lives. **Topic: Tolerance**

# Ruth



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# Ruth

To the familiar short list of “death and taxes” we can add one other certainty in life: grief. When we lose what we value, we grieve. Our losses may be obvious to all-a spouse, a child, a job, our health. Or they may be more private-the loss of status, relational intimacy, a secret dream. Everyone grieves. The question is: Will we let that grief paralyze our lives?

Ruth was a young Moabite woman who had married an Israelite. When all the men in this extended family died, the women faced uncertain futures. But Ruth clung to her mother-in-law, Naomi, pledging, “Wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God, my God” (1:16).

Although Ruth and Naomi lived on the edge of poverty, God provided amply for their needs. They returned to Israel, where Ruth met and married a wealthy farmer named Boaz. In the house of Boaz, both Ruth and Naomi found joy.

The Book of Ruth is a primer on handling grief. It shows that God’s compassion and faithful friends can give us the courage to meet grief head-on. Ruth’s life is a great encouragement to those whose souls are bent low by the grief of the past and the seeming hopelessness of the future. In the words of the psalm writer, “Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning” (Ps. 30:5).

**SOUL CONCERN IN**

## RUTH

PREMARITAL

RELATIONSHIPS (3:10-14)

## ELIMELECH'S FAMILY GOES TO MOAB

**1** Now it came to pass, in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a
famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem, Judah, went to dwell
in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons. 2The name of the
man *was* Elimelech, the name of his wife *was* Naomi, and the names of his
two sons *were* Mahlon and Chilion-Ephrathites of Bethlehem, Judah. And
they went to the country of Moab and remained there. 3Then Elimelech,
Naomi's husband, died; and she was left, and her two sons. 4Now they took
wives of the women of Moab: the name of the one *was* Orpah, and the name
of the other Ruth. And they dwelt there about ten years. 5Then both Mahlon
and Chilion also died; so the woman survived her two sons and her husband.

## NAOMI RETURNS WITH RUTH

6Then she arose with her daughters-in-law that she might return from the
country of Moab, for she had heard in the country of Moab that the LORD had
visited His people by giving them bread. 7Therefore she went out from the
place where she was, and her two daughters-in-law with her; and they went
on the way to return to the land of Judah. 8And Naomi said to her two
daughters-in-law, "Go, return each to her mother's house. The LORD deal
kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me. 9The LORD
grant that you may find rest, each in the house of her husband."

So she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept. 10And they
said to her, "Surely we will return with you to your people."

11But Naomi said, "Turn back, my daughters; why will you go with me?
*Are* there still sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? 12Turn
back, my daughters, go-for I am too old to have a husband. If I should say I
have hope, *if* I should have a husband tonight and should also bear sons,
13would you wait for them till they were grown? Would you restrain
yourselves from having husbands? No, my daughters; for it grieves me very
much for your sakes that the hand of the LORD has gone out against me!"

14Then they lifted up their voices and wept again; and Orpah kissed her
mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.

15 And she said, “Look, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and
to her gods; return after your sister-in-law.”

16 But Ruth said:

“Entreat me not to leave you,
*Or to* turn back from following after you;
For wherever you go, I will go;
And wherever you lodge, I will lodge;
Your people *shall be* my people,
And your God, my God.
17 Where you die, I will die,
And there will I be buried.
The LORD do so to me, and more also,
If *anything but* death parts you and me.”

18 When she saw that she was determined to go with her, she stopped
speaking to her.

19 Now the two of them went until they came to Bethlehem. And it
happened, when they had come to Bethlehem, that all the city was excited
because of them; and the women said, “*Is* this Naomi?”

20 But she said to them, “Do not call me Naomi;[a] call me Mara,[b] for the
Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. 21 I went out full, and the LORD has
brought me home again empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since the LORD
has testified against me, and the Almighty has afflicted me?”

22 So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess her daughter-in-law with
her, who returned from the country of Moab. Now they came to Bethlehem at
the beginning of barley harvest.

**SOUL NOTE**

**The Language of Love** *(1:16, 17)* People say “I love you” in many different ways. It is often said best through actions. Ruth showed her love for Naomi by staying with her and by working hard to support

them both (2:6, 7). Ruth loved and trusted Naomi, so she followed Naomi's advice in going to Boaz (3:1-9). Boaz was also a man of action, immediately handling the matter of providing for Ruth and becoming the redeemer for these women (3:18). We may not always hear the words, "I love you," but, if we listen, we may hear them through another's kind actions toward us.

**Topic: Love Languages**

**RUTH MEETS BOAZ**

**2** There was a relative of Naomi's husband, a man of great wealth, of the family of Elimelech. His name *was* Boaz. 2So Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, "Please let me go to the field, and glean heads of grain after *him* in whose sight I may find favor."

And she said to her, "Go, my daughter."

3Then she left, and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers. And she happened to come to the part of the field *belonging* to Boaz, who *was* of the family of Elimelech.

4Now behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said to the reapers, "The LORD *be* with you!"

And they answered him, "The LORD bless you!"

5Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, "Whose young woman *is* this?"

6So the servant who was in charge of the reapers answered and said, "It *is* the young Moabite woman who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab. 7And she said, 'Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.' So she came and has continued from morning until now, though she rested a little in the house."

8Then Boaz said to Ruth, "You will listen, my daughter, will you not? Do not go to glean in another field, nor go from here, but stay close by my young women. 9*Let* your eyes *be* on the field which they reap, and go after them. Have I not commanded the young men not to touch you? And when you are thirsty, go to the vessels and drink from what the young men have drawn."

10So she fell on her face, bowed down to the ground, and said to him, "Why have I found favor in your eyes, that you should take notice of me, since I *am* a foreigner?"

11And Boaz answered and said to her, "It has been fully reported to me, all that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband, and *how* you have left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and have come to a people whom you did not know before. 12The LORD repay

your work, and a full reward be given you by the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge."

13 Then she said, "Let me find favor in your sight, my lord; for you have comforted me, and have spoken kindly to your maidservant, though I am not like one of your maidservants."

14 Now Boaz said to her at mealtime, "Come here, and eat of the bread, and dip your piece of bread in the vinegar." So she sat beside the reapers, and he passed parched *grain* to her; and she ate and was satisfied, and kept some back. 15 And when she rose up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, "Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not reproach her. 16 Also let *grain* from the bundles fall purposely for her; leave *it* that she may glean, and do not rebuke her."

17 So she gleaned in the field until evening, and beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley. 18 Then she took *it* up and went into the city, and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. So she brought out and gave to her what she had kept back after she had been satisfied.

19 And her mother-in-law said to her, "Where have you gleaned today? And where did you work? Blessed be the one who took notice of you."

So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked, and said, "The man's name with whom I worked today *is* Boaz."

20 Then Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, "Blessed *be* he of the LORD, who has not forsaken His kindness to the living and the dead!" And Naomi said to her, "This man *is* a relation of ours, one of our close relatives."

21 Ruth the Moabitess said, "He also said to me, 'You shall stay close by my young men until they have finished all my harvest.' "

22 And Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, "*It is* good, my daughter, that you go out with his young women, and that people do not meet you in any other field." 23 So she stayed close by the young women of Boaz, to glean until the end of barley harvest and wheat harvest; and she dwelt with her mother-in-law.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# RUTH & BOAZ - SEXUAL INTEGRITY IN PREMARITAL RELATIONSHIPS

## (RUTH 2-3)

The way in which a couple meets and the story of their courtship reveals much about their marriage prospects. Ruth and Boaz lived one of the Bible's most romantic love stories. As in every true love story, Ruth and Boaz had their share of sorrow, difficulty, adventure, and victory. Where fools rush in, Ruth and Boaz walked wisely.

Boaz met Ruth shortly after she arrived in Bethlehem with Naomi, her mother-in-law, who was returning home. Both women were widows. They were also friends. Naomi's God had become Ruth's. The lovely Moabitess graciously assumed the role of resourceful provider for the two women, never guessing what surprises God had in store.

Ruth showed up during the harvest of Boaz's fields, gleaning the leftovers to feed Naomi and herself. Boaz noticed her. A few tactful questions later, Boaz began to demonstrate special attention toward Ruth. He encouraged her to stay with his work crew. He informed her that she was under his guarantee of safety because of her special care for his relative Naomi.

During the harvest days, mutual respect and appreciation became special affection between Ruth and Boaz. Under Naomi's guidance,

Ruth let Boaz know she was open to his role as kinsman-redeemer, meaning that he would marry her, care for her, and perhaps carry on the family line. Boaz praised her character and promised to take action. When it was all said and done, their marriage made them part of the ancestry of Jesus.

Sexual possibilities were undoubtedly part of Ruth and Boaz's story, but they did not use sex to determine their relationship. They are a romantic tribute to the power of sexual integrity before marriage.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the articles about sexual integrity Obedience Or Mere Excellence? and premarital relationships The Dating Game. See also the key passage note on sexual integrity at 1 Corinthians 6:15, and the key passage note on premarital relationships at Amos 3:3.

**RUTH'S REDEMPTION ASSURED**

**3** Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, shall I not seek
security for you, that it may be well with you? [2]Now Boaz, whose young
women you were with, *is he* not our relative? In fact, he is winnowing barley
tonight at the threshing floor. [3]Therefore wash yourself and anoint yourself,
put on your *best* garment and go down to the threshing floor; *but* do not make
yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. [4]Then it
shall be, when he lies down, that you shall notice the place where he lies; and
you shall go in, uncover his feet, and lie down; and he will tell you what you
should do."

[5]And she said to her, "All that you say to me I will do."

[6]So she went down to the threshing floor and did according to all that her
mother-in-law instructed her. [7]And after Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his
heart was cheerful, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain; and
she came softly, uncovered his feet, and lay down.

[8]Now it happened at midnight that the man was startled, and turned
himself; and there, a woman was lying at his feet. [9]And he said, "Who *are*
you?"

So she answered, "I *am* Ruth, your maidservant. Take your maidservant
under your wing,[a] for you are a close relative."

[10]Then he said, "Blessed *are* you of the LORD, my daughter! For you have
shown more kindness at the end than at the beginning, in that you did not go
after young men, whether poor or rich. [11]And now, my daughter, do not fear.
I will do for you all that you request, for all the people of my town know that
you *are* a virtuous woman. [12]Now it is true that I *am* a close relative;
however, there is a relative closer than I. [13]Stay this night, and in the morning
it shall be *that* if he will perform the duty of a close relative for you-good; let
him do it. But if he does not want to perform the duty for you, then I will
perform the duty for you, *as* the LORD lives! Lie down until morning."

[14]So she lay at his feet until morning, and she arose before one could
recognize another. Then he said, "Do not let it be known that the woman

came to the threshing floor.” [15]Also he said, “Bring the shawl that *is* on you and hold it.” And when she held it, he measured six *ephahs* of barley, and laid *it* on her. Then she[a] went into the city.

[16]When she came to her mother-in-law, she said, “*Is* that you, my daughter?”

Then she told her all that the man had done for her. [17]And she said, “These six *ephahs* of barley he gave me; for he said to me, ‘Do not go empty-handed to your mother-in-law.’ ”

[18]Then she said, “Sit still, my daughter, until you know how the matter will turn out; for the man will not rest until he has concluded the matter this day.”

**THE DATING GAME**

## LES AND LESLIE PARROTT

## (Ruth 3:10-14)

**F**alling in love can be a dizzying experience. Once the spark of attraction catches flame, love can quickly turn into a raging fire of unreasonable passion. Engulfed by its heat, people sometimes sacrifice all sound judgment. The Song of Solomon says, “Many waters cannot quench love, nor can the floods drown it” (Song 8:7). Love can cause some people to “lose their head,” and they lose their capacity to think clearly. This is why Scripture admonishes people to seek wisdom: “Get wisdom, and in all your getting, get understanding” (Prov. 4:7).

The word *wisdom* often elicits images of old men with long beards, but wisdom does not necessarily come with age. If that were so, the Bible would not tell us to be wise right now. Neither is wisdom the result of a high IQ. Being brilliant does not necessarily mean being wise. Wisdom is defined as "a common-sense understanding of what is true, right, or lasting."

Wisdom is vital throughout life, but it is particularly important in the dating process. As people date, they usually put their best foot forward and are not completely genuine; they face temptation to sexual sin; they deal with many strong emotions-all while they are attempting to decide on the person with whom they will spend the rest of life, "for better or worse." Obviously, people who are in the process of dating are better off seeking God's discernment regarding the character of the people they date.

Wisdom helps people avoid embarrassing mistakes, to not jump to conclusions or make decisions without first gathering the facts. Some who are in the process of dating think that the exhilaration of infatuation will last forever. They need wisdom to guide them into a strong relationship based on more than exciting feelings. Romance focuses mostly on emotion; true love is grounded in character; true character is discerned through wisdom.

## DISCERNING A PERSON'S CHARACTER

Wisdom is not concerned with *doing* but with *being*, so it can be difficult to spot. But a wise person will have a steady demeanor and attitude over a long period of time that will reveal his or her wisdom (or the lack of it). That is why people generally date for many months. They need to see each other in a variety of situations across a span of time. Wisdom, or lack of wisdom, will emerge over time in hundreds of ways great and small. It will help, then, for people to have some idea what to look for as they date a person over a period of time.

*Spiritual or Worldly?*

Evangelist Billy Graham once said, “Knowledge is horizontal; wisdom is vertical-it comes down from above.” Spiritual wisdom can only be given by the Holy Spirit. For this reason, Christians should only date other Christians. There cannot be a true spiritual dimension in a person who is not a believer. Even then, however, people must be discerning. Anyone can say the right words and act the right way for a time, but the genuine person will eventually be revealed. Even if the other person is a believer, each person must still carefully consider the depth of that person’s faith. Does the other have a heart for God? Does he or she possess true spiritual wisdom? Of course, everyone is a pilgrim on the path and no one will be perfect, but those who are dating must ask God for discernment and guidance as they consider this other person’s personal relationship with God.

*Humble or Self-centered?*

Humility is an important attribute in a date. Proverbs 11:2 warns, “When pride comes, then comes shame; but with the humble is wisdom.” A humble person seeks the other’s good. A humble person can ask for help. Only a truly humble person will be able to love his or her spouse completely, according to the kind of love described in 1 Corinthians 13: “Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; loves does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own . . .” (1 Cor. 13:4, 5). Such love is fundamental to a positive and lasting relationship.

*Genuine or Deceptive?*

Sincerity is a valuable virtue. Going on a date, however, is often a showcase, a place to conceal shortcomings. As they are dating, many people try to disguise their flaws and defects; others attempt to exaggerate their positive qualities, or even lie. This can cause people to obsess about how to look, what to say, how to eat. The whole routine is misleading. For this reason, it is particularly important to

look beyond the veneer by dating over a period of time and by doing things together in a variety of situations. The real person will eventually emerge-for better or worse. But it would be better to discover that real person *before* making the "for better or worse" vow!

**SO IS IT LOVE OR INFATUATION?**

Even when a person is dating a spiritual, humble, and genuine person, how can real love be distinguished from temporary infatuation? Several characteristics separate true love from infatuation. Infatuation is based on physical characteristics; love is based on the whole person. Infatuation is instant ("love at first sight"); love grows steadily over time. Infatuation can be lost in a moment, for it is based only on feelings; love is a commitment that remains as feelings come and go. Infatuation meets *my* needs; love meets *our* needs.

The decision you are making will last a lifetime. Take your time and make it wisely.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of premarital relationships include:

- 1 Kings 11:1-13
- Proverbs 2; 5-9
- Ecclesiastes 4:9-12
- Amos 3:3
- 1 Corinthians 13
- 2 Corinthians 6:14-18

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on premarital relationships at Amos 3:3. See also the personality profile of Ruth &

Boaz — Sexual Integrity In Premarital Relationships.

**SOUL NOTE**

**People of Character** *(3:11)* Marriages in this culture were generally arranged by a girl's parents. In Ruth's case, Naomi did the arranging by instructing her to approach Boaz, a near kinsman, whose duty it would be to marry her. Boaz had heard about Ruth (2:11, 12) and had great respect for her because she was known as "a virtuous woman" (3:11). Ruth appreciated Boaz's kindness to her and Naomi. Although our culture is very different, people who are dating should look at the other person's character before deciding whether to marry. In the long run, character is what will matter most. **Topic: Premarital Relationships**

**BOAZ REDEEMS RUTH**

**4** Now Boaz went up to the gate and sat down there; and behold, the close
relative of whom Boaz had spoken came by. So Boaz said, “Come aside,
friend,[a] sit down here.” So he came aside and sat down. 2And he took ten
men of the elders of the city, and said, “Sit down here.” So they sat down.
3Then he said to the close relative, “Naomi, who has come back from the
country of Moab, sold the piece of land which *belonged* to our brother
Elimelech. 4And I thought to inform you, saying, ‘Buy *it* back in the presence
of the inhabitants and the elders of my people. If you will redeem *it*, redeem
*it;* but if you[a] will not redeem *it*, *then* tell me, that I may know; for *there is* no
one but you to redeem *it*, and I *am* next after you.’ ”

And he said, “I will redeem *it.* ”

5Then Boaz said, “On the day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi,
you must also buy *it* from Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to
perpetuate[a] the name of the dead through his inheritance.”

6And the close relative said, “I cannot redeem *it* for myself, lest I ruin my
own inheritance. You redeem my right of redemption for yourself, for I
cannot redeem *it.* ”

7Now this *was the custom* in former times in Israel concerning redeeming
and exchanging, to confirm anything: one man took off his sandal and gave *it*
to the other, and this *was* a confirmation in Israel.

8Therefore the close relative said to Boaz, “Buy *it* for yourself.” So he took
off his sandal. 9And Boaz said to the elders and all the people, “You *are*
witnesses this day that I have bought all that was Elimelech’s, and all that
*was* Chilion’s and Mahlon’s, from the hand of Naomi. 10Moreover, Ruth the
Moabitess, the widow of Mahlon, I have acquired as my wife, to perpetuate
the name of the dead through his inheritance, that the name of the dead may
not be cut off from among his brethren and from his position at the gate.[a]
You *are* witnesses this day.”

11And all the people who *were* at the gate, and the elders, said, “*We are*
witnesses. The LORD make the woman who is coming to your house like

Rachel and Leah, the two who built the house of Israel; and may you prosper in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem. [12]May your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, because of the offspring which the LORD will give you from this young woman."

**DESCENDANTS OF BOAZ AND RUTH**

[13]So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife; and when he went in to her, the LORD gave her conception, and she bore a son. [14]Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed *be* the LORD, who has not left you this day without a close relative; and may his name be famous in Israel! [15]And may he be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age; for your daughter-in-law, who loves you, who is better to you than seven sons, has borne him." [16]Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her bosom, and became a nurse to him. [17]Also the neighbor women gave him a name, saying, "There is a son born to Naomi." And they called his name Obed. He *is* the father of Jesse, the father of David.

[18]Now this *is* the genealogy of Perez: Perez begot Hezron; [19]Hezron begot Ram, and Ram begot Amminadab; [20]Amminadab begot Nahshon, and Nahshon begot Salmon;[a] [21]Salmon begot Boaz, and Boaz begot Obed; [22]Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David.

# 1 Samuel



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# 1 Samuel

Some people make a mess of their lives. Others make a difference with their lives.

Nowhere is this contrast more clear than in the Book of 1 Samuel. Following the dark period of the judges, Israel demands a king so they can be like all the pagan nations around them. The prophet Samuel, at God's insistence, anoints Saul. Though Saul's reign begins well, he soon lapses into a lifestyle of disobedience.

In the meantime, God is preparing a new king for Israel-a young shepherd named David who has a passionate heart for God (13:14). Throughout the latter half of the book, David demonstrates the kingly qualities of courage, character, and faith by boldly killing the giant Goliath, faithfully serving the increasingly paranoid Saul, and trusting God during the years he must live as a fugitive, hiding himself from Saul's murderous rage.

As Saul sinks further into depravity, David grows in faithfulness and strength, preparing to be a great leader for God. By the end of the book, the contrast between the two leaders is stark. Saul is spiritually bankrupt-mentally and emotionally disturbed, consumed with jealous hatred, and suicidal. David, on the other hand, has grown into a leader who is walking closely with God. He is faithful to God, battle-tested, and ready to lead Israel.

Let 1 Samuel remind you that every choice of the soul has consequences. Our lives can be a mess, or they can make a difference. The choice is ours.

**SOUL CONCERNS IN**

## 1 SAMUEL

MENTAL ILLNESS (16:14-23)
OCCULT (28:7)

## THE FAMILY OF ELKANAH

**1** Now there was a certain man of Ramathaim Zophim, of the mountains of
Ephraim, and his name *was* Elkanah the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu,[a]
the son of Tohu,[b] the son of Zuph, an Ephraimite. [2]And he had two wives: the
name of one *was* Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah. Peninnah had
children, but Hannah had no children. [3]This man went up from his city yearly
to worship and sacrifice to the LORD of hosts in Shiloh. Also the two sons of
Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, the priests of the LORD, *were* there. [4]And
whenever the time came for Elkanah to make an offering, he would give
portions to Peninnah his wife and to all her sons and daughters. [5]But to
Hannah he would give a double portion, for he loved Hannah, although the
LORD had closed her womb. [6]And her rival also provoked her severely, to
make her miserable, because the LORD had closed her womb. [7]So it was, year
by year, when she went up to the house of the LORD, that she provoked her;
therefore she wept and did not eat.

## HANNAH'S VOW

[8]Then Elkanah her husband said to her, "Hannah, why do you weep? Why
do you not eat? And why is your heart grieved? *Am* I not better to you than
ten sons?"

[9]So Hannah arose after they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh.
Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat by the doorpost of the tabernacle[a]
of the LORD. [10]And she *was* in bitterness of soul, and prayed to the LORD and
wept in anguish. [11]Then she made a vow and said, "O LORD of hosts, if You
will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me, and
not forget Your maidservant, but will give Your maidservant a male child,
then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and no razor shall
come upon his head."

[12]And it happened, as she continued praying before the LORD, that Eli
watched her mouth. [13]Now Hannah spoke in her heart; only her lips moved,
but her voice was not heard. Therefore Eli thought she was drunk. [14]So Eli
said to her, "How long will you be drunk? Put your wine away from you!"

15 But Hannah answered and said, “No, my lord, I *am* a woman of
sorrowful spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor intoxicating drink, but have
poured out my soul before the LORD. 16 Do not consider your maidservant a
wicked woman,[a] for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief I have
spoken until now.”

17 Then Eli answered and said, “Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant
your petition which you have asked of Him.”

18 And she said, “Let your maidservant find favor in your sight.” So the
woman went her way and ate, and her face was no longer *sad.*

## SAMUEL IS BORN AND DEDICATED

19 Then they rose early in the morning and worshiped before the LORD, and
returned and came to their house at Ramah. And Elkanah knew Hannah his
wife, and the LORD remembered her. 20 So it came to pass in the process of
time that Hannah conceived and bore a son, and called his name Samuel,[a]
*saying,* “Because I have asked for him from the LORD.”

21 Now the man Elkanah and all his house went up to offer to the LORD the
yearly sacrifice and his vow. 22 But Hannah did not go up, for she said to her
husband, “*Not* until the child is weaned; then I will take him, that he may
appear before the LORD and remain there forever.”

23 So Elkanah her husband said to her, “Do what seems best to you; wait
until you have weaned him. Only let the LORD establish His[a] word.” Then the
woman stayed and nursed her son until she had weaned him.

24 Now when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with three
bulls,[a] one ephah of flour, and a skin of wine, and brought him to the house
of the LORD in Shiloh. And the child *was* young. 25 Then they slaughtered a
bull, and brought the child to Eli. 26 And she said, “O my lord! As your soul
lives, my lord, I *am* the woman who stood by you here, praying to the LORD.
27 For this child I prayed, and the LORD has granted me my petition which I
asked of Him. 28 Therefore I also have lent him to the LORD; as long as he
lives he shall be lent to the LORD.” So they worshiped the LORD there.

## SOUL NOTE

**On Loan** *(1:27, 28)* Children are gifts from God. In ancient Israelite culture, not having children was seen as a great tragedy. Samuel's birth was a blessing to Hannah. To thank God for answering her prayer, Hannah kept her promise and dedicated Samuel to serve the Lord at the tabernacle. Her words to Eli the high priest serve as a model for all parents. Even as parents care for and raise their children, they must remember that each child ultimately belongs to God. Parents give their children back to the Lord when they entrust their children to God and His guidance. **Topic: Motherhood**

## KEY PASSAGE

# A MOST IMPORTANT JOB

# (1:27, 28)

Parenting is demanding and rewarding. Many people prepare and study for years to enter a chosen profession, but parenting is usually on-the-job training.

Moreover, it is a job with no retirement plan.

The family unit, created by God, is the basic foundation of every society. God calls children "a reward" (Ps. 127:3). He commands

parents to raise their children with loving discipline (Prov. 10:1, 5; 13:1; 15:20), bringing them up "in the training and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). The goal of parenting is to eventually let the children go. Like Hannah, parents begin that letting-go process right away as they understand that their children are God's gifts. They are lent to us for a time, and we give them back to God as we allow them to follow His guidance in their lives.

Turn to the article about parenting Godly Parenting. See also the personality profile of Abraham: A Parent's Heart.

**HANNAH'S PRAYER**

**2** And Hannah prayed and said:

"My heart rejoices in the LORD;
My horn[a] is exalted in the LORD.
I smile at my enemies,
Because I rejoice in Your salvation.

2 "No one is holy like the LORD,
For *there is* none besides You,
Nor *is there* any rock like our God.
3 "Talk no more so very proudly;
Let no arrogance come from your mouth,
For the LORD *is* the God of knowledge;
And by Him actions are weighed.
4 "The bows of the mighty men *are* broken,
And those who stumbled are girded with strength.
5 *Those who were* full have hired themselves out for bread,
And the hungry have ceased *to hunger*.
Even the barren has borne seven,
And she who has many children has become feeble.
6 "The LORD kills and makes alive;
He brings down to the grave and brings up.
7 The LORD makes poor and makes rich;
He brings low and lifts up.
8 He raises the poor from the dust
*And* lifts the beggar from the ash heap,
To set *them* among princes
And make them inherit the throne of glory.
"For the pillars of the earth *are* the LORD's,
And He has set the world upon them.

9 He will guard the feet of His saints,
But the wicked shall be silent in darkness.
"For by strength no man shall prevail.

10 The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken in pieces;
From heaven He will thunder against them.
The LORD will judge the ends of the earth.
"He will give strength to His king,
And exalt the horn of His anointed."

11 Then Elkanah went to his house at Ramah. But the child ministered to the LORD before Eli the priest.

## THE WICKED SONS OF ELI

12 Now the sons of Eli *were* corrupt;[a] they did not know the LORD. 13 And the priests' custom with the people *was that* when any man offered a sacrifice, the priest's servant would come with a three-pronged fleshhook in his hand while the meat was boiling. 14 Then he would thrust *it* into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; and the priest would take for himself all that the fleshhook brought up. So they did in Shiloh to all the Israelites who came there. 15 Also, before they burned the fat, the priest's servant would come and say to the man who sacrificed, "Give meat for roasting to the priest, for he will not take boiled meat from you, but raw."

16 And *if* the man said to him, "They should really burn the fat first; *then* you may take *as much* as your heart desires," he would then answer him, "*No,* but you must give *it* now; and if not, I will take *it* by force."

17 Therefore the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD, for men abhorred the offering of the LORD.

## SAMUEL'S CHILDHOOD MINISTRY

18 But Samuel ministered before the LORD, *even as* a child, wearing a linen ephod. 19 Moreover his mother used to make him a little robe, and bring *it* to him year by year when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. 20 And Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, and say, "The LORD give you descendants from this woman for the loan that was given to the LORD." Then they would go to their own home.

21 And the LORD visited Hannah, so that she conceived and bore three sons and two daughters. Meanwhile the child Samuel grew before the LORD.

**PROPHECY AGAINST ELI'S HOUSEHOLD**

22 Now Eli was very old; and he heard everything his sons did to all Israel,[a]
and how they lay with the women who assembled at the door of the
tabernacle of meeting. 23 So he said to them, "Why do you do such things?
For I hear of your evil dealings from all the people. 24 No, my sons! For *it is*
not a good report that I hear. You make the LORD's people transgress. 25 If
one man sins against another, God will judge him. But if a man sins against
the LORD, who will intercede for him?" Nevertheless they did not heed the
voice of their father, because the LORD desired to kill them.

26 And the child Samuel grew in stature, and in favor both with the LORD
and men.

27 Then a man of God came to Eli and said to him, "Thus says the LORD:
'Did I not clearly reveal Myself to the house of your father when they were in
Egypt in Pharaoh's house? 28 Did I not choose him out of all the tribes of
Israel *to be* My priest, to offer upon My altar, to burn incense, and to wear an
ephod before Me? And did I not give to the house of your father all the
offerings of the children of Israel made by fire? 29 Why do you kick at My
sacrifice and My offering which I have commanded *in My* dwelling place,
and honor your sons more than Me, to make yourselves fat with the best of
all the offerings of Israel My people?' 30 Therefore the LORD God of Israel
says: 'I said indeed *that* your house and the house of your father would walk
before Me forever.' But now the LORD says: 'Far be it from Me; for those
who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me shall be lightly
esteemed. 31 Behold, the days are coming that I will cut off your arm and the
arm of your father's house, so that there will not be an old man in your house.
32 And you will see an enemy *in My* dwelling place, *despite* all the good
which God does for Israel. And there shall not be an old man in your house
forever. 33 But any of your men *whom* I do not cut off from My altar shall
consume your eyes and grieve your heart. And all the descendants of your
house shall die in the flower of their age. 34 Now this *shall be* a sign to you
that will come upon your two sons, on Hophni and Phinehas: in one day they
shall die, both of them. 35 Then I will raise up for Myself a faithful priest *who*
shall do according to what *is* in My heart and in My mind. I will build him a
sure house, and he shall walk before My anointed forever. 36 And it shall

come to pass that everyone who is left in your house will come *and* bow down to him for a piece of silver and a morsel of bread, and say, “Please, put me in one of the priestly positions, that I may eat a piece of bread.” ’ ”

**KEY PASSAGE**

## HANNAH’S HURT

## (2:5)

Hannah’s infertility caused great distress because children were seen as a sign of God’s blessing. By extension, therefore, barrenness was seen as a curse. Children were important for the continuance of the family line and family inheritance.

Infertility still causes pain, although perhaps for different reasons. Like Hannah, women who are infertile often hear others’ painful comments-even when people don’t mean to be hurtful. Barrenness does not make a woman any less important in God’s eyes. It is not a curse. Women facing infertility can pray, as Hannah did. God may answer the prayer miraculously, as He did for Hannah, and provide a child. He may answer the prayer in other ways. Infertile couples should pray, being open to God’s different ways of answering.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about infertility Stillborn Dreams: The Heartbreak of Infertility. See also the personality profile of Hannah-Coping With Infertility.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# HANNAH-COPING WITH INFERTILITY

**(1 SAMUEL 2:5)**

Hannah loved her husband. Elkanah loved her in return, though their relationship was somewhat complicated by a second wife in the house-Peninnah. Hannah struggled to accept her husband's repeated demonstrations of affection because she was unable to give him children. The "fault" was hers, for her rival Peninnah seemed to have no difficulty conceiving. Hannah's shame deepened under Peninnah's resentful attacks. Elkanah's assurances that his love for Hannah wasn't based on her fertility fell on deaf ears. Instead of love, she heard only reminders of her failure.

After years of humiliation, Hannah turned to God in a special way. We don't know how often she prayed about her infertility, but during one trip to Shiloh she gave her problem to God. She made a painful vow: If God would give her a son, she would present the child back to God for lifelong service. Hannah made no promises about her own feelings, or threats about what she would do if God chose not to accept her vow. She simply gave up her part of a long struggle. She returned to her husband, leaving her burden with God.

Within months, Hannah conceived and gave birth to Samuel, and she kept her promise. When she returned to Shiloh, Hannah brought her toddler and presented him to Eli for upbringing in the temple. He grew into a mighty man of God-a prophet, priest, and judge. Meanwhile, Hannah had other children. God demonstrated His

faithfulness to Hannah. In her life, God's answer opened her womb. But the deeper, more important, healing occurred in her soul. She finally understood that God had heard her. Such a settled faith allowed her to dedicate Samuel.

Modern medicine has made great strides in overcoming infertility, and God is still there hearing prayer. Hannah's example to women remains one of hope. God knows their sorrow, and He remains faithful.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about infertility Stillborn Dreams: The Heartbreak of Infertility,. See also the key passage note at 1 Samuel 2:5.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# ELI'S SONS-WAYWARD CHILDREN

**(1 SAMUEL 2:12)**

Eli served as a priest and judge in Israel. His two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, grew up in the shadow of God's house, but they never learned to respect God.

Eli's sons had the privileges of their father's vocation, but they twisted their responsibilities into evil acts. They threatened violence and practiced sexual abuse. When Eli attempted to correct them verbally, they displayed the same disrespect for him that they had for God. Their response reveals a long-standing pattern of a lack of discipline in Eli's home. God's judgment on the entire household confirms that problem.

Hophni and Phinehas did not understand the reality of consequences. They continued blindly toward death as warnings turned into prophecies. The way in which they had learned to take advantage of their position led them to assume that they could manipulate the ark of God like a magical device. They wrongly believed that carrying the ark into battle somehow made them immune to defeat (1 Sam. 4:1-11), just as they thought pretending to be priests had kept them immune from punishment. Their mistake cost them their lives.

Although the sons suffered consequences, Eli had to bear the responsibility for the conditions that had led to God's judgment on his family. By allowing his sons to remain in their positions, Eli himself had dishonored God. Apart from his words, Eli displayed an inability to discipline his sons. He confronted, but did not follow through with consequences.

One of the hardest parental tasks involves confronting wayward children. Delay only makes the job more difficult. Fear of being rejected by that son or daughter often leads to hesitation, denial, and soft correction. A parent may call it love, but the failure to discipline and correct is actually cowardice. Bold parental love doesn't always result in positive responses from children, but responsibilities are kept clear. Children have a better opportunity to learn right and wrong when their parents give them both the tender and the tough sides of love.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about adolescent problems The Disconnected Generation. See also the key passage note at Luke 15:17, 18.

**SOUL NOTE**

**What a Contrast!** *(2:17, 18)* Eli, the high priest of Israel, had

"corrupt" sons who "did not know the LORD" (2:12). Their hearts were so hard that God decided to kill them. In their responsible position as priests, their corruption deserved extreme punishment. In vivid contrast, Samuel "ministered before the LORD, even as a child" (2:18). When God spoke to Israel, he spoke not to Eli, but to Samuel (3:10). God's guidance and blessing come to His obedient servants. But those who reject Him are left to their own ways-and will face judgment. **Topic: Obedience**

## SOUL NOTE

**Growing Up** *(2:21, 26)* Young Samuel was growing "in stature, and in favor both with the LORD and men." The Bible describes Jesus' growth in a similar manner: He "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men" (Luke 2:52). Children grow physically, intellectually, emotionally, socially, and spiritually. Just as parents feed their children good food to help them grow strong physically, they should also provide guidance and opportunities in the various areas of life so that the children can grow in wisdom and favor with God and the people around them. **Topic: Child Development**

**SAMUEL'S FIRST PROPHECY**

**3** Now the boy Samuel ministered to the LORD before Eli. And the word of
the LORD was rare in those days; *there was* no widespread revelation. 2And
it came to pass at that time, while Eli *was* lying down in his place, and when
his eyes had begun to grow so dim that he could not see, 3and before the lamp
of God went out in the tabernacle[a] of the LORD where the ark of God *was*,
and while Samuel was lying down, 4that the LORD called Samuel. And he
answered, "Here I am!" 5So he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called
me."

And he said, "I did not call; lie down again." And he went and lay down.

6Then the LORD called yet again, "Samuel!"

So Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me."
He answered, "I did not call, my son; lie down again." 7(Now Samuel did not
yet know the LORD, nor was the word of the LORD yet revealed to him.)

8And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. So he arose and went to
Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you did call me."

Then Eli perceived that the LORD had called the boy. 9Therefore Eli said to
Samuel, "Go, lie down; and it shall be, if He calls you, that you must say,
'Speak, LORD, for Your servant hears.' " So Samuel went and lay down in his
place.

10Now the LORD came and stood and called as at other times, "Samuel!
Samuel!"

And Samuel answered, "Speak, for Your servant hears."

11Then the LORD said to Samuel: "Behold, I will do something in Israel at
which both ears of everyone who hears it will tingle. 12In that day I will
perform against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from
beginning to end. 13For I have told him that I will judge his house forever for
the iniquity which he knows, because his sons made themselves vile, and he
did not restrain them. 14And therefore I have sworn to the house of Eli that
the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be atoned for by sacrifice or offering
forever."

15 So Samuel lay down until morning,[a] and opened the doors of the house
of the LORD. And Samuel was afraid to tell Eli the vision. 16 Then Eli called
Samuel and said, “Samuel, my son!”

He answered, “Here I am.”

17 And he said, “What *is* the word that *the LORD* spoke to you? Please do
not hide *it* from me. God do so to you, and more also, if you hide anything
from me of all the things that He said to you.” 18 Then Samuel told him
everything, and hid nothing from him. And he said, “It *is* the LORD. Let Him
do what seems good to Him.”

19 So Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him and let none of his words
fall to the ground. 20 And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel
*had been* established as a prophet of the LORD. 21 Then the LORD appeared
again in Shiloh. For the LORD revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the
word of the LORD.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Intervene!** *(3:13)* Eli’s sons “made themselves vile, and he did not restrain them.” Eli did not discipline his sons even though they were priests under his supervision. These men were treating the sacrifices of the people with contempt (2:12-17) and were committing sexual sin with women of the tabernacle. Eli, as parent and as high priest, certainly had the authority to deal with his sons, but he chose not to do anything. Eventually, God stepped in. God gives parents authority over their children. Parents should use that authority wisely to guide their children away from sin. **Topic: Parenting**

**4** And the word of Samuel came to all Israel.[a]

## THE ARK OF GOD CAPTURED

Now Israel went out to battle against the Philistines, and encamped beside
Ebenezer; and the Philistines encamped in Aphek. 2Then the Philistines put
themselves in battle array against Israel. And when they joined battle, Israel
was defeated by the Philistines, who killed about four thousand men of the
army in the field. 3And when the people had come into the camp, the elders
of Israel said, "Why has the LORD defeated us today before the Philistines?
Let us bring the ark of the covenant of the LORD from Shiloh to us, that when
it comes among us it may save us from the hand of our enemies." 4So the
people sent to Shiloh, that they might bring from there the ark of the covenant
of the LORD of hosts, who dwells *between* the cherubim. And the two sons of
Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, *were* there with the ark of the covenant of God.

5And when the ark of the covenant of the LORD came into the camp, all
Israel shouted so loudly that the earth shook. 6Now when the Philistines
heard the noise of the shout, they said, "What *does* the sound of this great
shout in the camp of the Hebrews *mean*?" Then they understood that the ark
of the LORD had come into the camp. 7So the Philistines were afraid, for they
said, "God has come into the camp!" And they said, "Woe to us! For such a
thing has never happened before. 8Woe to us! Who will deliver us from the
hand of these mighty gods? These *are* the gods who struck the Egyptians
with all the plagues in the wilderness. 9Be strong and conduct yourselves like
men, you Philistines, that you do not become servants of the Hebrews, as
they have been to you. Conduct yourselves like men, and fight!"

10So the Philistines fought, and Israel was defeated, and every man fled to
his tent. There was a very great slaughter, and there fell of Israel thirty
thousand foot soldiers. 11Also the ark of God was captured; and the two sons
of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, died.

## DEATH OF ELI

12Then a man of Benjamin ran from the battle line the same day, and came
to Shiloh with his clothes torn and dirt on his head. 13Now when he came,

there was Eli, sitting on a seat by the wayside watching,[a] for his heart trembled for the ark of God. And when the man came into the city and told *it*, all the city cried out. [14]When Eli heard the noise of the outcry, he said, "What *does* the sound of this tumult *mean?*" And the man came quickly and told Eli. [15]Eli was ninety-eight years old, and his eyes were so dim that he could not see.

[16]Then the man said to Eli, "I *am* he who came from the battle. And I fled today from the battle line."

And he said, "What happened, my son?"

[17]So the messenger answered and said, "Israel has fled before the Philistines, and there has been a great slaughter among the people. Also your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead; and the ark of God has been captured."

[18]Then it happened, when he made mention of the ark of God, that Eli fell off the seat backward by the side of the gate; and his neck was broken and he died, for the man was old and heavy. And he had judged Israel forty years.

**ICHABOD**

[19]Now his daughter-in-law, Phinehas' wife, was with child, *due* to be delivered; and when she heard the news that the ark of God was captured, and that her father-in-law and her husband were dead, she bowed herself and gave birth, for her labor pains came upon her. [20]And about the time of her death the women who stood by her said to her, "Do not fear, for you have borne a son." But she did not answer, nor did she regard *it.* [21]Then she named the child Ichabod,[a] saying, "The glory has departed from Israel!" because the ark of God had been captured and because of her father-in-law and her husband. [22]And she said, "The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God has been captured."

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# ELI: UNBRIDLED APPETITES

**(1 SAMUEL 4:18)**

Eli died as a pathetic father, overwhelmed by the consequences of his own failures. His two sons had just died violently. The beloved ark of the covenant had fallen into enemy hands. He had been warned, but the shock of his worst fears suddenly coming true led to his death. The biblical autopsy reveals the cause of death: a broken neck resulting from a fall against a gate, compounded by the victim's age (98) and his weight.

Eli may have been a glutton; we don't know. Words spoken years before his death, when God sent a prophet to warn Eli, indicate a possible problem: "Why do you kick at My sacrifice and My offering . . . to make yourselves fat with the best of all the offerings of Israel My people?" (1 Sam. 2:29). At best, Eli's story describes a father and sons who lived undisciplined lives. They ate too much and exercised too little.

We now know that some kinds of obesity have a strong genetic influence. In Eli's life, however, weight appears as part of a pattern. Lack of self-control-even a lust for various pleasures-reveals a disturbing family dynamic in Eli's line. We see in his sons unbridled appetites for mischief and illicit sex that were never curbed. These behaviors were at least enabled, if not modeled, by the father. God's eventual judgment affected individual family members as well as Eli's entire family structure.

Overeating, lax parenting, and whatever else Eli may have struggled with are all clues to a deeper problem-a disordered character. The specifics are not as important as the traits they reveal. What traits in your life have not been surrendered to God's control? Excusing or

denying the clues doesn't get rid of them. At the center lies the decision to be a person whose life belongs to ourselves or to God. If we belong to God, doesn't it make sense to let Him deal with the sins for which Jesus Christ gave His life? Only the Creator knows how to bring order to our character.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Eating Disorders: Anorexia and Bulimia Nervosa. See also the key passage note at Proverbs 23:2.

## THE PHILISTINES AND THE ARK

**5** Then the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it from Ebenezer to
Ashdod. [2]When the Philistines took the ark of God, they brought it into the
house of Dagon[a] and set it by Dagon. [3]And when the people of Ashdod arose
early in the morning, there was Dagon, fallen on its face to the earth before
the ark of the LORD. So they took Dagon and set it in its place again. [4]And
when they arose early the next morning, there was Dagon, fallen on its face
to the ground before the ark of the LORD. The head of Dagon and both the
palms of its hands *were* broken off on the threshold; only Dagon's torso[a] was
left of it. [5]Therefore neither the priests of Dagon nor any who come into
Dagon's house tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod to this day.

[6]But the hand of the LORD was heavy on the people of Ashdod, and He
ravaged them and struck them with tumors,[a] *both* Ashdod and its territory.
[7]And when the men of Ashdod saw how *it was,* they said, "The ark of the
God of Israel must not remain with us, for His hand is harsh toward us and
Dagon our god." [8]Therefore they sent and gathered to themselves all the lords
of the Philistines, and said, "What shall we do with the ark of the God of
Israel?"

And they answered, "Let the ark of the God of Israel be carried away to
Gath." So they carried the ark of the God of Israel away. [9]So it was, after
they had carried it away, that the hand of the LORD was against the city with a
very great destruction; and He struck the men of the city, both small and
great, and tumors broke out on them.

[10]Therefore they sent the ark of God to Ekron. So it was, as the ark of God
came to Ekron, that the Ekronites cried out, saying, "They have brought the
ark of the God of Israel to us, to kill us and our people!" [11]So they sent and
gathered together all the lords of the Philistines, and said, "Send away the ark
of the God of Israel, and let it go back to its own place, so that it does not kill
us and our people." For there was a deadly destruction throughout all the city;
the hand of God was very heavy there. [12]And the men who did not die were
stricken with the tumors, and the cry of the city went up to heaven.

## THE ARK RETURNED TO ISRAEL

**6** Now the ark of the LORD was in the country of the Philistines seven
months. 2And the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners, saying,
"What shall we do with the ark of the LORD? Tell us how we should send it to
its place."

3So they said, "If you send away the ark of the God of Israel, do not send it
empty; but by all means return *it* to Him *with* a trespass offering. Then you
will be healed, and it will be known to you why His hand is not removed
from you."

4Then they said, "What *is* the trespass offering which we shall return to
Him?"

They answered, "Five golden tumors and five golden rats, *according to* the
number of the lords of the Philistines. For the same plague *was* on all of you
and on your lords. 5Therefore you shall make images of your tumors and
images of your rats that ravage the land, and you shall give glory to the God
of Israel; perhaps He will lighten His hand from you, from your gods, and
from your land. 6Why then do you harden your hearts as the Egyptians and
Pharaoh hardened their hearts? When He did mighty things among them, did
they not let the people go, that they might depart? 7Now therefore, make a
new cart, take two milk cows which have never been yoked, and hitch the
cows to the cart; and take their calves home, away from them. 8Then take the
ark of the LORD and set it on the cart; and put the articles of gold which you
are returning to Him *as* a trespass offering in a chest by its side. Then send it
away, and let it go. 9And watch: if it goes up the road to its own territory, to
Beth Shemesh, *then* He has done us this great evil. But if not, then we shall
know that *it is* not His hand *that* struck us-it happened to us by chance."

10Then the men did so; they took two milk cows and hitched them to the
cart, and shut up their calves at home. 11And they set the ark of the LORD on
the cart, and the chest with the gold rats and the images of their tumors.
12Then the cows headed straight for the road to Beth Shemesh, *and* went
along the highway, lowing as they went, and did not turn aside to the right
hand or the left. And the lords of the Philistines went after them to the border

of Beth Shemesh.

13 Now *the people of* Beth Shemesh *were* reaping their wheat harvest in the
valley; and they lifted their eyes and saw the ark, and rejoiced to see *it.*
14 Then the cart came into the field of Joshua of Beth Shemesh, and stood
there; a large stone *was* there. So they split the wood of the cart and offered
the cows as a burnt offering to the LORD. 15 The Levites took down the ark of
the LORD and the chest that *was* with it, in which *were* the articles of gold,
and put *them* on the large stone. Then the men of Beth Shemesh offered burnt
offerings and made sacrifices the same day to the LORD. 16 So when the five
lords of the Philistines had seen *it,* they returned to Ekron the same day.

17 These *are* the golden tumors which the Philistines returned *as* a trespass
offering to the LORD: one for Ashdod, one for Gaza, one for Ashkelon, one
for Gath, one for Ekron; 18 and the golden rats, *according to* the number of all
the cities of the Philistines *belonging* to the five lords, *both* fortified cities
and country villages, even as far as the large *stone of* Abel on which they set
the ark of the LORD, *which stone remains* to this day in the field of Joshua of
Beth Shemesh.

19 Then He struck the men of Beth Shemesh, because they had looked into
the ark of the LORD. He struck fifty thousand and seventy men[a] of the people,
and the people lamented because the LORD had struck the people with a great
slaughter.

## THE ARK AT KIRJATH JEARIM

20 And the men of Beth Shemesh said, “Who is able to stand before this
holy LORD God? And to whom shall it go up from us?” 21 So they sent
messengers to the inhabitants of Kirjath Jearim, saying, “The Philistines have
brought back the ark of the LORD; come down *and* take it up with you.”

7 Then the men of Kirjath Jearim came and took the ark of the LORD, and brought it into the house of Abinadab on the hill, and consecrated Eleazar his son to keep the ark of the LORD.

**SAMUEL JUDGES ISRAEL**

2 So it was that the ark remained in Kirjath Jearim a long time; it was there twenty years. And all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD.

3 Then Samuel spoke to all the house of Israel, saying, "If you return to the LORD with all your hearts, *then* put away the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths[a] from among you, and prepare your hearts for the LORD, and serve Him only; and He will deliver you from the hand of the Philistines." 4 So the children of Israel put away the Baals and the Ashtoreths,[a] and served the LORD only.

5 And Samuel said, "Gather all Israel to Mizpah, and I will pray to the LORD for you." 6 So they gathered together at Mizpah, drew water, and poured *it* out before the LORD. And they fasted that day, and said there, "We have sinned against the LORD." And Samuel judged the children of Israel at Mizpah.

7 Now when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel had gathered together at Mizpah, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the children of Israel heard *of it,* they were afraid of the Philistines. 8 So the children of Israel said to Samuel, "Do not cease to cry out to the LORD our God for us, that He may save us from the hand of the Philistines."

9 And Samuel took a suckling lamb and offered *it as* a whole burnt offering to the LORD. Then Samuel cried out to the LORD for Israel, and the LORD answered him. 10 Now as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel. But the LORD thundered with a loud thunder upon the Philistines that day, and so confused them that they were overcome before Israel. 11 And the men of Israel went out of Mizpah and pursued the Philistines, and drove them back as far as below Beth Car. 12 Then Samuel took a stone and set *it* up between Mizpah and Shen, and called its name Ebenezer,[a] saying, "Thus far the LORD has helped us."

13 So the Philistines were subdued, and they did not come anymore into the territory of Israel. And the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all

the days of Samuel. [14]Then the cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron to Gath; and Israel recovered its territory from the hands of the Philistines. Also there was peace between Israel and the Amorites.

[15]And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. [16]He went from year to year on a circuit to Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah, and judged Israel in all those places. [17]But he always returned to Ramah, for his home *was* there. There he judged Israel, and there he built an altar to the LORD.

## ISRAEL DEMANDS A KING

**8** Now it came to pass when Samuel was old that he made his sons judges
over Israel. 2The name of his firstborn was Joel, and the name of his
second, Abijah; *they were* judges in Beersheba. 3But his sons did not walk in
his ways; they turned aside after dishonest gain, took bribes, and perverted
justice.

4Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at
Ramah, 5and said to him, “Look, you are old, and your sons do not walk in
your ways. Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.”

6But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, “Give us a king to judge
us.” So Samuel prayed to the LORD. 7And the LORD said to Samuel, “Heed
the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected
you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them. 8According
to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up
out of Egypt, even to this day-with which they have forsaken Me and served
other gods-so they are doing to you also. 9Now therefore, heed their voice.
However, you shall solemnly forewarn them, and show them the behavior of
the king who will reign over them.”

10So Samuel told all the words of the LORD to the people who asked him
for a king. 11And he said, “This will be the behavior of the king who will
reign over you: He will take your sons and appoint *them* for his own chariots
and *to be* his horsemen, and *some* will run before his chariots. 12He will
appoint captains over his thousands and captains over his fifties, *will set some*
to plow his ground and reap his harvest, and *some* to make his weapons of
war and equipment for his chariots. 13He will take your daughters *to be*
perfumers, cooks, and bakers. 14And he will take the best of your fields, your
vineyards, and your olive groves, and give *them* to his servants. 15He will
take a tenth of your grain and your vintage, and give it to his officers and
servants. 16And he will take your male servants, your female servants, your
finest young men,[a] and your donkeys, and put *them* to his work. 17He will
take a tenth of your sheep. And you will be his servants. 18And you will cry
out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves,

and the LORD will not hear you in that day."

19 Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they
said, "No, but we will have a king over us, 20 that we also may be like all the
nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our
battles."

21 And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he repeated them in
the hearing of the LORD. 22 So the LORD said to Samuel, "Heed their voice,
and make them a king."

And Samuel said to the men of Israel, "Every man go to his city."

**SOUL NOTE**

**Copycat** *(8:22)* God had been Israel's sovereign leader, but the people wanted a human king, refusing to heed Samuel's warnings (8:10-22). So God told Samuel to do as they asked. The people desired a king because they wanted to be like other nations (8:5, 20). God had brought the Israelites into their land so they would be distinct from those nations, so this was a step in the wrong direction. To compromise our faith by desiring to be like the world is to lose our distinctness as God's people. **Topic: Attitudes**

**SAUL CHOSEN TO BE KING**

**9** There was a man of Benjamin whose name *was* Kish the son of Abiel, the
son of Zeror, the son of Bechorath, the son of Aphiah, a Benjamite, a
mighty man of power. 2And he had a choice and handsome son whose name
*was* Saul. *There was* not a more handsome person than he among the children
of Israel. From his shoulders upward *he was* taller than any of the people.

3Now the donkeys of Kish, Saul's father, were lost. And Kish said to his
son Saul, "Please take one of the servants with you, and arise, go and look for
the donkeys." 4So he passed through the mountains of Ephraim and through
the land of Shalisha, but they did not find *them.* Then they passed through the
land of Shaalim, and *they were* not *there.* Then he passed through the land of
the Benjamites, but they did not find *them.*

5When they had come to the land of Zuph, Saul said to his servant who
*was* with him, "Come, let us return, lest my father cease *caring* about the
donkeys and become worried about us."

6And he said to him, "Look now, *there is* in this city a man of God, and *he
is* an honorable man; all that he says surely comes to pass. So let us go there;
perhaps he can show us the way that we should go."

7Then Saul said to his servant, "But look, *if* we go, what shall we bring the
man? For the bread in our vessels is all gone, and *there is* no present to bring
to the man of God. What do we have?"

8And the servant answered Saul again and said, "Look, I have here at hand
one-fourth of a shekel of silver. I will give *that* to the man of God, to tell us
our way." 9(Formerly in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, he spoke
thus: "Come, let us go to the seer"; for *he who is* now *called* a prophet was
formerly called a seer.)

10Then Saul said to his servant, "Well said; come, let us go." So they went
to the city where the man of God *was.*

11As they went up the hill to the city, they met some young women going
out to draw water, and said to them, "Is the seer here?"

12And they answered them and said, "Yes, there he is, just ahead of you.

Hurry now; for today he came to this city, because there is a sacrifice of the people today on the high place. [13]As soon as you come into the city, you will surely find him before he goes up to the high place to eat. For the people will not eat until he comes, because he must bless the sacrifice; afterward those who are invited will eat. Now therefore, go up, for about this time you will find him." [14]So they went up to the city. As they were coming into the city, there was Samuel, coming out toward them on his way up to the high place.

[15]Now the LORD had told Samuel in his ear the day before Saul came, saying, [16]"Tomorrow about this time I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him commander over My people Israel, that he may save My people from the hand of the Philistines; for I have looked upon My people, because their cry has come to Me."

[17]So when Samuel saw Saul, the LORD said to him, "There he is, the man of whom I spoke to you. This one shall reign over My people." [18]Then Saul drew near to Samuel in the gate, and said, "Please tell me, where *is* the seer's house?"

[19]Samuel answered Saul and said, "I *am* the seer. Go up before me to the high place, for you shall eat with me today; and tomorrow I will let you go and will tell you all that *is* in your heart. [20]But as for your donkeys that were lost three days ago, do not be anxious about them, for they have been found. And on whom *is* all the desire of Israel? *Is it* not on you and on all your father's house?"

[21]And Saul answered and said, "*Am* I not a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel, and my family the least of all the families of the tribe[a] of Benjamin? Why then do you speak like this to me?"

[22]Now Samuel took Saul and his servant and brought them into the hall, and had them sit in the place of honor among those who were invited; there *were* about thirty persons. [23]And Samuel said to the cook, "Bring the portion which I gave you, of which I said to you, 'Set it apart.' " [24]So the cook took up the thigh with its upper part and set *it* before Saul. And *Samuel* said, "Here it is, what was kept back. *It* was set apart for you. Eat; for until this time it has been kept for you, since I said I invited the people." So Saul ate with Samuel that day.

25 When they had come down from the high place into the city, *Samuel* spoke with Saul on the top of the house.[a] 26 They arose early; and it was about the dawning of the day that Samuel called to Saul on the top of the house, saying, “Get up, that I may send you on your way.” And Saul arose, and both of them went outside, he and Samuel.

**SAUL ANOINTED KING**

27 As they were going down to the outskirts of the city, Samuel said to Saul, “Tell the servant to go on ahead of us.” And he went on. “But you stand here awhile, that I may announce to you the word of God.”

**10** Then Samuel took a flask of oil and poured *it* on his head, and kissed
him and said: "*Is it* not because the LORD has anointed you commander
over His inheritance? [a] 2When you have departed from me today, you will
find two men by Rachel's tomb in the territory of Benjamin at Zelzah; and
they will say to you, 'The donkeys which you went to look for have been
found. And now your father has ceased caring about the donkeys and is
worrying about you, saying, "What shall I do about my son?" ' 3Then you
shall go on forward from there and come to the terebinth tree of Tabor. There
three men going up to God at Bethel will meet you, one carrying three young
goats, another carrying three loaves of bread, and another carrying a skin of
wine. 4And they will greet you and give you two *loaves* of bread, which you
shall receive from their hands. 5After that you shall come to the hill of God
where the Philistine garrison *is.* And it will happen, when you have come
there to the city, that you will meet a group of prophets coming down from
the high place with a stringed instrument, a tambourine, a flute, and a harp
before them; and they will be prophesying. 6Then the Spirit of the LORD will
come upon you, and you will prophesy with them and be turned into another
man. 7And let it be, when these signs come to you, *that* you do as the
occasion demands; for God *is* with you. 8You shall go down before me to
Gilgal; and surely I will come down to you to offer burnt offerings *and* make
sacrifices of peace offerings. Seven days you shall wait, till I come to you
and show you what you should do."

9So it was, when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, that God gave
him another heart; and all those signs came to pass that day. 10When they
came there to the hill, there was a group of prophets to meet him; then the
Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them. 11And it
happened, when all who knew him formerly saw that he indeed prophesied
among the prophets, that the people said to one another, "What *is* this *that*
has come upon the son of Kish? *Is* Saul also among the prophets?" 12Then a
man from there answered and said, "But who *is* their father?" Therefore it
became a proverb: "*Is* Saul also among the prophets?" 13And when he had
finished prophesying, he went to the high place.

14Then Saul's uncle said to him and his servant, "Where did you go?"

So he said, "To look for the donkeys. When we saw that *they were*

nowhere *to be found,* we went to Samuel."

15 And Saul's uncle said, "Tell me, please, what Samuel said to you."

16 So Saul said to his uncle, "He told us plainly that the donkeys had been found." But about the matter of the kingdom, he did not tell him what Samuel had said.

**SAUL PROCLAIMED KING**

17 Then Samuel called the people together to the LORD at Mizpah, 18 and said to the children of Israel, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians *and* from the hand of all kingdoms and from those who oppressed you.' 19 But you have today rejected your God, who Himself saved you from all your adversities and your tribulations; and you have said to Him, 'No, set a king over us!' Now therefore, present yourselves before the LORD by your tribes and by your clans."[a]

20 And when Samuel had caused all the tribes of Israel to come near, the tribe of Benjamin was chosen. 21 When he had caused the tribe of Benjamin to come near by their families, the family of Matri was chosen. And Saul the son of Kish was chosen. But when they sought him, he could not be found. 22 Therefore they inquired of the LORD further, "Has the man come here yet?"

And the LORD answered, "There he is, hidden among the equipment."

23 So they ran and brought him from there; and when he stood among the people, he was taller than any of the people from his shoulders upward. 24 And Samuel said to all the people, "Do you see him whom the LORD has chosen, that *there is* no one like him among all the people?"

So all the people shouted and said, "Long live the king!"

25 Then Samuel explained to the people the behavior of royalty, and wrote *it* in a book and laid *it* up before the LORD. And Samuel sent all the people away, every man to his house. 26 And Saul also went home to Gibeah; and valiant *men* went with him, whose hearts God had touched. 27 But some rebels said, "How can this man save us?" So they despised him, and brought him no presents. But he held his peace.

## SOUL NOTE

**Insecure and Afraid** *(10:22)* The soon-to-be-crowned king of Israel was “hidden among the equipment.” God had chosen Saul, but apparently Saul was insecure and afraid. Moses too had been insecure about his calling, begging God to send someone else (Ex. 4:13). When God calls someone to a task, He promises to be with them and to accomplish His work through them. The job may be difficult, but God will be there. Be secure in God’s call. **Topic: Insecurity**

**SAUL SAVES JABESH GILEAD**

**11** Then Nahash the Ammonite came up and encamped against Jabesh Gilead; and all the men of Jabesh said to Nahash, “Make a covenant with us, and we will serve you.”

2 And Nahash the Ammonite answered them, “On this *condition* I will make *a covenant* with you, that I may put out all your right eyes, and bring reproach on all Israel.”

3 Then the elders of Jabesh said to him, “Hold off for seven days, that we may send messengers to all the territory of Israel. And then, if *there is* no one to save us, we will come out to you.”

4 So the messengers came to Gibeah of Saul and told the news in the hearing of the people. And all the people lifted up their voices and wept. 5 Now there was Saul, coming behind the herd from the field; and Saul said, “What *troubles* the people, that they weep?” And they told him the words of the men of Jabesh. 6 Then the Spirit of God came upon Saul when he heard this news, and his anger was greatly aroused. 7 So he took a yoke of oxen and cut them in pieces, and sent *them* throughout all the territory of Israel by the hands of messengers, saying, “Whoever does not go out with Saul and Samuel to battle, so it shall be done to his oxen.”

And the fear of the LORD fell on the people, and they came out with one consent. 8 When he numbered them in Bezek, the children of Israel were three hundred thousand, and the men of Judah thirty thousand. 9 And they said to the messengers who came, “Thus you shall say to the men of Jabesh Gilead: ‘Tomorrow, by *the time* the sun is hot, you shall have help.’ ” Then the messengers came and reported *it* to the men of Jabesh, and they were glad. 10 Therefore the men of Jabesh said, “Tomorrow we will come out to you, and you may do with us whatever seems good to you.”

11 So it was, on the next day, that Saul put the people in three companies; and they came into the midst of the camp in the morning watch, and killed Ammonites until the heat of the day. And it happened that those who survived were scattered, so that no two of them were left together.

12 Then the people said to Samuel, “Who *is* he who said, ‘Shall Saul reign

over us?’ Bring the men, that we may put them to death.”

13 But Saul said, “Not a man shall be put to death this day, for today the LORD has accomplished salvation in Israel.”

14 Then Samuel said to the people, “Come, let us go to Gilgal and renew the kingdom there.” 15 So all the people went to Gilgal, and there they made Saul king before the LORD in Gilgal. There they made sacrifices of peace offerings before the LORD, and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly.

## SAMUEL'S ADDRESS AT SAUL'S CORONATION

**12** Now Samuel said to all Israel: "Indeed I have heeded your voice in all
that you said to me, and have made a king over you. 2And now here is
the king, walking before you; and I am old and grayheaded, and look, my
sons *are* with you. I have walked before you from my childhood to this day.
3Here I am. Witness against me before the LORD and before His anointed:
Whose ox have I taken, or whose donkey have I taken, or whom have I
cheated? Whom have I oppressed, or from whose hand have I received *any*
bribe with which to blind my eyes? I will restore *it* to you."

4And they said, "You have not cheated us or oppressed us, nor have you
taken anything from any man's hand."

5Then he said to them, "The LORD *is* witness against you, and His anointed
*is* witness this day, that you have not found anything in my hand."

And they answered, "*He is* witness."

6Then Samuel said to the people, "*It is* the LORD who raised up Moses and
Aaron, and who brought your fathers up from the land of Egypt. 7Now
therefore, stand still, that I may reason with you before the LORD concerning
all the righteous acts of the LORD which He did to you and your fathers:
8When Jacob had gone into Egypt,[a] and your fathers cried out to the LORD,
then the LORD sent Moses and Aaron, who brought your fathers out of Egypt
and made them dwell in this place. 9And when they forgot the LORD their
God, He sold them into the hand of Sisera, commander of the army of Hazor,
into the hand of the Philistines, and into the hand of the king of Moab; and
they fought against them. 10Then they cried out to the LORD, and said, 'We
have sinned, because we have forsaken the LORD and served the Baals and
Ashtoreths;[a] but now deliver us from the hand of our enemies, and we will
serve You.' 11And the LORD sent Jerubbaal,[a] Bedan,[b] Jephthah, and Samuel,[c]
and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side; and you
dwelt in safety. 12And when you saw that Nahash king of the Ammonites
came against you, you said to me, 'No, but a king shall reign over us,' when
the LORD your God *was* your king.

13"Now therefore, here is the king whom you have chosen *and* whom you

have desired. And take note, the LORD has set a king over you. [14]If you fear the LORD and serve Him and obey His voice, and do not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then both you and the king who reigns over you will continue following the LORD your God. [15]However, if you do not obey the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then the hand of the LORD will be against you, as *it was* against your fathers.

[16]"Now therefore, stand and see this great thing which the LORD will do before your eyes: [17]*Is* today not the wheat harvest? I will call to the LORD, and He will send thunder and rain, that you may perceive and see that your wickedness *is* great, which you have done in the sight of the LORD, in asking a king for yourselves."

[18]So Samuel called to the LORD, and the LORD sent thunder and rain that day; and all the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel.

[19]And all the people said to Samuel, "Pray for your servants to the LORD your God, that we may not die; for we have added to all our sins the evil of asking a king for ourselves."

[20]Then Samuel said to the people, "Do not fear. You have done all this wickedness; yet do not turn aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart. [21]And do not turn aside; for *then you would go* after empty things which cannot profit or deliver, for they *are* nothing. [22]For the LORD will not forsake His people, for His great name's sake, because it has pleased the LORD to make you His people. [23]Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you; but I will teach you the good and the right way. [24]Only fear the LORD, and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider what great things He has done for you. [25]But if you still do wickedly, you shall be swept away, both you and your king."

**SOUL NOTE**

**Keep on Praying** *(12:23)* The prophet Samuel was heartbroken that the Israelites desired a king. But God told Samuel to do as they asked (8:6, 7). Despite his disappointment, Samuel stated that he would not "sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray" for them (12:23). Loved ones may make choices with which we disagree. Like Samuel, we should be committed to continuing to pray for them. Persevering in prayer is our responsibility and should be our commitment. **Topic: Prayer**

## SAUL'S UNLAWFUL SACRIFICE

**13** Saul reigned one year; and when he had reigned two years over Israel,[a]
2 Saul chose for himself three thousand *men* of Israel. Two thousand
were with Saul in Michmash and in the mountains of Bethel, and a thousand
were with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin. The rest of the people he sent
away, every man to his tent.

3 And Jonathan attacked the garrison of the Philistines that *was* in Geba,
and the Philistines heard *of it.* Then Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the
land, saying, "Let the Hebrews hear!" 4 Now all Israel heard it said *that* Saul
had attacked a garrison of the Philistines, and *that* Israel had also become an
abomination to the Philistines. And the people were called together to Saul at
Gilgal.

5 Then the Philistines gathered together to fight with Israel, thirty[a] thousand
chariots and six thousand horsemen, and people as the sand which *is* on the
seashore in multitude. And they came up and encamped in Mich-mash, to the
east of Beth Aven. 6 When the men of Israel saw that they were in danger (for
the people were distressed), then the people hid in caves, in thickets, in rocks,
in holes, and in pits. 7 And *some of* the Hebrews crossed over the Jordan to the
land of Gad and Gilead.

As for Saul, he *was* still in Gilgal, and all the people followed him
trembling. 8 Then he waited seven days, according to the time set by Samuel.
But Samuel did not come to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him.
9 So Saul said, "Bring a burnt offering and peace offerings here to me." And
he offered the burnt offering. 10 Now it happened, as soon as he had finished
presenting the burnt offering, that Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet
him, that he might greet him.

11 And Samuel said, "What have you done?"

Saul said, "When I saw that the people were scattered from me, and *that*
you did not come within the days appointed, and *that* the Philistines gathered
together at Michmash, 12 then I said, 'The Philistines will now come down on
me at Gilgal, and I have not made supplication to the LORD.' Therefore I felt
compelled, and offered a burnt offering."

13 And Samuel said to Saul, “You have done foolishly. You have not kept
the commandment of the LORD your God, which He commanded you. For
now the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever.
14 But now your kingdom shall not continue. The LORD has sought for
Himself a man after His own heart, and the LORD has commanded him *to be*
commander over His people, because you have not kept what the LORD
commanded you.”

15 Then Samuel arose and went up from Gil-gal to Gibeah of Benjamin.[a]
And Saul numbered the people present with him, about six hundred men.

**NO WEAPONS FOR THE ARMY**

16 Saul, Jonathan his son, and the people present with them remained in
Gibeah of Benjamin. But the Philistines encamped in Michmash. 17 Then
raiders came out of the camp of the Philistines in three companies. One
company turned onto the road to Ophrah, to the land of Shual, 18 another
company turned to the road *to* Beth Horon, and another company turned *to*
the road of the border that overlooks the Valley of Zeboim toward the
wilderness.

19 Now there was no blacksmith to be found throughout all the land of
Israel, for the Philistines said, “Lest the Hebrews make swords or spears.”
20 But all the Israelites would go down to the Philistines to sharpen each
man’s plowshare, his mattock, his ax, and his sickle; 21 and the charge for a
sharpening was a pim[a] for the plowshares, the mattocks, the forks, and the
axes, and to set the points of the goads. 22 So it came about, on the day of
battle, that there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the
people who *were* with Saul and Jonathan. But they were found with Saul and
Jonathan his son.

23 And the garrison of the Philistines went out to the pass of Michmash.

## SOUL NOTE

**After God's Heart** *(13:14)* Samuel had told Saul to wait until he arrived at Gilgal to offer the sacrifices (10:8). When Samuel did not arrive soon enough, however, Saul decided to offer the sacrifice himself. When Samuel arrived, Saul had plenty of excuses, but, in reality, this new king had "not kept the commandment of the LORD" (13:13). God rejected Saul and promised to give Israel's leadership to "a man after His own heart" (13:14). To be successful for God, we must have hearts for God-hearts that have been changed by the power of an intimate relationship with Him. **Topic: Knowing God**

## JONATHAN DEFEATS THE PHILISTINES

**14** Now it happened one day that Jonathan the son of Saul said to the young
man who bore his armor, “Come, let us go over to the Philistines’
garrison that *is* on the other side.” But he did not tell his father. 2And Saul
was sitting in the outskirts of Gibeah under a pomegranate tree which *is* in
Migron. The people who *were* with him *were* about six hundred men. 3Ahijah
the son of Ahitub, Ichabod’s brother, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eli, the
LORD’s priest in Shiloh, was wearing an ephod. But the people did not know
that Jonathan had gone.

4Between the passes, by which Jonathan sought to go over to the
Philistines’ garrison, *there was* a sharp rock on one side and a sharp rock on
the other side. And the name of one *was* Bozez, and the name of the other
Seneh. 5The front of one faced northward opposite Michmash, and the other
southward opposite Gibeah.

6Then Jonathan said to the young man who bore his armor, “Come, let us
go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised; it may be that the LORD will
work for us. For nothing restrains the LORD from saving by many or by few.”

7So his armorbearer said to him, “Do all that is in your heart. Go then; here
I am with you, according to your heart.”

8Then Jonathan said, “Very well, let us cross over to *these* men, and we
will show ourselves to them. 9If they say thus to us, ‘Wait until we come to
you,’ then we will stand still in our place and not go up to them. 10But if they
say thus, ‘Come up to us,’ then we will go up. For the LORD has delivered
them into our hand, and this *will be* a sign to us.”

11So both of them showed themselves to the garrison of the Philistines.
And the Philistines said, “Look, the Hebrews are coming out of the holes
where they have hidden.” 12Then the men of the garrison called to Jonathan
and his armorbearer, and said, “Come up to us, and we will show you
something.”

Jonathan said to his armorbearer, “Come up after me, for the LORD has
delivered them into the hand of Israel.” 13And Jonathan climbed up on his
hands and knees with his armorbearer after him; and they fell before

Jonathan. And as he came after him, his armorbearer killed them. [14]That first slaughter which Jonathan and his armorbearer made was about twenty men within about half an acre of land.[a]

[15]And there was trembling in the camp, in the field, and among all the people. The garrison and the raiders also trembled; and the earth quaked, so that it was a very great trembling. [16]Now the watchmen of Saul in Gibeah of Benjamin looked, and *there* was the multitude, melting away; and they went here and there. [17]Then Saul said to the people who *were* with him, "Now call the roll and see who has gone from us." And when they had called the roll, surprisingly, Jonathan and his armor-bearer *were* not *there.* [18]And Saul said to Ahijah, "Bring the ark[a] of God here" (for at that time the ark[b] of God was with the children of Israel). [19]Now it happened, while Saul talked to the priest, that the noise which *was* in the camp of the Philistines continued to increase; so Saul said to the priest, "Withdraw your hand." [20]Then Saul and all the people who *were* with him assembled, and they went to the battle; and indeed every man's sword was against his neighbor, *and there was* very great confusion. [21]Moreover the Hebrews *who* were with the Philistines before that time, who went up with them into the camp *from the* surrounding *country,* they also joined the Israelites who *were* with Saul and Jonathan. [22]Likewise all the men of Israel who had hidden in the mountains of Ephraim, *when* they heard that the Philistines fled, they also followed hard after them in the battle. [23]So the LORD saved Israel that day, and the battle shifted to Beth Aven.

**SAUL'S RASH OATH**

[24]And the men of Israel were distressed that day, for Saul had placed the people under oath, saying, "Cursed *is* the man who eats *any* food until evening, before I have taken vengeance on my enemies." So none of the people tasted food. [25]Now all *the people* of the land came to a forest; and there was honey on the ground. [26]And when the people had come into the woods, there was the honey, dripping; but no one put his hand to his mouth, for the people feared the oath. [27]But Jonathan had not heard his father charge the people with the oath; therefore he stretched out the end of the rod that *was* in his hand and dipped it in a honeycomb, and put his hand to his mouth; and his countenance brightened. [28]Then one of the people said, "Your father

strictly charged the people with an oath, saying, ‘Cursed *is* the man who eats food this day.’ ” And the people were faint.

29 But Jonathan said, “My father has troubled the land. Look now, how my countenance has brightened because I tasted a little of this honey. 30 How much better if the people had eaten freely today of the spoil of their enemies which they found! For now would there not have been a much greater slaughter among the Philistines?”

31 Now they had driven back the Philistines that day from Michmash to Aijalon. So the people were very faint. 32 And the people rushed on the spoil, and took sheep, oxen, and calves, and slaughtered *them* on the ground; and the people ate *them* with the blood. 33 Then they told Saul, saying, “Look, the people are sinning against the LORD by eating with the blood!”

So he said, “You have dealt treacherously; roll a large stone to me this day.” 34 Then Saul said, “Disperse yourselves among the people, and say to them, ‘Bring me here every man’s ox and every man’s sheep, slaughter *them* here, and eat; and do not sin against the LORD by eating with the blood.’ ” So every one of the people brought his ox with him that night, and slaughtered *it* there. 35 Then Saul built an altar to the LORD. This was the first altar that he built to the LORD.

36 Now Saul said, “Let us go down after the Philistines by night, and plunder them until the morning light; and let us not leave a man of them.”

And they said, “Do whatever seems good to you.”

Then the priest said, “Let us draw near to God here.”

37 So Saul asked counsel of God, “Shall I go down after the Philistines? Will You deliver them into the hand of Israel?” But He did not answer him that day. 38 And Saul said, “Come over here, all you chiefs of the people, and know and see what this sin was today. 39 For *as* the LORD lives, who saves Israel, though it be in Jonathan my son, he shall surely die.” But not a man among all the people answered him. 40 Then he said to all Israel, “You be on one side, and my son Jonathan and I will be on the other side.”

And the people said to Saul, “Do what seems good to you.”

41 Therefore Saul said to the LORD God of Israel, “Give a perfect *lot*.”[a] So

Saul and Jonathan were taken, but the people escaped. [42]And Saul said, “Cast *lots* between my son Jonathan and me.” So Jonathan was taken. [43]Then Saul said to Jonathan, “Tell me what you have done.”

And Jonathan told him, and said, “I only tasted a little honey with the end of the rod that *was* in my hand. So now I must die!”

[44]Saul answered, “God do so and more also; for you shall surely die, Jonathan.”

[45]But the people said to Saul, “Shall Jonathan die, who has accomplished this great deliverance in Israel? Certainly not! *As* the LORD lives, not one hair of his head shall fall to the ground, for he has worked with God this day.” So the people rescued Jonathan, and he did not die.

[46]Then Saul returned from pursuing the Philistines, and the Philistines went to their own place.

**SAUL’S CONTINUING WARS**

[47]So Saul established his sovereignty over Israel, and fought against all his enemies on every side, against Moab, against the people of Ammon, against Edom, against the kings of Zobah, and against the Philistines. Wherever he turned, he harassed *them.*[a] [48]And he gathered an army and attacked the Amalekites, and delivered Israel from the hands of those who plundered them.

[49]The sons of Saul were Jonathan, Jishui,[a] and Malchishua. And the names of his two daughters *were these:* the name of the firstborn Merab, and the name of the younger Michal. [50]The name of Saul’s wife *was* Ahinoam the daughter of Ahimaaz. And the name of the commander of his army *was* Abner the son of Ner, Saul’s uncle. [51]Kish *was* the father of Saul, and Ner the father of Abner *was* the son of Abiel.

[52]Now there was fierce war with the Philistines all the days of Saul. And when Saul saw any strong man or any valiant man, he took him for himself.

## SAUL SPARES KING AGAG

**15** Samuel also said to Saul, “The LORD sent me to anoint you king over His
people, over Israel. Now therefore, heed the voice of the words of the
LORD. 2Thus says the LORD of hosts: ‘I will punish Amalek *for* what he did to
Israel, how he ambushed him on the way when he came up from Egypt.
3Now go and attack Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and do not
spare them. But kill both man and woman, infant and nursing child, ox and
sheep, camel and donkey.’ ”

4So Saul gathered the people together and numbered them in Telaim, two
hundred thousand foot soldiers and ten thousand men of Judah. 5And Saul
came to a city of Amalek, and lay in wait in the valley.

6Then Saul said to the Kenites, “Go, depart, get down from among the
Amalekites, lest I destroy you with them. For you showed kindness to all the
children of Israel when they came up out of Egypt.” So the Kenites departed
from among the Amalekites. 7And Saul attacked the Amalekites, from
Havilah all the way to Shur, which is east of Egypt. 8He also took Agag king
of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of
the sword. 9But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep,
the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all *that was* good, and were unwilling to
utterly destroy them. But everything despised and worthless, that they utterly
destroyed.

## SAUL REJECTED AS KING

10Now the word of the LORD came to Samuel, saying, 11“I greatly regret
that I have set up Saul *as* king, for he has turned back from following Me,
and has not performed My commandments.” And it grieved Samuel, and he
cried out to the LORD all night. 12So when Samuel rose early in the morning
to meet Saul, it was told Samuel, saying, “Saul went to Carmel, and indeed,
he set up a monument for himself; and he has gone on around, passed by, and
gone down to Gilgal.” 13Then Samuel went to Saul, and Saul said to him,
“Blessed *are* you of the LORD! I have performed the commandment of the
LORD.”

14 But Samuel said, “What then *is* this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and
the lowing of the oxen which I hear?”

15 And Saul said, “They have brought them from the Amalekites; for the
people spared the best of the sheep and the oxen, to sacrifice to the LORD
your God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed.”

16 Then Samuel said to Saul, “Be quiet! And I will tell you what the LORD
said to me last night.”

And he said to him, “Speak on.”

17 So Samuel said, “When you *were* little in your own eyes, *were* you not
head of the tribes of Israel? And did not the LORD anoint you king over
Israel? 18 Now the LORD sent you on a mission, and said, ‘Go, and utterly
destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are
consumed.’ 19 Why then did you not obey the voice of the LORD? Why did
you swoop down on the spoil, and do evil in the sight of the LORD?”

20 And Saul said to Samuel, “But I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and
gone on the mission on which the LORD sent me, and brought back Agag king
of Amalek; I have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. 21 But the people took of
the plunder, sheep and oxen, the best of the things which should have been
utterly destroyed, to sacrifice to the LORD your God in Gilgal.”

22 So Samuel said:

“Has the LORD *as great* delight in burnt
offerings and sacrifices,
As in obeying the voice of the LORD?
Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,
*And* to heed than the fat of rams.
23 For rebellion *is as* the sin of witchcraft,
And stubbornness *is as* iniquity and idolatry.
Because you have rejected the word of the LORD,
He also has rejected you from *being* king.”

24 Then Saul said to Samuel, “I have sinned, for I have transgressed the
commandment of the LORD and your words, because I feared the people and
obeyed their voice. 25 Now therefore, please pardon my sin, and return with

me, that I may worship the LORD.”

[26]But Samuel said to Saul, “I will not return with you, for you have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you from being king over Israel.”

[27]And as Samuel turned around to go away, *Saul* seized the edge of his robe, and it tore. [28]So Samuel said to him, “The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today, and has given it to a neighbor of yours, *who is* better than you. [29]And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor relent. For He *is* not a man, that He should relent.”

[30]Then he said, “I have sinned; *yet* honor me now, please, before the elders of my people and before Israel, and return with me, that I may worship the LORD your God.” [31]So Samuel turned back after Saul, and Saul worshiped the LORD.

[32]Then Samuel said, “Bring Agag king of the Amalekites here to me.” So Agag came to him cautiously.

And Agag said, “Surely the bitterness of death is past.”

[33]But Samuel said, “As your sword has made women childless, so shall your mother be childless among women.” And Samuel hacked Agag in pieces before the LORD in Gilgal.

[34]Then Samuel went to Ramah, and Saul went up to his house at Gibeah of Saul. [35]And Samuel went no more to see Saul until the day of his death. Nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul, and the LORD regretted that He had made Saul king over Israel.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# SAUL’S DISOBEDIENCE

**(1 SAMUEL 15:17-23)**

“We want a king!” Years after settling in the Promised Land, the Israelites clamored for a ruler so they could be “like all the nations” (1 Sam. 8:5). They had been graciously chosen to be like no other nation, but they forgot that God was their only true king and protector. They also forgot specific warnings about the cost of kings, precautions that God had given them through Moses (Deut. 17:14-20).

The judge Samuel reluctantly anointed Saul as the first king of Israel. Saul was tall, handsome, and had the right reputation as a respected military leader. Unfortunately, Saul’s admirable qualities were overshadowed by a dark side that came to dominate his life. From the start of his reign, Saul demonstrated a tendency to cut corners, tell half-truths, justify bad behavior, and blame others for his own mistakes. He was determined to reign his own way, which often meant direct disobedience to God.

Saul also suffered from terrible bouts of depression, spirit oppression, and despair. David’s miraculous triumph over Goliath and the resulting praise of the people stirred in Saul feelings of fear and jealousy. He hated David as a possible rival for the throne. He overlooked his own failures and allowed murderous intentions toward David to take root in his soul. Obsessive hatred poisoned and ruled Saul’s life until the time of his death.

Saul repeatedly disobeyed God’s directions. He tried to cover up his willfulness before God. Samuel confronted him each time with the truth that it is always better to obey God than to offer sacrifices. Saul thought he could replace obedience with appearance. He chose his own way (even witchcraft), rather than the way of the Lord. His ways seemed right to him, but they led to death.

The lessons from Saul’s life include the truth that there is no effective substitute for obedience to God. If our way isn’t God’s way, it’s the

wrong way.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Obedience. See also the key passage note at 1 Samuel 15:22.

**KEY PASSAGE**

## BETTER THAN SACRIFICE

## (15:22)

A form of this theme occurs in several places in the Bible: "To obey is better than sacrifice" (see also Ps. 40:6-8; 51:16, 17; Prov. 21:3; Is. 1:11-17; Jer. 7:21-23; Hos. 6:6; Mic. 6:6-8; Matt. 12:7; Mark 12:33; Heb. 10:8, 9). Clearly this is an important concept for God's people.

Saul had been told to wait for Samuel so that Samuel could offer the sacrifice. Saul, however, fearing the enemy, rushed to perform the sacrifice, thinking that it would magically provide protection. In this act, Saul disobeyed Samuel, as well as God's laws regarding the offering of sacrifices (the king was not to do it). God doesn't perform for people because of a ritual sacrifice or any other religious act; He acts on behalf of His obedient people. God wants obedience that flows out of love for Him.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Obedience. See also the personality profile of Saul's Disobedience.

**DAVID ANOINTED KING**

**16** Now the LORD said to Samuel, “How long will you mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? Fill your horn with oil, and go; I am sending you to Jesse the Bethlehemite. For I have provided Myself a king among his sons.”

> “The LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”
> 1 SAMUEL 16:7

2 And Samuel said, “How can I go? If Saul hears *it*, he will kill me.”

But the LORD said, “Take a heifer with you, and say, ‘I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.’ 3 Then invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do; you shall anoint for Me the one I name to you.”

4 So Samuel did what the LORD said, and went to Bethlehem. And the elders of the town trembled at his coming, and said, “Do you come peaceably?”

5 And he said, “Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. Sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice.” Then he consecrated Jesse and his sons, and invited them to the sacrifice.

6 So it was, when they came, that he looked at Eliab and said, “Surely the LORD’s anointed *is* before Him!”

7 But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For *the LORD does* not *see* as man sees;[a] for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”

8 So Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, “Neither has the LORD chosen this one.” 9 Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, “Neither has the LORD chosen this one.” 10 Thus Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. And Samuel said to Jesse, “The LORD has not chosen these.” 11 And Samuel said to Jesse, “Are all the young men here?” Then he said, “There remains yet the youngest, and there he is,

keeping the sheep.”

And Samuel said to Jesse, “Send and bring him. For we will not sit down[a] till he comes here.” 12So he sent and brought him in. Now he *was* ruddy, with bright eyes, and good-looking. And the LORD said, “Arise, anoint him; for this *is* the one!” 13Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel arose and went to Ramah.

**A DISTRESSING SPIRIT TROUBLES SAUL**

14But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and a distressing spirit from the LORD troubled him. 15And Saul’s servants said to him, “Surely, a distressing spirit from God is troubling you. 16Let our master now command your servants, *who are* before you, to seek out a man *who is* a skillful player on the harp. And it shall be that he will play it with his hand when the distressing spirit from God is upon you, and you shall be well.”

17So Saul said to his servants, “Provide me now a man who can play well, and bring *him* to me.”

18Then one of the servants answered and said, “Look, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, *who is* skillful in playing, a mighty man of valor, a man of war, prudent in speech, and a handsome person; and the LORD *is* with him.”

19Therefore Saul sent messengers to Jesse, and said, “Send me your son David, who *is* with the sheep.” 20And Jesse took a donkey *loaded with* bread, a skin of wine, and a young goat, and sent *them* by his son David to Saul. 21So David came to Saul and stood before him. And he loved him greatly, and he became his armorbearer. 22Then Saul sent to Jesse, saying, “Please let David stand before me, for he has found favor in my sight.” 23And so it was, whenever the spirit from God was upon Saul, that David would take a harp and play *it* with his hand. Then Saul would become refreshed and well, and the distressing spirit would depart from him.

**MENTAL ILLNESS: REDUCING SUFFERING IN THE CHURCH**

# PAUL MEIER, TIM CLINTON, & GEORGE OHLSCHLAGER

## (1 SAMUEL 16:14-23)

No one escapes periods of trouble in life. Everyone struggles with problems in life, such as periods of being down, struggles with grief, or handling relationship difficulties. But **N** what compels people to "go crazy," commit suicide, cut themselves deliberately, or hurt others mindlessly? What causes some to hear voices or have hallucinations without drugs? These unique maladies and extreme behaviors indicate deeper problems.

### THE REALITY OF MENTAL ILLNESS

Human suffering is ultimately tied to sin. Sometimes it is directly influenced by demonic activity (1 Sam. 26:14-23). Mental disorders also involve suffering that is sometimes related to or rooted in biological, genetic, and physiological problems. When mental illness interacts with sin problems, relationship problems, or other kinds of illness, a person, marriage, or family can become overwhelmed.

Studies of clinical disorders in the twentieth century have revealed patterns that manifest a more serious level of disorder. We have also developed more effective interventions that promise hope and healing.

The failure to understand and treat the multiple reasons that people suffer-including understanding the distinctions between sin, mental illness, and demonic influence-has significant consequences. Some people are just confessing sins when they should also be taking medicine. Others are blaming nonexistent illnesses when they should be confessing their sins. Demons are being cast out of schizophrenics who need medical treatment. People who need exorcism and relief from demons are put into mental hospitals and drugged into complacency.

## THE TREATMENT OF MENTAL ILLNESS

Misdiagnosis and improper treatment still remains all too common at the intersection of mental health and Christian ministry. Sometimes well-meaning Christians discourage those suffering mental illness from getting professional counseling or medical help. Far too many people in the church suffer needlessly because someone in a position of influence falsely believes that a “spiritual” solution alone is the answer to every problem. Instead, Christians must understand that physicians, balm, salve, and other medicines were used throughout the Scriptures. Just as a diabetic needs insulin to live, those with mental illness sometimes need medicine to correct their disordered brain chemistry.

In many cases, there is no one single cause for a problem, but the weight of multiple issues has added up to a personal or family crisis. Some cases *do* require medicine, counseling, and spiritual warfare because sin, illness, and demon oppression are all at issue. A comprehensive approach to Christian counseling treatment should use a collaborative team of specialists-doctors, psychologists, counselors, social workers, health educators, nutritionists, physical therapists, and others-to under stand and treat the many dimensions of the problem.

As a Christian psychiatrist who runs a nationwide network of clinics and as a medical doctor, I (Paul Meier) deal with these issues and questions on a daily basis. My interest and specialty is in the

biogenetic and physical bases of mental disorders. I treat patients who were born with high and low levels of crucial chemicals in the brain-what we call neurotransmitters-that are essential to the proper functioning of brain and body.

Low levels of serotonin, for example, cause a variety of depressive disorders or lifelong obsessive-compulsive traits. Patients with dopamine or GABA abnormalities often have high-energy manic episodes that involve paranoid delusions, feelings of grandeur and power, even hallucinations. Manic episodes are almost always controlled with GABA correcting medicines. The voices that often get attributed to demons nearly always disappear with the proper treatment of dopamine medicines. Auditory hallucinations, in other words, are rarely demonic, but are more a function of an inherited disorder that affects the auditory regions of the brain.

## WORKING TOGETHER TO HELP THOSEWHO SUFFER

Mental disorders are a significant issue in society and in the church. We believe that the church and the mental health professions-which for too long have been at odds with one another-must work together. We believe that the church, in fact, is anointed by God to be specially designed for the care and comfort of the mentally ill-a “spiritual hospital” for those who suffer this way.

We all face times when the wise counsel of our pastor, friend, colleague, or doctor is essential for our safety and well-being. A small but significant percentage of the populace-including the body of Christ-will suffer from the kinds of mental disorders that require the special knowledge and treatment of a psychiatrist and other specialized caregivers.

A Christian psychiatrist should understand and respect the spiritual as well as the emotional, relational, and physical realms of life, and should incorporate God’s truth about the totality of persons into their work. Christian counselors can help others deal with the thinking,

feeling, and behavioral effects of mental disorders, and should be a welcome part of the entire treatment team. Any kind of helping professional should be in close consultation with the patient's pastor. Our common goal is to help all sufferers free their souls and be able to grow up and mature in Christ.

The pastor is the one who maintains an ongoing relationship with the suffering church member, so he or she has a special role as the shepherd, acting as the "case manager." The pastor is usually best suited to assist the church member in using treatment and making the transition back into life in the church and the community.

The church is critical in the care and solace of those suffering with mental disorders. These people are very often isolated, fearful, confused, and in need of the unconditional love of Christians to repair and return to vital living.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of mental illness include:

- Psalm 34:18
- Proverbs 13:12
- Isaiah 40:27-31
- James 1:12-27

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on mental illness at Daniel 4:33. See also the personality profile of Nebuchadnezzar Nebuchadnezzar's Illness.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Distressed** *(16:14-23)* Saul displayed classic characteristics of mental disorder, including wide mood swings and fits of depression and anger. A person can develop such debilitating emotional symptoms for many reasons. In this case, Scripture indicates that "a distressing spirit from the LORD troubled" Saul (16:14). Saul's heart had turned from God, so God sovereignly permitted affliction by a spirit of distress-possibly a demonic influence-to occur. Not all mental disorders are a result of direct demonic influence, but like any sickness or disease, the battle for our minds is a result of the Fall and Satan's presence in this world. **Topic: Mental Illness**

**DAVID AND GOLIATH**

**17** Now the Philistines gathered their armies together to battle, and were gathered at Sochoh, which *belongs* to Judah; they encamped between Sochoh and Azekah, in Ephes Dammim. 2And Saul and the men of Israel were gathered together, and they encamped in the Valley of Elah, and drew up in battle array against the Philistines. 3The Philistines stood on a mountain on one side, and Israel stood on a mountain on the other side, with a valley between them.

4And a champion went out from the camp of the Philistines, named Goliath, from Gath, whose height *was* six cubits and a span. 5*He had* a bronze helmet on his head, and he *was* armed with a coat of mail, and the weight of the coat *was* five thousand shekels of bronze. 6And *he had* bronze armor on his legs and a bronze javelin between his shoulders. 7Now the staff of his spear *was* like a weaver's beam, and his iron spearhead *weighed* six hundred shekels; and a shield-bearer went before him. 8Then he stood and cried out to the armies of Israel, and said to them, "Why have you come out to line up for battle? *Am* I not a Philistine, and you the servants of Saul? Choose a man for yourselves, and let him come down to me. 9If he is able to fight with me and kill me, then we will be your servants. But if I prevail against him and kill him, then you shall be our servants and serve us." 10And the Philistine said, "I defy the armies of Israel this day; give me a man, that we may fight together." 11When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid.

12Now David *was* the son of that Ephrathite of Bethlehem Judah, whose name *was* Jesse, and who had eight sons. And the man was old, advanced *in years*, in the days of Saul. 13The three oldest sons of Jesse had gone to follow Saul to the battle. The names of his three sons who went to the battle *were* Eliab the firstborn, next to him Abinadab, and the third Shammah. 14David *was* the youngest. And the three oldest followed Saul. 15But David occasionally went and returned from Saul to feed his father's sheep at Bethlehem.

16And the Philistine drew near and presented himself forty days, morning

and evening.

17 Then Jesse said to his son David, “Take now for your brothers an ephah
of this dried *grain* and these ten loaves, and run to your brothers at the camp.
18 And carry these ten cheeses to the captain of *their* thousand, and see how
your brothers fare, and bring back news of them.” 19 Now Saul and they and
all the men of Israel *were* in the Valley of Elah, fighting with the Philistines.

20 So David rose early in the morning, left the sheep with a keeper, and
took *the things* and went as Jesse had commanded him. And he came to the
camp as the army was going out to the fight and shouting for the battle. 21 For
Israel and the Philistines had drawn up in battle array, army against army.
22 And David left his supplies in the hand of the supply keeper, ran to the
army, and came and greeted his brothers. 23 Then as he talked with them,
there was the champion, the Philistine of Gath, Goliath by name, coming up
from the armies of the Philistines; and he spoke according to the same words.
So David heard *them.* 24 And all the men of Israel, when they saw the man,
fled from him and were dreadfully afraid. 25 So the men of Israel said, “Have
you seen this man who has come up? Surely he has come up to defy Israel;
and it shall be *that* the man who kills him the king will enrich with great
riches, will give him his daughter, and give his father’s house exemption
*from taxes* in Israel.”

26 Then David spoke to the men who stood by him, saying, “What shall be
done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from
Israel? For who *is* this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the
armies of the living God?”

27 And the people answered him in this manner, saying, “So shall it be done
for the man who kills him.”

28 Now Eliab his oldest brother heard when he spoke to the men; and
Eliab’s anger was aroused against David, and he said, “Why did you come
down here? And with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness?
I know your pride and the insolence of your heart, for you have come down
to see the battle.”

29 And David said, “What have I done now? *Is there* not a cause?” 30 Then
he turned from him toward another and said the same thing; and these people

answered him as the first ones *did.*

31 Now when the words which David spoke were heard, they reported *them*
to Saul; and he sent for him. 32 Then David said to Saul, "Let no man's heart
fail because of him; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine."

33 And Saul said to David, "You are not able to go against this Philistine to
fight with him; for you *are* a youth, and he a man of war from his youth."

34 But David said to Saul, "Your servant used to keep his father's sheep,
and when a lion or a bear came and took a lamb out of the flock, 35 I went out
after it and struck it, and delivered *the lamb* from its mouth; and when it
arose against me, I caught *it* by its beard, and struck and killed it. 36 Your
servant has killed both lion and bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine will
be like one of them, seeing he has defied the armies of the living God."
37 Moreover David said, "The LORD, who delivered me from the paw of the
lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this
Philistine."

And Saul said to David, "Go, and the LORD be with you!"

38 So Saul clothed David with his armor, and he put a bronze helmet on his
head; he also clothed him with a coat of mail. 39 David fastened his sword to
his armor and tried to walk, for he had not tested *them.* And David said to
Saul, "I cannot walk with these, for I have not tested *them.*" So David took
them off.

40 Then he took his staff in his hand; and he chose for himself five smooth
stones from the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag, in a pouch which he
had, and his sling was in his hand. And he drew near to the Philistine. 41 So
the Philistine came, and began drawing near to David, and the man who bore
the shield *went* before him. 42 And when the Philistine looked about and saw
David, he disdained him; for he was *only* a youth, ruddy and good-looking.
43 So the Philistine said to David, "*Am* I a dog, that you come to me with
sticks?" And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. 44 And the Philistine
said to David, "Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air
and the beasts of the field!"

45 Then David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with a sword, with a

spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. [46]This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you and take your head from you. And this day I will give the carcasses of the camp of the Philistines to the birds of the air and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. [47]Then all this assembly shall know that the LORD does not save with sword and spear; for the battle *is* the LORD's, and He will give you into our hands."

[48]So it was, when the Philistine arose and came and drew near to meet David, that David hurried and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine. [49]Then David put his hand in his bag and took out a stone; and he slung *it* and struck the Philistine in his forehead, so that the stone sank into his forehead, and he fell on his face to the earth. [50]So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone, and struck the Philistine and killed him. But *there was* no sword in the hand of David. [51]Therefore David ran and stood over the Philistine, took his sword and drew it out of its sheath and killed him, and cut off his head with it.

And when the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled. [52]Now the men of Israel and Judah arose and shouted, and pursued the Philistines as far as the entrance of the valley[a] and to the gates of Ekron. And the wounded of the Philistines fell along the road to Shaaraim, even as far as Gath and Ekron. [53]Then the children of Israel returned from chasing the Philistines, and they plundered their tents. [54]And David took the head of the Philistine and brought it to Jerusalem, but he put his armor in his tent.

> "Then all this assembly shall know that the LORD does not save with sword and spear; for the battle is the LORD's, and He will give you into our hands."
> 1 SAMUEL 17:47

[55]When Saul saw David going out against the Philistine, he said to Ab-ner, the commander of the army, "Abner, whose son *is* this youth?"

And Abner said, "As your soul lives, O king, I do not know."

[56]So the king said, "Inquire whose son this young man *is*."

[57]Then, as David returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, Abner took him and brought him before Saul with the head of the Philistine in his hand.
[58]And Saul said to him, “Whose son *are* you, young man?”

So David answered, “*I am* the son of your servant Jesse the Bethlehemite.”

**SOUL NOTE**

**Secret Weapon** *(17:45)* Goliath of Gath was a champion, a warrior experienced at combat. Not only that, he was a giant of a man armed with giant weapons. Young David had only a sling and some small stones. But David had something that Goliath didn’t-faith in the living God. When David came at Goliath “in the name of the LORD of hosts,” there was no competition. With faith, we can do anything God calls us to do, even defeat the “giants” in our lives. **Topic: Faith**

**SAUL RESENTS DAVID**

**18** Now when he had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was
knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. 2Saul
took him that day, and would not let him go home to his father's house
anymore. 3Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him
as his own soul. 4And Jonathan took off the robe that *was* on him and gave it
to David, with his armor, even to his sword and his bow and his belt.

5So David went out wherever Saul sent him, *and* behaved wisely. And Saul
set him over the men of war, and he was accepted in the sight of all the
people and also in the sight of Saul's servants. 6Now it had happened as they
were coming *home,* when David was returning from the slaughter of the
Philistine, that the women had come out of all the cities of Israel, singing and
dancing, to meet King Saul, with tambourines, with joy, and with musical
instruments. 7So the women sang as they danced, and said:

"Saul has slain his thousands,
And David his ten thousands."

8Then Saul was very angry, and the saying displeased him; and he said,
"They have ascribed to David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed
*only* thousands. Now *what* more can he have but the kingdom?" 9So Saul
eyed David from that day forward.

10And it happened on the next day that the distressing spirit from God
came upon Saul, and he prophesied inside the house. So David played *music*
with his hand, as at other times; but *there was* a spear in Saul's hand. 11And
Saul cast the spear, for he said, "I will pin David to the wall!" But David
escaped his presence twice.

12Now Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with him, but had
departed from Saul. 13Therefore Saul removed him from his presence, and
made him his captain over a thousand; and he went out and came in before
the people. 14And David behaved wisely in all his ways, and the LORD *was*
with him. 15Therefore, when Saul saw that he behaved very wisely, he was
afraid of him. 16But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he went out

and came in before them.

**DAVID MARRIES MICHAL**

17 Then Saul said to David, “Here is my older daughter Merab; I will give
her to you as a wife. Only be valiant for me, and fight the LORD’s battles.”
For Saul thought, “Let my hand not be against him, but let the hand of the
Philistines be against him.”

18 So David said to Saul, “Who *am* I, and what *is* my life *or* my father’s
family in Israel, that I should be son-in-law to the king?” 19 But it happened at
the time when Merab, Saul’s daughter, should have been given to David, that
she was given to Adriel the Meholathite as a wife.

20 Now Michal, Saul’s daughter, loved David. And they told Saul, and the
thing pleased him. 21 So Saul said, “I will give her to him, that she may be a
snare to him, and that the hand of the Philistines may be against him.”
Therefore Saul said to David a second time, “You shall be my son-in-law
today.”

22 And Saul commanded his servants, “Communicate with David secretly,
and say, ‘Look, the king has delight in you, and all his servants love you.
Now therefore, become the king’s son-in-law.’ ”

23 So Saul’s servants spoke those words in the hearing of David. And David
said, “Does it seem to you *a* light *thing* to be a king’s son-in-law, seeing I *am*
a poor and lightly esteemed man?” 24 And the servants of Saul told him,
saying, “In this manner David spoke.”

25 Then Saul said, “Thus you shall say to David: ‘The king does not desire
any dowry but one hundred foreskins of the Philistines, to take vengeance on
the king’s enemies.’ ” But Saul thought to make David fall by the hand of the
Philistines. 26 So when his servants told David these words, it pleased David
well to become the king’s son-in-law. Now the days had not expired;
27 therefore David arose and went, he and his men, and killed two hundred
men of the Philistines. And David brought their foreskins, and they gave
them in full count to the king, that he might become the king’s son-in-law.
Then Saul gave him Michal his daughter as a wife.

28 Thus Saul saw and knew that the LORD *was* with David, and *that* Michal,

Saul’s daughter, loved him; [29]and Saul was still more afraid of David. So Saul became David’s enemy continually. [30]Then the princes of the Philistines went out *to war*. And so it was, whenever they went out, *that* David behaved more wisely than all the servants of Saul, so that his name became highly esteemed.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Green with Envy** *(18:8)* Saul became jealous of David’s victory over Goliath and the national attention that it received. The young warrior had upstaged the king. Saul’s jealousy led to anger, resentment, fear, and attempted murder (18:11). Like a seething cauldron ready to tip at any moment, uncontrolled jealousy can lead to destruction. We must take our jealousy to God, asking Him to help us appreciate others’ talents while showing us how best to use our own. **Topic: Jealousy**

**SAUL PERSECUTES DAVID**

**19** Now Saul spoke to Jonathan his son and to all his servants, that they should kill David; but Jonathan, Saul's son, delighted greatly in David.
2 So Jonathan told David, saying, "My father Saul seeks to kill you. Therefore please be on your guard until morning, and stay in a secret *place* and hide.
3 And I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where you *are,* and I will speak with my father about you. Then what I observe, I will tell you."

4 Thus Jonathan spoke well of David to Saul his father, and said to him, "Let not the king sin against his servant, against David, because he has not sinned against you, and because his works *have been* very good toward you.
5 For he took his life in his hands and killed the Philistine, and the LORD brought about a great deliverance for all Israel. You saw *it* and rejoiced. Why then will you sin against innocent blood, to kill David without a cause?"

6 So Saul heeded the voice of Jonathan, and Saul swore, "*As* the LORD lives, he shall not be killed." 7 Then Jonathan called David, and Jonathan told him all these things. So Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence as in times past.

8 And there was war again; and David went out and fought with the Philistines, and struck them with a mighty blow, and they fled from him.

9 Now the distressing spirit from the LORD came upon Saul as he sat in his house with his spear in his hand. And David was playing *music* with *his* hand. 10 Then Saul sought to pin David to the wall with the spear, but he slipped away from Saul's presence; and he drove the spear into the wall. So David fled and escaped that night.

11 Saul also sent messengers to David's house to watch him and to kill him in the morning. And Michal, David's wife, told him, saying, "If you do not save your life tonight, tomorrow you will be killed." 12 So Michal let David down through a window. And he went and fled and escaped. 13 And Michal took an image and laid *it* in the bed, put a cover of goats' *hair* for his head, and covered *it* with clothes. 14 So when Saul sent messengers to take David, she said, "He *is* sick."

15 Then Saul sent the messengers *back* to see David, saying, “Bring him up
to me in the bed, that I may kill him.” 16 And when the messengers had come
in, there was the image in the bed, with a cover of goats’ *hair* for his head.
17 Then Saul said to Michal, “Why have you deceived me like this, and sent
my enemy away, so that he has escaped?”

And Michal answered Saul, “He said to me, ‘Let me go! Why should I kill
you?’ ”

18 So David fled and escaped, and went to Samuel at Ramah, and told him
all that Saul had done to him. And he and Samuel went and stayed in Naioth.
19 Now it was told Saul, saying, “Take note, David *is* at Naioth in Ramah!”
20 Then Saul sent messengers to take David. And when they saw the group of
prophets prophesying, and Samuel standing *as* leader over them, the Spirit of
God came upon the messengers of Saul, and they also prophesied. 21 And
when Saul was told, he sent other messengers, and they prophesied likewise.
Then Saul sent messengers again the third time, and they prophesied also.
22 Then he also went to Ramah, and came to the great well that *is* at Sechu. So
he asked, and said, “Where *are* Samuel and David?”

And *someone* said, “Indeed *they are* at Naioth in Ramah.” 23 So he went
there to Naioth in Ramah. Then the Spirit of God was upon him also, and he
went on and prophesied until he came to Naioth in Ramah. 24 And he also
stripped off his clothes and prophesied before Samuel in like manner, and lay
down naked all that day and all that night. Therefore they say, “*Is* Saul also
among the prophets?”[a]

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# SAUL AND THE POISON OF BITTER FRUIT

**(1 SAMUEL 19)**

King Saul wasted his last years in hatred and anger. He sank deeper into darkness and tormented suffering as his battle-scarred body and soul yielded to age. Fears, jealousies, murderous thoughts, and violent rage consumed him without relief. He attempted to kill David, driving David to life as a fugitive and wasting kingdom resources trying to track down and eliminate him. Others also suffered. Saul unjustly accused the priests of Nob of conspiring with David, and he had 85 of them killed. Once the killing started in Nob, no one was spared-neither men, women, children, nor animals.

Saul's choices caused a tidal wave of evil to flood his soul. He lost all godliness or restraint. Even David's mercy in sparing Saul's life twice had no softening effect that lasted. His soul was hardened and unresponsive to any message from God. He collected a legacy of evil and bitterness.

Facing his final battle, Saul was terrified by the overwhelming might of the Philistines. Samuel was dead and God was silent. Desperate, Saul consulted a medium-an ancient psychic who practiced divination in direct violation of God's law. The message he received sealed his fate. During the battle, with defeat in sight, Saul fell on his own sword. Bitterness finally turned into self-destruction.

Saul's journey to his doom followed a well-traveled path. People continue to discover that resistance against God's Spirit gains strength with practice. Such lives even show up in the church. These people are bitter, angry, divisive, and dark in thought and deed. As David treated Saul with mercy and respect, so must we treat such people. They must be lovingly called to repentance. The church can speak truth to them while taking care not to join them on their bitter journey.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Bitterness. See also the key passage note at Hebrews 12:12-29.

**JONATHAN'S LOYALTY TO DAVID**

**20** Then David fled from Naioth in Ramah, and went and said to Jonathan, "What have I done? What *is* my iniquity, and what *is* my sin before your father, that he seeks my life?"

2So Jonathan said to him, "By no means! You shall not die! Indeed, my father will do nothing either great or small without first telling me. And why should my father hide this thing from me? It *is* not *so!*"

3Then David took an oath again, and said, "Your father certainly knows that I have found favor in your eyes, and he has said, 'Do not let Jonathan know this, lest he be grieved.' But truly, *as* the LORD lives and *as* your soul lives, *there is* but a step between me and death."

4So Jonathan said to David, "Whatever you yourself desire, I will do *it* for you."

5And David said to Jonathan, "Indeed tomorrow *is* the New Moon, and I should not fail to sit with the king to eat. But let me go, that I may hide in the field until the third *day* at evening. 6If your father misses me at all, then say, 'David earnestly asked *permission* of me that he might run over to Bethlehem, his city, for *there is* a yearly sacrifice there for all the family.' 7If he says thus: '*It is* well,' your servant will be safe. But if he is very angry, be sure that evil is determined by him. 8Therefore you shall deal kindly with your servant, for you have brought your servant into a covenant of the LORD with you. Nevertheless, if there is iniquity in me, kill me yourself, for why should you bring me to your father?"

9But Jonathan said, "Far be it from you! For if I knew certainly that evil was determined by my father to come upon you, then would I not tell you?"

10Then David said to Jonathan, "Who will tell me, or what *if* your father answers you roughly?"

11And Jonathan said to David, "Come, let us go out into the field." So both of them went out into the field. 12Then Jonathan said to David: "The LORD God of Israel *is witness!* When I have sounded out my father sometime tomorrow, *or* the third *day*, and indeed *there is* good toward David, and I do

not send to you and tell you, [13]may the LORD do so and much more to Jonathan. But if it pleases my father *to do* you evil, then I will report it to you and send you away, that you may go in safety. And the LORD be with you as He has been with my father. [14]And you shall not only show me the kindness of the LORD while I still live, that I may not die; [15]but you shall not cut off your kindness from my house forever, no, not when the LORD has cut off every one of the enemies of David from the face of the earth." [16]So Jonathan made *a covenant* with the house of David, *saying*, "Let the LORD require *it* at the hand of David's enemies."

[17]Now Jonathan again caused David to vow, because he loved him; for he loved him as he loved his own soul. [18]Then Jonathan said to David, "Tomorrow *is* the New Moon; and you will be missed, because your seat will be empty. [19]And *when* you have stayed three days, go down quickly and come to the place where you hid on the day of the deed; and remain by the stone Ezel. [20]Then I will shoot three arrows to the side, as though I shot at a target; [21]and there I will send a lad, *saying*, 'Go, find the arrows.' If I expressly say to the lad, 'Look, the arrows *are* on this side of you; get them and come'-then, as the LORD lives, *there is* safety for you and no harm. [22]But if I say thus to the young man, 'Look, the arrows *are* beyond you'-go your way, for the LORD has sent you away. [23]And as for the matter which you and I have spoken of, indeed the LORD *be* between you and me forever."

[24]Then David hid in the field. And when the New Moon had come, the king sat down to eat the feast. [25]Now the king sat on his seat, as at other times, on a seat by the wall. And Jonathan arose,[a] and Abner sat by Saul's side, but David's place was empty. [26]Nevertheless Saul did not say anything that day, for he thought, "Something has happened to him; he *is* unclean, surely he *is* unclean." [27]And it happened the next day, the second *day* of the month, that David's place was empty. And Saul said to Jonathan his son, "Why has the son of Jesse not come to eat, either yesterday or today?"

[28]So Jonathan answered Saul, "David earnestly asked *permission* of me *to go* to Bethlehem. [29]And he said, 'Please let me go, for our family has a sacrifice in the city, and my brother has commanded me *to be there.* And now, if I have found favor in your eyes, please let me get away and see my

brothers.’ Therefore he has not come to the king’s table.”

30Then Saul’s anger was aroused against Jonathan, and he said to him,
“You son of a perverse, rebellious *woman!* Do I not know that you have
chosen the son of Jesse to your own shame and to the shame of your mother’s
nakedness? 31For as long as the son of Jesse lives on the earth, you shall not
be established, nor your kingdom. Now therefore, send and bring him to me,
for he shall surely die.”

32And Jonathan answered Saul his father, and said to him, “Why should he
be killed? What has he done?” 33Then Saul cast a spear at him to kill him, by
which Jonathan knew that it was determined by his father to kill David.

34So Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger, and ate no food the
second day of the month, for he was grieved for David, because his father
had treated him shamefully.

35And so it was, in the morning, that Jonathan went out into the field at the
time appointed with David, and a little lad *was* with him. 36Then he said to
his lad, “Now run, find the arrows which I shoot.” As the lad ran, he shot an
arrow beyond him. 37When the lad had come to the place where the arrow
was which Jonathan had shot, Jonathan cried out after the lad and said, “*Is*
not the arrow beyond you?” 38And Jonathan cried out after the lad, “Make
haste, hurry, do not delay!” So Jonathan’s lad gathered up the arrows and
came back to his master. 39But the lad did not know anything. Only Jonathan
and David knew of the matter. 40Then Jonathan gave his weapons to his lad,
and said to him, “Go, carry *them* to the city.”

41As soon as the lad had gone, David arose from *a place* toward the south,
fell on his face to the ground, and bowed down three times. And they kissed
one another; and they wept together, but David more so. 42Then Jonathan
said to David, “Go in peace, since we have both sworn in the name of the
LORD, saying, ‘May the LORD be between you and me, and between your
descendants and my descendants, forever.’ ” So he arose and departed, and
Jonathan went into the city.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# DAVID AND JONATHAN-BEST OF FRIENDS

**(1 SAMUEL 20)**

David and Jonathan shared a rare friendship. Born out of youthful mutual admiration, their relationship stood the test of difficult decisions and conflicting loyalties. Jonathan, the king's son and future heir, befriended David, his father's champion. Both men demonstrated courage and fine leadership abilities. They came to trust one another with their lives.

Then came the conflict between Saul, the king, and David. Jonathan found himself caught between his father and his best friend. At first, he found it hard to accept his father's change of heart toward David. The temptation was to choose one over the other. Jonathan had a better plan. He chose the truth and faithfulness to God. He remained loyal to both his father and to David. He managed to keep them apart so he wouldn't have to take a side.

His wisdom earned him David's deep gratitude and Saul's resentment. To Jonathan's credit, he did not allow his father's attitude to drive him away. He died with his father in battle. Until then, it was apparent that Jonathan was never threatened by David's popularity. Whether or not he knew that Samuel had anointed David as the next king, Jonathan remained loyal. He displayed all the best character of a true friend.

Most of us desire to have a friend like Jonathan in our lives. We don't necessarily have control over that. But we can decide to be a friend to others like Jonathan. David and Jonathan were not in the same place, with the same choices. Jonathan made his relationship with David an area in which he practiced his faithfulness to God. Integrity, truth, intimacy, and loyalty characterized his side of the friendship. In what ways are you seeking to be a Jonathan in someone else's life?

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about relationships Building Good Relationships. See also the key passage note at Ephesians 4:31, 32.

## DAVID AND THE HOLY BREAD

**21** Now David came to Nob, to Ahimelech the priest. And Ahimelech was
afraid when he met David, and said to him, “Why *are* you alone, and no
one is with you?” 2So David said to Ahimelech the priest, “The king has
ordered me on some business, and said to me, ‘Do not let anyone know
anything about the business on which I send you, or what I have commanded
you.’ And I have directed *my* young men to such and such a place. 3Now
therefore, what have you on hand? Give *me* five *loaves of* bread in my hand,
or whatever can be found.”

4And the priest answered David and said, “*There is* no common bread on
hand; but there is holy bread, if the young men have at least kept themselves
from women.”

5Then David answered the priest, and said to him, “Truly, women *have
been* kept from us about three days since I came out. And the vessels of the
young men are holy, and *the bread is* in effect common, even though it was
consecrated in the vessel this day.”

6So the priest gave him holy *bread;* for there was no bread there but the
showbread which had been taken from before the LORD, in order to put hot
bread *in its place* on the day when it was taken away.

7Now a certain man of the servants of Saul *was* there that day, detained
before the LORD. And his name *was* Doeg, an Edomite, the chief of the
herdsmen who *belonged* to Saul.

8And David said to Ahimelech, “Is there not here on hand a spear or a
sword? For I have brought neither my sword nor my weapons with me,
because the king’s business required haste.”

9So the priest said, “The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom you killed
in the Valley of Elah, there it is, wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod. If you
will take that, take *it.* For *there is* no other except that one here.”

And David said, “*There is* none like it; give it to me.”

## DAVID FLEES TO GATH

[10]Then David arose and fled that day from before Saul, and went to Achish the king of Gath. [11]And the servants of Achish said to him, “*Is* this not David the king of the land? Did they not sing of him to one another in dances, saying:

‘Saul has slain his thousands,
And David his ten thousands’”[a]

[12]Now David took these words to heart, and was very much afraid of Achish the king of Gath. [13]So he changed his behavior before them, pretended madness in their hands, scratched on the doors of the gate, and let his saliva fall down on his beard. [14]Then Achish said to his servants, “Look, you see the man is insane. Why have you brought him to me? [15]Have I need of madmen, that you have brought this *fellow* to play the madman in my presence? Shall this *fellow* come into my house?”

## DAVID'S FOUR HUNDRED MEN

**22** David therefore departed from there and escaped to the cave of Adullam.
So when his brothers and all his father's house heard *it*, they went down
there to him. 2And everyone *who was* in distress, everyone who *was* in debt,
and everyone *who was* discontented gathered to him. So he became captain
over them. And there were about four hundred men with him.

3Then David went from there to Mizpah of Moab; and he said to the king
of Moab, "Please let my father and mother come here with you, till I know
what God will do for me." 4So he brought them before the king of Moab, and
they dwelt with him all the time that David was in the stronghold.

5Now the prophet Gad said to David, "Do not stay in the stronghold;
depart, and go to the land of Judah." So David departed and went into the
forest of Hereth.

## SAUL MURDERS THE PRIESTS

6When Saul heard that David and the men who *were* with him had been
discovered-now Saul was staying in Gibeah under a tamarisk tree in Ramah,
with his spear in his hand, and all his servants standing about him-7then Saul
said to his servants who stood about him, "Hear now, you Benjamites! Will
the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards, *and* make you all
captains of thousands and captains of hundreds? 8All of you have conspired
against me, and *there is* no one who reveals to me that my son has made a
covenant with the son of Jesse; and *there is* not one of you who is sorry for
me or reveals to me that my son has stirred up my servant against me, to lie
in wait, as *it is* this day."

9Then answered Doeg the Edomite, who was set over the servants of Saul,
and said, "I saw the son of Jesse going to Nob, to Ahime-lech the son of
Ahitub. 10And he inquired of the LORD for him, gave him provisions, and
gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine."

11So the king sent to call Ahimelech the priest, the son of Ahitub, and all
his father's house, the priests who *were* in Nob. And they all came to the
king. 12And Saul said, "Hear now, son of Ahitub!"

He answered, “Here I am, my lord.”

13Then Saul said to him, “Why have you conspired against me, you and the
son of Jesse, in that you have given him bread and a sword, and have inquired
of God for him, that he should rise against me, to lie in wait, as it is this
day?”

14So Ahimelech answered the king and said, “And who among all your
servants *is as* faithful as David, who is the king’s son-in-law, who goes at
your bidding, and is honorable in your house? 15Did I then begin to inquire of
God for him? Far be it from me! Let not the king impute anything to his
servant, *or* to any in the house of my father. For your servant knew nothing of
all this, little or much.”

16And the king said, “You shall surely die, Ahimelech, you and all your
father’s house!” 17Then the king said to the guards who stood about him,
“Turn and kill the priests of the LORD, because their hand also *is* with David,
and because they knew when he fled and did not tell it to me.” But the
servants of the king would not lift their hands to strike the priests of the
LORD. 18And the king said to Doeg, “You turn and kill the priests!” So Doeg
the Edomite turned and struck the priests, and killed on that day eighty-five
men who wore a linen ephod. 19Also Nob, the city of the priests, he struck
with the edge of the sword, both men and women, children and nursing
infants, oxen and donkeys and sheep-with the edge of the sword.

20Now one of the sons of Ahimelech the son of Ahitub, named Abiathar,
escaped and fled after David. 21And Abiathar told David that Saul had killed
the LORD’s priests. 22So David said to Abiathar, “I knew that day, when Doeg
the Edomite *was* there, that he would surely tell Saul. I have caused *the death*
of all the persons of your father’s house. 23Stay with me; do not fear. For he
who seeks my life seeks your life, but with me you *shall be* safe.”

**DAVID SAVES THE CITY OF KEILAH**

**23** Then they told David, saying, “Look, the Philistines are fighting against Keilah, and they are robbing the threshing floors.”

2 Therefore David inquired of the LORD, saying, “Shall I go and attack these Philistines?”

And the LORD said to David, “Go and attack the Philistines, and save Keilah.”

3 But David’s men said to him, “Look, we are afraid here in Judah. How much more then if we go to Keilah against the armies of the Philistines?” 4 Then David inquired of the LORD once again.

And the LORD answered him and said, “Arise, go down to Keilah. For I will deliver the Philistines into your hand.” 5 And David and his men went to Keilah and fought with the Philistines, struck them with a mighty blow, and took away their livestock. So David saved the inhabitants of Keilah.

6 Now it happened, when Abiathar the son of Ahimelech fled to David at Keilah, *that* he went down *with* an ephod in his hand.

7 And Saul was told that David had gone to Keilah. So Saul said, “God has delivered him into my hand, for he has shut himself in by entering a town that has gates and bars.” 8 Then Saul called all the people together for war, to go down to Keilah to besiege David and his men.

9 When David knew that Saul plotted evil against him, he said to Abiathar the priest, “Bring the ephod here.” 10 Then David said, “O LORD God of Israel, Your servant has certainly heard that Saul seeks to come to Keilah to destroy the city for my sake. 11 Will the men of Keilah deliver me into his hand? Will Saul come down, as Your servant has heard? O LORD God of Israel, I pray, tell Your servant.”

And the LORD said, “He will come down.”

12 Then David said, “Will the men of Keilah deliver me and my men into the hand of Saul?”

And the LORD said, “They will deliver *you.* ”

13 So David and his men, about six hundred, arose and departed from
Keilah and went wherever they could go. Then it was told Saul that David
had escaped from Keilah; so he halted the expedition.

**DAVID IN WILDERNESS STRONGHOLDS**

14 And David stayed in strongholds in the wilderness, and remained in the
mountains in the Wilderness of Ziph. Saul sought him every day, but God did
not deliver him into his hand. 15 So David saw that Saul had come out to seek
his life. And David *was* in the Wilderness of Ziph in a forest.[a] 16 Then
Jonathan, Saul's son, arose and went to David in the woods and strengthened
his hand in God. 17 And he said to him, "Do not fear, for the hand of Saul my
father shall not find you. You shall be king over Israel, and I shall be next to
you. Even my father Saul knows that." 18 So the two of them made a covenant
before the LORD. And David stayed in the woods, and Jonathan went to his
own house.

19 Then the Ziphites came up to Saul at Gibeah, saying, "Is David not
hiding with us in strongholds in the woods, in the hill of Hachilah, which *is*
on the south of Jeshimon? 20 Now therefore, O king, come down according to
all the desire of your soul to come down; and our part *shall be* to deliver him
into the king's hand."

21 And Saul said, "Blessed *are* you of the LORD, for you have compassion
on me. 22 Please go and find out for sure, and see the place where his hideout
is, *and* who has seen him there. For I am told he is very crafty. 23 See
therefore, and take knowledge of all the lurking places where he hides; and
come back to me with certainty, and I will go with you. And it shall be, if he
is in the land, that I will search for him throughout all the clans[a] of Judah."

24 So they arose and went to Ziph before Saul. But David and his men *were*
in the Wilderness of Maon, in the plain on the south of Jeshimon. 25 When
Saul and his men went to seek *him*, they told David. Therefore he went down
to the rock, and stayed in the Wilderness of Maon. And when Saul heard *that*,
he pursued David in the Wilderness of Maon. 26 Then Saul went on one side
of the mountain, and David and his men on the other side of the mountain. So
David made haste to get away from Saul, for Saul and his men were

encircling David and his men to take them.

[27]But a messenger came to Saul, saying, “Hurry and come, for the Philistines have invaded the land!” [28]Therefore Saul returned from pursuing David, and went against the Philistines; so they called that place the Rock of Escape.[a] [29]Then David went up from there and dwelt in strongholds at En Gedi.

**DAVID SPARES SAUL**

**24** Now it happened, when Saul had returned from following the Philistines,
that it was told him, saying, “Take note! David *is* in the Wilderness of
En Gedi.” 2Then Saul took three thousand chosen men from all Israel, and
went to seek David and his men on the Rocks of the Wild Goats. 3So he came
to the sheepfolds by the road, where there *was* a cave; and Saul went in to
attend to his needs. (David and his men were staying in the recesses of the
cave.) 4Then the men of David said to him, “This is the day of which the
LORD said to you, ‘Behold, I will deliver your enemy into your hand, that you
may do to him as it seems good to you.’ ” And David arose and secretly cut
off a corner of Saul’s robe. 5Now it happened afterward that David’s heart
troubled him because he had cut Saul’s *robe.* 6And he said to his men, “The
LORD forbid that I should do this thing to my master, the LORD’s anointed, to
stretch out my hand against him, seeing he *is* the anointed of the LORD.” 7So
David restrained his servants with *these* words, and did not allow them to rise
against Saul. And Saul got up from the cave and went on *his* way.

8David also arose afterward, went out of the cave, and called out to Saul,
saying, “My lord the king!” And when Saul looked behind him, David
stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed down. 9And David said to Saul:
“Why do you listen to the words of men who say, ‘Indeed David seeks your
harm’? 10Look, this day your eyes have seen that the LORD delivered you
today into my hand in the cave, and *someone* urged *me* to kill you. But *my
eye* spared you, and I said, ‘I will not stretch out my hand against my lord, for
he *is* the LORD’s anointed.’ 11Moreover, my father, see! Yes, see the corner of
your robe in my hand! For in that I cut off the corner of your robe, and did
not kill you, know and see that *there is* neither evil nor rebellion in my hand,
and I have not sinned against you. Yet you hunt my life to take it. 12Let the
LORD judge between you and me, and let the LORD avenge me on you. But
my hand shall not be against you. 13As the proverb of the ancients says,
‘Wickedness proceeds from the wicked.’ But my hand shall not be against
you. 14After whom has the king of Israel come out? Whom do you pursue? A
dead dog? A flea? 15Therefore let the LORD be judge, and judge between you
and me, and see and plead my case, and deliver me out of your hand.”

16 So it was, when David had finished speaking these words to Saul, that
Saul said, “*Is* this your voice, my son David?” And Saul lifted up his voice
and wept. 17 Then he said to David: “You *are* more righteous than I; for you
have rewarded me with good, whereas I have rewarded you with evil. 18 And
you have shown this day how you have dealt well with me; for when the
LORD delivered me into your hand, you did not kill me. 19 For if a man finds
his enemy, will he let him get away safely? Therefore may the LORD reward
you with good for what you have done to me this day. 20 And now I know
indeed that you shall surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be
established in your hand. 21 Therefore swear now to me by the LORD that you
will not cut off my descendants after me, and that you will not destroy my
name from my father’s house.”

22 So David swore to Saul. And Saul went home, but David and his men
went up to the stronghold.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Just Trust** *(24:6)* Saul had been attempting to kill David. Surely David, who had been secretly anointed as the next king of Israel (16:13), would have been justified to kill Saul in self-defense so he could finally take over. David realized, however, that he had to respect Saul as God’s anointed king and leave vengeance to God (24:12). While it would have been easier on David to get rid of his enemy, David trusted God to handle the situation. When we face difficult situations, we may not understand God’s timing, but we must trust Him to lead us and do what is best. **Topic: Trust**

**DEATH OF SAMUEL**

**25** Then Samuel died; and the Israelites gathered together and lamented for him, and buried him at his home in Ramah. And David arose and went down to the Wilderness of Paran.[a]

**DAVID AND THE WIFE OF NABAL**

2 Now *there was* a man in Maon whose business *was* in Carmel, and the man *was* very rich. He had three thousand sheep and a thousand goats. And he was shearing his sheep in Carmel. 3 The name of the man *was* Nabal, and the name of his wife Abigail. And *she was* a woman of good understanding and beautiful appearance; but the man *was* harsh and evil in *his* doings. He *was of the house of* Caleb.

4 When David heard in the wilderness that Nabal was shearing his sheep, 5 David sent ten young men; and David said to the young men, "Go up to Carmel, go to Nabal, and greet him in my name. 6 And thus you shall say to him who lives *in prosperity:* 'Peace *be* to you, peace to your house, and peace to all that you have! 7 Now I have heard that you have shearers. Your shepherds were with us, and we did not hurt them, nor was there anything missing from them all the while they were in Carmel. 8 Ask your young men, and they will tell you. Therefore let *my* young men find favor in your eyes, for we come on a feast day. Please give whatever comes to your hand to your servants and to your son David.' "

9 So when David's young men came, they spoke to Nabal according to all these words in the name of David, and waited.

10 Then Nabal answered David's servants, and said, "Who *is* David, and who *is* the son of Jesse? There are many servants nowadays who break away each one from his master. 11 Shall I then take my bread and my water and my meat that I have killed for my shearers, and give *it* to men when I do not know where they *are* from?"

12 So David's young men turned on their heels and went back; and they came and told him all these words. 13 Then David said to his men, "Every man gird on his sword." So every man girded on his sword, and David also

girded on his sword. And about four hundred men went with David, and two hundred stayed with the supplies.

14 Now one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, saying, "Look, David sent messengers from the wilderness to greet our master; and he reviled them. 15 But the men *were* very good to us, and we were not hurt, nor did we miss anything as long as we accompanied them, when we were in the fields. 16 They were a wall to us both by night and day, all the time we were with them keeping the sheep. 17 Now therefore, know and consider what you will do, for harm is determined against our master and against all his household. For he *is such* a scoundrel[a] that *one* cannot speak to him."

18 Then Abigail made haste and took two hundred *loaves* of bread, two skins of wine, five sheep already dressed, five seahs of roasted *grain*, one hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs, and loaded *them* on donkeys. 19 And she said to her servants, "Go on before me; see, I am coming after you." But she did not tell her husband Nabal.

20 So it was, *as* she rode on the donkey, that she went down under cover of the hill; and there were David and his men, coming down toward her, and she met them. 21 Now David had said, "Surely in vain I have protected all that this *fellow* has in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that *belongs* to him. And he has repaid me evil for good. 22 May God do so, and more also, to the enemies of David, if I leave one male of all who *belong* to him by morning light."

23 Now when Abigail saw David, she dismounted quickly from the donkey, fell on her face before David, and bowed down to the ground. 24 So she fell at his feet and said: "On me, my lord, *on* me *let* this iniquity *be!* And please let your maidservant speak in your ears, and hear the words of your maidservant. 25 Please, let not my lord regard this scoundrel Nabal. For as his name *is,* so *is* he: Nabal[a] *is* his name, and folly *is* with him! But I, your maidservant, did not see the young men of my lord whom you sent. 26 Now therefore, my lord, *as* the LORD lives and *as* your soul lives, since the LORD has held you back from coming to bloodshed and from avenging yourself with your own hand, now then, let your enemies and those who seek harm for my lord be as Nabal. 27 And now this present which your maidservant has brought to my lord, let it

be given to the young men who follow my lord. [28]Please forgive the trespass of your maidservant. For the LORD will certainly make for my lord an enduring house, because my lord fights the battles of the LORD, and evil is not found in you throughout your days. [29]Yet a man has risen to pursue you and seek your life, but the life of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of the living with the LORD your God; and the lives of your enemies He shall sling out, *as from* the pocket of a sling. [30]And it shall come to pass, when the LORD has done for my lord according to all the good that He has spoken concerning you, and has appointed you ruler over Israel, [31]that this will be no grief to you, nor offense of heart to my lord, either that you have shed blood without cause, or that my lord has avenged himself. But when the LORD has dealt well with my lord, then remember your maidservant."

[32]Then David said to Abigail: "Blessed *is* the LORD God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me! [33]And blessed *is* your advice and blessed *are* you, because you have kept me this day from coming to bloodshed and from avenging myself with my own hand. [34]For indeed, *as* the LORD God of Israel lives, who has kept me back from hurting you, unless you had hurried and come to meet me, surely by morning light no males would have been left to Nabal!" [35]So David received from her hand what she had brought him, and said to her, "Go up in peace to your house. See, I have heeded your voice and respected your person."

[36]Now Abigail went to Nabal, and there he was, holding a feast in his house, like the feast of a king. And Nabal's heart *was* merry within him, for he *was* very drunk; therefore she told him nothing, little or much, until morning light. [37]So it was, in the morning, when the wine had gone from Nabal, and his wife had told him these things, that his heart died within him, and he became *like* a stone. [38]Then it happened, *after* about ten days, that the LORD struck Nabal, and he died.

[39]So when David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, "Blessed *be* the LORD, who has pleaded the cause of my reproach from the hand of Nabal, and has kept His servant from evil! For the LORD has returned the wickedness of Nabal on his own head."

And David sent and proposed to Abigail, to take her as his wife. [40]When

the servants of David had come to Abigail at Carmel, they spoke to her saying, “David sent us to you, to ask you to become his wife.”

41Then she arose, bowed her face to the earth, and said, “Here is your maidservant, a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord.” 42So Abigail rose in haste and rode on a donkey, attended by five of her maidens; and she followed the messengers of David, and became his wife. 43David also took Ahinoam of Jezreel, and so both of them were his wives.

44But Saul had given Michal his daughter, David’s wife, to Palti[a] the son of Laish, who *was* from Gallim.

**SOUL NOTE**

**In the Middle** *(25:14-17)* Abigail used great courage and wisdom. Her husband, Nabal, had insulted David and his men-not a wise move. David got angry and was ready to attack-also not a wise move. In between these two stepped Abigail. She honestly explained her husband’s behavior and appealed to David with wise words and the provisions that he and his men had originally requested (25:8). Abigail’s wisdom saved both her household from destruction and David from shedding innocent blood. Wisdom has great power to resolve great problems. **Topic: Wisdom**

## DAVID SPARES SAUL A SECOND TIME

**26** Now the Ziphites came to Saul at Gib-eah, saying, “Is David not hiding
in the hill of Hachilah, opposite Jeshimon?” 2Then Saul arose and went
down to the Wilderness of Ziph, having three thousand chosen men of Israel
with him, to seek David in the Wilderness of Ziph. 3And Saul encamped in
the hill of Hachilah, which *is* opposite Jeshimon, by the road. But David
stayed in the wilderness, and he saw that Saul came after him into the
wilderness. 4David therefore sent out spies, and understood that Saul had
indeed come.

5So David arose and came to the place where Saul had encamped. And
David saw the place where Saul lay, and Abner the son of Ner, the
commander of his army. Now Saul lay within the camp, with the people
encamped all around him. 6Then David answered, and said to Ahimelech the
Hittite and to Abishai the son of Zeruiah, brother of Joab, saying, “Who will
go down with me to Saul in the camp?”

And Abishai said, “I will go down with you.”

7So David and Abishai came to the people by night; and there Saul lay
sleeping within the camp, with his spear stuck in the ground by his head. And
Abner and the people lay all around him. 8Then Abishai said to David, “God
has delivered your enemy into your hand this day. Now therefore, please, let
me strike him at once with the spear, right to the earth; and I will not *have to*
*strike* him a second time!”

9But David said to Abishai, “Do not destroy him; for who can stretch out
his hand against the LORD’s anointed, and be guiltless?” 10David said
furthermore, “*As* the LORD lives, the LORD shall strike him, or his day shall
come to die, or he shall go out to battle and perish. 11The LORD forbid that I
should stretch out my hand against the LORD’s anointed. But please, take now
the spear and the jug of water that *are* by his head, and let us go.” 12So David
took the spear and the jug of water *by* Saul’s head, and they got away; and no
man saw or knew *it* or awoke. For they *were* all asleep, because a deep sleep
from the LORD had fallen on them.

13Now David went over to the other side, and stood on the top of a hill afar

off, a great distance *being* between them. [14]And David called out to the people and to Abner the son of Ner, saying, “Do you not answer, Abner?”

Then Abner answered and said, “Who *are* you, calling out to the king?”

[15]So David said to Abner, “*Are* you not a man? And who *is* like you in Israel? Why then have you not guarded your lord the king? For one of the people came in to destroy your lord the king. [16]This thing that you have done *is* not good. *As* the LORD lives, you deserve to die, because you have not guarded your master, the LORD’s anointed. And now see where the king’s spear *is*, and the jug of water that *was* by his head.”

[17]Then Saul knew David’s voice, and said, “*Is* that your voice, my son David?”

David said, “*It is* my voice, my lord, O king.” [18]And he said, “Why does my lord thus pursue his servant? For what have I done, or what evil *is* in my hand? [19]Now therefore, please, let my lord the king hear the words of his servant: If the LORD has stirred you up against me, let Him accept an offering. But if *it is* the children of men, *may* they *be* cursed before the LORD, for they have driven me out this day from sharing in the inheritance of the LORD, saying, ‘Go, serve other gods.’ [20]So now, do not let my blood fall to the earth before the face of the LORD. For the king of Israel has come out to seek a flea, as when one hunts a partridge in the mountains.”

[21]Then Saul said, “I have sinned. Return, my son David. For I will harm you no more, because my life was precious in your eyes this day. Indeed I have played the fool and erred exceedingly.”

[22]And David answered and said, “Here is the king’s spear. Let one of the young men come over and get it. [23]May the LORD repay every man *for* his righteousness and his faithfulness; for the LORD delivered you into *my* hand today, but I would not stretch out my hand against the LORD’s anointed. [24]And indeed, as your life was valued much this day in my eyes, so let my life be valued much in the eyes of the LORD, and let Him deliver me out of all tribulation.”

[25]Then Saul said to David, “*May* you *be* blessed, my son David! You shall both do great things and also still prevail.”

So David went on his way, and Saul returned to his place.

## DAVID ALLIED WITH THE PHILISTINES

**27** And David said in his heart, “Now I shall perish someday by the hand of
Saul. *There is* nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape to
the land of the Philistines; and Saul will despair of me, to seek me anymore
in any part of Israel. So I shall escape out of his hand.” 2Then David arose
and went over with the six hundred men who *were* with him to Achish the
son of Maoch, king of Gath. 3So David dwelt with Achish at Gath, he and his
men, each man with his household, *and* David with his two wives, Ahinoam
the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the Carmelitess, Nabal’s widow. 4And it was
told Saul that David had fled to Gath; so he sought him no more.

5Then David said to Achish, “If I have now found favor in your eyes, let
them give me a place in some town in the country, that I may dwell there. For
why should your servant dwell in the royal city with you?” 6So Achish gave
him Ziklag that day. Therefore Ziklag has belonged to the kings of Judah to
this day. 7Now the time that David dwelt in the country of the Philistines was
one full year and four months.

8And David and his men went up and raided the Geshurites, the Girzites,[a]
and the Amalekites. For those nations were the inhabitants of the land from
of old, as you go to Shur, even as far as the land of Egypt. 9Whenever David
attacked the land, he left neither man nor woman alive, but took away the
sheep, the oxen, the donkeys, the camels, and the apparel, and returned and
came to Achish. 10Then Achish would say, “Where have you made a raid
today?” And David would say, “Against the southern *area* of Judah, or
against the southern *area* of the Jerahmeel-ites, or against the southern *area*
of the Kenites.” 11David would save neither man nor woman alive, to bring
*news* to Gath, saying, “Lest they should inform on us, saying, ‘Thus David
did.’ ” And thus *was* his behavior all the time he dwelt in the country of the
Philistines. 12So Achish believed David, saying, “He has made his people
Israel utterly abhor him; therefore he will be my servant forever.”

**28** Now it happened in those days that the Philistines gathered their armies together for war, to fight with Israel. And Achish said to David, “You assuredly know that you will go out with me to battle, you and your men.”

2 So David said to Achish, “Surely you know what your servant can do.”

And Achish said to David, “Therefore I will make you one of my chief guardians forever.”

**SAUL CONSULTS A MEDIUM**

3 Now Samuel had died, and all Israel had lamented for him and buried him in Ramah, in his own city. And Saul had put the mediums and the spiritists out of the land.

4 Then the Philistines gathered together, and came and encamped at Shunem. So Saul gathered all Israel together, and they encamped at Gilboa. 5 When Saul saw the army of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart trembled greatly. 6 And when Saul inquired of the LORD, the LORD did not answer him, either by dreams or by Urim or by the prophets.

7 Then Saul said to his servants, “Find me a woman who is a medium, that I may go to her and inquire of her.”

And his servants said to him, “In fact, *there is* a woman who is a medium at En Dor.”

8 So Saul disguised himself and put on other clothes, and he went, and two men with him; and they came to the woman by night. And he said, “Please conduct a séance for me, and bring up for me the one I shall name to you.”

9 Then the woman said to him, “Look, you know what Saul has done, how he has cut off the mediums and the spiritists from the land. Why then do you lay a snare for my life, to cause me to die?”

10 And Saul swore to her by the LORD, saying, “*As* the LORD lives, no punishment shall come upon you for this thing.”

11 Then the woman said, “Whom shall I bring up for you?”

And he said, “Bring up Samuel for me.”

12 When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out with a loud voice. And the

woman spoke to Saul, saying, “Why have you deceived me? For you *are* Saul!”

13 And the king said to her, “Do not be afraid. What did you see?”

And the woman said to Saul, “I saw a spirit[a] ascending out of the earth.”

14 So he said to her, “What *is* his form?”

And she said, “An old man is coming up, and he *is* covered with a mantle.” And Saul perceived that it *was* Samuel, and he stooped with *his* face to the ground and bowed down.

15 Now Samuel said to Saul, “Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?”

And Saul answered, “I am deeply distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God has departed from me and does not answer me anymore, neither by prophets nor by dreams. Therefore I have called you, that you may reveal to me what I should do.”

16 Then Samuel said: “So why do you ask me, seeing the LORD has departed from you and has become your enemy? 17 And the LORD has done for Himself[a] as He spoke by me. For the LORD has torn the kingdom out of your hand and given it to your neighbor, David. 18 Because you did not obey the voice of the LORD nor execute His fierce wrath upon Ama-lek, therefore the LORD has done this thing to you this day. 19 Moreover the LORD will also deliver Israel with you into the hand of the Philistines. And tomorrow you and your sons *will be* with me. The LORD will also deliver the army of Israel into the hand of the Philistines.”

20 Immediately Saul fell full length on the ground, and was dreadfully afraid because of the words of Samuel. And there was no strength in him, for he had eaten no food all day or all night.

21 And the woman came to Saul and saw that he was severely troubled, and said to him, “Look, your maidservant has obeyed your voice, and I have put my life in my hands and heeded the words which you spoke to me. 22 Now therefore, please, heed also the voice of your maidservant, and let me set a piece of bread before you; and eat, that you may have strength when you go on *your* way.”

[23]But he refused and said, “I will not eat.”

So his servants, together with the woman, urged him; and he heeded their voice. Then he arose from the ground and sat on the bed. [24]Now the woman had a fatted calf in the house, and she hastened to kill it. And she took flour and kneaded *it,* and baked unleavened bread from it. [25]So she brought *it* before Saul and his servants, and they ate. Then they rose and went away that night.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# THE WITCH OF EN DOR-
# THE OCCULT TEMPTATION

**(1 SAMUEL 28:7)**

One night the medium that lived in En Dor had an unexpected visitor. Her customer was in disguise, but she assumed he must be someone of means, since he was in the company of two men. When he asked her to conduct a séance for him, she was frightened. King Saul had recently banned all witches and mediums from the land. In addition, the ancient laws of God spoke in no uncertain terms against witchcraft (Lev. 19:31; Deut. 18:9-14). She suspected a trap. She did not yet realize the identity of her guest-King Saul himself.

Ironically, the stranger granted the witch immunity with an oath to God. He asked her to summon up Samuel from the dead. Much to her shock, Samuel actually appeared. She now knew that her customer was the king, and the matter was out of her hands. She was terrified.

Samuel had devastating news for Saul. God really had deserted him. His fate and the fate of his army were sealed. His own disobedience, including the consulting of the witch, had created a distance between the king and God that could now only be bridged by judgment.

Once Saul had ignored God's guidance, he left himself exposed. Once Samuel had died, that solitude had overwhelmed Saul. He didn't even have Samuel's bad news to keep him company. He didn't realize how much help he needed until he had cut himself off from every good source. In desperation, he reached for evil.

The more people turn away from the true things of God, the more we can expect to see a rising interest in the occult. People need answers. Once they have rejected the true source, they are exposed to the temptation to look to evil sources for guidance. The attraction of the occult may be fascinating and powerful, but it is deadly.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about The Occult. See also the key passage note at Ephesians 6:10-20.

# THE OCCULT

## JERRY JOHNSTON

**(1 Samuel 28:7)**

Young people are turning to the satanic and the demonic at rates unparalleled since medieval times. They are experimenting with astrology, witchcraft, divination, and more. Satan has cleverly convinced the modern mind that he is not to be taken seriously until

all other spiritual options are exhausted. Then when empty souls turn to him in desperation, he can take them over completely. C. S. Lewis wrote that there are two equal and opposite errors into which people can fall about demons: One is to not believe they exist; the other is to believe they exist, and to feel an excessive interest in them.

The current fad of satanism is reaching epidemic proportions in developed countries. There is compelling evidence of the existence of an international network of satanic cults. The United States harbors the fastest growing and most highly organized body of satanists in the world. Today's occult practices include a variety of activities such as witchcraft, voodoo, astrology, divination, visualization, and spiritism.

The psychological packaging of occultism has made it more acceptable to moderns. The appeal is that the occult will help the experimenter to have an experience that transcends previous spiritual emptiness. Experimentation with the occult is like experimenting with drugs. Once someone starts, it's hard to quit. Most people who become involved get in deeper than they ever intended to, and they stay in longer than they ever thought they would.

## WITCHCRAFT AND SATANISM

Satanic circles, ritual dances, incantations to the devil, human and animal sacrifices, and the drinking of blood have all been part of satanic worship for centuries. These practices can be found in settings ranging from primitive tribes to modern educated circles. In every case where such arts are practiced, evil spirits (demons) or the devil himself are called upon in some manifestation of destructive power.

Witchcraft, sorcery, divination, and magic are ancient and universal. Every culture, primitive or civilized, Eastern or Western, has had its share of magicians, sorcerers, and witches. What possesses an Adolf Hitler to exterminate six million Jews? What provokes a Saddam Hussein to assassinate his own officers? What compels a Charles Manson to murder innocent people? What disturbing influence causes

a Jeffrey Dahmer to rape, kill, and cannibalize his victims? What tempts people to reject the grace of God and renounce the glories of heaven? Is it not Satan and his demons?

The Bible treats occultism as a serious threat. Pharaoh's sorcerers were able to mimic some of Moses' miracles (Ex. 7:22; 8:7). Two sorcerers, Simon (Acts 8:9-11) and Elymas (Acts 13:8-10), as well as the medium at Philippi (Acts 16:16-18), seem to have had powers that went well beyond normal human ability or trickery.

Several Bible passages clearly condemn witchcraft and demonism (for example, Ex. 22:18; Lev. 19:26; 1 Sam. 15:23). The apostle Paul, in enumerating "the works of the flesh," included sorcery, and said "those who practice such things will 383 not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal. 5:19-21). In Revelation 21:8 and 22:15, sorcerers, murderers, and idolaters are pictured as being excluded from heaven and cast into the lake of fire.

## THE DOCTRINE OF SATAN AND DEMONS

The existence of Satan is taught in several Old Testament books and by every New Testament writer. Jesus Himself referred to Satan several times (for example, Matt. 13:39; Luke 10:18; 11:18). Satan is represented both as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14) and as "the great dragon . . . that serpent of old" (Rev. 12:9). Satan is described as the tempter (1 Thess. 3:5), the ruler of this world (John 12:31), the god of this age (2 Cor. 4:4), the prince of the power of the air (Eph. 2:2), and the accuser of the brethren (Rev. 12:10). He deceives the nations (Rev. 20:3), blinds the minds of unbelievers (2 Cor. 4:4), and hinders the work of believers (1 Thess. 2:18).

Demons are described in the Bible as fallen angels over whom Satan rules (Matt. 12:24; Eph. 6:11, 12). They are spirit beings (Matt. 17:18) who attempt to thwart the purposes of God (Dan. 10:10-14). Demon possession refers to a demon residing in a person and exerting direct control and influence over that person. Most biblical scholars

believe that Christians cannot be possessed by demons because they are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. However, believers can be the targets of demonic activity. Demon possession can result in physical disease (Matt. 9:32, 33) and in some cases, mental derangement (Matt. 17:15-18). Eventually, the Bible predicts, all demons will be cast into the lake of fire along with Satan (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:10).

Dabbling in occult fads, symbols, or practices is the first step toward serious trouble for curiosity seekers. Eventually it can lead to hard-core satanic cult activity, even including animal and human sacrifice. Behind the variety of witches, mediums, psychic healers, and parapsychologists looms the actual spirit power that is the source of their knowledge and strength. In our modern culture, satanism expresses itself in a variety of ways-sexual perversion, ritual abuse of children, excessive violence, the misuse of drugs, and the epidemic proportion of suicide. Satanism especially offers to fit the needs and wants of middle- and upper-class teens of high intelligence who are creative, curious, and possibly underachievers with low self-esteem.

Believers must take this aspect of spiritual warfare seriously as they attempt to minister to today's generation.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of the occult include:

- Leviticus 20:27
- Deuteronomy 18:9-14
- 1 Samuel 15:23; 28:3-25
- Acts 26:18
- 2 Corinthians 11:12-15
- Ephesians 2:1-3
- 1 Peter 5:8

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on the occult at Ephesians

6:10-20. See also the personality profile of the witch of En Dor.

## THE PHILISTINES REJECT DAVID

**29** Then the Philistines gathered together all their armies at Aphek, and the
Israelites encamped by a fountain which *is* in Jezreel. 2And the lords of
the Philistines passed in review by hundreds and by thousands, but David and
his men passed in review at the rear with Achish. 3Then the princes of the
Philistines said, "What *are* these Hebrews *doing here?*"

And Achish said to the princes of the Philistines, "*Is* this not David, the servant of Saul king of Israel, who has been with me these days, or these years? And to this day I have found no fault in him since he defected *to me.* "

4But the princes of the Philistines were angry with him; so the princes of the Philistines said to him, "Make this fellow return, that he may go back to the place which you have appointed for him, and do not let him go down with us to battle, lest in the battle he become our adversary. For with what could he reconcile himself to his master, if not with the heads of these men? 5*Is* this not David, of whom they sang to one another in dances, saying:

'Saul has slain his thousands,
And David his ten thousands'?"[a]

6Then Achish called David and said to him, "Surely, *as* the LORD lives, you have been upright, and your going out and your coming in with me in the army *is* good in my sight. For to this day I have not found evil in you since the day of your coming to me. Nevertheless the lords do not favor you. 7Therefore return now, and go in peace, that you may not displease the lords of the Philistines."

8So David said to Achish, "But what have I done? And to this day what have you found in your servant as long as I have been with you, that I may not go and fight against the enemies of my lord the king?"

9Then Achish answered and said to David, "I know that you *are* as good in my sight as an angel of God; nevertheless the princes of the Philistines have said, 'He shall not go up with us to the battle.' 10Now therefore, rise early in the morning with your master's servants who have come with you.[a] And as soon as you are up early in the morning and have light, depart."

[11]So David and his men rose early to depart in the morning, to return to the land of the Philistines. And the Philistines went up to Jezreel.

## DAVID'S CONFLICT WITH THE AMALEKITES

**30** Now it happened, when David and his men came to Ziklag, on the third
day, that the Amalekites had invaded the South and Ziklag, attacked
Ziklag and burned it with fire, 2and had taken captive the women and those
who *were* there, from small to great; they did not kill anyone, but carried
*them* away and went their way. 3So David and his men came to the city, and
there it was, burned with fire; and their wives, their sons, and their daughters
had been taken captive. 4Then David and the people who *were* with him lifted
up their voices and wept, until they had no more power to weep. 5And
David's two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the widow of
Nabal the Carmelite, had been taken captive. 6Now David was greatly
distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him, because the soul of all the
people was grieved, every man for his sons and his daughters. But David
strengthened himself in the LORD his God.

7Then David said to Abiathar the priest, Ahimelech's son, "Please bring
the ephod here to me." And Abiathar brought the ephod to David. 8So David
inquired of the LORD, saying, "Shall I pursue this troop? Shall I overtake
them?"

And He answered him, "Pursue, for you shall surely overtake *them* and
without fail recover *all.*"

9So David went, he and the six hundred men who *were* with him, and came
to the Brook Besor, where those stayed who were left behind. 10But David
pursued, he and four hundred men; for two hundred stayed *behind,* who were
so weary that they could not cross the Brook Besor.

11Then they found an Egyptian in the field, and brought him to David; and
they gave him bread and he ate, and they let him drink water. 12And they
gave him a piece of a cake of figs and two clusters of raisins. So when he had
eaten, his strength came back to him; for he had eaten no bread nor drunk
water for three days and three nights. 13Then David said to him, "To whom
do you *belong,* and where *are* you from?"

And he said, "I *am* a young man from Egypt, servant of an Amalekite; and
my master left me behind, because three days ago I fell sick. 14We made an

invasion of the southern *area* of the Cherethites, in the *territory* which *belongs* to Judah, and of the southern *area* of Caleb; and we burned Ziklag with fire."

15 And David said to him, "Can you take me down to this troop?"

So he said, "Swear to me by God that you will neither kill me nor deliver me into the hands of my master, and I will take you down to this troop."

16 And when he had brought him down, there they were, spread out over all the land, eating and drinking and dancing, because of all the great spoil which they had taken from the land of the Philistines and from the land of Judah. 17 Then David attacked them from twilight until the evening of the next day. Not a man of them escaped, except four hundred young men who rode on camels and fled. 18 So David recovered all that the Amalekites had carried away, and David rescued his two wives. 19 And nothing of theirs was lacking, either small or great, sons or daughters, spoil or anything which they had taken from them; David recovered all. 20 Then David took all the flocks and herds they had driven before those *other* livestock, and said, "This *is* David's spoil."

21 Now David came to the two hundred men who had been so weary that they could not follow David, whom they also had made to stay at the Brook Besor. So they went out to meet David and to meet the people who *were* with him. And when David came near the people, he greeted them. 22 Then all the wicked and worthless men[a] of those who went with David answered and said, "Because they did not go with us, we will not give them *any* of the spoil that we have recovered, except for every man's wife and children, that they may lead *them* away and depart."

23 But David said, "My brethren, you shall not do so with what the LORD has given us, who has preserved us and delivered into our hand the troop that came against us. 24 For who will heed you in this matter? But as his part *is* who goes down to the battle, so *shall* his part *be* who stays by the supplies; they shall share alike." 25 So it was, from that day forward; he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel to this day.

26 Now when David came to Ziklag, he sent *some* of the spoil to the elders of Judah, to his friends, saying, "Here is a present for you from the spoil of

the enemies of the LORD”- [27]to *those* who *were* in Bethel, *those* who *were* in Ramoth of the South, *those* who *were* in Jattir, [28]*those* who *were* in Aroer, *those* who *were* in Siphmoth, *those* who *were* in Eshtemoa, [29]*those* who *were* in Rachal, *those* who *were* in the cities of the Jerahmeelites, *those* who *were* in the cities of the Kenites, [30]*those* who *were* in Hormah, *those* who *were* in Chorashan,[a] *those* who *were* in Athach, [31]*those* who *were* in Hebron, and to all the places where David himself and his men were accustomed to rove.

**SOUL NOTE**

**No More Tears** *(30:4-6)* When David and his army returned to Ziklag and found the city burned and their families gone, they “lifted up their voices and wept, until they had no more power to weep.” Grief can blanket our lives until we feel completely overwhelmed. There is nothing wrong with that, for it is a natural feeling. In that darkness, however, there is a ray of hope. David found it. He “strengthened himself in the LORD his God.” God will not take away the sorrow, but He will strengthen people as they bear it. **Topic: Grief/Loss**

## THE TRAGIC END OF SAUL AND HIS SONS

**31** Now the Philistines fought against Israel; and the men of Israel fled from
before the Philistines, and fell slain on Mount Gilboa. 2Then the
Philistines followed hard after Saul and his sons. And the Philistines killed
Jonathan, Abinadab, and Malchishua, Saul's sons. 3The battle became fierce
against Saul. The archers hit him, and he was severely wounded by the
archers.

4Then Saul said to his armorbearer, "Draw your sword, and thrust me
through with it, lest these uncircumcised men come and thrust me through
and abuse me."

But his armorbearer would not, for he was greatly afraid. Therefore Saul
took a sword and fell on it. 5And when his armorbearer saw that Saul was
dead, he also fell on his sword, and died with him. 6So Saul, his three sons,
his armorbearer, and all his men died together that same day.

7And when the men of Israel who *were* on the other side of the valley, and
*those* who *were* on the other side of the Jordan, saw that the men of Israel had
fled and that Saul and his sons were dead, they forsook the cities and fled;
and the Philistines came and dwelt in them. 8So it happened the next day,
when the Philistines came to strip the slain, that they found Saul and his three
sons fallen on Mount Gilboa. 9And they cut off his head and stripped off his
armor, and sent *word* throughout the land of the Philistines, to proclaim *it in*
the temple of their idols and among the people. 10Then they put his armor in
the temple of the Ashtoreths, and they fastened his body to the wall of Beth
Shan.[a]

11Now when the inhabitants of Jabesh Gile ad heard what the Philistines
had done to Saul, 12all the valiant men arose and traveled all night, and took
the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Beth Shan; and
they came to Jabesh and burned them there. 13Then they took their bones and
buried *them* under the tamarisk tree at Jabesh, and fasted seven days.

**KEY PASSAGE**

# THE DEATH OF A KING

## (31:4)

Saul's army was losing the battle against the Philistines. Ancient kings did not want to be taken prisoner, because the victorious army would treat a captured king with contempt-either humiliating him as a captive or torturing him until he died. Having been mortally wounded, Saul asked his armorbearer to finish the job so he would not be captured alive. The armorbearer refused, so Saul committed suicide by falling on his own sword.

Because Saul had turned away from God, he was left completely to his own devices. He had great potential in his position as the chosen king of Israel, but he squandered it with jealousy, anger, and disobedience. In the end, when all was lost, he believed he had nowhere to turn but to death. Suicide is attractive to a desperate person. Such people need to be shown God's gracious love and forgiveness. There is always hope with God.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about suicide Choose Life. See also the personality profile of Judas The Suicide of Judas.

# 2 Samuel



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# 2 Samuel

Leaders are chosen for many reasons: their talent, skill, experience, knowledge, faithfulness, personal charisma, or political astuteness. Second Samuel is an intimate portrait of the life and reign of David, the man who was, arguably, Israel's greatest leader. Faithful but flawed, driven by both holy and impure passions, King David was brilliant in leading the people of Israel but failed to manage his own personal life.

Following Saul's death, David brought stability to Israel. With patience, honor, and kindness he consolidated the kingdom. He established Jerusalem as the capital, brought the ark of the covenant there, and envisioned the temple that Solomon would one day build. He victoriously battled Philistines, Moabites, and Syrians, uniting Palestine under his strong, benevolent hand.

Yet sin still lurked in David's heart. He yielded to the tempting beauty of Bathsheba. He indulged his son Absalom to the point where correction had no value to the young man. David became well acquainted with the awful consequences of sin.

The lesson of 2 Samuel has nothing to do with living a sinless life-none of us can do that. God loved and blessed David because he humbled himself. When confronted with his sins, David acknowledged them and turned from them. Though David suffered the wages of sin in numerous ways, God restored him to a place of favor in His divine plan. He will do the same for us when we confess and do not defend our sins.

**SOUL CONCERNS IN**

## 2 SAMUEL

HEALTH/SPIRITUALITY (12:1-23)

ADOLESCENT PROBLEMS (CH. 15)

## THE REPORT OF SAUL'S DEATH

**1** Now it came to pass after the death of Saul, when David had returned from
the slaughter of the Amalekites, and David had stayed two days in Ziklag,
2 on the third day, behold, it happened that a man came from Saul's camp with
his clothes torn and dust on his head. So it was, when he came to David, that
he fell to the ground and prostrated himself.

3 And David said to him, "Where have you come from?"

So he said to him, "I have escaped from the camp of Israel."

4 Then David said to him, "How did the matter go? Please tell me."

And he answered, "The people have fled from the battle, many of the people are fallen and dead, and Saul and Jonathan his son are dead also."

5 So David said to the young man who told him, "How do you know that Saul and Jonathan his son are dead?"

6 Then the young man who told him said, "As I happened by chance *to be* on Mount Gil-boa, there was Saul, leaning on his spear; and indeed the chariots and horsemen followed hard after him. 7 Now when he looked behind him, he saw me and called to me. And I answered, 'Here I am.' 8 And he said to me, 'Who *are* you?' So I answered him, 'I *am* an Amalekite.' 9 He said to me again, 'Please stand over me and kill me, for anguish has come upon me, but my life still *remains* in me.' 10 So I stood over him and killed him, because I was sure that he could not live after he had fallen. And I took the crown that *was* on his head and the bracelet that *was* on his arm, and have brought them here to my lord."

11 Therefore David took hold of his own clothes and tore them, and so did all the men who were with him. 12 And they mourned and wept and fasted until evening for Saul and for Jonathan his son, for the people of the LORD and for the house of Israel, because they had fallen by the sword.

13 Then David said to the young man who told him, "Where *are* you from?"

And he answered, "I *am* the son of an alien, an Amalekite."

14 So David said to him, "How was it you were not afraid to put forth your

hand to destroy the LORD's anointed?" [15]Then David called one of the young men and said, "Go near, *and* execute him!" And he struck him so that he died. [16]So David said to him, "Your blood *is* on your own head, for your own mouth has testified against you, saying, 'I have killed the LORD's anointed.' "

**THE SONG OF THE BOW**

[17]Then David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and over Jonathan his son, [18]and he told *them* to teach the children of Judah *the Song of* the Bow; indeed *it is* written in the Book of Jasher:

[19] "The beauty of Israel is slain on your high
places!
How the mighty have fallen!
[20] Tell *it* not in Gath,
Proclaim *it* not in the streets of
Ashkelon-
Lest the daughters of the Philistines
rejoice,
Lest the daughters of the uncircumcised
triumph.
[21] "O mountains of Gilboa,
*Let there be* no dew nor rain upon you,
Nor fields of offerings.
For the shield of the mighty is cast away
there!
The shield of Saul, not anointed with oil.
[22] From the blood of the slain,
From the fat of the mighty,
The bow of Jonathan did not turn back,
And the sword of Saul did not return
empty.
[23] "Saul and Jonathan
*were* beloved
and pleasant in
their lives,

And in their death
they were not
divided;
They were swifter than eagles,
They were stronger than lions.
24 “O daughters of Israel, weep over Saul,
Who clothed you in scarlet, with
luxury;
Who put ornaments of gold on your
apparel.
25 “How the mighty have fallen in the midst
of the battle!
Jonathan *was* slain in your high places.
26 I am distressed for you, my brother
Jonathan;
You have been very pleasant to me;
Your love to me was wonderful,
Surpassing the love of women.
27 “How the mighty have fallen,
And the weapons of war perished!”

**SOUL NOTE**

**Express It** *(1:17)* David expressed genuine grief over the deaths of Saul and Jonathan. It seems natural that David would grieve Jonathan’s death, for they had been best friends (1 Sam. 18:1). King Saul, however, had been hunting David, desiring to kill him (1 Sam. 19:1, 2). Yet David lamented the loss of Israel’s king and prince. Expressing sorrow is a healthy response to grief. David poured out his sorrow in words that honored the anointed king and his son. Putting grief into words is a healthy way to handle the pain and honor

those who have died. **Topic: Grief/Loss**

## DAVID ANOINTED KING OF JUDAH

**2** It happened after this that David inquired of the LORD, saying, “Shall I go up to any of the cities of Judah?”

And the LORD said to him, “Go up.”

David said, “Where shall I go up?”

And He said, “To Hebron.”

2So David went up there, and his two wives also, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the widow of Nabal the Carmelite. 3And David brought up the men who *were* with him, every man with his household. So they dwelt in the cities of Hebron.

4Then the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah. And they told David, saying, “The men of Jabesh Gilead *were the ones* who buried Saul.” 5So David sent messengers to the men of Jabesh Gilead, and said to them, “You *are* blessed of the LORD, for you have shown this kindness to your lord, to Saul, and have buried him. 6And now may the LORD show kindness and truth to you. I also will repay you this kindness, because you have done this thing. 7Now therefore, let your hands be strengthened, and be valiant; for your master Saul is dead, and also the house of Judah has anointed me king over them.”

> “And now may the LORD show kindness and truth to you. I also will repay you this kindness, because you have done this thing.”
> 2 SAMUEL 2:6

## ISHBOSHETH MADE KING OF ISRAEL

8But Abner the son of Ner, commander of Saul’s army, took Ishbosheth[a] the son of Saul and brought him over to Mahanaim; 9and he made him king over Gilead, over the Ashurites, over Jezreel, over Ephraim, over Benjamin, and over all Israel. 10Ishbosheth, Saul’s son, *was* forty years old when he began to reign over Israel, and he reigned two years. Only the house of Judah followed David. 11And the time that David was king in Hebron over the

house of Judah was seven years and six months.

**ISRAEL AND JUDAH AT WAR**

12 Now Abner the son of Ner, and the servants of Ishbosheth the son of Saul, went out from Mahanaim to Gibeon. 13 And Joab the son of Zeruiah, and the servants of David, went out and met them by the pool of Gibeon. So they sat down, one on one side of the pool and the other on the other side of the pool. 14 Then Abner said to Joab, "Let the young men now arise and compete before us."

And Joab said, "Let them arise."

15 So they arose and went over by number, twelve from Benjamin, *followers* of Ishbosheth the son of Saul, and twelve from the servants of David. 16 And each one grasped his opponent by the head and *thrust* his sword in his opponent's side; so they fell down together. Therefore that place was called the Field of Sharp Swords,[a] which *is* in Gibeon. 17 So there was a very fierce battle that day, and Abner and the men of Israel were beaten before the servants of David.

18 Now the three sons of Zeruiah were there: Joab and Abishai and Asahel. And Asahel *was as* fleet of foot as a wild gazelle. 19 So Asahel pursued Abner, and in going he did not turn to the right hand or to the left from following Abner.

20 Then Abner looked behind him and said, "*Are* you Asahel?"

He answered, "I *am.*"

21 And Abner said to him, "Turn aside to your right hand or to your left, and lay hold on one of the young men and take his armor for yourself." But Asahel would not turn aside from following him. 22 So Abner said again to Asahel, "Turn aside from following me. Why should I strike you to the ground? How then could I face your brother Joab?" 23 However, he refused to turn aside. Therefore Abner struck him in the stomach with the blunt end of the spear, so that the spear came out of his back; and he fell down there and died on the spot. So it was *that* as many as came to the place where Asahel fell down and died, stood still.

24 Joab and Abishai also pursued Abner. And the sun was going down

when they came to the hill of Ammah, which *is* before Giah by the road to the Wilderness of Gibeon. [25]Now the children of Benjamin gathered together behind Abner and became a unit, and took their stand on top of a hill. [26]Then Abner called to Joab and said, “Shall the sword devour forever? Do you not know that it will be bitter in the latter end? How long will it be then until you tell the people to return from pursuing their brethren?”

[27]And Joab said, “*As* God lives, unless you had spoken, surely then by morning all the people would have given up pursuing their brethren.” [28]So Joab blew a trumpet; and all the people stood still and did not pursue Israel anymore, nor did they fight anymore. [29]Then Abner and his men went on all that night through the plain, crossed over the Jordan, and went through all Bithron; and they came to Mahanaim.

[30]So Joab returned from pursuing Abner. And when he had gathered all the people together, there were missing of David’s servants nineteen men and Asahel. [31]But the servants of David had struck down, of Benjamin and Abner’s men, three hundred and sixty men who died. [32]Then they took up Asahel and buried him in his father’s tomb, which *was in* Bethlehem. And Joab and his men went all night, and they came to Hebron at daybreak.

**3** Now there was a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David. But David grew stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul grew weaker and weaker.

**SONS OF DAVID**

2 Sons were born to David in Hebron: His firstborn was Amnon by
Ahinoam the Jezreelitess; 3 his second, Chileab, by Abigail the widow of
Nabal the Carmelite; the third, Absalom the son of Maacah, the daughter of
Talmai, king of Geshur; 4 the fourth, Adonijah the son of Haggith; the fifth,
Shephatiah the son of Abital; 5 and the sixth, Ithream, by David's wife Eglah.
These were born to David in Hebron.

**ABNER JOINS FORCES WITH DAVID**

6 Now it was so, while there was war between the house of Saul and the
house of David, that Abner was strengthening *his hold* on the house of Saul.

7 And Saul had a concubine, whose name *was* Rizpah, the daughter of
Aiah. So *Ishbosheth* said to Abner, "Why have you gone in to my father's
concubine?"

8 Then Abner became very angry at the words of Ishbosheth, and said, "*Am*
I a dog's head that belongs to Judah? Today I show loyalty to the house of
Saul your father, to his brothers, and to his friends, and have not delivered
you into the hand of David; and you charge me today with a fault concerning
this woman? 9 May God do so to Abner, and more also, if I do not do for
David as the LORD has sworn to him- 10 to transfer the kingdom from the
house of Saul, and set up the throne of David over Israel and over Judah,
from Dan to Beersheba." 11 And he could not answer Abner another word,
because he feared him.

12 Then Abner sent messengers on his behalf to David, saying, "Whose *is*
the land?" saying *also*, "Make your covenant with me, and indeed my hand
*shall be* with you to bring all Israel to you."

13 And *David* said, "Good, I will make a covenant with you. But one thing I
require of you: you shall not see my face unless you first bring Michal, Saul's
daughter, when you come to see my face." 14 So David sent messengers to

Ishbosheth, Saul's son, saying, "Give *me* my wife Michal, whom I betrothed to myself for a hundred foreskins of the Philistines." [15]And Ishbosheth sent and took her from *her* husband, from Paltiel[a] the son of Laish. [16]Then her husband went along with her to Bahurim, weeping behind her. So Abner said to him, "Go, return!" And he returned.

[17]Now Abner had communicated with the elders of Israel, saying, "In time past you were seeking for David *to be* king over you. [18]Now then, do *it!* For the LORD has spoken of David, saying, 'By the hand of My servant David, I[a] will save My people Israel from the hand of the Philistines and the hand of all their enemies.' " [19]And Abner also spoke in the hearing of Benjamin. Then Abner also went to speak in the hearing of David in Hebron all that seemed good to Israel and the whole house of Benjamin.

[20]So Abner and twenty men with him came to David at Hebron. And David made a feast for Abner and the men who *were* with him. [21]Then Abner said to David, "I will arise and go, and gather all Israel to my lord the king, that they may make a covenant with you, and that you may reign over all that your heart desires." So David sent Abner away, and he went in peace.

**JOAB MURDERS ABNER**

[22]At that moment the servants of David and Joab came from a raid and brought much spoil with them. But Abner *was* not with David in Hebron, for he had sent him away, and he had gone in peace. [23]When Joab and all the troops that *were* with him had come, they told Joab, saying, "Abner the son of Ner came to the king, and he sent him away, and he has gone in peace." [24]Then Joab came to the king and said, "What have you done? Look, Abner came to you; why *is* it *that* you sent him away, and he has already gone? [25]Surely you realize that Abner the son of Ner came to deceive you, to know your going out and your coming in, and to know all that you are doing."

[26]And when Joab had gone from David's presence, he sent messengers after Abner, who brought him back from the well of Sirah. But David did not know *it.* [27]Now when Abner had returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside in the gate to speak with him privately, and there stabbed him in the stomach, so that he died for the blood of Asahel his brother.

[28]Afterward, when David heard *it,* he said, “My kingdom and I *are* guiltless before the LORD forever of the blood of Abner the son of Ner. [29]Let it rest on the head of Joab and on all his father’s house; and let there never fail to be in the house of Joab one who has a discharge or is a leper, who leans on a staff or falls by the sword, or who lacks bread.” [30]So Joab and Abishai his brother killed Abner, because he had killed their brother Asahel at Gibeon in the battle.

**DAVID’S MOURNING FOR ABNER**

[31]Then David said to Joab and to all the people who were with him, “Tear your clothes, gird yourselves with sackcloth, and mourn for Abner.” And King David followed the coffin. [32]So they buried Abner in Hebron; and the king lifted up his voice and wept at the grave of Abner, and all the people wept. [33]And the king sang *a lament* over Abner and said:

“Should Abner die as a fool dies?
[34] Your hands were not bound
Nor your feet put into fetters;
As a man falls before wicked men, *so*
you fell.”

Then all the people wept over him again.

[35]And when all the people came to persuade David to eat food while it was still day, David took an oath, saying, “God do so to me, and more also, if I taste bread or anything else till the sun goes down!” [36]Now all the people took note *of it,* and it pleased them, since whatever the king did pleased all the people. [37]For all the people and all Israel understood that day that it had not been the king’s *intent* to kill Abner the son of Ner. [38]Then the king said to his servants, “Do you not know that a prince and a great man has fallen this day in Israel? [39]And I *am* weak today, though anointed king; and these men, the sons of Zeruiah, *are* too harsh for me. The LORD shall repay the evildoer according to his wickedness.”

## SOUL NOTE

**Wise Up** *(3:1-5)* This list of David's sons by various wives reveals the starting point of many of the family problems David would face. As the various princes would seek attention and position, they would also wreak havoc on the family. Eventually, one son would rape a half sister, that sister's brother would kill the rapist, others would commit treason against their father and set themselves up as kings. David, it seems, did not discipline his children well (1 Kin. 1:6). Although David ruled the nation wisely, he could have faced less pain if he had used the same wisdom to run his family. **Topic: Family Problems**

## ISHBOSHETH IS MURDERED

**4** When Saul's son[a] heard that Abner had died in Hebron, he lost heart, and
all Israel was troubled. [2]Now Saul's son *had* two men *who were* captains
of troops. The name of one *was* Baanah and the name of the other Rechab,
the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, of the children of Benjamin. (For Beeroth
also was *part* of Benjamin, [3]because the Beer-othites fled to Gittaim and have
been sojourners there until this day.)

[4]Jonathan, Saul's son, had a son *who was* lame in *his* feet. He was five
years old when the news about Saul and Jonathan came from Jezreel; and his
nurse took him up and fled. And it happened, as she made haste to flee, that
he fell and became lame. His name *was* Mephibosheth.[a]

[5]Then the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, Rechab and Baanah, set out and
came at about the heat of the day to the house of Ishbosheth, who was lying
on his bed at noon. [6]And they came there, all the way into the house, *as
though* to get wheat, and they stabbed him in the stomach. Then Rechab and
Baanah his brother escaped. [7]For when they came into the house, he was
lying on his bed in his bedroom; then they struck him and killed him,
beheaded him and took his head, and were all night escaping through the
plain. [8]And they brought the head of Ishbosheth to David at Hebron, and said
to the king, "Here is the head of Ishbosheth, the son of Saul your enemy, who
sought your life; and the LORD has avenged my lord the king this day of Saul
and his descendants."

[9]But David answered Rechab and Baanah his brother, the sons of Rimmon
the Beerothite, and said to them, "*As* the LORD lives, who has redeemed my
life from all adversity, [10]when someone told me, saying, 'Look, Saul is dead,'
thinking to have brought good news, I arrested him and had him executed in
Zik-lag-the one who *thought* I would give him a reward for *his* news. [11]How
much more, when wicked men have killed a righteous person in his own
house on his bed? Therefore, shall I not now require his blood at your hand
and remove you from the earth?" [12]So David commanded his young men,
and they executed them, cut off their hands and feet, and hanged *them* by the
pool in Hebron. But they took the head of Ishbosheth and buried *it* in the

tomb of Abner in Hebron.

## DAVID REIGNS OVER ALL ISRAEL

**5** Then all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and spoke, saying,
"Indeed we *are* your bone and your flesh. 2 Also, in time past, when Saul
was king over us, you were the one who led Israel out and brought them in;
and the LORD said to you, 'You shall shepherd My people Israel, and be ruler
over Israel.' " 3 Therefore all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron,
and King David made a covenant with them at Hebron before the LORD. And
they anointed David king over Israel. 4 David *was* thirty years old when he
began to reign, *and* he reigned forty years. 5 In Hebron he reigned over Judah
seven years and six months, and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty-three years
over all Israel and Judah.

## THE CONQUEST OF JERUSALEM

6 And the king and his men went to Jerusalem against the Jebusites, the
inhabitants of the land, who spoke to David, saying, "You shall not come in
here; but the blind and the lame will repel you," thinking, "David cannot
come in here." 7 Nevertheless David took the stronghold of Zion (that *is*, the
City of David).

8 Now David said on that day, "Whoever climbs up by way of the water
shaft and defeats the Jebusites (the lame and the blind, *who are* hated by
David's soul), *he shall be chief and captain.*"[a] Therefore they say, "The blind
and the lame shall not come into the house."

9 Then David dwelt in the stronghold, and called it the City of David. And
David built all around from the Millo[a] and inward. 10 So David went on and
became great, and the LORD God of hosts *was* with him.

11 Then Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, and cedar trees, and
carpenters and masons. And they built David a house. 12 So David knew that
the LORD had established him as king over Israel, and that He had exalted His
kingdom for the sake of His people Israel.

13 And David took more concubines and wives from Jerusalem, after he had
come from Hebron. Also more sons and daughters were born to David.
14 Now these *are* the names of those who were born to him in Jerusalem:

Shammua,[a] Shobab, Nathan, Solomon, [15]Ib-har, Elishua,[a] Nepheg, Japhia, [16]Elishama, Eli-ada, and Eliphelet.

**THE PHILISTINES DEFEATED**

[17]Now when the Philistines heard that they had anointed David king over Israel, all the Philistines went up to search for David. And David heard *of it* and went down to the stronghold. [18]The Philistines also went and deployed themselves in the Valley of Rephaim. [19]So David inquired of the LORD, saying, “Shall I go up against the Philistines? Will You deliver them into my hand?”

And the LORD said to David, “Go up, for I will doubtless deliver the Philistines into your hand.”

[20]So David went to Baal Perazim, and David defeated them there; and he said, “The LORD has broken through my enemies before me, like a breakthrough of water.” Therefore he called the name of that place Baal Perazim.[a] [21]And they left their images there, and David and his men carried them away.

[22]Then the Philistines went up once again and deployed themselves in the Valley of Rephaim. [23]Therefore David inquired of the LORD, and He said, “You shall not go up; circle around behind them, and come upon them in front of the mulberry trees. [24]And it shall be, when you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the mulberry trees, then you shall advance quickly. For then the LORD will go out before you to strike the camp of the Philistines.” [25]And David did so, as the LORD commanded him; and he drove back the Philistines from Geba[a] as far as Gezer.

## THE ARK BROUGHT TO JERUSALEM

**6** Again David gathered all *the* choice *men* of Israel, thirty thousand. [2]And David arose and went with all the people who *were* with him from Baale Judah to bring up from there the ark of God, whose name is called by the Name,[a] the LORD of Hosts, who dwells *between* the cherubim. [3]So they set the ark of God on a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which *was* on the hill; and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drove the new cart.[a] [4]And they brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which *was* on the hill, accompanying the ark of God; and Ahio went before the ark. [5]Then David and all the house of Israel played *music* before the LORD on all kinds of *instruments of* fir wood, on harps, on stringed instruments, on tambourines, on sis-trums, and on cymbals.

[6]And when they came to Nachon's threshing floor, Uzzah put out *his hand* to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen stumbled. [7]Then the anger of the LORD was aroused against Uzzah, and God struck him there for *his* error; and he died there by the ark of God. [8]And David became angry because of the LORD's outbreak against Uzzah; and he called the name of the place Perez Uzzah[a] to this day.

[9]David was afraid of the LORD that day; and he said, "How can the ark of the LORD come to me?" [10]So David would not move the ark of the LORD with him into the City of David; but David took it aside into the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite. [11]The ark of the LORD remained in the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite three months. And the LORD blessed Obed-Edom and all his household.

[12]Now it was told King David, saying, "The LORD has blessed the house of Obed-Edom and all that *belongs* to him, because of the ark of God." So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom to the City of David with gladness. [13]And so it was, when those bearing the ark of the LORD had gone six paces, that he sacrificed oxen and fatted sheep. [14]Then David danced before the LORD with all *his* might; and David *was* wearing a linen ephod. [15]So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting and with the sound of the trumpet.

[16]Now as the ark of the LORD came into the City of David, Michal, Saul's daughter, looked through a window and saw King David leaping and whirling before the LORD; and she despised him in her heart. [17]So they brought the ark of the LORD, and set it in its place in the midst of the tabernacle that David had erected for it. Then David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD. [18]And when David had finished offering burnt offerings and peace offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD of hosts. [19]Then he distributed among all the people, among the whole multitude of Israel, both the women and the men, to everyone a loaf of bread, a piece *of meat,* and a cake of raisins. So all the people departed, everyone to his house.

[20]Then David returned to bless his household. And Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David, and said, "How glorious was the king of Israel today, uncovering himself today in the eyes of the maids of his servants, as one of the base fellows shamelessly uncovers himself!"

[21]So David said to Michal, "*It was* before the LORD, who chose me instead of your father and all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the LORD, over Israel. Therefore I will play *music* before the LORD. [22]And I will be even more undignified than this, and will be humble in my own sight. But as for the maidservants of whom you have spoken, by them I will be held in honor."

[23]Therefore Michal the daughter of Saul had no children to the day of her death.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# MICHAL-WATCH YOUR ATTITUDE

# (2 SAMUEL 6:16)

The qualities about David that first caught Michal's attention and captured her heart were the same qualities that she came to resent. David was handsome, heroic, and had a heart for God. Perhaps Michal misunderstood the kind of single-minded devotion David had toward God as nothing more than an endearing trait she hoped one day would be centered on her. If David killed the giant Goliath for God, what might he do for a lover?

When news of his daughter's love for the shepherd-hero reached the king's ears, Saul was already scheming to eliminate David. He set a trap for David using his own daughter as the prize (1 Sam. 18:17-29). David met the challenge, however, and received Michal's hand in marriage.

The young couple had few days of happiness. After all, the father of the bride kept trying to kill the groom. When Michal helped her husband escape from a deadly ambush her father arranged, Saul punished her by giving her to another man (1 Sam. 25:44). David eventually got her back (2 Sam. 3:14-16), but by then she was merely one of several wives he had collected. Michal had to accept yet another disappointment in life.

Resentment and bitterness in Michal finally erupted on the day the ark of the covenant was brought into Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6:1-23). David led the parade, leaping and dancing in his joy before God, as Michal watched him from a palace window. She considered his behavior excessive and unnecessary and confronted him with shameful derision. Her pent-up frustrations may have been understandable, but her timing and target were tragic. Instead of gaining her husband's attention, she demeaned his faith and was punished by God for it.

Injustices and hardships that come our way cannot excuse bad attitudes. We are responsible for our responses. When we entrust our

lives to God, we will still face pain, but He helps us to keep the pain from giving us a bad attitude toward life.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about attitudes How to Have a Positive Attitude. See also the key passage note at Romans 12:1, 2.

## GOD'S COVENANT WITH DAVID

**7** Now it came to pass when the king was dwelling in his house, and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies all around, 2that the king said to Nathan the prophet, "See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells inside tent curtains."

3Then Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that *is* in your heart, for the LORD *is* with you."

4But it happened that night that the word of the LORD came to Nathan, saying, 5"Go and tell My servant David, 'Thus says the LORD: "Would you build a house for Me to dwell in? 6For I have not dwelt in a house since the time that I brought the children of Israel up from Egypt, even to this day, but have moved about in a tent and in a tabernacle. 7Wherever I have moved about with all the children of Israel, have I ever spoken a word to anyone from the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd My people Israel, saying, 'Why have you not built Me a house of cedar?' " ' 8Now therefore, thus shall you say to My servant David, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts: "I took you from the sheepfold, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people, over Israel. 9And I have been with you wherever you have gone, and have cut off all your enemies from before you, and have made you a great name, like the name of the great men who *are* on the earth. 10Moreover I will appoint a place for My people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own and move no more; nor shall the sons of wickedness oppress them anymore, as previously, 11since the time that I commanded judges *to be* over My people Israel, and have caused you to rest from all your enemies. Also the LORD tells you that He will make you a house.[a]

12"When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. 13He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. 14I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men. 15But My mercy shall not depart from him, as I took *it* from Saul, whom I removed from before you. 16And your house and

your kingdom shall be established forever before you.[a] Your throne shall be established forever.” ’ ”

17 According to all these words and according to all this vision, so Nathan spoke to David.

## DAVID’S THANKSGIVING TO GOD

18 Then King David went in and sat before the LORD; and he said: “Who *am* I, O Lord GOD? And what is my house, that You have brought me this far? 19 And yet this was a small thing in Your sight, O Lord GOD; and You have also spoken of Your servant’s house for a great while to come. *Is* this the manner of man, O Lord GOD? 20 Now what more can David say to You? For You, Lord GOD, know Your servant. 21 For Your word’s sake, and according to Your own heart, You have done all these great things, to make Your servant know *them*. 22 Therefore You are great, O Lord GOD.[a] For *there is* none like You, nor *is there any* God besides You, according to all that we have heard with our ears. 23 And who *is* like Your people, like Israel, the one nation on the earth whom God went to redeem for Himself as a people, to make for Himself a name-and to do for Yourself great and awesome deeds for Your land-before Your people whom You redeemed for Yourself from Egypt, the nations, and their gods? 24 For You have made Your people Israel Your very own people forever; and You, LORD, have become their God.

> “Therefore You are great, O Lord GOD. For there is none like You, nor is there any God besides You, according to all that we have heard with our ears.”
> 2 SAMUEL 7:22

25 “Now, O LORD God, the word which You have spoken concerning Your servant and concerning his house, establish *it* forever and do as You have said. 26 So let Your name be magnified forever, saying, ‘The LORD of hosts *is* the God over Israel.’ And let the house of Your servant David be established before You. 27 For You, O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, have revealed *this* to Your servant, saying, ‘I will build you a house.’ Therefore Your servant has found it in his heart to pray this prayer to You.

28 “And now, O Lord GOD, You are God, and Your words are true, and
You have promised this goodness to Your servant. 29 Now therefore, let it
please You to bless the house of Your servant, that it may continue before
You forever; for You, O Lord GOD, have spoken *it,* and with Your blessing
let the house of Your servant be blessed forever.”

## DAVID'S FURTHER CONQUESTS

**8** After this it came to pass that David attacked the Philistines and subdued them. And David took Metheg Ammah from the hand of the Philistines.

2 Then he defeated Moab. Forcing them down to the ground, he measured them off with a line. With two lines he measured off those to be put to death, and with one full line those to be kept alive. So the Moabites became David's servants, *and* brought tribute.

3 David also defeated Hadadezer the son of Rehob, king of Zobah, as he went to recover his territory at the River Euphrates. 4 David took from him one thousand *chariots,* seven hundred[a] horsemen, and twenty thousand foot soldiers. Also David hamstrung all the chariot horses, except that he spared *enough* of them for one hundred chariots.

5 When the Syrians of Damascus came to help Hadadezer king of Zobah, David killed twenty-two thousand of the Syrians. 6 Then David put garrisons in Syria of Damascus; and the Syrians became David's servants, *and* brought tribute. So the LORD preserved David wherever he went. 7 And David took the shields of gold that had belonged to the servants of Hadadezer, and brought them to Jerusalem. 8 Also from Betah[a] and from Berothai, cities of Hadadezer, King David took a large amount of bronze.

9 When Toi[a] king of Hamath heard that David had defeated all the army of Hadadezer, 10 then Toi sent Joram[a] his son to King David, to greet him and bless him, because he had fought against Hadadezer and defeated him (for Hadadezer had been at war with Toi); and *Joram* brought with him articles of silver, articles of gold, and articles of bronze. 11 King David also dedicated these to the LORD, along with the silver and gold that he had dedicated from all the nations which he had subdued- 12 from Syria,[a] from Moab, from the people of Ammon, from the Philistines, from Amalek, and from the spoil of Hadadezer the son of Re-hob, king of Zobah.

13 And David made *himself* a name when he returned from killing eighteen thousand Syrians[a] in the Valley of Salt. 14 He also put garrisons in Edom; throughout all Edom he put garrisons, and all the Edomites became David's servants. And the LORD preserved David wherever he went.

**DAVID’S ADMINISTRATION**

15 So David reigned over all Israel; and David administered judgment and
justice to all his people. 16 Joab the son of Zeruiah *was* over the army;
Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud *was* recorder; 17 Zadok the son of Ahitub and
Ahime-lech the son of Abiathar *were* the priests; Seraiah[a] *was* the scribe;
18 Benaiah the son of Jehoiada *was over* both the Cherethites and the
Pelethites; and David’s sons were chief ministers.

## DAVID'S KINDNESS TO MEPHIBOSHETH

**9** Now David said, "Is there still anyone who is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?"

2 And *there was* a servant of the house of Saul whose name *was* Ziba. So when they had called him to David, the king said to him, "*Are* you Ziba?"

He said, "At your service!"

3 Then the king said, "*Is* there not still someone of the house of Saul, to whom I may show the kindness of God?"

And Ziba said to the king, "There is still a son of Jonathan *who is* lame in *his* feet."

4 So the king said to him, "Where *is* he?"

And Ziba said to the king, "Indeed he *is* in the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, in Lo Debar."

5 Then King David sent and brought him out of the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, from Lo Debar.

6 lNow when Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, had come to David, he fell on his face and prostrated himself. Then David said, "Mephibosheth?"

And he answered, "Here is your servant!"

7 So David said to him, "Do not fear, for I will surely show you kindness for Jonathan your father's sake, and will restore to you all the land of Saul your grandfather; and you shall eat bread at my table continually."

8 Then he bowed himself, and said, "What *is* your servant, that you should look upon such a dead dog as I?"

9 And the king called to Ziba, Saul's servant, and said to him, "I have given to your master's son all that belonged to Saul and to all his house. 10 You therefore, and your sons and your servants, shall work the land for him, and you shall bring in *the harvest,* that your master's son may have food to eat. But Mephibosheth your master's son shall eat bread at my table always." Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants.

[11]Then Ziba said to the king, “According to all that my lord the king has commanded his servant, so will your servant do.”

“As for Mephibosheth,” *said the king*, “he shall eat at my table[a] like one of the king’s sons.” [12]Mephibosheth had a young son whose name *was* Micha. And all who dwelt in the house of Ziba *were* servants of Mephibo-sheth. [13]So Mephibosheth dwelt in Jerusalem, for he ate continually at the king’s table. And he was lame in both his feet.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Honorable** *(9:7)* Mephibosheth was the son of Jonathan, David’s best friend. With Saul and Jonathan dead, Mephibosheth was technically in line for the throne. Threats to David’s position were not unusual (even his own sons would try to take his throne), but David’s dealing with this potential threat *was* unusual. Instead of killing the potential rival, as most kings would, he brought Mephibosheth to live in the palace with him. This act honored a promise that David had made to Jonathan (1 Sam. 20:14, 15). At risk to himself, David kept his promise. Honorable people keep their word.
**Topic: Honor**

## THE AMMONITES AND SYRIANS DEFEATED

**10** It happened after this that the king of the people of Ammon died, and Hanun his son reigned in his place. 2Then David said, “I will show kindness to Hanun the son of Na-hash, as his father showed kindness to me.”

So David sent by the hand of his servants to comfort him concerning his father. And David’s servants came into the land of the people of Ammon. 3And the princes of the people of Ammon said to Hanun their lord, “Do you think that David really honors your father because he has sent comforters to you? Has David not *rather* sent his servants to you to search the city, to spy it out, and to overthrow it?”

4Therefore Hanun took David’s servants, shaved off half of their beards, cut off their garments in the middle, at their buttocks, and sent them away. 5When they told David, he sent to meet them, because the men were greatly ashamed. And the king said, “Wait at Jericho until your beards have grown, and *then* return.”

6When the people of Ammon saw that they had made themselves repulsive to David, the people of Ammon sent and hired the Syrians of Beth Rehob and the Syrians of Zoba, twenty thousand foot soldiers; and from the king of Maacah one thousand men, and from Ish-Tob twelve thousand men. 7Now when David heard *of it,* he sent Joab and all the army of the mighty men. 8Then the people of Ammon came out and put themselves in battle array at the entrance of the gate. And the Syrians of Zoba, Beth Rehob, Ish-Tob, and Maacah *were* by themselves in the field.

9When Joab saw that the battle line was against him before and behind, he chose some of Israel’s best and put *them* in battle array against the Syrians. 10And the rest of the people he put under the command of Abishai his brother, that he might set *them* in battle array against the people of Ammon. 11Then he said, “If the Syrians are too strong for me, then you shall help me; but if the people of Ammon are too strong for you, then I will come and help you. 12Be of good courage, and let us be strong for our people and for the cities of our God. And may the LORD do *what is* good in His sight.”

13So Joab and the people who *were* with him drew near for the battle

against the Syrians, and they fled before him. [14]When the people of Ammon saw that the Syrians were fleeing, they also fled before Abishai, and entered the city. So Joab returned from the people of Ammon and went to Jerusalem.

[15]When the Syrians saw that they had been defeated by Israel, they gathered together. [16]Then Hadadezer[a] sent and brought out the Syrians who *were* beyond the River,[b] and they came to Helam. And Shobach the commander of Hadadezer's army *went* before them. [17]When it was told David, he gathered all Israel, crossed over the Jordan, and came to Helam. And the Syrians set themselves in battle array against David and fought with him. [18]Then the Syrians fled before Israel; and David killed seven hundred charioteers and forty thousand horsemen of the Syrians, and struck Shobach the commander of their army, who died there. [19]And when all the kings *who were* servants to Hadadezer[a] saw that they were defeated by Israel, they made peace with Israel and served them. So the Syrians were afraid to help the people of Ammon anymore.

**DAVID, BATHSHEBA, AND URIAH**

**11** It happened in the spring of the year, at the time when kings go out *to battle*, that David sent Joab and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the people of Ammon and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem.

2 Then it happened one evening that David arose from his bed and walked on the roof of the king's house. And from the roof he saw a woman bathing, and the woman *was* very beautiful to behold. 3 So David sent and inquired about the woman. And *someone* said, "*Is* this not Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" 4 Then David sent messengers, and took her; and she came to him, and he lay with her, for she was cleansed from her impurity; and she returned to her house. 5 And the woman conceived; so she sent and told David, and said, "I *am* with child."

6 Then David sent to Joab, *saying*, "Send me Uriah the Hittite." And Joab sent Uriah to David. 7 When Uriah had come to him, David asked how Joab was doing, and how the people were doing, and how the war prospered. 8 And David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house and wash your feet." So Uriah departed from the king's house, and a gift *of food* from the king followed him. 9 But Uriah slept at the door of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and did not go down to his house. 10 So when they told David, saying, "Uriah did not go down to his house," David said to Uriah, "Did you not come from a journey? Why did you not go down to your house?"

11 And Uriah said to David, "The ark and Israel and Judah are dwelling in tents, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are encamped in the open fields. Shall I then go to my house to eat and drink, and to lie with my wife? *As* you live, and *as* your soul lives, I will not do this thing."

12 Then David said to Uriah, "Wait here today also, and tomorrow I will let you depart." So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next. 13 Now when David called him, he ate and drank before him; and he made him drunk. And at evening he went out to lie on his bed with the servants of his lord, but he did not go down to his house.

14 In the morning it happened that David wrote a letter to Joab and sent *it*

by the hand of Uriah. [15]And he wrote in the letter, saying, “Set Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retreat from him, that he may be struck down and die.” [16]So it was, while Joab besieged the city, that he assigned Uriah to a place where he knew there *were* valiant men. [17]Then the men of the city came out and fought with Joab. And *some* of the people of the servants of David fell; and Uriah the Hittite died also.

[18]Then Joab sent and told David all the things concerning the war, [19]and charged the messenger, saying, “When you have finished telling the matters of the war to the king, [20]if it happens that the king’s wrath rises, and he says to you: ‘Why did you approach so near to the city when you fought? Did you not know that they would shoot from the wall? [21]Who struck Abimelech the son of Jerubbesheth?[a] Was it not a woman who cast a piece of a millstone on him from the wall, so that he died in Thebez? Why did you go near the wall?’- then you shall say, ‘Your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also.’ ”

[22]So the messenger went, and came and told David all that Joab had sent by him. [23]And the messenger said to David, “Surely the men prevailed against us and came out to us in the field; then we drove them back as far as the entrance of the gate. [24]The archers shot from the wall at your servants; and *some* of the king’s servants are dead, and your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also.”

[25]Then David said to the messenger, “Thus you shall say to Joab: ‘Do not let this thing displease you, for the sword devours one as well as another. Strengthen your attack against the city, and overthrow it.’ So encourage him.”

[26]When the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she mourned for her husband. [27]And when her mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# DAVID AND BATHSHEBA-COSTLY COVER-UP

## (2 SAMUEL 11)

King David enjoyed the perks that come with power. His privileges included multiple wives and concubines. Although sexual satisfaction was always available, it did not insulate David from sexual temptation. Boredom and wandering attention made the king vulnerable. While casually viewing Jerusalem from his high palace porch one evening, David noticed a beautiful woman bathing.

The accidental glance became a fantasy. The fantasy evolved into fact-finding. David discovered the woman was Bathsheba, the wife of one of his military leaders. He summoned her to the palace and took sexual advantage of her. She later notified David that she was pregnant. Sinful decisions continued to escalate in damage, and they widened the group involved.

After a failed attempt to trick Uriah into sleeping with his wife so he would think he had caused Bathsheba's pregnancy, David took more desperate and deceitful actions. He ordered his general Joab to place Uriah in an exposed battle situation where he would almost surely be killed. This led to Uriah's death and David's attempt to cover up the sexual situation by a hasty marriage to Bathsheba.

Fortunately for David, God didn't give up on him, nor did the prophet Nathan. Deep in sin and denial, David needed a fearless friend with the wisdom to lance a cancerous boil of guilt. When Nathan did that (2 Sam. 12:1-15), David repented. Although the repentance was genuine, the consequences were costly. The baby David and Bathsheba conceived in sin died shortly after childbirth.

This sordid episode in David's life reveals the power of temptation and the destructiveness of sin. Sexual sin often leads to lies, cover-up, and deception that only further complicate the lives of those involved. The most destructive cover-ups are the ones that seem to work. They leave sin free to create a havoc of guilt and shame behind the scenes. Though repentance may be costly, it eventually yields better results than hidden and unconfessed sin.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Sexual Sin And Personal Holiness. See also the key passage note at 1 Thessalonians 4:3-7.

## NATHAN'S PARABLE AND DAVID'S CONFESSION

**12** Then the LORD sent Nathan to David. And he came to him, and said to him: "There were two men in one city, one rich and the other poor. 2The rich *man* had exceedingly many flocks and herds. 3But the poor *man* had nothing, except one little ewe lamb which he had bought and nourished; and it grew up together with him and with his children. It ate of his own food and drank from his own cup and lay in his bosom; and it was like a daughter to him. 4And a traveler came to the rich man, who refused to take from his own flock and from his own herd to prepare one for the wayfaring man who had come to him; but he took the poor man's lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him."

5So David's anger was greatly aroused against the man, and he said to Nathan, "*As* the LORD lives, the man who has done this shall surely die! 6And he shall restore fourfold for the lamb, because he did this thing and because he had no pity."

7Then Nathan said to David, "You *are* the man! Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. 8I gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your keeping, and gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if *that had been* too little, I also would have given you much more! 9Why have you despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in His sight? You have killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword; you have taken his wife *to be* your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the people of Ammon. 10Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.' 11Thus says the LORD: 'Behold, I will raise up adversity against you from your own house; and I will take your wives before your eyes and give *them* to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun. 12For you did *it* secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, before the sun.' "

13So David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD."

And Nathan said to David, "The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die. 14However, because by this deed you have given great occasion

to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also *who is* born to you shall surely die." [15]Then Nathan departed to his house.

**THE DEATH OF DAVID'S SON**

And the LORD struck the child that Uriah's wife bore to David, and it became ill. [16]David therefore pleaded with God for the child, and David fasted and went in and lay all night on the ground. [17]So the elders of his house arose *and went* to him, to raise him up from the ground. But he would not, nor did he eat food with them. [18]Then on the seventh day it came to pass that the child died. And the servants of David were afraid to tell him that the child was dead. For they said, "Indeed, while the child was alive, we spoke to him, and he would not heed our voice. How can we tell him that the child is dead? He may do some harm!"

[19]When David saw that his servants were whispering, David perceived that the child was dead. Therefore David said to his servants, "Is the child dead?"

And they said, "He is dead."

[20]So David arose from the ground, washed and anointed himself, and changed his clothes; and he went into the house of the LORD and worshiped. Then he went to his own house; and when he requested, they set food before him, and he ate. [21]Then his servants said to him, "What *is* this that you have done? You fasted and wept for the child *while he was* alive, but when the child died, you arose and ate food."

[22]And he said, "While the child was alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, 'Who can tell *whether* the LORD[a] will be gracious to me, that the child may live?' [23]But now he is dead; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me."

**SOLOMON IS BORN**

[24]Then David comforted Bathsheba his wife, and went in to her and lay with her. So she bore a son, and he[a] called his name Solomon. Now the LORD loved him, [25]and He sent *word* by the hand of Nathan the prophet: So he[a] called his name Jedidiah,[b] because of the LORD.

**RABBAH IS CAPTURED**

[26]Now Joab fought against Rabbah of the people of Ammon, and took the royal city. [27]And Joab sent messengers to David, and said, "I have fought against Rabbah, and I have taken the city's water *supply*. [28]Now therefore, gather the rest of the people together and encamp against the city and take it, lest I take the city and it be called after my name." [29]So David gathered all the people together and went to Rabbah, fought against it, and took it. [30]Then he took their king's crown from his head. Its weight *was* a talent of gold, with precious stones. And it was *set* on David's head. Also he brought out the spoil of the city in great abundance. [31]And he brought out the people who *were* in it, and put *them to work* with saws and iron picks and iron axes, and made them cross over to the brick works. So he did to all the cities of the people of Am-mon. Then David and all the people returned to Jerusalem.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# NATHAN-AN HONEST FRIEND

## (2 SAMUEL 12)

Everyone can use a friend like Nathan. Such a friend shows up not only when wanted, but especially when needed. In Nathan, David had the added benefit of a friend who brought God's perspective into their relationship.

Shortly after David succeeded in covering up a shocking episode of sexual sin followed by conspiracy and murder, his friend Nathan showed up one day with a story (2 Sam. 12:1-12). Nathan's vivid

parable became a tool God used to shatter David's denial of sin. Nathan confronted David about his sin and called him into accountability before God. Sometimes such accountability can be done privately and personally. Other times, sins of a public nature must be dealt with in a public manner.

In David's case, the sin may have seemed private, but the cover-up and the consequences were public. Not only did the child conceived with Bathsheba die, but God also announced that the sword of violence would never depart from David's house (2 Sam. 12:10). His own family would try to betray and kill him.

Nathan remained a friend to David and Bathsheba. His confrontation of their sin was not intended to destroy them, but to help them clear their consciences and deal with their behavior properly. Although he couldn't change the consequences that followed, Nathan's faithful friendship allowed David and Bathsheba to make the best before God of a shameful event. They may not have wanted everything he offered them as a friend, but he gave it to them anyway. God showed him what they really needed.

Do you have any friends like Nathan? Could you be a friend like Nathan?

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Personal Growth Through Personal Accountability. See also the key passage note at Romans 14:12.

**HEALTH AND SPIRITUALITY**

GEORGE OHLSCHLAGER

## (2 SAMUEL 12:1-23)

**I**t was one of those uneasy moments in counseling. The skeptical client, chafing at my challenge, reversed roles and bore right in. “If God is so good, if knowing Him is so good for you, why are *you* so sick?”

He was challenging the onset of diabetes, depression, and heart disease in my life-a dark triad of trouble that had assaulted me in my late forties. I was caught off guard by his attack and his implied assumption that my illness was evidence that God was not so good. After an awkward silence, I suddenly realized how backward my client was viewing things, how good God truly had been.

“You know,” I answered him, “considering my chaotic childhood and the way I abused my body in my youth, by all rights I should be dead by now. I am paying the wages of my past sins, and that is a sad and sobering truth. But the fact that I stand here at all, that I survived my heart attack and live today, is a testimony to God’s goodness to me.” And that, I told my now-disarmed client, was a truth worth celebrating.

A vital Christian faith yields good health in every way. Furthermore, as my case demonstrates, it lengthens life and gives meaning to it like nothing else can.

Yet the 20th-century world has received two sharply conflicting views about the relationship of health and Christian spirituality. The Bible has revealed a positive relationship-asserting that a strong spiritual life yields good health. Obedience to the call and commands of God yields life and peace, while disobedience brings death-the wages of sin.

In contrast, some of the leading lights of psychology and psychiatry have argued that religion is pathological, an irrational crutch that has reinforced disease and disorder rather than healing it.

Furthermore, most mental health professionals are less religious and more atheistic than the general populace, and consider religion to be of little value in helping others.

The professionals should more seriously study their own research. The truth about health and spirituality is there in plain view.

## RESEARCH ON HEALTH AND CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY

Buried among thousands of studies in health and mental health over the past half-century are a few gems that look at the relationship between religion and health.

*Mental health and well-being.* Increased religious commitment reduced suicidal behavior. In fact, one study showed that church attendance rates predicted suicide better than any other factor. Religious commitment also correlated with reduced drug abuse. A large survey of 14,000 youth indicated the lowest abuse rates among conservative religious groups, and the highest rates among the nonreligious and liberal religious groups. The importance of religion to the teenager was the key-religious values that were internalized in youth had more power than fear or peer pressure. Further, dynamic faith correlated with less depression. Religious commitment was shown to counteract the hopelessness and despair of depression. Seventeen different studies over four decades showed that less distress, a greater sense of well-being, and the occurrence of fewer psychiatric symptoms were all related to higher levels of religious commitment and church participation.

*Health and disease.* One study showed that even after allowing for the influence of smoking and socioeconomic status, the death rate for males who attended church frequently was just 60 percent of that of infrequent or nonattenders. Women who attended infrequently were twice as likely to die as those who did. Numerous studies have shown that higher levels of religious commitment produce healthier lifestyles, and are related to lower blood pressure levels and reduced

hypertension.

*Relationships.* Every study on marriage showed greater levels of marital satisfaction, exposing the fallacy that religious people stay together in unhappy unions because their faith demands it. Further, the myth that religious people are sexually repressed and unhappy is exploded by numerous findings that indicated highly religious women were more satisfied with their sexual lives than either nonreligious or even moderately religious women. All five studies on divorce showed that divorce rates were reduced as religious commitment increased.

## LIVING OUT TRUE RELIGION

Another way that religion has been studied distinguishes intrinsic and extrinsic religion. Intrinsic religion represents a dynamic faith, where people internalize their beliefs and live consistent with their moral teachings. Extrinsic religion, on the other hand, is religion for social status or personal gain. Comparing the two, the health benefits accrue to those living an intrinsic faith. Those espousing only an extrinsic faith were no more healthy than those who had no religion at all.

True believers live out their faith and walk daily in the presence of God. They pray for and seek the peace of God to surround and infuse them experientially. They live longer and stay healthy longer, show higher levels of life satisfaction, higher levels of personal contentment, have an ability to endure hardship and suffering, and show a consistently higher practice of forgiving others, thanksgiving, and laughter.

Those who refuse to forgive, who maintain a core of jealousy, envy, or bitterness, and who complain and blame are more prone to illness, psychiatric disorders, and a shorter, less contented life. Unrepented sin, ingratitude, and unforgiveness carries a weight that grows and accumulates throughout life. It does not stop on its own, but piles on until it becomes a crushing load.

Jesus' yoke is far lighter-it is freedom and renewal. Life lived daily in Christ includes the assurance of salvation and the promise of eternal life. It is also the best prescription for good health.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of health/spirituality include:

- Psalm 38:3
- Proverbs 3:7, 8; 4:20-22; 12:18; 16:24
- Jeremiah 33:6
- James 5:13-16
- 3 John 2

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on health/spirituality at Proverbs 17:22. See also the personality profile of Paul: Strength in Weakness.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Spiritual Health** *(12:1-23)* Psalm 51 records David's lament after being confronted by Nathan. Evidently David had felt no guilt until God, through Nathan, revealed his sin to him. When David felt the crushing weight of his guilt, he felt sick and tormented. "I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is always before me," he said (Ps. 51:3). David had withdrawn from God and failed spiritually. The result was devastating. The pain sent him back to God, for God alone could restore him. Guilt can crush people, or it can send them to God for forgiveness and spiritual restoration.
**Topic: Health/Spirituality**

## SOUL NOTE

**Me First** *(12:13)* As Nathan spun his story, David flashed with anger. “The man who has done this shall surely die!” he exclaimed (12:5). David clearly saw the rich man’s sin, but failed to make the connection with his own actions toward Uriah and Bathsheba until Nathan said, “You are the man!” (12:7). It is easy for us to hear a sermon or read a Bible passage and think of other people to whom it applies. Instead, we should first ask, “What can I learn that will help me grow spiritually?”
**Topic: Change/Maturity**

## SOUL NOTE

**Eternal Hope** *(12:23)* After the death of David and Bathsheba’s first son, David’s only consolation was that eventually he would “go to him.” While the child was alive, David had begged God to spare his life. When the child died, however, David was confident that the boy was with God and he would see him again. Christian parents who have faced the devastation of the death of a young child can take hope in David’s faith that God will bring the little ones to Himself. **Topic: Death**

**AMNON AND TAMAR**

**13** After this Absalom the son of David had a lovely sister, whose name *was* Tamar; and Amnon the son of David loved her. 2 Amnon was so distressed over his sister Tamar that he became sick; for she *was* a virgin. And it was improper for Amnon to do anything to her. 3 But Amnon had a friend whose name *was* Jonadab the son of Shimeah, David's brother. Now Jonadab *was* a very crafty man. 4 And he said to him, "Why *are* you, the king's son, becoming thinner day after day? Will you not tell me?"

Amnon said to him, "I love Tamar, my brother Absalom's sister."

5 So Jonadab said to him, "Lie down on your bed and pretend to be ill. And when your father comes to see you, say to him, 'Please let my sister Tamar come and give me food, and prepare the food in my sight, that I may see *it* and eat it from her hand.' " 6 Then Amnon lay down and pretended to be ill; and when the king came to see him, Amnon said to the king, "Please let Tamar my sister come and make a couple of cakes for me in my sight, that I may eat from her hand."

7 And David sent home to Tamar, saying, "Now go to your brother Amnon's house, and prepare food for him." 8 So Tamar went to her brother Amnon's house; and he was lying down. Then she took flour and kneaded *it*, made cakes in his sight, and baked the cakes. 9 And she took the pan and placed *them* out before him, but he refused to eat. Then Am-non said, "Have everyone go out from me." And they all went out from him. 10 Then Am-non said to Tamar, "Bring the food into the bedroom, that I may eat from your hand." And Tamar took the cakes which she had made, and brought *them* to Amnon her brother in the bedroom. 11 Now when she had brought *them* to him to eat, he took hold of her and said to her, "Come, lie with me, my sister."

12 But she answered him, "No, my brother, do not force me, for no such thing should be done in Israel. Do not do this disgraceful thing! 13 And I, where could I take my shame? And as for you, you would be like one of the fools in Israel. Now therefore, please speak to the king; for he will not withhold me from you." 14 However, he would not heed her voice; and being

stronger than she, he forced her and lay with her.

15 Then Amnon hated her exceedingly, so that the hatred with which he
hated her *was* greater than the love with which he had loved her. And Amnon
said to her, “Arise, be gone!”

16 So she said to him, “No, indeed! This evil of sending me away *is* worse
than the other that you did to me.”

But he would not listen to her. 17 Then he called his servant who attended
him, and said, “Here! Put this *woman* out, away from me, and bolt the door
behind her.” 18 Now she had on a robe of many colors, for the king’s virgin
daughters wore such apparel. And his servant put her out and bolted the door
behind her.

19 Then Tamar put ashes on her head, and tore her robe of many colors that
*was* on her, and laid her hand on her head and went away crying bitterly.
20 And Absalom her brother said to her, “Has Amnon your brother been with
you? But now hold your peace, my sister. He *is* your brother; do not take this
thing to heart.” So Tamar remained desolate in her brother Absalom’s house.

21 But when King David heard of all these things, he was very angry. 22 And
Absalom spoke to his brother Amnon neither good nor bad. For Absalom
hated Amnon, because he had forced his sister Tamar.

**ABSALOM MURDERS AMNON**

23 And it came to pass, after two full years, that Absalom had sheepshearers
in Baal Ha-zor, which *is* near Ephraim; so Absalom invited all the king’s
sons. 24 Then Absalom came to the king and said, “Kindly note, your servant
has sheepshearers; please, let the king and his servants go with your servant.”

25 But the king said to Absalom, “No, my son, let us not all go now, lest we
be a burden to you.” Then he urged him, but he would not go; and he blessed
him.

26 Then Absalom said, “If not, please let my brother Amnon go with us.”

And the king said to him, “Why should he go with you?” 27 But Absalom
urged him; so he let Amnon and all the king’s sons go with him.

28 Now Absalom had commanded his servants, saying, “Watch now, when

Amnon's heart is merry with wine, and when I say to you, 'Strike Amnon!' then kill him. Do not be afraid. Have I not commanded you? Be courageous and valiant." [29]So the servants of Absalom did to Amnon as Absalom had commanded. Then all the king's sons arose, and each one got on his mule and fled.

[30]And it came to pass, while they were on the way, that news came to David, saying, "Absalom has killed all the king's sons, and not one of them is left!" [31]So the king arose and tore his garments and lay on the ground, and all his servants stood by with their clothes torn. [32]Then Jonadab the son of Shimeah, David's brother, answered and said, "Let not my lord suppose they have killed all the young men, the king's sons, for only Amnon is dead. For by the command of Absalom this has been determined from the day that he forced his sister Tamar. [33]Now therefore, let not my lord the king take the thing to his heart, to think that all the king's sons are dead. For only Amnon is dead."

**ABSALOM FLEES TO GESHUR**

[34]Then Absalom fled. And the young man who was keeping watch lifted his eyes and looked, and there, many people were coming from the road on the hillside behind him.[a] [35]And Jonadab said to the king, "Look, the king's sons are coming; as your servant said, so it is." [36]So it was, as soon as he had finished speaking, that the king's sons indeed came, and they lifted up their voice and wept. Also the king and all his servants wept very bitterly.

[37]But Absalom fled and went to Talmai the son of Ammihud, king of Geshur. And *David* mourned for his son every day. [38]So Absalom fled and went to Geshur, and was there three years. [39]And King David[a] longed to go to[b] Ab-salom. For he had been comforted concerning Amnon, because he was dead.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# TAMAR-A LEGACY OF TRIALS

## (2 SAMUEL 13)

The painful legacy of turmoil that David provoked by his sin with Bathsheba soon spread to other family members. David's children, Amnon and Tamar, were snared by the curse. Amnon acted out a sexual obsession with Tamar, his half sister, by conspiring with a friend to trick her into being alone with him. The trap worked. Tamar begged for mercy and desperately suggested an honorable solution of marriage to Amnon. Since they were half siblings, the arrangement was possible. In spite of her pleading, Amnon raped her.

Once he had abused her, Amnon shamefully rejected Tamar. She lived in disgrace as a desolate woman in her brother Absalom's house. The painful loneliness of her life was a trial she faced as part of a legacy in her family. For although David was aware of the tragedy unfolding in his family and got angry, he actually did nothing. Meanwhile, Tamar's brother Absalom festered in hatred and planned vengeance on Amnon. There was more than Tamar's honor at stake. Amnon's position as the firstborn son and likely heir to the throne certainly increased Absalom's desire to see him eliminated. Years later, Absalom lured Amnon away from the palace and killed him.

These trials could have been avoided. Even though David's heart was broken by the behavior of his children, he never tried to correct the injustices. Perhaps his own guilt and shame immobilized him. His denial and delay only let matters fester and worsen. The consequences were devastating.

The trials experienced by David's children speak volumes about David's own lack of self-control and his lack of parental discipline.

> Parents cannot insulate their children from all trials and disappointments, nor should they. Parents must, however, provide positive examples and positive discipline to help their children avoid some kinds of trials that they shouldn't have to face.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Problems in Children. See also the key passage note on children problems at James 1:27. Turn to the article about The Trial of Rejection. See also the key passage note on trials at Psalm 34:18.

**ABSALOM RETURNS TO JERUSALEM**

**14** So Joab the son of Zeruiah perceived that the king's heart *was* concerned
about Absalom. 2And Joab sent to Tekoa and brought from there a wise
woman, and said to her, "Please pretend to be a mourner, and put on
mourning apparel; do not anoint yourself with oil, but act like a woman who
has been mourning a long time for the dead. 3Go to the king and speak to him
in this manner." So Joab put the words in her mouth.

4And when the woman of Tekoa spoke[a] to the king, she fell on her face to
the ground and prostrated herself, and said, "Help, O king!"

5Then the king said to her, "What troubles you?"

And she answered, "Indeed I *am* a widow, my husband is dead. 6Now your
maidservant had two sons; and the two fought with each other in the field,
and *there was* no one to part them, but the one struck the other and killed
him. 7And now the whole family has risen up against your maidservant, and
they said, 'Deliver him who struck his brother, that we may execute him for
the life of his brother whom he killed; and we will destroy the heir also.' So
they would extinguish my ember that is left, and leave to my husband *neither*
name nor remnant on the earth."

8Then the king said to the woman, "Go to your house, and I will give
orders concerning you."

9And the woman of Tekoa said to the king, "My lord, O king, *let* the
iniquity *be* on me and on my father's house, and the king and his throne *be*
guiltless."

10So the king said, "Whoever says *anything* to you, bring him to me, and
he shall not touch you anymore."

11Then she said, "Please let the king remember the LORD your God, and do
not permit the avenger of blood to destroy anymore, lest they destroy my
son."

And he said, "*As* the LORD lives, not one hair of your son shall fall to the
ground."

12Therefore the woman said, "Please, let your maidservant speak *another*

word to my lord the king."

And he said, "Say on."

13So the woman said: "Why then have you schemed such a thing against
the people of God? For the king speaks this thing as one who is guilty, *in that*
the king does not bring his banished one home again. 14For we will surely die
and *become* like water spilled on the ground, which cannot be gathered up
again. Yet God does not take away a life; but He devises means, so that His
banished ones are not expelled from Him. 15Now therefore, I have come to
speak of this thing to my lord the king because the people have made me
afraid. And your maidservant said, 'I will now speak to the king; it may be
that the king will perform the request of his maidservant. 16For the king will
hear and deliver his maidservant from the hand of the man *who would* destroy
me and my son together from the inheritance of God.' 17Your maidservant
said, 'The word of my lord the king will now be comforting; for as the angel
of God, so *is* my lord the king in discerning good and evil. And may the
LORD your God be with you.' "

18Then the king answered and said to the woman, "Please do not hide from
me anything that I ask you."

And the woman said, "Please, let my lord the king speak."

19So the king said, "*Is* the hand of Joab with you in all this?" And the
woman answered and said, "*As* you live, my lord the king, no one can turn to
the right hand or to the left from anything that my lord the king has spoken.
For your servant Joab commanded me, and he put all these words in the
mouth of your maidservant. 20To bring about this change of affairs your
servant Joab has done this thing; but my lord *is* wise, according to the
wisdom of the angel of God, to know everything that *is* in the earth."

21And the king said to Joab, "All right, I have granted this thing. Go
therefore, bring back the young man Absalom."

22Then Joab fell to the ground on his face and bowed himself, and thanked
the king. And Joab said, "Today your servant knows that I have found favor
in your sight, my lord, O king, in that the king has fulfilled the request of his
servant." 23So Joab arose and went to Geshur, and brought Absalom to

Jerusalem. [24]And the king said, “Let him return to his own house, but do not let him see my face.” So Absalom returned to his own house, but did not see the king’s face.

## DAVID FORGIVES ABSALOM

[25]Now in all Israel there was no one who was praised as much as Absalom for his good looks. From the sole of his foot to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him. [26]And when he cut the hair of his head-at the end of every year he cut *it* because it was heavy on him-when he cut it, he weighed the hair of his head at two hundred shekels according to the king’s standard. [27]To Absalom were born three sons, and one daughter whose name *was* Tamar. She was a woman of beautiful appearance.

[28]And Absalom dwelt two full years in Jerusalem, but did not see the king’s face. [29]Therefore Absalom sent for Joab, to send him to the king, but he would not come to him. And when he sent again the second time, he would not come. [30]So he said to his servants, “See, Joab’s field is near mine, and he has barley there; go and set it on fire.” And Absalom’s servants set the field on fire.

[31]Then Joab arose and came to Absalom’s house, and said to him, “Why have your servants set my field on fire?”

[32] And Absalom answered Joab, “Look, I sent to you, saying, ‘Come here, so that I may send you to the king, to say, “Why have I come from Geshur? *It would be* better for me *to be* there still.” ’ Now therefore, let me see the king’s face; but if there is iniquity in me, let him execute me.”

[33]So Joab went to the king and told him. And when he had called for Absalom, he came to the king and bowed himself on his face to the ground before the king. Then the king kissed Absalom.

**SOUL NOTE**

**One Person Can Forgive** *(14:33)* Despite his pain and anger, David "kissed Absalom," expressing his love and forgiveness. Despite all that Absalom had done, David allowed for the possibility of reconciliation by forgiving his son. Absalom, however, had no tears, no repentance, no change of heart. Indeed, Absalom would eventually try to take his father's throne (15:10). One person can forgive, but it takes two to reconcile. Forgiveness does not guarantee reconciliation. Forgiveness, however, does put salve on those who are willing to let go of the hurt and wrongs done by others. **Topic: Forgiveness**

## ABSALOM'S TREASON

**15** After this it happened that Absalom provided himself with chariots and
horses, and fifty men to run before him. 2Now Absalom would rise early
and stand beside the way to the gate. *So* it was, whenever anyone who had a
lawsuit came to the king for a decision, that Absalom would call to him and
say, "What city *are* you from?" And he would say, "Your servant *is* from
such and such a tribe of Israel." 3Then Absalom would say to him, "Look,
your case *is* good and right; but *there is* no deputy of the king to hear you."
4Moreover Absalom would say, "Oh, that I were made judge in the land, and
everyone who has any suit or cause would come to me; then I would give him
justice." 5And *so* it was, whenever anyone came near to bow down to him,
that he would put out his hand and take him and kiss him. 6In this manner
Absalom acted toward all Israel who came to the king for judgment. So
Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.

7Now it came to pass after forty[a] years that Absalom said to the king,
"Please, let me go to Hebron and pay the vow which I made to the LORD.
8For your servant took a vow while I dwelt at Geshur in Syria, saying, 'If the
LORD indeed brings me back to Jerusalem, then I will serve the LORD.' "

9And the king said to him, "Go in peace." So he arose and went to Hebron.

10Then Absalom sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, "As
soon as you hear the sound of the trumpet, then you shall say, 'Absalom
reigns in Hebron!' " 11And with Absalom went two hundred men invited
from Jerusalem, and they went along innocently and did not know anything.
12Then Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counselor, from
his city-from Giloh-while he offered sacrifices. And the conspiracy grew
strong, for the people with Absalom continually increased in number.

## DAVID ESCAPES FROM JERUSALEM

13Now a messenger came to David, saying, "The hearts of the men of
Israel are with Ab-salom."

14So David said to all his servants who *were* with him at Jerusalem, "Arise,
and let us flee, or we shall not escape from Absalom. Make haste to depart,

lest he overtake us suddenly and bring disaster upon us, and strike the city with the edge of the sword."

15 And the king's servants said to the king, "We *are* your servants, *ready to do* whatever my lord the king commands." 16 Then the king went out with all his household after him. But the king left ten women, concubines, to keep the house. 17 And the king went out with all the people after him, and stopped at the outskirts. 18 Then all his servants passed before him; and all the Cherethites, all the Pelethites, and all the Gittites, six hundred men who had followed him from Gath, passed before the king.

19 Then the king said to Ittai the Gittite, "Why are you also going with us? Return and remain with the king. For you *are* a foreigner and also an exile from your own place. 20 In fact, you came *only* yesterday. Should I make you wander up and down with us today, since I go I know not where? Return, and take your brethren back. Mercy and truth *be* with you."

21 But Ittai answered the king and said, "*As* the LORD lives, and *as* my lord the king lives, surely in whatever place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also your servant will be."

22 So David said to Ittai, "Go, and cross over." Then Ittai the Gittite and all his men and all the little ones who *were* with him crossed over. 23 And all the country wept with a loud voice, and all the people crossed over. The king himself also crossed over the Brook Kidron, and all the people crossed over toward the way of the wilderness.

24 There was Zadok also, and all the Levites with him, bearing the ark of the covenant of God. And they set down the ark of God, and Abiathar went up until all the people had finished crossing over from the city. 25 Then the king said to Zadok, "Carry the ark of God back into the city. If I find favor in the eyes of the LORD, He will bring me back and show me *both* it and His dwelling place. 26 But if He says thus: 'I have no delight in you,' here I am, let Him do to me as seems good to Him." 27 The king also said to Zadok the priest, "*Are* you *not* a seer? Return to the city in peace, and your two sons with you, Ahimaaz your son, and Jonathan the son of Abiathar. 28 See, I will wait in the plains of the wilderness until word comes from you to inform me." 29 Therefore Zadok and Abiathar carried the ark of God back to

Jerusalem. And they remained there.

30So David went up by the Ascent of the *Mount of* Olives, and wept as he went up; and he had his head covered and went barefoot. And all the people who *were* with him covered their heads and went up, weeping as they went up. 31Then *someone* told David, saying, "Ahithophel *is* among the conspirators with Absalom." And David said, "O LORD, I pray, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness!"

32Now it happened when David had come to the top *of the mountain,* where he worshiped God-there was Hushai the Archite coming to meet him with his robe torn and dust on his head. 33David said to him, "If you go on with me, then you will become a burden to me. 34But if you return to the city, and say to Absalom, 'I will be your servant, O king; *as* I *was* your father's servant previously, so I *will* now also *be* your servant,' then you may defeat the counsel of Ahithophel for me. 35And *do* you not *have* Zadok and Abiathar the priests with you there? Therefore it will be *that* whatever you hear from the king's house, you shall tell to Zadok and Abiathar the priests. 36Indeed *they have* there with them their two sons, Ahimaaz, Zadok's *son,* and Jonathan, Abiathar's *son;* and by them you shall send me everything you hear."

37So Hushai, David's friend, went into the city. And Absalom came into Jerusalem.

Adolescent Problems

**THE DISCONNECTED GENERATION**

JOSH MCDOWELL

(2 SAMUEL 15)

**“I** ’m so lonely I can’t stand it. I want to be special to somebody, but there’s nobody who cares about me. I can’t remember anybody ever touching me, or smiling at me, or wanting to be with me. I feel so empty inside.”

“It’s like I have this really heavy heart and this burden on my back, but I don’t know what it is. There’s something in me that makes me want to cry, and I don’t even know what it is.”

Hear the words of teens-the outstanding representatives of the “disconnected generation.” They are part of the population group referred to as the Echo Boomers, born between 1977 and 1994. Primarily the offspring of the Baby Boomer generation, today’s teenage population is over 30 million strong. They are perhaps the richest, most populous, best-educated, and most physically fit generation in history. Kids are growing up in a prosperous society with unprecedented career opportunities and access to virtually limitless information. And yet, more than any other generation before theirs, they feel disconnected. Even kids from good Christian homes feel alienated from their parents, from adults in general, and from society as a whole. Lacking a sense of personal identity, today’s teens feel adrift in a hostile world.

## ADOLESCENCE MEANS CHANGE

When children enter adolescence, sometimes it seems like a metamorphosis gone bad. In some ways, it appears that a beautiful butterfly is being transformed into an ugly caterpillar. Almost overnight, these cute, cherubic, charming little kids who were a delight to be around turn into erratic, moody, and often unruly teenagers. One minute they are all smiles, and the next minute they blow their stack or stomp away sullen and silent. Once-perfect kids can be forgetful, irresponsible, impulsive, contradictory, insolent, and confused-sometimes all in the same day!

A lot of young people are good kids whose priorities for school,

work, money, or use of time are a little out of whack-or at least they don't match parents' priorities for them. They are no longer quick to obey and easy to control. In fact, parents wonder and worry at times if they will soon be totally beyond their control.

## RESPONDING TOTHE CHANGE

So, how do parents respond to their emerging teenagers? In a genuinely sincere but misguided attempt to help, many think the primary answer to teenager angst and struggle is more structure. More rules. So they lay down the law and tighten the screws. Assuming that their primary job is to fix the problem, correct the misbehavior, enforce the rules, or right the wrong, their well-meaning efforts often leave kids feeling more disconnected from their own families.

Clearly, adults must provide clear guidance and hold their children accountable for their actions even when they feel confused and disconnected. Teens need to follow certain rules even when they think they have the right to make up their own rules. But here is the critical question: How do parents provide appropriate rules and guidelines for children without prompting them to disconnect relationally?

The answer relates directly to how the rules are presented. Parents must be challenged to present rules in the context of loving relationships. Biblical principles and personal experience with youth show that young people do not respond to rules; they respond to relationships. Two formulas illustrate the contrast:

Rules - Relationships = Rebellion

Rules + Relationships = Response

The real challenge is learning to enter each young person's sometimes complex and confusing world and make a relational connection at a deep emotional level. If kids perceive that their

parents are more concerned about the rules than they are about them, the kids will be tempted to disregard the rules. When kids know that they are more important to their parents than the rules-that parents love them no matter what they do or do not do-they are much more likely to follow the guidelines. The difference is a relational context for the rules that govern a family.

Notice how important "relationship" was to God. Speaking for God, Moses said, "And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but . . . to keep the commandments of the LORD and His statutes which I command you today for your good?" (Deut. 10:12, 13). As rebellious as Israel was at times, God always treated them like a loving Father, doing everything for their good. The Ten Commandments were given as a safeguard and a blessing, not a burden. The Law was God's loving effort to protect and provide for His people.

Many adults believe that the rules and regulations they lay down for their children are "for their own good." But what is often missing is the relational factor. Telling kids, "I'm doing this for your own good," will not cut it if they seldom see or hear unconditional love through time, attention, and care. Rules without relationship lead to a relational disconnect, which prompts rebellion. But rules within a loving relationship usually lead to a positive response.

Not all children will rebel; many will rebel, but in varying degrees. Adolescence is a time of discovering one's individuality and what God is preparing for each teenager's future. It is a time of uncertainty, wonder about the future, desire to be cared for at home while at the same time wanting (and needing) to eventually be out on their own. With love, open communication, and constant prayer, parents can weather these turbulent times, preparing their children to be responsible, God-honoring adults.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issues of adolescent problems include:

- Deuteronomy 6:1-25
- Proverbs 3:12; 29:17
- Ecclesiastes 12:1
- Matthew 7:7-12
- Luke 15:11-32
- Ephesians 6:4

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on adolescent problems at Luke 15:17, 18. See also the personality profile of Eli's Sons-wayward Children.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Do Them a Favor** *(15:14)* David had not dealt decisively with Amnon's rape of Tamar, so Absalom had taken matters into his own hands. David did not deal decisively with Absalom's murder of Amnon, nor with Absalom's treason. Absalom was used to getting his own way without facing consequences, and had seen the same pattern with the rest of his siblings. Absalom's story pictures an undisciplined child becoming an undisciplined adult. When parents discipline their children, they do so knowing that they are doing their children a favor-saving them from the tragic consequences of an undisciplined life. **Topic: Child Discipline**

## MEPHIBOSHETH'S SERVANT

**16** When David was a little past the top *of the mountain,* there was Ziba the
servant of Mephibosheth, who met him with a couple of saddled
donkeys, and on them two hundred *loaves* of bread, one hundred clusters of
raisins, one hundred summer fruits, and a skin of wine. 2And the king said to
Ziba, "What do you mean to do with these?"

So Ziba said, "The donkeys *are* for the king's household to ride on, the
bread and summer fruit for the young men to eat, and the wine for those who
are faint in the wilderness to drink."

3Then the king said, "And where *is* your master's son?"

And Ziba said to the king, "Indeed he is staying in Jerusalem, for he said,
'Today the house of Israel will restore the kingdom of my father to me.' "

4So the king said to Ziba, "Here, all that *belongs* to Mephibosheth *is*
yours."

And Ziba said, "I humbly bow before you, *that* I may find favor in your
sight, my lord, O king!"

## SHIMEI CURSES DAVID

5Now when King David came to Bahurim, there was a man from the
family of the house of Saul, whose name *was* Shimei the son of Gera, coming
from there. He came out, cursing continuously as he came. 6And he threw
stones at David and at all the servants of King David. And all the people and
all the mighty men *were* on his right hand and on his left. 7Also Shimei said
thus when he cursed: "Come out! Come out! You bloodthirsty man, you
rogue! 8The LORD has brought upon you all the blood of the house of Saul, in
whose place you have reigned; and the LORD has delivered the kingdom into
the hand of Absalom your son. So now you *are caught* in your own evil,
because you are a bloodthirsty man!"

9Then Abishai the son of Zeruiah said to the king, "Why should this dead
dog curse my lord the king? Please, let me go over and take off his head!"

10But the king said, "What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah? So

let him curse, because the LORD has said to him, ‘Curse David.’ Who then shall say, ‘Why have you done so?’ ”

11And David said to Abishai and all his servants, “See how my son who came from my own body seeks my life. How much more now *may this* Benjamite? Let him alone, and let him curse; for so the LORD has ordered him. 12It may be that the LORD will look on my affliction,[a] and that the LORD will repay me with good for his cursing this day.” 13And as David and his men went along the road, Shim-ei went along the hillside opposite him and cursed as he went, threw stones at him and kicked up dust. 14Now the king and all the people who *were* with him became weary; so they refreshed themselves there.

**THE ADVICE OF AHITHOPHEL**

15Meanwhile Absalom and all the people, the men of Israel, came to Jerusalem; and Ahithophel *was* with him. 16And so it was, when Hushai the Archite, David’s friend, came to Absalom, that Hushai said to Absalom, “*Long* live the king! *Long* live the king!”

17So Absalom said to Hushai, “*Is* this your loyalty to your friend? Why did you not go with your friend?”

18And Hushai said to Absalom, “No, but whom the LORD and this people and all the men of Israel choose, his I will be, and with him I will remain. 19Furthermore, whom should I serve? *Should I* not *serve* in the presence of his son? As I have served in your father’s presence, so will I be in your presence.”

20Then Absalom said to Ahithophel, “Give advice as to what we should do.”

21And Ahithophel said to Absalom, “Go in to your father’s concubines, whom he has left to keep the house; and all Israel will hear that you are abhorred by your father. Then the hands of all who are with you will be strong.”

22So they pitched a tent for Absalom on the top of the house, and Absalom went in to his father’s concubines in the sight of all Israel.

[23]Now the advice of Ahithophel, which he gave in those days, *was* as if one had inquired at the oracle of God. So *was* all the advice of Ahithophel both with David and with Ab-salom.

**17** Moreover Ahithophel said to Absa-lom, “Now let me choose twelve
thousand men, and I will arise and pursue David tonight. 2I will come
upon him while he *is* weary and weak, and make him afraid. And all the
people who *are* with him will flee, and I will strike only the king. 3Then I
will bring back all the people to you. When all return except the man whom
you seek, all the people will be at peace.” 4And the saying pleased Ab-salom
and all the elders of Israel.

**THE ADVICE OF HUSHAI**

5Then Absalom said, “Now call Hushai the Archite also, and let us hear
what he says too.” 6And when Hushai came to Absalom, Absalom spoke to
him, saying, “Ahithophel has spoken in this manner. Shall we do as he says?
If not, speak up.”

7So Hushai said to Absalom: “The advice that Ahithophel has given *is* not
good at this time. 8For,” said Hushai, “you know your father and his men,
that they *are* mighty men, and they *are* enraged in their minds, like a bear
robbed of her cubs in the field; and your father *is* a man of war, and will not
camp with the people. 9Surely by now he is hidden in some pit, or in some
*other* place. And it will be, when some of them are overthrown at the first,
that whoever hears *it* will say, ‘There is a slaughter among the people who
follow Absalom.’ 10And even he *who is* valiant, whose heart *is* like the heart
of a lion, will melt completely. For all Israel knows that your father *is* a
mighty man, and *those* who *are* with him *are* valiant men. 11Therefore I
advise that all Israel be fully gathered to you, from Dan to Beer-sheba, like
the sand that *is* by the sea for multitude, and that you go to battle in
person.12So we will come upon him in some place where he may be found,
and we will fall on him as the dew falls on the ground. And of him and all the
men who *are* with him there shall not be left so much as one. 13Moreover, if
he has withdrawn into a city, then all Israel shall bring ropes to that city; and
we will pull it into the river, until there is not one small stone found there.”

14So Absalom and all the men of Israel said, “The advice of Hushai the
Archite *is* better than the advice of Ahithophel.” For the LORD had purposed
to defeat the good advice of Ahithophel, to the intent that the LORD might
bring disaster on Absalom.

**HUSHAI WARNS DAVID TO ESCAPE**

15 Then Hushai said to Zadok and Abiathar the priests, “Thus and so Ahithophel advised Absalom and the elders of Israel, and thus and so I have advised. 16 Now therefore, send quickly and tell David, saying, ‘Do not spend this night in the plains of the wilderness, but speedily cross over, lest the king and all the people who *are* with him be swallowed up.’ ” 17 Now Jonathan and Ahimaaz stayed at En Rogel, for they dared not be seen coming into the city; so a female servant would come and tell them, and they would go and tell King David. 18 Nevertheless a lad saw them, and told Absalom. But both of them went away quickly and came to a man’s house in Bahurim, who had a well in his court; and they went down into it. 19 Then the woman took and spread a covering over the well’s mouth, and spread ground grain on it; and the thing was not known. 20 And when Absalom’s servants came to the woman at the house, they said, “Where *are* Ahimaaz and Jonathan?”

So the woman said to them, “They have gone over the water brook.”

And when they had searched and could not find *them*, they returned to Jerusalem. 21 Now it came to pass, after they had departed, that they came up out of the well and went and told King David, and said to David, “Arise and cross over the water quickly. For thus has Ahithophel advised against you.” 22 So David and all the people who *were* with him arose and crossed over the Jordan. By morning light not one of them was left who had not gone over the Jordan.

23 Now when Ahithophel saw that his advice was not followed, he saddled a donkey, and arose and went home to his house, to his city. Then he put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died; and he was buried in his father’s tomb.

24 Then David went to Mahanaim. And Ab-salom crossed over the Jordan, he and all the men of Israel with him. 25 And Absalom made Amasa captain of the army instead of Joab. This Amasa *was* the son of a man whose name *was* Jithra,[a] an Israelite,[b] who had gone in to Abigail the daughter of Nahash, sister of Zeru-iah, Joab’s mother. 26 So Israel and Absalom encamped in the land of Gilead.

27 Now it happened, when David had come to Mahanaim, that Shobi the

son of Nahash from Rabbah of the people of Ammon, Machir the son of Ammiel from Lo Debar, and Barzil-lai the Gileadite from Rogelim, [28]brought beds and basins, earthen vessels and wheat, barley and flour, parched *grain* and beans, lentils and parched *seeds*, [29]honey and curds, sheep and cheese of the herd, for David and the people who *were* with him to eat. For they said, “The people are hungry and weary and thirsty in the wilderness.”

**ABSALOM'S DEFEAT AND DEATH**

**18** And David numbered the people who *were* with him, and set captains of
thousands and captains of hundreds over them. 2Then David sent out one
third of the people under the hand of Joab, one third under the hand of
Abishai the son of Zeruiah, Joab's brother, and one third under the hand of
Ittai the Gittite. And the king said to the people, "I also will surely go out
with you myself."

3But the people answered, "You shall not go out! For if we flee away, they
will not care about us; nor if half of us die, will they care about us. But *you
are* worth ten thousand of us now. For you are now more help to us in the
city."

4Then the king said to them, "Whatever seems best to you I will do." So
the king stood beside the gate, and all the people went out by hundreds and
by thousands. 5Now the king had commanded Joab, Abishai, and Ittai,
saying, "*Deal* gently for my sake with the young man Absalom." And all the
people heard when the king gave all the captains orders concerning Absalom.

6So the people went out into the field of battle against Israel. And the battle
was in the woods of Ephraim. 7The people of Israel were overthrown there
before the servants of David, and a great slaughter of twenty thousand took
place there that day. 8For the battle there was scattered over the face of the
whole countryside, and the woods devoured more people that day than the
sword devoured.

9Then Absalom met the servants of David. Absalom rode on a mule. The
mule went under the thick boughs of a great terebinth tree, and his head
caught in the terebinth; so he was left hanging between heaven and earth.
And the mule which *was* under him went on. 10Now a certain man saw *it* and
told Joab, and said, "I just saw Absalom hanging in a terebinth tree!"

11So Joab said to the man who told him, "You just saw *him!* And why did
you not strike him there to the ground? I would have given you ten *shekels* of
silver and a belt."

12But the man said to Joab, "Though I were to receive a thousand *shekels*
of silver in my hand, I would not raise my hand against the king's son. For in

our hearing the king commanded you and Abishai and Ittai, saying, ‘Beware lest anyone *touch* the young man Absalom!’[a] 13Otherwise I would have dealt falsely against my own life. For there is nothing hidden from the king, and you yourself would have set yourself against *me.* ”

14Then Joab said, “I cannot linger with you.” And he took three spears in his hand and thrust them through Absalom’s heart, while he was *still* alive in the midst of the terebinth tree. 15And ten young men who bore Joab’s armor surrounded Absalom, and struck and killed him.

16So Joab blew the trumpet, and the people returned from pursuing Israel. For Joab held back the people. 17And they took Absalom and cast him into a large pit in the woods, and laid a very large heap of stones over him. Then all Israel fled, everyone to his tent.

18Now Absalom in his lifetime had taken and set up a pillar for himself, which *is* in the King’s Valley. For he said, “I have no son to keep my name in remembrance.” He called the pillar after his own name. And to this day it is called Absalom’s Monument.

## DAVID HEARS OF ABSALOM’S DEATH

19Then Ahimaaz the son of Zadok said, “Let me run now and take the news to the king, how the LORD has avenged him of his enemies.”

20And Joab said to him, “You shall not take the news this day, for you shall take the news another day. But today you shall take no news, because the king’s son is dead.” 21Then Joab said to the Cushite, “Go, tell the king what you have seen.” So the Cushite bowed himself to Joab and ran.

22And Ahimaaz the son of Zadok said again to Joab, “But whatever happens, please let me also run after the Cushite.”

So Joab said, “Why will you run, my son, since you have no news ready?”

23“But whatever happens,” *he said,* “let me run.”

So he said to him, “Run.” Then Ahimaaz ran by way of the plain, and outran the Cushite.

24Now David was sitting between the two gates. And the watchman went up to the roof over the gate, to the wall, lifted his eyes and looked, and there

was a man, running alone. [25]Then the watchman cried out and told the king. And the king said, “If he *is* alone, *there is* news in his mouth.” And he came rapidly and drew near.

[26]Then the watchman saw *another* man running, and the watchman called to the gatekeeper and said, “There is *another* man, running alone!”

And the king said, “He also brings news.”

[27]So the watchman said, “I think the running of the first is like the running of Ahimaaz the son of Zadok.”

And the king said, “He *is* a good man, and comes with good news.”

[28]So Ahimaaz called out and said to the king, “All is well!” Then he bowed down with his face to the earth before the king, and said, “Blessed *be* the LORD your God, who has delivered up the men who raised their hand against my lord the king!”

[29]The king said, “Is the young man Absalom safe?”

Ahimaaz answered, “When Joab sent the king’s servant and *me* your servant, I saw a great tumult, but I did not know what *it was about.* ”

[30]And the king said, “Turn aside *and* stand here.” So he turned aside and stood still.

[31]Just then the Cushite came, and the Cush-ite said, “There is good news, my lord the king! For the LORD has avenged you this day of all those who rose against you.”

[32]And the king said to the Cushite, “Is the young man Absalom safe?”

So the Cushite answered, “May the enemies of my lord the king, and all who rise against you to do harm, be like *that* young man!”

## DAVID’S MOURNING FOR ABSALOM

[33]Then the king was deeply moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept. And as he went, he said thus: “O my son Absalom-my son, my son Absalom-if only I had died in your place! O Absalom my son, my son!”

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# DAVID AND ABSALOM-A CRISIS IN THE MAKING

## (2 SAMUEL 18:5-19)

Before he died, David had the crushing experience of watching at least three of his sons destroy their own lives. Two of them tried to replace their own father as king by force.

The third-born son, Absalom, attempted the first coup. He paid for his temporary success with his life. David loved Absalom deeply, but failed to discipline his son or give him wise direction. He stood by helplessly after Absalom killed his half brother Amnon and then fled the country. When he finally returned, Absalom suffered no consequences for his past behavior.

David's passivity allowed Absalom to shape their relationship. He bluffed his father into forgiving him. In fact, he began to lay the groundwork for taking over the throne. He used his considerable charm and "stole the hearts of the men of Israel" (2 Sam. 15:6).

Once he had gathered key allies and the support of the people, Absalom rebelled. David did not resist his son's revolution; instead, he fled Jerusalem. Eventually, however, the superior military strategy of David and his generals defeated Absalom's forces. Even then, David's intention was to spare his son. But Joab, David's chief of staff, killed the traitor.

Although the crisis for the kingdom was over, David mourned Absalom, a son whose undisciplined life had drifted from crisis to crisis. David remained silent when he should have intervened. Fear of losing his son clouded David's ability to see that his son was already lost.

David's love was so full of fear that it unintentionally brought about the very thing David feared most.

Some crises come into our lives from situations beyond our control. In those situations, we trust in God, knowing that He is "a very present help in trouble" (Ps. 46:1). Some crises come from unwise choices that we make. In those cases, God is still a "very present help," but He may not take away the natural consequences of those choices. In a crisis, turn to God. Seek what He may want to teach you through it. Change what needs to change, then trust God for the rest.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Crises and Crisis Intervention. See also the key passage note at Psalm 46:1.

**19** And Joab was told, “Behold, the king is weeping and mourning for
Absa-lom.” 2So the victory that day was *turned* into mourning for all the
people. For the people heard it said that day, “The king is grieved for his
son.” 3And the people stole back into the city that day, as people who are
ashamed steal away when they flee in battle. 4But the king covered his face,
and the king cried out with a loud voice, “O my son Absalom! O Absalom,
my son, my son!”

5Then Joab came into the house to the king, and said, “Today you have
disgraced all your servants who today have saved your life, the lives of your
sons and daughters, the lives of your wives and the lives of your concubines,
6in that you love your enemies and hate your friends. For you have declared
today that you regard neither princes nor servants; for today I perceive that if
Absalom had lived and all of us had died today, then it would have pleased
you well. 7Now therefore, arise, go out and speak comfort to your servants.
For I swear by the LORD, if you do not go out, not one will stay with you this
night. And that will be worse for you than all the evil that has befallen you
from your youth until now.” 8Then the king arose and sat in the gate. And
they told all the people, saying, “There is the king, sitting in the gate.” So all
the people came before the king.

For everyone of Israel had fled to his tent.

## DAVID RETURNS TO JERUSALEM

9Now all the people were in a dispute throughout all the tribes of Israel,
saying, “The king saved us from the hand of our enemies, he delivered us
from the hand of the Philistines, and now he has fled from the land because
of Absalom. 10But Absalom, whom we anointed over us, has died in battle.
Now therefore, why do you say nothing about bringing back the king?”

11So King David sent to Zadok and Abiathar the priests, saying, “Speak to
the elders of Judah, saying, ‘Why are you the last to bring the king back to
his house, since the words of all Israel have come to the king, to his *very*
house? 12You *are* my brethren, you *are* my bone and my flesh. Why then are
you the last to bring back the king?’ 13And say to Amasa, ‘*Are* you not my
bone and my flesh? God do so to me, and more also, if you are not

commander of the army before me continually in place of Joab.' " [14]So he swayed the hearts of all the men of Judah, just as *the heart of* one man, so that they sent *this word* to the king: "Return, you and all your servants!"

[15]Then the king returned and came to the Jordan. And Judah came to Gilgal, to go to meet the king, to escort the king across the Jordan. [16]And Shimei the son of Gera, a Benja-mite, who *was* from Bahurim, hurried and came down with the men of Judah to meet King David. [17]*There were* a thousand men of Benjamin with him, and Ziba the servant of the house of Saul, and his fifteen sons and his twenty servants with him; and they went over the Jordan before the king. [18]Then a ferryboat went across to carry over the king's household, and to do what he thought good.

**DAVID'S MERCY TO SHIMEI**

Now Shimei the son of Gera fell down before the king when he had crossed the Jordan. [19]Then he said to the king, "Do not let my lord impute iniquity to me, or remember what wrong your servant did on the day that my lord the king left Jerusalem, that the king should take *it* to heart. [20]For I, your servant, know that I have sinned. Therefore here I am, the first to come today of all the house of Joseph to go down to meet my lord the king."

[21]But Abishai the son of Zeruiah answered and said, "Shall not Shimei be put to death for this, because he cursed the LORD's anointed?"

[22]And David said, "What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah, that you should be adversaries to me today? Shall any man be put to death today in Israel? For do I not know that today I *am* king over Israel?" [23]Therefore the king said to Shimei, "You shall not die." And the king swore to him.

**DAVID AND MEPHIBOSHETH MEET**

[24]Now Mephibosheth the son of Saul came down to meet the king. And he had not cared for his feet, nor trimmed his mustache, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he returned in peace. [25]So it was, when he had come to Jerusalem to meet the king, that the king said to him, "Why did you not go with me, Mephibosheth?"

[26]And he answered, "My lord, O king, my servant deceived me. For your

servant said, ‘I will saddle a donkey for myself, that I may ride on it and go to the king,’ because your servant *is* lame. [27]And he has slandered your servant to my lord the king, but my lord the king *is* like the angel of God. Therefore do *what is* good in your eyes. [28]For all my father’s house were but dead men before my lord the king. Yet you set your servant among those who eat at your own table. Therefore what right have I still to cry out anymore to the king?”

[29]So the king said to him, “Why do you speak anymore of your matters? I have said, ‘You and Ziba divide the land.’ ”

[30]Then Mephibosheth said to the king, “Rather, let him take it all, inasmuch as my lord the king has come back in peace to his own house.”

**DAVID’S KINDNESS TO BARZILLAI**

[31]And Barzillai the Gileadite came down from Rogelim and went across the Jordan with the king, to escort him across the Jordan. [32]Now Barzillai was a very aged man, eighty years old. And he had provided the king with supplies while he stayed at Mahanaim, for he *was* a very rich man. [33]And the king said to Barzil-lai, “Come across with me, and I will provide for you while you are with me in Jerusalem.”

[34]But Barzillai said to the king, “How long have I to live, that I should go up with the king to Jerusalem? [35]I *am* today eighty years old. Can I discern between the good and bad? Can your servant taste what I eat or what I drink? Can I hear any longer the voice of singing men and singing women? Why then should your servant be a further burden to my lord the king? [36]Your servant will go a little way across the Jordan with the king. And why should the king repay me *with* such a reward? [37]Please let your servant turn back again, that I may die in my own city, near the grave of my father and mother. But here is your servant Chimham; let him cross over with my lord the king, and do for him what seems good to you.”

[38]And the king answered, “Chimham shall cross over with me, and I will do for him what seems good to you. Now whatever you request of me, I will do for you.” [39]Then all the people went over the Jordan. And when the king had crossed over, the king kissed Bar-zillai and blessed him, and he returned

to his own place.

**THE QUARREL ABOUT THE KING**

40 Now the king went on to Gilgal, and Chimham[a] went on with him. And
all the people of Judah escorted the king, and also half the people of Israel.
41 Just then all the men of Israel came to the king, and said to the king, "Why
have our brethren, the men of Judah, stolen you away and brought the king,
his household, and all David's men with him across the Jordan?"

42 So all the men of Judah answered the men of Israel, "Because the king *is*
a close relative of ours. Why then are you angry over this matter? Have we
ever eaten at the king's *expense?* Or has he given us any gift?"

43 And the men of Israel answered the men of Judah, and said, "We have
ten shares in the king; therefore we also have more *right* to David than you.
Why then do you despise us-were we not the first to advise bringing back our
king?"

Yet the words of the men of Judah were fiercer than the words of the men
of Israel.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# DAVID RESTORED

## (2 SAMUEL 19:9-43)

When the Scriptures report that David was a man after God's own heart, the implication is not that he was perfect or without sin. David proved himself capable of shocking sinfulness.

He lied, lusted, deceived others, committed adultery, murdered someone who trusted him, neglected his family, and failed as a father. He willfully disobeyed God. He suffered deeply as a result of his transgressions.

Then why did God have such a high regard for this all-too-fallible king? David was a humble man-approachable, merciful, just in his rulings, repentant in spirit, and faithful to God. He had a deep confidence in God's grace and mercy. He was assured that God's good plans included both himself and the nation of Israel.

When confronted with his sins, David did not hesitate to repent. His sins were terrible, but he did not persist in them. Even when the way back to fellowship with God was paved with pain, David readily returned. That was the heart for God that endeared David to his Maker.

Even after losing his kingdom to his son Absalom, David's confidence remained fixed on God. He understood that much of the chaos in his life was self-inflicted. He did not cut himself off from God's grace. He also accepted the restoration of the kingdom that God accomplished on David's behalf. He understood God had a large plan, and that David's family was part of it. David's heart for God was a lasting heritage in the lineage of Jesus Christ. The term "Son of David" (Matt. 1:1) by which Jesus identified Himself, offers a timeless tribute to the depth and length of God's restoration. The Son of God was also the Son of David. No one is beyond God's reach or too lost for His grace.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Restoration. See also the key passage note at Galatians 6:1-5.

## THE REBELLION OF SHEBA

**20** And there happened to be there a rebel,[a] whose name *was* Sheba the son of Bichri, a Benjamite. And he blew a trumpet, and said:

"We have no share in David,
Nor do we have inheritance in the son of
Jesse;
Every man to his tents, O Israel!"

2So every man of Israel deserted David, *and* followed Sheba the son of Bichri. But the men of Judah, from the Jordan as far as Jerusalem, remained loyal to their king.

3Now David came to his house at Jerusalem. And the king took the ten women, his concubines whom he had left to keep the house, and put them in seclusion and supported them, but did not go in to them. So they were shut up to the day of their death, living in widowhood.

4And the king said to Amasa, "Assemble the men of Judah for me within three days, and be present here yourself." 5So Amasa went to assemble *the men of* Judah. But he delayed longer than the set time which David had appointed him. 6And David said to Abishai, "Now Sheba the son of Bichri will do us more harm than Absalom. Take your lord's servants and pursue him, lest he find for himself fortified cities, and escape us." 7So Joab's men, with the Cherethites, the Pelethites, and all the mighty men, went out after him. And they went out of Jerusalem to pursue Sheba the son of Bichri. 8When they *were* at the large stone which *is* in Gibeon, Amasa came before them. Now Joab was dressed in battle armor; on it was a belt *with* a sword fastened in its sheath at his hips; and as he was going forward, it fell out. 9Then Joab said to Amasa, "*Are* you in health, my brother?" And Joab took Amasa by the beard with his right hand to kiss him. 10But Amasa did not notice the sword that *was* in Joab's hand. And he struck him with it in the stomach, and his entrails poured out on the ground; and he did not *strike* him again. Thus he died.

Then Joab and Abishai his brother pursued Sheba the son of Bichri. 11Meanwhile one of Joab's men stood near Amasa, and said, "Whoever

favors Joab and whoever *is* for David-follow Joab!” [12]But Amasa wallowed in *his* blood in the middle of the highway. And when the man saw that all the people stood still, he moved Amasa from the highway to the field and threw a garment over him, when he saw that everyone who came upon him halted. [13]When he was removed from the highway, all the people went on after Joab to pursue Sheba the son of Bichri.

[14]And he went through all the tribes of Israel to Abel and Beth Maachah and all the Berites. So they were gathered together and also went after *Sheba.*[a] [15]Then they came and besieged him in Abel of Beth Maachah; and they cast up a siege mound against the city, and it stood by the rampart. And all the people who *were* with Joab battered the wall to throw it down.

[16]Then a wise woman cried out from the city, “Hear, hear! Please say to Joab, ‘Come nearby, that I may speak with you.’ ” [17]When he had come near to her, the woman said, “*Are* you Joab?”

He answered, “I *am.*”

Then she said to him, “Hear the words of your maidservant.”

And he answered, “I am listening.”

[18]So she spoke, saying, “They used to talk in former times, saying, ‘They shall surely seek *guidance* at Abel,’ and so they would end *disputes.* [19]I *am among the* peaceable *and* faithful in Israel. You seek to destroy a city and a mother in Israel. Why would you swallow up the inheritance of the LORD?”

[20]And Joab answered and said, “Far be it, far be it from me, that I should swallow up or destroy! [21]That *is* not so. But a man from the mountains of Ephraim, Sheba the son of Bichri by name, has raised his hand against the king, against David. Deliver him only, and I will depart from the city.”

So the woman said to Joab, “Watch, his head will be thrown to you over the wall.” [22]Then the woman in her wisdom went to all the people. And they cut off the head of Sheba the son of Bichri, and threw *it* out to Joab. Then he blew a trumpet, and they withdrew from the city, every man to his tent. So Joab returned to the king at Jerusalem.

**DAVID’S GOVERNMENT OFFICERS**

[23]And Joab *was* over all the army of Israel; Benaiah the son of Jehoiada *was* over the Cherethites and the Pelethites; [24]Adoram *was* in charge of revenue; Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud *was* recorder; [25]Sheva *was* scribe; Za-dok and Abiathar *were* the priests; [26]and Ira the Jairite was a chief minister under David.

## DAVID AVENGES THE GIBEONITES

**21** Now there was a famine in the days of David for three years, year after year; and David inquired of the LORD. And the LORD answered, "*It is* because of Saul and *his* bloodthirsty house, because he killed the Gibeonites."
2So the king called the Gibeonites and spoke to them. Now the Gibeonites *were* not of the children of Israel, but of the remnant of the Amorites; the children of Israel had sworn protection to them, but Saul had sought to kill them in his zeal for the children of Israel and Judah.

3Therefore David said to the Gibeonites, "What shall I do for you? And with what shall I make atonement, that you may bless the inheritance of the LORD?"

4And the Gibeonites said to him, "We will have no silver or gold from Saul or from his house, nor shall you kill any man in Israel for us."

So he said, "Whatever you say, I will do for you."

5Then they answered the king, "As for the man who consumed us and plotted against us, *that* we should be destroyed from remaining in any of the territories of Israel, 6let seven men of his descendants be delivered to us, and we will hang them before the LORD in Gib-eah of Saul, *whom* the LORD chose."

And the king said, "I will give *them.* "

7But the king spared Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, because of the LORD's oath that *was* between them, between David and Jonathan the son of Saul. 8So the king took Armoni and Mephibosheth, the two sons of Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, whom she bore to Saul, and the five sons of Michal[a] the daughter of Saul, whom she brought up for Adriel the son of Barzillai the Meholathite; 9and he delivered them into the hands of the Gibeonites, and they hanged them on the hill before the LORD. So they fell, *all* seven together, and were put to death in the days of harvest, in the first *days,* in the beginning of barley harvest.

10Now Rizpah the daughter of Aiah took sackcloth and spread it for herself on the rock, from the beginning of harvest until the late rains poured on them

from heaven. And she did not allow the birds of the air to rest on them by day nor the beasts of the field by night.

11 And David was told what Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, the concubine of
Saul, had done. 12 Then David went and took the bones of Saul, and the bones
of Jonathan his son, from the men of Jabesh Gilead who had stolen them
from the street of Beth Shan,[a] where the Philistines had hung them up, after
the Philistines had struck down Saul in Gilboa. 13 So he brought up the bones
of Saul and the bones of Jonathan his son from there; and they gathered the
bones of those who had been hanged. 14 They buried the bones of Saul and
Jonathan his son in the country of Benjamin in Zelah, in the tomb of Kish his
father. So they performed all that the king commanded. And after that God
heeded the prayer for the land.

**PHILISTINE GIANTS DESTROYED**

15 When the Philistines were at war again with Israel, David and his
servants with him went down and fought against the Philistines; and David
grew faint. 16 Then Ishbi-Benob, who *was* one of the sons of the giant, the
weight of whose bronze spear *was* three hundred *shekels,* who was bearing a
new *sword,* thought he could kill David. 17 But Abishai the son of Zeruiah
came to his aid, and struck the Philistine and killed him. Then the men of
David swore to him, saying, “You shall go out no more with us to battle, lest
you quench the lamp of Israel.”

18 Now it happened afterward that there was again a battle with the
Philistines at Gob. Then Sibbechai the Hushathite killed Saph,[a] who *was* one
of the sons of the giant. 19 Again there was war at Gob with the Philistines,
where Elhanan the son of Jaare-Oregim[a] the Bethlehemite killed *the brother
of* Goliath the Gittite, the shaft of whose spear *was* like a weaver’s beam.

20 Yet again there was war at Gath, where there was a man of *great* stature,
who had six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot, twenty-four in
number; and he also was born to the giant. 21 So when he defied Israel,
Jonathan the son of Shimea,[a] David’s brother, killed him.

22 These four were born to the giant in Gath, and fell by the hand of David
and by the hand of his servants.

## PRAISE FOR GOD'S DELIVERANCE

**22** Then David spoke to the LORD the words of this song, on the day when
the LORD had delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from
the hand of Saul. 2 And he said:[a]

"The LORD *is* my rock and my fortress
and my deliverer;
3 The God of my strength, in whom I will
trust;
My shield and the horn of my salvation,
My stronghold and my refuge;
My Savior, You save me from violence.
4 I will call upon the LORD, *who is worthy*
to be praised;
So shall I be saved from my enemies.
5 "When the waves of death surrounded
me,
The floods of ungodliness made me
afraid.
6 The sorrows of Sheol surrounded me;
The snares of death confronted me.
7 In my distress I called upon the LORD,
And cried out to my God;
He heard my voice from His temple,
And my cry *entered* His ears.
8 "Then the earth shook and trembled;
The foundations of heaven[a] quaked and
were shaken,
Because He was angry.
9 Smoke went up from His nostrils,
And devouring fire from His mouth;
Coals were kindled by it.
10 He bowed the heavens also, and came
down

With darkness under His feet.
11 He rode upon a cherub, and flew;
And He was seen[a] upon the wings of the
wind.
12 He made darkness canopies around Him,
Dark waters *and* thick clouds of the
skies.
13 From the brightness before Him
Coals of fire were kindled.
14 “The LORD thundered from heaven,
And the Most High uttered His voice.
15 He sent out arrows and scattered them;
Lightning bolts, and He vanquished
them.
16 Then the channels
of the sea were
seen,
The foundations of the world were uncovered,
At the rebuke of the LORD,
At the blast of the breath of His nostrils.

“For You are my lamp, O LORD;
the LORD shall enlighten my darkness.”
2 SAMUEL 22:29

17 “He sent from above, He took me,
He drew me out of many waters.
18 He delivered me from my strong enemy,
From those who hated me;
For they were too strong for me.
19 They confronted me in the day of my
calamity,
But the LORD was my support.
20 He also brought me out into a broad
place;

He delivered me because He delighted in
me.
21 “The LORD rewarded me according to my
righteousness;
According to the cleanness of my hands He has recompensed me.
22 For I have kept the ways of the LORD,
And have not wickedly departed from
my God.
23 For all His judgments *were* before me;
And *as for* His statutes, I did not depart
from them.
24 I was also blameless before Him,
And I kept myself from my iniquity.
25 Therefore the LORD has recompensed me
according to my righteousness,
According to my cleanness in His eyes.[a]
26 “With the merciful You will show Yourself
merciful;
With a blameless man You will show
Yourself blameless;
27 With the pure You will show Yourself
pure;
And with the devious You will show
Yourself shrewd.
28 You will save the humble people;
But Your eyes *are* on the haughty, *that*
You may bring *them* down.
29 “For You *are* my lamp, O LORD;
The LORD shall enlighten my darkness.
30 For by You I can
run against a
troop;
By my God I can leap over a wall.
31 *As for* God, His
way *is* perfect;

The word of the LORD *is* proven;
He *is* a shield to all who trust in Him.
32 “For who *is* God, except the LORD?
And who *is* a rock, except our God?
33 God *is* my strength *and* power,[a]
And He makes my[b] way perfect.
34 He makes my[a] feet like the *feet* of
deer,
And sets me on my high places.
35 He teaches my hands to make war,
So that my arms can bend a bow of
bronze.
36 “You have also given me the shield of
Your salvation;
Your gentleness has made me great.
37 You enlarged my path under me;
So my feet did not slip.
38 “I have pursued my enemies and destroyed them;
Neither did I turn back again till they
were destroyed.
39 And I have destroyed them and
wounded them,
So that they could not rise;
They have fallen under my feet.
40 For You have armed me with strength for
the battle;
You have subdued under me those who
rose against me.
41 You have also given me the necks of my
enemies,
So that I destroyed those who hated me.
42 They looked, but *there was* none to
save;
*Even* to the LORD, but He did not answer
them.

43 Then I beat them as fine as the dust of
the earth;
I trod them like dirt in the streets,
*And* I spread them out.
44 “You have also delivered me from the
strivings of my people;
You have kept me as the head of the
nations.
A people I have not known shall serve me.
45 The foreigners submit to me;
As soon as they hear, they obey me.
46 The foreigners fade away,
And come frightened[a] from their hideouts.
47 “The LORD lives!
Blessed *be* my Rock!
Let God be exalted,
The Rock of my salvation!
48 *It is* God who avenges me,
And subdues the peoples under me;
49 He delivers me from my enemies.
You also lift me up above those who rise
against me;
You have delivered me from the violent
man.
50 Therefore I will give thanks to You,
O LORD, among the Gentiles,
And sing praises to Your name.
51 “*He is* the tower of salvation to His king,
And shows mercy to His anointed,
To David and his descendants
forevermore.”

## SOUL NOTE

**Trust in Me** *(22:2, 3)* David's song praised God for deliverance from enemies. David expressed his love for "the God of my strength, in whom I will trust." David had faced many enemies, trials, and problems. He had sinned against God and had reaped the consequences. David's words reveal a heart that, though imperfect, constantly desired to seek God's way and follow Him. Thus God called him "a man after His own heart" (1 Sam. 13:14). People do not need to be perfect before God can use them, but they need to be willing to put their trust in Him. **Topic: Trust**

## STRESS MANAGEMENT

# LESLIE VERNICK

# (2 Samuel 22)

**A**t times, we all experience physical, emotional and spiritual exhaustion. One more interruption, delay, or problem may send us tumbling over the edge. Many of us try to get more done in less time with better results. We try to juggle the demands of home, church, work, and family life. Living on the ragged edge, we become worn out, stressed out, and eventually we can burn out.

Stress not only dampens our spirits and frazzles our nerves, but the constant rush of adrenaline overstimulates the heart and can weaken the immune system, leaving us prone to more illnesses and stress-related problems.

In our time-driven culture, stress is an inevitable part of life, so we have to learn to manage it. Let's look at what God says about stress and how Christians are to handle the reality of a stress-filled life and still maintain that inner peace that God promises.

## GOD'S REMEDY FOR STRESS

*Consider What God Is Doing-James 1:2-4*One of the best antidotes to stress is seeing God's purposes in the difficulties He allows in our lives. James counsels that we are to consider it all joy when we face trials of various kinds, because these will produce something good in us. The "good" God wants to do is to conform us to the image of Christ. He may use certain situations to develop one of the fruits of the Spirit in us. Knowing that God uses every situation, even the petty, irritating situations of life, to teach us to become more like Jesus helps us to feel less stressed by things we cannot control.

The apostle Paul experienced many life stresses that would put most of us over the edge. Yet he did not get discouraged or overwhelmed. By focusing on God's eternal perspective, Paul was able to endure all kinds of difficulties with inner peace and joy (2 Cor. 4:16-18).

*Take Time Each Day to Be Alone with God-Psalm* 46:10

Planned times of quiet and solitude are a good balance to a busy life. Cultivating a heart of prayer helps us see God's perspective and to more fully experience His presence throughout the day (Ps. 16:8-11). Many of us use prayer as a way to change a stressful situation. Although this is not a bad idea, prayer often does not change the situation as much as it changes us. As we purposely quiet our hearts

each day, the Holy Spirit has a chance to change the way we see our difficulties. That may be just what we need in order to better cope with our situation.

*Guard Our Hearts-Proverbs 4:23*

Jesus tells us not to let our hearts be troubled or afraid (John 14:27). Stress has a way of orienting us toward the things that are wrong in our lives. We need to guard our hearts and minds against negativity and pessimism. There are times when we will not understand God or His ways (Is. 55:8), but He gives us enough information about His character that even when we do not understand or are confused, we can rest in His faithfulness and His holy goodness. He delights in us when we trust Him, even when we do not understand (Hab. 3:17-19). We must take time each day to check our thinking and take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10:5).

*Number Our Days and Live*

*Intentionally-Psalm 90:12*

Sometimes we get stressed out because we are majoring in minor things. At the end of our life, many of us will realize that we have spent most of our time on what matters least, and the least time on those things that matter most. We need to decide what is really important, choose our priorities, and live for them. Life is full of choices. When we become more intentional about the way we spend our time and energy, we learn to say no to things that are just not that important.

*Remember Our Limits-Psalm 103:14*

Often our lives become filled with stress because we refuse to accept our limits. We are not God. We are not all-knowing or able to assume total control. We are human beings. We need to sleep, eat, and relax. Yet, at times we live our lives in a way that ignores these realities, which can result in a host of stress-related ailments. When we are

feeling overwhelmed, perhaps that is a reminder that we are not living within the limits and boundaries that God has created for us. It may be time to reevaluate, cut back, say no, or slow down.

*Cultivate a Thankful Heart-*

*1 Thessalonians 5:18*

We must learn to count our blessings every day. Many of us must work to see the good in life and to cultivate a grateful heart. As we do this, we will feel more positive and the little things that go wrong will cease to look so important.

**FINAL TIPS**

Stress can affect the body, mind, and spirit. We must pay attention to each area to reduce the effects of stress on our overall well-being. If we do not learn to control stress, it will eventually control us. To protect our bodies, we need to get adequate rest, exercise regularly, eat well, and learn to breathe deeply. To protect our minds, we should think truthfully, refuse to make mountains out of molehills, and set priorities. Finally, to protect our spirits, we need to meditate on God and His Word, learn to trust God, and pray without ceasing.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of stress include:

- Psalms 46; • 55:22
- Isaiah 26:3; 40:28-31
- Matthew 11:28-30
- Galatians 6:9, 10

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on stress at 2 Corinthians 4:9. See also the personality profile of James: Grace Under Fire.

**23** Now these *are* the last words of David.
*Thus* says David the son of Jesse;
*Thus* says the man raised up on high,
The anointed of the God of Jacob,
And the sweet psalmist of Israel:
2 "The Spirit of the LORD spoke by me,
And His word *was* on my tongue.
3 The God of Israel said,
The Rock of Israel spoke to me:
'He who rules over men *must be* just,
Ruling in the fear of God.
4 And *he shall be* like the light of the
morning *when* the sun rises,
A morning without clouds,
*Like* the tender grass *springing* out of the
earth,
By clear shining after rain.'
5 "Although my house *is* not so with God,
Yet He has made with me an everlasting
covenant,
Ordered in all *things* and secure.
For *this is* all my salvation and all *my*
desire;
Will He not make *it* increase?
6 But *the sons* of rebellion *shall* all *be* as
thorns thrust away,
Because they cannot be taken with
hands.
7 But the man *who* touches them
Must be armed with iron and the shaft
of a spear,
And they shall be utterly burned with
fire in *their* place."

**DAVID'S MIGHTY MEN**

[8]These *are* the names of the mighty men whom David had: Josheb-Basshebeth[a] the Tachmonite, chief among the captains.[b] He was called Adino the Eznite, because he had killed eight hundred men at one time. [9]And after him *was* Eleazar the son of Dodo,[a] the Ahohite, *one* of the three mighty men with David when they defied the Philistines *who* were gathered there for battle, and the men of Israel had retreated. [10]He arose and attacked the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand stuck to the sword. The LORD brought about a great victory that day; and the people returned after him only to plunder. [11]And after him *was* Shammah the son of Agee the Hararite. The Philistines had gathered together into a troop where there was a piece of ground full of lentils. So the people fled from the Philistines. [12]But he stationed himself in the middle of the field, defended it, and killed the Philistines. So the LORD brought about a great victory.

[13]Then three of the thirty chief men went down at harvest time and came to David at the cave of Adullam. And the troop of Philistines encamped in the Valley of Rephaim. [14]David *was* then in the stronghold, and the garrison of the Philistines *was* then *in* Bethlehem. [15]And David said with longing, "Oh, that someone would give me a drink of the water from the well of Bethlehem, which *is* by the gate!" [16]So the three mighty men broke through the camp of the Philistines, drew water from the well of Bethlehem that *was* by the gate, and took it and brought *it* to David. Nevertheless he would not drink it, but poured it out to the LORD. [17]And he said, "Far be it from me, O LORD, that I should do this! Is *this not* the blood of the men who went in *jeopardy of* their lives?" Therefore he would not drink it.

These things were done by the three mighty men.

[18]Now Abishai the brother of Joab, the son of Zeruiah, was chief of *another* three.[a] He lifted his spear against three hundred *men,* killed *them,* and won a name among *these* three. [19]Was he not the most honored of three? Therefore he became their captain. However, he did not attain to the *first* three.

[20]Benaiah *was* the son of Jehoiada, the son of a valiant man from Kabzeel, who had done many deeds. He had killed two lion-like heroes of Moab. He

also had gone down and killed a lion in the midst of a pit on a snowy day. [21]And he killed an Egyptian, a spectacular man. The Egyptian *had* a spear in his hand; so he went down to him with a staff, wrested the spear out of the Egyptian's hand, and killed him with his own spear. [22]These *things* Bena-iah the son of Jehoiada did, and won a name among three mighty men. [23]He was more honored than the thirty, but he did not attain to the *first* three. And David appointed him over his guard.

[24]Asahel the brother of Joab *was* one of the thirty; Elhanan the son of Dodo of Bethlehem, [25]Shammah the Harodite, Elika the Harodite, [26]Helez the Paltite, Ira the son of Ikkesh the Tekoite, [27]Abiezer the Anathothite, Mebunnai the Hushathite, [28]Zalmon the Ahohite, Maharai the Netophathite, [29]Heleb the son of Baanah (the Netophathite), Ittai the son of Ribai from Gibeah of the children of Benjamin, [30]Benaiah a Pirathonite, Hiddai from the brooks of Gaash, [31]Abi-Albon the Arbathite, Azmaveth the Barhumite, [32]Eliahba the Shaalbonite (of the sons of Jashen), Jonathan, [33]Shammah the Hararite, Ahiam the son of Sharar the Hararite, [34]Eliphe-let the son of Ahasbai, the son of the Maacha-thite, Eliam the son of Ahithophel the Gilonite, [35]Hezrai[a] the Carmelite, Paarai the Arbite, [36]Igal the son of Nathan of Zobah, Bani the Gadite, [37]Zelek the Ammonite, Naharai the Beerothite (armorbearer of Joab the son of Zer-uiah), [38]Ira the Ithrite, Gareb the Ithrite, [39]*and* Uriah the Hittite: thirty-seven in all.

## DAVID'S CENSUS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH

**24** Again the anger of the LORD was aroused against Israel, and He moved
David against them to say, "Go, number Israel and Judah."

2So the king said to Joab the commander of the army who *was* with him,
"Now go throughout all the tribes of Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, and
count the people, that I may know the number of the people."

3And Joab said to the king, "Now may the LORD your God add to the
people a hundred times more than there are, and may the eyes of my lord the
king see *it.* But why does my lord the king desire this thing?" 4Nevertheless
the king's word prevailed against Joab and against the captains of the army.
Therefore Joab and the captains of the army went out from the presence of
the king to count the people of Israel.

5And they crossed over the Jordan and camped in Aroer, on the right side
of the town which *is* in the midst of the ravine of Gad, and toward Jazer.
6Then they came to Gilead and to the land of Tahtim Hodshi; they came to
Dan Jaan and around to Sidon; 7and they came to the stronghold of Tyre and
to all the cities of the Hivites and the Canaanites. Then they went out to
South Judah *as far as* Beersheba. 8So when they had gone through all the
land, they came to Jerusalem at the end of nine months and twenty days.
9Then Joab gave the sum of the number of the people to the king. And there
were in Israel eight hundred thousand valiant men who drew the sword, and
the men of Judah were five hundred thousand men.

## THE JUDGMENT ON DAVID'S SIN

10And David's heart condemned him after he had numbered the people. So
David said to the LORD, "I have sinned greatly in what I have done; but now,
I pray, O LORD, take away the iniquity of Your servant, for I have done very
foolishly."

11Now when David arose in the morning, the word of the LORD came to the
prophet Gad, David's seer, saying, 12"Go and tell David, 'Thus says the
LORD: "I offer you three *things;* choose one of them for yourself, that I may
do *it* to you." ' " 13So Gad came to David and told him; and he said to him,

“Shall seven[a] years of famine come to you in your land? Or shall you flee three months before your enemies, while they pursue you? Or shall there be three days’ plague in your land? Now consider and see what answer I should take back to Him who sent me.”

14And David said to Gad, “I am in great distress. Please let us fall into the hand of the LORD, for His mercies *are* great; but do not let me fall into the hand of man.”

15So the LORD sent a plague upon Israel from the morning till the appointed time. From Dan to Beersheba seventy thousand men of the people died. 16And when the angel [a] stretched out His hand over Jerusalem to destroy it, the LORD relented from the destruction, and said to the angel who was destroying the people, “It is enough; now restrain your hand.” And the angel of the LORD was by the threshing floor of Araunah[b] the Jebusite.

17Then David spoke to the LORD when he saw the angel who was striking the people, and said, “Surely I have sinned, and I have done wickedly; but these sheep, what have they done? Let Your hand, I pray, be against me and against my father’s house.”

**THE ALTAR ON THE THRESHING FLOOR**

18And Gad came that day to David and said to him, “Go up, erect an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.” 19So David, according to the word of Gad, went up as the LORD commanded. 20Now Araunah looked, and saw the king and his servants coming toward him. So Araunah went out and bowed before the king with his face to the ground.

21Then Araunah said, “Why has my lord the king come to his servant?”

And David said, “To buy the threshing floor from you, to build an altar to the LORD, that the plague may be withdrawn from the people.”

22Now Araunah said to David, “Let my lord the king take and offer up whatever *seems* good to him. Look, *here are* oxen for burnt sacrifice, and threshing implements and the yokes of the oxen for wood. 23All these, O king, Arau-nah has given to the king.”

And Araunah said to the king, “May the LORD your God accept you.”

[24]Then the king said to Araunah, “No, but I will surely buy *it* from you for a price; nor will I offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God with that which costs me nothing.” So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver. [25]And David built there an altar to the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. So the LORD heeded the prayers for the land, and the plague was withdrawn from Israel.

# 1 Kings



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# 1 Kings

How can something that starts so well end so badly? Why do loving marriages fail, promising businesses go bankrupt, churches split, and spiritually vital people drift away from God?

First Kings, possibly written by the prophet Jeremiah, provides clues to these mysteries. The first eleven chapters describe Solomon's wise and able leadership over Israel. A magnificent temple is built in Jerusalem to the glory of God. Wealth, splendor, and fame are Solomon's as he reigns over a glorious united kingdom.

But almost imperceptibly, Solomon's heart is stolen away by his foreign wives and their pagan gods. As he forsakes the Lord, he sets the nation on a path of political ruin and spiritual decadence. The final eleven chapters detail the breakup of the kingdom under Solomon's son Rehoboam in 931 B.C.

The ten northern tribes become known collectively as Israel and are ruled by a succession of wicked kings. The two southern tribes take the name of the larger tribe, Judah. Although Judah is blessed with a few God-honoring rulers, most of her leaders are evil as well.

First Kings teaches a number of sobering lessons: It is not enough merely to begin well; short-lived religious zeal is not sufficient; beware of unhealthy affections; sin is deceptive and addictive; what you do *for* God is not nearly so important as what you do *with* God. Solomon's story reminds us that the state of one's heart will ultimately determine the outcome of one's life and legacy.

**SOUL CONCERNS IN**

## 1 KINGS

MENTORING (ch. 1-2)

WISDOM (3:5-14)
SIN (8:31-40)

## ADONIJAH PRESUMES TO BE KING

**1** Now King David was old, advanced in years; and they put covers on him,
but he could not get warm. 2Therefore his servants said to him, “Let a
young woman, a virgin, be sought for our lord the king, and let her stand
before the king, and let her care for him; and let her lie in your bosom, that
our lord the king may be warm.” 3So they sought for a lovely young woman
throughout all the territory of Israel, and found Abishag the Shunam-mite,
and brought her to the king. 4The young woman *was* very lovely; and she
cared for the king, and served him; but the king did not know her.

5Then Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, “I will be
king”; and he prepared for himself chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to
run before him. 6(And his father had not rebuked him at any time by saying,
“Why have you done so?” He *was* also very good-looking. *His mother* had
borne him after Absalom.) 7Then he conferred with Joab the son of Zeruiah
and with Abiathar the priest, and they followed and helped Adonijah. 8But
Zadok the priest, Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, Nathan the prophet, Shimei,
Rei, and the mighty men who *belonged* to David were not with Adonijah.

9And Adonijah sacrificed sheep and oxen and fattened cattle by the stone
of Zoheleth, which *is* by En Rogel; he also invited all his brothers, the king’s
sons, and all the men of Judah, the king’s servants. 10But he did not invite
Nathan the prophet, Benaiah, the mighty men, or Solomon his brother.

11So Nathan spoke to Bathsheba the mother of Solomon, saying, “Have
you not heard that Adonijah the son of Haggith has become king, and David
our lord does not know *it?* 12Come, please, let me now give you advice, that
you may save your own life and the life of your son Solomon. 13Go
immediately to King David and say to him, ‘Did you not, my lord, O king,
swear to your maidservant, saying, “Assuredly your son Solomon shall reign
after me, and he shall sit on my throne”? Why then has Adonijah become
king?’ 14Then, while you are still talking there with the king, I also will come
in after you and confirm your words.”

15So Bathsheba went into the chamber to the king. (Now the king was very
old, and Abishag the Shunammite was serving the king.) 16And Bathsheba

bowed and did homage to the king. Then the king said, “What is your wish?”

17 Then she said to him, “My lord, you swore by the LORD your God to
your maidservant, *saying*, ‘Assuredly Solomon your son shall reign after me,
and he shall sit on my throne.’ 18 So now, look! Adonijah has become king;
and now, my lord the king, you do not know about *it.* 19 He has sacrificed
oxen and fattened cattle and sheep in abundance, and has invited all the sons
of the king, Abiathar the priest, and Joab the commander of the army; but
Solomon your servant he has not invited. 20 And as for you, my lord, O king,
the eyes of all Israel *are* on you, that you should tell them who will sit on the
throne of my lord the king after him. 21 Otherwise it will happen, when my
lord the king rests with his fathers, that I and my son Solomon will be
counted as offenders.”

22 And just then, while she was still talking with the king, Nathan the
prophet also came in. 23 So they told the king, saying, “Here is Nathan the
prophet.” And when he came in before the king, he bowed down before the
king with his face to the ground. 24 And Nathan said, “My lord, O king, have
you said, ‘Adonijah shall reign after me, and he shall sit on my throne’? 25 For
he has gone down today, and has sacrificed oxen and fattened cattle and
sheep in abundance, and has invited all the king’s sons, and the commanders
of the army, and Abiathar the priest; and look! They are eating and drinking
before him; and they say, ‘*Long* live King Adonijah!’ 26 But he has not invited
me-me your servant-nor Zadok the priest, nor Benaiah the son of Jehoiada,
nor your servant Solomon. 27 Has this thing been done by my lord the king,
and you have not told your servant who should sit on the throne of my lord
the king after him?”

## DAVID PROCLAIMS SOLOMON KING

28 Then King David answered and said, “Call Bathsheba to me.” So she
came into the king’s presence and stood before the king. 29 And the king took
an oath and said, “*As* the LORD lives, who has redeemed my life from every
distress, 30 just as I swore to you by the LORD God of Israel, saying,
‘Assuredly Solomon your son shall be king after me, and he shall sit on my
throne in my place,’ so I certainly will do this day.”

31 Then Bathsheba bowed with *her* face to the earth, and paid homage to

the king, and said, “Let my lord King David live forever!”

[32]And King David said, “Call to me Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada.” So they came before the king. [33]The king also said to them, “Take with you the servants of your lord, and have Solomon my son ride on my own mule, and take him down to Gihon. [34]There let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him king over Israel; and blow the horn, and say, ‘*Long* live King Solomon!’ [35]Then you shall come up after him, and he shall come and sit on my throne, and he shall be king in my place. For I have appointed him to be ruler over Israel and Judah.”

[36]Benaiah the son of Jehoiada answered the king and said, “Amen! May the LORD God of my lord the king say so *too*. [37]As the LORD has been with my lord the king, even so may He be with Solomon, and make his throne greater than the throne of my lord King David.”

[38]So Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, the Cherethites, and the Pelethites went down and had Solomon ride on King David’s mule, and took him to Gihon. [39]Then Zadok the priest took a horn of oil from the tabernacle and anointed Solomon. And they blew the horn, and all the people said, “*Long* live King Solomon!” [40]And all the people went up after him; and the people played the flutes and rejoiced with great joy, so that the earth *seemed to* split with their sound.

[41]Now Adonijah and all the guests who *were* with him heard *it* as they finished eating. And when Joab heard the sound of the horn, he said, “Why *is* the city in such a noisy uproar?” [42]While he was still speaking, there came Jonathan, the son of Abiathar the priest. And Adonijah said to him, “Come in, for you *are* a prominent man, and bring good news.”

[43]Then Jonathan answered and said to Ado-nijah, “No! Our lord King David has made Solomon king. [44]The king has sent with him Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, the Cherethites, and the Pelethites; and they have made him ride on the king’s mule. [45]So Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet have anointed him king at Gihon; and they have gone up from there rejoicing, so that the city is in an uproar. This *is* the noise that you have heard. [46]Also Solomon sits on the throne of the kingdom. [47]And moreover the king’s servants have gone to bless our lord King David,

saying, ‘May God make the name of Solomon better than your name, and may He make his throne greater than your throne.’ Then the king bowed himself on the bed. [48]Also the king said thus, ‘Blessed *be* the LORD God of Israel, who has given *one* to sit on my throne this day, while my eyes see *it!*’ ”

[49]So all the guests who were with Adonijah were afraid, and arose, and each one went his way.

[50]Now Adonijah was afraid of Solomon; so he arose, and went and took hold of the horns of the altar. [51]And it was told Solomon, saying, “Indeed Adonijah is afraid of King Solomon; for look, he has taken hold of the horns of the altar, saying, ‘Let King Solomon swear to me today that he will not put his servant to death with the sword.’ ”

[52]Then Solomon said, “If he proves himself a worthy man, not one hair of him shall fall to the earth; but if wickedness is found in him, he shall die.” [53]So King Solomon sent them to bring him down from the altar. And he came and fell down before King Solomon; and Solomon said to him, “Go to your house.”

**SOUL NOTE**

**A Good Investment** *(1:5, 6)* David was very ill, and one of his sons, Adonijah, set up a scheme to take over the kingdom. The Bible says of Adonijah that “his father had not rebuked him at any time.” One of David’s apparent weaknesses was the inability to discipline his children. Many severe conflicts had arisen within his family among the various half brothers. David’s failures as a father led to a number of failures and sins in his children. Parents always influence their children-for good and bad. There is no substitute for invested, caring, loving parents who discipline when necessary.
**Topic: Parenting**

**MASTER MENTORING**

# DON HAWKINS

## (1 Kings 1-2)

**E**lijah had served God faithfully, and then he faithfully trained his replacement, Elisha. That training process is called "mentoring" or "discipling." Spiritual mentoring is vital to the continuation of the Christian faith. It was the discipling of new believers by older believers that allowed Christianity to continue across centuries. Many Christians owe their mature faith to the mentoring of mature Christians who helped them grow spiritually.

Perhaps the best outline for discipleship was given by the Master Himself in John 17. In this chapter, Jesus gives a framework for the process of discipleship that can be broken down into six steps.

**STEP 1: EXAMPLE**

Jesus said, "I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world" (John 17:6). In His work with the disciples, Jesus displayed God's nature, character, and person. For example, Malachi 3:6 presents God as unchanging, "For I am the LORD, I do not change." Jesus also demonstrated a consistency in word and action that went far beyond what any human being has ever shown. Furthermore, God is all-knowing, omniscient. Job described Him as having perfect knowledge (Job 37:16), and Isaiah affirmed that the all-knowing God needs no teacher (Is. 40:13, 14). Throughout His ministry, Jesus demonstrated His knowledge of the human heart, of circumstances, and even of the future.

Paul also followed this pattern. While he was not perfect as was Jesus, he earnestly lived to serve God and urged Corinthian believers to imitate him (1 Cor. 46). Every successful mentor must begin at the same place: providing an example for those being discipled.

**STEP 2: EVANGELISM**

For the first-century followers of Christ, faith in Him became the cornerstone on which all life and ministry were based.

John 17 reveals the source of the faith that Peter and others came to express. Jesus said, “For I have given to them [the apostles] the words which You have given Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me” (John 17:8).

Clearly the proclamation of the message of Jesus and the salvation He offered became the focal point of the ministry of these early Christians. Wherever they went, they spread the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Such sharing is the key way for the message of salvation to spread. People must first accept salvation before they can grow in the faith. Evangelism was an integral part of the process of discipling by Jesus and the first-century church. Every successful mentor is able to share the Good News of Christ.

**STEP 3: INTERCESSION**

In John 17:9 Jesus declared, “I pray for them.” Later in this chapter, He added, “I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word” (John 17:20). Jesus made it very clear that His ministry was, and continues to be, one of intercession for His followers (Rom. 8:34).

Jesus also prayed specifically. He prayed for His followers to be unified, protected, and sanctified (John 17:11, 15, 17). Every aspect

of a believer's life-emotional, physical and spiritual-is covered in this intercessory prayer.

Every successful mentor must be committed to prayer-and particularly to intercessory prayer.

**STEP 4: ENCOURAGEMENT**

Working through "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1 John 2:16), Satan seeks to trip us up daily. As our Great Shepherd, Jesus has committed Himself to protecting and encouraging us. In John 17:12, He said to the Father, "I kept them in Your name."

While mentors cannot provide the protection of an omnipresent Savior, part of their "keeping ministry" involves the role of encourager. Encouragement is one of the most essential ingredients for successful discipling. Like shepherds, mentors are called alongside the sheep to help them.

Verbal encouragement is key, but mentors can also encourage in other ways-such as taking time, sharing a meal, providing help, or even sharing a hug. Every successful mentor communicates that he or she will care for and stand by those who need help.

# STEP 5: EDIFICATION

As He prepared to return to His Father in heaven, Jesus explained that He was providing a resource for the edification of His followers: "I have given to them the words which You have given Me" (John 17:8). Jesus communicated Scripture to His disciples during His teaching ministry. Approximately ten percent of what Jesus shared with His disciples was right from the Old Testament.

When it comes to discipling, there is no substitute for the Bible. It is the Word that brings change and growth to people's lives. In its

most basic form, discipleship involves a relationship in which the Scripture is infused into a life to produce Christlike character. Every successful mentor continues to study God's Word to be able to teach others.

**STEP 6: EXTENSION**

In John 17:18, Jesus declared, "I also have sent them into the world." Jesus intended for His disciples to extend themselves by making other disciples. The goal of the mentoring process is to develop mature believers who then can mentor others. Paul wrote to Timothy, "The things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2). Every successful mentor has students who become mentors for others.

**FINAL REVIEW**

Jesus intended for every believer to be plugged into a vital, growing relationship with the Savior-being discipled and eventually reaching out to mentor others in the faith. By following the steps of John 17, all believers can successfully mentor others.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of mentoring include:

- Numbers 10:29-32
- Matthew 10:24
- Mark 1:16-18
- 1 Corinthians 4:15-17
- Titus 2:2-8
- Philemon 8-16

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on mentoring at 2 Timothy 2:2. See also the personality profile of Elijah And Elisha: A Tough Act To Follow.

## DAVID'S INSTRUCTIONS TO SOLOMON

**2** Now the days of David drew near that he should die, and he charged
Solomon his son, saying: [2]"I go the way of all the earth; be strong,
therefore, and prove yourself a man. [3]And keep the charge of the LORD your
God: to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His
judgments, and His testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses, that you
may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn; [4]that the LORD may
fulfill His word which He spoke concerning me, saying, 'If your sons take
heed to their way, to walk before Me in truth with all their heart and with all
their soul,' He said, 'you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.'

[5]"Moreover you know also what Joab the son of Zeruiah did to me, *and*
what he did to the two commanders of the armies of Israel, to Abner the son
of Ner and Amasa the son of Jether, whom he killed. And he shed the blood
of war in peacetime, and put the blood of war on his belt that *was* around his
waist, and on his sandals that *were* on his feet. [6]Therefore do according to
your wisdom, and do not let his gray hair go down to the grave in peace.

[7]"But show kindness to the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite, and let them be
among those who eat at your table, for so they came to me when I fled from
Absalom your brother.

[8]"And see, *you have* with you Shimei the son of Gera, a Benjamite from
Bahurim, who cursed me with a malicious curse in the day when I went to
Mahanaim. But he came down to meet me at the Jordan, and I swore to him
by the LORD, saying, 'I will not put you to death with the sword.' [9]Now
therefore, do not hold him guiltless, for you *are* a wise man and know what
you ought to do to him; but bring his gray hair down to the grave with
blood."

## DEATH OF DAVID

[10]So David rested with his fathers, and was buried in the City of David.
[11]The period that David reigned over Israel *was* forty years; seven years he
reigned in Hebron, and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty-three years. [12]Then
Solomon sat on the throne of his father David; and his kingdom was firmly

established.

**SOLOMON EXECUTES ADONIJAH**

13 Now Adonijah the son of Haggith came to Bathsheba the mother of
Solomon. So she said, “Do you come peaceably?”

And he said, “Peaceably.” 14 Moreover he said, “I have something *to say* to
you.”

And she said, “Say it.”

15 Then he said, “You know that the kingdom was mine, and all Israel had
set their expectations on me, that I should reign. However, the kingdom has
been turned over, and has become my brother’s; for it was his from the LORD.
16 Now I ask one petition of you; do not deny me.”

And she said to him, “Say it.”

17 Then he said, “Please speak to King Solomon, for he will not refuse you,
that he may give me Abishag the Shunammite as wife.”

18 So Bathsheba said, “Very well, I will speak for you to the king.”

19 Bathsheba therefore went to King Solomon, to speak to him for
Adonijah. And the king rose up to meet her and bowed down to her, and sat
down on his throne and had a throne set for the king’s mother; so she sat at
his right hand. 20 Then she said, “I desire one small petition of you; do not
refuse me.”

And the king said to her, “Ask it, my mother, for I will not refuse you.”

21 So she said, “Let Abishag the Shunammite be given to Adonijah your
brother as wife.”

22 And King Solomon answered and said to his mother, “Now why do you
ask Abishag the Shunammite for Adonijah? Ask for him the kingdom also-
for he *is* my older brother-for him, and for Abiathar the priest, and for Joab
the son of Zeruiah.” 23 Then King Solomon swore by the LORD, saying, “May
God do so to me, and more also, if Adonijah has not spoken this word against
his own life! 24 Now therefore, *as* the LORD lives, who has confirmed me and
set me on the throne of David my father, and who has established a house[a]

for me, as He promised, Adonijah shall be put to death today!”

25So King Solomon sent by the hand of Benaiah the son of Jehoiada; and he struck him down, and he died.

**ABIATHAR EXILED, JOAB EXECUTED**

26And to Abiathar the priest the king said, “Go to Anathoth, to your own fields, for you *are* deserving of death; but I will not put you to death at this time, because you carried the ark of the Lord GOD before my father David, and because you were afflicted every time my father was afflicted.” 27So Solomon removed Abiathar from being priest to the LORD, that he might fulfill the word of the LORD which He spoke concerning the house of Eli at Shiloh.

28Then news came to Joab, for Joab had defected to Adonijah, though he had not defected to Absalom. So Joab fled to the tabernacle of the LORD, and took hold of the horns of the altar. 29And King Solomon was told, “Joab has fled to the tabernacle of the LORD; there *he is*, by the altar.” Then Solomon sent Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, saying, “Go, strike him down.” 30So Benaiah went to the tabernacle of the LORD, and said to him, “Thus says the king, ‘Come out!’ ”

And he said, “No, but I will die here.” And Benaiah brought back word to the king, saying, “Thus said Joab, and thus he answered me.”

31Then the king said to him, “Do as he has said, and strike him down and bury him, that you may take away from me and from the house of my father the innocent blood which Joab shed. 32So the LORD will return his blood on his head, because he struck down two men more righteous and better than he, and killed them with the sword-Abner the son of Ner, the commander of the army of Israel, and Amasa the son of Jether, the commander of the army of Judah-though my father David did not know *it.* 33Their blood shall therefore return upon the head of Joab and upon the head of his descendants forever. But upon David and his descendants, upon his house and his throne, there shall be peace forever from the LORD.”

34So Benaiah the son of Jehoiada went up and struck and killed him; and he was buried in his own house in the wilderness. 35The king put Benaiah the

son of Jehoiada in his place over the army, and the king put Zadok the priest in the place of Abiathar.

**SHIMEI EXECUTED**

[36]Then the king sent and called for Shimei, and said to him, “Build yourself a house in Jerusalem and dwell there, and do not go out from there anywhere. [37]For it shall be, on the day you go out and cross the Brook Kidron, know for certain you shall surely die; your blood shall be on your own head.”

[38]And Shimei said to the king, “The saying *is* good. As my lord the king has said, so your servant will do.” So Shimei dwelt in Jerusalem many days.

[39]Now it happened at the end of three years, that two slaves of Shimei ran away to Achish the son of Maachah, king of Gath. And they told Shimei, saying, “Look, your slaves *are* in Gath!” [40]So Shimei arose, saddled his donkey, and went to Achish at Gath to seek his slaves. And Shimei went and brought his slaves from Gath. [41]And Solomon was told that Shimei had gone from Jerusalem to Gath and had come back. [42]Then the king sent and called for Shimei, and said to him, “Did I not make you swear by the LORD, and warn you, saying, ‘Know for certain that on the day you go out and travel anywhere, you shall surely die’? And you said to me, ‘The word I have heard *is* good.’ [43]Why then have you not kept the oath of the LORD and the commandment that I gave you?” [44]The king said moreover to Shimei, “You know, as your heart acknowledges, all the wickedness that you did to my father David; therefore the LORD will return your wickedness on your own head. [45]But King Solomon *shall be* blessed, and the throne of David shall be established before the LORD forever.”

[46]So the king commanded Benaiah the son of Jehoiada; and he went out and struck him down, and he died. Thus the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon.

## SOLOMON REQUESTS WISDOM

**3** Now Solomon made a treaty with Pharaoh king of Egypt, and married
Pharaoh's daughter; then he brought her to the City of David until he had
finished building his own house, and the house of the LORD, and the wall all
around Jerusalem. 2 Meanwhile the people sacrificed at the high places,
because there was no house built for the name of the LORD until those days.
3 And Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of his father David,
except that he sacrificed and burned incense at the high places.

4 Now the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that *was* the great high
place: Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings on that altar. 5 At Gibeon
the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, "Ask!
What shall I give you?"

6 And Solomon said: "You have shown great mercy to Your servant David
my father, because he walked before You in truth, in righteousness, and in
uprightness of heart with You; You have continued this great kindness for
him, and You have given him a son to sit on his throne, as *it is* this day.
7 Now, O LORD my God, You have made Your servant king instead of my
father David, but I *am* a little child; I do not know *how* to go out or come in.
8 And Your servant *is* in the midst of Your people whom You have chosen, a
great people, too numerous to be numbered or counted. 9 Therefore give to
Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern
between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?"

10 The speech pleased the LORD, that Solomon had asked this thing. 11 Then
God said to him: "Because you have asked this thing, and have not asked
long life for yourself, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have asked the
life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern
justice, 12 behold, I have done according to your words; see, I have given you
a wise and understanding heart, so that there has not been anyone like you
before you, nor shall any like you arise after you. 13 And I have also given
you what you have not asked: both riches and honor, so that there shall not be
anyone like you among the kings all your days. 14 So if you walk in My ways,
to keep My statutes and My commandments, as your father David walked,

then I will lengthen your days.”

15 Then Solomon awoke; and indeed it had been a dream. And he came to
Jerusalem and stood before the ark of the covenant of the LORD, offered up
burnt offerings, offered peace offerings, and made a feast for all his servants.

**SOLOMON’S WISE JUDGMENT**

16 Now two women *who were* harlots came to the king, and stood before
him. 17 And one woman said, “O my lord, this woman and I dwell in the same
house; and I gave birth while she *was* in the house. 18 Then it happened, the
third day after I had given birth, that this woman also gave birth. And we
*were* together; no one *was* with us in the house, except the two of us in the
house. 19 And this woman’s son died in the night, because she lay on him.
20 So she arose in the middle of the night and took my son from my side,
while your maidservant slept, and laid him in her bosom, and laid her dead
child in my bosom. 21 And when I rose in the morning to nurse my son, there
he was, dead. But when I had examined him in the morning, indeed, he was
not my son whom I had borne.”

22 Then the other woman said, “No! But the living one *is* my son, and the
dead one *is* your son.”

And the first woman said, “No! But the dead one *is* your son, and the
living one *is* my son.”

Thus they spoke before the king.

23 And the king said, “The one says, ‘This *is* my son, who lives, and your
son *is* the dead one’; and the other says, ‘No! But your son *is* the dead one,
and my son *is* the living one.’ ” 24 Then the king said, “Bring me a sword.” So
they brought a sword before the king. 25 And the king said, “Divide the living
child in two, and give half to one, and half to the other.”

26 Then the woman whose son *was* living spoke to the king, for she yearned
with compassion for her son; and she said, “O my lord, give her the living
child, and by no means kill him!”

But the other said, “Let him be neither mine nor yours, *but* divide *him.* ”

27 So the king answered and said, “Give the first woman the living child,

and by no means kill him; she *is* his mother."

[28]And all Israel heard of the judgment which the king had rendered; and they feared the king, for they saw that the wisdom of God *was* in him to administer justice.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# SOLOMON: HAVING WISDOM VS. USING WISDOM

## (1 KINGS 3)

Solomon had it all. There is no doubt that he ruled over the golden age of Israel. He had riches beyond compare, fame beyond imagination, and wisdom greater than anyone who ever lived. All of this, of course, came from God.

Solomon was one of several sons of David and Bathsheba (1 Chr. 3:5). David had promised the kingdom to Solomon (1 Kin. 1:17), whom God had chosen to succeed him (1 Chr. 28:5). God wanted to bless Israel through Solomon's reign. One night, therefore, God told Solomon to ask for anything and He would give it to him. Solomon knew what he needed most-wisdom to rule the nation.

When God answers a prayer, He doesn't go halfway. Solomon wasn't given just a little wisdom; he became the wisest man who ever lived! His wisdom became known internationally, and people came from all over the world just to meet him (1 Kin. 4:29-34). Solomon built the magnificent temple in Jerusalem as well as many other buildings. He wrote books, including the biblical books of Proverbs,

Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon.

Solomon struggled, however, at putting his wisdom into practice at home. He “loved many foreign women” from the surrounding nations (1 Kin. 11:1), with whom the Lord had commanded Israel not to intermarry. God said, “Surely they will turn away your hearts after other gods” (1 Kin. 11:2), but Solomon did not listen. He married not one or two, but 700 women, and, as if that weren’t enough, he had 300 concubines. What God predicted came true, of course: “His wives turned his heart after others gods; and his heart was not loyal to the LORD his God” (1 Kin. 11:4).

Like Solomon, someone may be wise in many areas, but not in managing their own life. Solomon did much for his nation with his wisdom, but his unwise lack of restraint caused him to lose his kingdom (1 Kin. 11:11). A truly wise person knows how to apply God-given wisdom in life.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Wisdom. See also the key passage note at James 1:5.

## WISDOM

LLOYD OGILVIE

(1 Kings 3:5-14)

**W**isdom is the special gift of the Lord in our quest to know His will for our lives. Wisdom goes beyond mere intellect and knowledge and encompasses a God-given ability to perceive people and

situations with spiritual clarity. Wisdom is the vertical thrust of the mind of God into our minds, making discernment possible on the horizontal level of human relationships. With God's wisdom, we can know His plans and purposes.

Life is an endless succession of choices and decisions. We are called on to evaluate, analyze, and decide about what is right and best for our lives. The possibility of error is enormous. Therefore, we need God's wisdom in order to understand and do His will.

When young King Solomon succeeded his father as the king of Israel, he felt acutely the need for divine wisdom in order to administer the kingdom of Israel. In a dream, the Lord appeared to Solomon and promised to give him anything he asked for. Solomon asked for wisdom. God was pleased with the request, saying, "I have done according to your words; see, I have given you a wise and understanding heart, so that there has not been anyone like you before you, nor shall any like you arise after you" (1 Kin. 3:12). The Bible records that "Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the men of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men" (1 Kin. 4:30, 31). Solomon's reign over Israel expressed his wisdom-as did his writings, sayings, and proverbs.

However, Solomon's great wisdom did not always affect his own lifestyle. Even as he received great wisdom to rule the nation, he also foolishly intermarried with many foreign women. Eventually, those women proved to be his downfall. "But King Solomon loved many foreign women.

. . . Solomon clung to these in love . . . and his wives turned away his heart. For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the LORD his God" (1 Kin. 11:1-4). Clearly, wisdom must be applied to one's own personal life as well.

Despite Solomon's later mistakes, we must not diminish our

appreciation of his God-given gift of wisdom. Solomon is distinguished not just for his judgments or his brilliant leadership, but for the wisdom God gave him.

**GIFT OF WISDOM**

The same capacity of wisdom is offered to us as well, so that we can know and do the will of God. The Bible promises: “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him” (James 1:5). God usually follows a gift with the opportunity for us to use it. That way, we will know that the power we have been given is from Him. All God’s gifts are for ministry, not just for our own private enjoyment. God allowed Solomon to use his wisdom to make wise judgments, as well as to write books in our Bible-such as Proverbs-to which we still turn for guidance.

We do not need to wander aimlessly through life, uncertain and confused. Our purpose is to know and do God’s will. Whatever we discover of the nature of the universe can guide us only as we grow in Christ. Wisdom grows in us as we grow in Christ.

Jesus referred to Himself as “greater than Solomon.” Christ was Wisdom Incarnate. And yet, people resisted the splendor of Wisdom’s radiance. No wonder Jesus said, “The queen of the South [the Queen of Sheba] will rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here” (Luke 11:31). Solomon had gone as far as any human being in experiencing the precious gift of wisdom. Christ said to the people of His day that what had made King Solomon great, and what was sought after by the leaders of His own time, was present with them. All that Jesus taught about God and His ultimate purpose for our lives came out of the limitless storehouse of wisdom He had with God before the foundation of the world.

**GROWING IN WISDOM**

For us today, in the confusing complications of our lives, the promise of wisdom means that in Christ we can receive, experience, and communicate the depth perception of true wisdom. Christ was, and now is, the power of God utilized to accomplish His ultimate purpose to create a people whom He loves and who will love Him. When we receive Christ, we receive wisdom.

Wisdom indwelling us integrates knowledge and guides our decisions. The ultimate choice of making Christ Lord of our lives is followed by a million choices in daily life which are guided by what will further our ultimate purpose: to live in fellowship with Him forever.

We do not need to wander aimlessly through life, uncertain and confused. We know whose we are and for what we were created. Our purpose is to know and do Wisdom's will. Whatever we discover of the nature of the universe can now be guided by our ultimate destiny. Wisdom grows in us as we grow in Christ.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of wisdom include:

- Deuteronomy 17:18-20
- Joshua 1:8
- Proverbs 2:1-9; 5:1-6; 16:6
- Matthew 7:24-27; 13:18-23
- 2 Timothy 3:14-17

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on wisdom at James 1:5. See also the personality profile of Solomon: Having Wisdom Vs. Using Wisdom.

## SOUL NOTE

**Just Ask** *(3:5-14)* Solomon could have asked for anything, but he knew what he needed most: “an understanding heart to . . . discern between good and evil.” Solomon’s position as king would require him to make decisions that would affect all of God’s people. He wanted to rule those people well. God says that anyone can ask for wisdom: “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him” ( James 1:5). Regardless of position in life, every believer should seek God’s wisdom. **Topic: Wisdom**

## SOUL NOTE

**Mother’s Love***(3:16-27)* This story illustrates Solomon’s wisdom. Two women had borne children; one child had died and both women claimed the living child. Solomon’s proposed solution was to divide the child in half with a sword. Immediately the real mother cried out, telling the king to give the living child to the other woman rather than kill him. Solomon knew that the woman who responded was the real mother, for she was willing to give up her child to someone else to save his life. Such is the depth of a mother’s love-giving of herself for the best of her child.
**Topic: Motherhood**

## SOLOMON'S ADMINISTRATION

**4** So King Solomon was king over all Israel. [2] And these *were* his officials:
Azariah the son of Zadok, the priest; [3]Elihoreph and Ahi-jah, the sons of Shisha, scribes; Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud, the recorder; [4]Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, over the army; Zadok and Abiathar, the priests; [5]Azariah the son of Nathan, over the officers; Zabud the son of Nathan, a priest *and* the king's friend; [6]Ahishar, over the household; and Adoniram the son of Abda, over the labor force.

[7]And Solomon had twelve governors over all Israel, who provided food for the king and his household; each one made provision for one month of the year. [8]These *are* their names: Ben-Hur,[a] in the mountains of Ephraim; [9]BenDeker,[a]in Makaz, Shaalbim, Beth Shemesh, and Elon Beth Hanan; [10]Ben-Hesed,[a]in Arub-both; to him *belonged* Sochoh and all the land of Hepher; [11]Ben-Abinadab,[a] *in* all the regions of Dor; he had Taphath the daughter of Solomon as wife; [12]Baana the son of Ahilud, *in* Taanach, Megiddo, and all Beth Shean, which *is* beside Zaretan below Jezreel, from Beth Shean to Abel Meholah, as far as the other side of Jokneam; [13]Ben-Geber,[a] in Ramoth Gil-ead; to him *belonged* the towns of Jair the son of Manasseh, in Gilead; to him *also belonged* the region of Argob in Bashan-sixty large cities with walls and bronze gate-bars; [14]Ahinadab the son of Iddo, *in* Mahanaim; [15]Ahimaaz, in Naphtali; he also took Basemath the daughter of Solomon as wife; [16]Baanah the son of Hushai, in Asher and Aloth; [17]Jehoshaphat the son of Paruah, in Issachar; [18]Shimei the son of Elah, in Benjamin; [19]Geber the son of Uri, in the land of Gilead, *in* the country of Sihon king of the Amorites, and of Og king of Bashan. *He was* the only governor who *was* in the land.

## PROSPERITY AND WISDOM OF SOLOMON'S REIGN

[20]Judah and Israel *were* as numerous as the sand by the sea in multitude, eating and drinking and rejoicing. [21]So Solomon reigned over all kingdoms from the River[a] *to* the land of the Philistines, as far as the border of Egypt.

*They* brought tribute and served Solomon all the days of his life.

22 Now Solomon's provision for one day was thirty kors of fine flour, sixty
kors of meal, 23 ten fatted oxen, twenty oxen from the pastures, and one
hundred sheep, besides deer, gazelles, roebucks, and fatted fowl.

24 For he had dominion over all *the region* on this side of the River[a] from
Tiphsah even to Gaza, namely over all the kings on this side of the River; and
he had peace on every side all around him. 25 And Judah and Israel dwelt
safely, each man under his vine and his fig tree, from Dan as far as
Beersheba, all the days of Solomon.

26 Solomon had forty[a] thousand stalls of horses for his chariots, and twelve
thousand horsemen. 27 And these governors, each man in his month, provided
food for King Solomon and for all who came to King Solomon's table. There
was no lack in their supply. 28 They also brought barley and straw to the
proper place, for the horses and steeds, each man according to his charge.

29 And God gave Solomon wisdom and exceedingly great understanding,
and largeness of heart like the sand on the seashore. 30 Thus Solomon's
wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the men of the East and all the wisdom of
Egypt. 31 For he was wiser than all men-than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman,
Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and his fame was in all the
surrounding nations. 32 He spoke three thousand proverbs, and his songs were
one thousand and five. 33 Also he spoke of trees, from the cedar tree of
Lebanon even to the hyssop that springs out of the wall; he spoke also of
animals, of birds, of creeping things, and of fish. 34 And men of all nations,
from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom, came to hear the
wisdom of Solomon.

## SOLOMON PREPARES TO BUILD THE TEMPLE

**5** Now Hiram king of Tyre sent his servants to Solomon, because he heard
that they had anointed him king in place of his father, for Hiram had
always loved David. 2 Then Solomon sent to Hiram, saying:

3 You know how my father David could not build a house for the name of the
LORD his God because of the wars which were fought against him on every
side, until the LORD put *his foes*[a] under the soles of his feet.

4 But now the LORD my God has given me rest on every side; *there is* neither
adversary nor evil occurrence.

5 And behold, I propose to build a house for the name of the LORD my God,
as the LORD spoke to my father David, saying, "Your son, whom I will set
on your throne in your place, he shall build the house for My name."

6 Now therefore, command that they cut down cedars for me from Lebanon;
and my servants will be with your servants, and I will pay you wages for
your servants according to whatever you say. For you know *there is* none
among us who has skill to cut timber like the Sidonians.

7 So it was, when Hiram heard the words of Solomon, that he rejoiced
greatly and said,

Blessed *be* the LORD this day, for He has given David a wise son over this
great people!

8 Then Hiram sent to Solomon, saying:

I have considered *the message* which you sent me, *and* I will do all you
desire concerning the cedar and cypress logs.

9 My servants shall bring *them* down from Lebanon to the sea; I will float
them in rafts by sea to the place you indicate to me, and will have them
broken apart there; then you can take *them* away. And you shall fulfill my
desire by giving food for my household.

10 Then Hiram gave Solomon cedar and cypress logs *according to* all his
desire. 11 And Solomon gave Hiram twenty thousand kors of wheat *as* food
for his household, and twenty[a] kors of pressed oil. Thus Solomon gave to

Hiram year by year.

12 So the LORD gave Solomon wisdom, as He had promised him; and there was peace between Hiram and Solomon, and the two of them made a treaty together.

13 Then King Solomon raised up a labor force out of all Israel; and the labor force was thirty thousand men. 14 And he sent them to Lebanon, ten thousand a month in shifts: they were one month in Lebanon *and* two months at home; Adoniram *was* in charge of the labor force. 15 Solomon had seventy thousand who carried burdens, and eighty thousand who quarried *stone* in the mountains, 16 besides three thousand three hundred[a] from the chiefs of Solomon's deputies, who supervised the people who labored in the work. 17 And the king commanded them to quarry large stones, costly stones, *and* hewn stones, to lay the foundation of the temple.[a] 18 So Solomon's builders, Hiram's builders, and the Gebalites quarried *them;* and they prepared timber and stones to build the temple.

> So the LORD gave Solomon wisdom, as He had promised him.
> 1 KINGS 5:12

**SOUL NOTE**

**Family First** *(5:12-14)* God had given Solomon wisdom to rule the nation. There was peace in the land, so the nation could devote itself and its resources to building a glorious temple for God. Even as Solomon planned its construction, he used great wisdom. He drew upon the nation's labor force, divided it into three groups, and rotated the groups so they would be one month in Jerusalem and then two months at home. Solomon allowed for continuous work without burning out his workers or hurting their families. No matter how important the work, the workers' families must not be neglected.

## Topic: Work

## SOLOMON BUILDS THE TEMPLE

**6** And it came to pass in the four hundred and eightieth[a] year after the
children of Is rael had come out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of
Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, which *is* the second month,
that he began to build the house of the LORD. 2Now the house which King
Solomon built for the LORD, its length *was* sixty cubits, its width twenty, and
its height thirty cubits. 3The vestibule in front of the sanctuary[a] of the house
*was* twenty cubits long across the width of the house, *and* the width of *the*
*vestibule*[b] *extended* ten cubits from the front of the house. 4And he made for
the house windows with beveled frames.

5Against the wall of the temple he built chambers all around, *against* the
walls of the temple, all around the sanctuary and the inner sanctuary.[a] Thus
he made side chambers all around it. 6The lowest chamber *was* five cubits
wide, the middle *was* six cubits wide, and the third *was* seven cubits wide; for
he made narrow ledges around the outside of the temple, so that *the support*
*beams* would not be fastened into the walls of the temple. 7And the temple,
when it was being built, was built with stone finished at the quarry, so that no
hammer or chisel *or* any iron tool was heard in the temple while it was being
built. 8The doorway for the middle story[a] *was* on the right side of the temple.
They went up by stairs to the middle *story,* and from the middle to the third.

9So he built the temple and finished it, and he paneled the temple with
beams and boards of cedar. 10And he built side chambers against the entire
temple, each five cubits high; they were attached to the temple with cedar
beams.

11Then the word of the LORD came to Solomon, saying: 12"*Concerning* this
temple which you are building, if you walk in My statutes, execute My
judgments, keep all My commandments, and walk in them, then I will
perform My word with you, which I spoke to your father David. 13And I will
dwell among the children of Israel, and will not forsake My people Israel."

14So Solomon built the temple and finished it. 15And he built the inside
walls of the temple with cedar boards; from the floor of the temple to the
ceiling he paneled the inside with wood; and he covered the floor of the

temple with planks of cypress. [16]Then he built the twenty-cubit room at the rear of the temple, from floor to ceiling, with cedar boards; he built *it* inside as the inner sanctuary, as the Most Holy *Place*. [17]And in front of it the temple sanctuary was forty cubits *long*. [18]The inside of the temple was cedar, carved with ornamental buds and open flowers. All *was* cedar; there was no stone *to be* seen.

[19]And he prepared the inner sanctuary inside the temple, to set the ark of the covenant of the LORD there. [20]The inner sanctuary *was* twenty cubits long, twenty cubits wide, and twenty cubits high. He overlaid it with pure gold, and overlaid the altar of cedar. [21]So Solomon overlaid the inside of the temple with pure gold. He stretched gold chains across the front of the inner sanctuary, and overlaid it with gold. [22]The whole temple he overlaid with gold, until he had finished all the temple; also he overlaid with gold the entire altar that *was* by the inner sanctuary.

[23]Inside the inner sanctuary he made two cherubim *of* olive wood, *each* ten cubits high. [24]One wing of the cherub *was* five cubits, and the other wing of the cherub five cubits: ten cubits from the tip of one wing to the tip of the other. [25]And the other cherub *was* ten cubits; both cherubim *were* of the same size and shape. [26]The height of one cherub *was* ten cubits, and so *was* the other cherub. [27]Then he set the cherubim inside the inner room;[a] and they stretched out the wings of the cherubim so that the wing of the one touched *one* wall, and the wing of the other cherub touched the other wall. And their wings touched each other in the middle of the room. [28]Also he overlaid the cherubim with gold.

[29]Then he carved all the walls of the temple all around, both the inner and outer *sanctuaries,* with carved figures of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers. [30]And the floor of the temple he overlaid with gold, both the inner and outer *sanctuaries.*

[31]For the entrance of the inner sanctuary he made doors *of* olive wood; the lintel *and* doorposts *were* one-fifth *of the wall.* [32]The two doors *were of* olive wood; and he carved on them figures of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers, and overlaid *them* with gold; and he spread gold on the cherubim and on the palm trees. [33]So for the door of the sanctuary he also made

doorposts *of* olive wood, one-fourth *of the wall.* [34]And the two doors *were of* cypress wood; two panels *comprised* one folding door, and two panels *comprised* the other folding door. [35]Then he carved cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers *on them*, and overlaid *them* with gold applied evenly on the carved work.

[36]And he built the inner court with three rows of hewn stone and a row of cedar beams.

[37]In the fourth year the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid, in the month of Ziv. [38]And in the eleventh year, in the month of Bul, which is the eighth month, the house was finished in all its details and according to all its plans. So he was seven years in building it.

## SOLOMON'S OTHER BUILDINGS

7 But Solomon took thirteen years to build his own house; so he finished all
his house.

2He also built the House of the Forest of Lebanon; its length *was* one
hundred cubits, its width fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits, with four
rows of cedar pillars, and cedar beams on the pillars. 3And *it was* paneled
with cedar above the beams that *were* on forty-five pillars, fifteen *to* a row.
4*There were* windows *with beveled frames in* three rows, and window *was*
opposite window *in* three tiers. 5And all the doorways and doorposts *had*
rectangular frames; and window *was* opposite window *in* three tiers.

6He also made the Hall of Pillars: its length *was* fifty cubits, and its width
thirty cubits; and in front of them *was* a portico with pillars, and a canopy
*was* in front of them.

7Then he made a hall for the throne, the Hall of Judgment, where he might
judge; and *it was* paneled with cedar from floor to ceiling.[a]

8And the house where he dwelt *had* another court inside the hall, of like
workmanship. Solomon also made a house like this hall for Pharaoh's
daughter, whom he had taken *as wife.*

9All these *were of* costly stones cut to size, trimmed with saws, inside and
out, from the foundation to the eaves, and also on the outside to the great
court. 10The foundation *was of* costly stones, large stones, some ten cubits
and some eight cubits. 11And above *were* costly stones, hewn to size, and
cedar wood. 12The great court *was* enclosed with three rows of hewn stones
and a row of cedar beams. So were the inner court of the house of the LORD
and the vestibule of the temple.

## HIRAM THE CRAFTSMAN

13Now King Solomon sent and brought Huram[a] from Tyre. 14He *was* the
son of a widow from the tribe of Naphtali, and his father *was* a man of Tyre,
a bronze worker; he was filled with wisdom and understanding and skill in
working with all kinds of bronze work. So he came to King Solomon and did

all his work.

## THE BRONZE PILLARS FOR THE TEMPLE

15 And he cast two pillars of bronze, each one eighteen cubits high, and a
line of twelve cubits measured the circumference of each.

16 Then he made two capitals *of* cast bronze, to set on the tops of the pillars.
The height of one capital *was* five cubits, and the height of the other capital
*was* five cubits. 17 *He made* a lattice network, with wreaths of chainwork, for
the capitals which *were* on top of the pillars: seven chains for one capital and
seven for the other capital. 18 So he made the pillars, and two rows of
pomegranates above the network all around to cover the capitals that *were* on
top; and thus he did for the other capital.

19 The capitals which *were* on top of the pillars in the hall *were* in the shape
of lilies, four cubits. 20 The capitals on the two pillars also *had pomegranates*
above, by the convex surface which *was* next to the network; and there *were*
two hundred such pomegranates in rows on each of the capitals all around.

21 Then he set up the pillars by the vestibule of the temple; he set up the
pillar on the right and called its name Jachin, and he set up the pillar on the
left and called its name Boaz. 22 The tops of the pillars were in the shape of
lilies. So the work of the pillars was finished.

## THE SEA AND THE OXEN

23 And he made the Sea of cast bronze, ten cubits from one brim to the
other; *it was* completely round. Its height *was* five cubits, and a line of thirty
cubits measured its circumference.

24 Below its brim *were* ornamental buds encircling it all around, ten to a
cubit, all the way around the Sea. The ornamental buds *were* cast in two rows
when it was cast. 25 It stood on twelve oxen: three looking toward the north,
three looking toward the west, three looking toward the south, and three
looking toward the east; the Sea *was set* upon them, and all their back parts
*pointed* inward. 26 It *was* a handbreadth thick; and its brim was shaped like the
brim of a cup, *like* a lily blossom. It contained two thousand[a] baths.

## THE CARTS AND THE LAVERS

27 He also made ten carts of bronze; four cubits *was* the length of each cart,
four cubits its width, and three cubits its height. 28 And this *was* the design of
the carts: They had panels, and the panels *were* between frames; 29 on the
panels that *were* between the frames *were* lions, oxen, and cherubim. And on
the frames *was* a pedestal on top. Below the lions and oxen *were* wreaths of
plaited work. 30 Every cart had four bronze wheels and axles of bronze, and
its four feet had supports. Under the laver *were* supports of cast *bronze* beside
each wreath. 31 Its opening inside the crown at the top *was* one cubit in
diameter; and the opening *was* round, shaped *like* a pedestal, one and a half
cubits in outside diameter; and also on the opening *were* engravings, but the
panels were square, not round. 32 Under the panels *were* the four wheels, and
the axles of the wheels *were joined* to the cart. The height of a wheel *was* one
and a half cubits. 33 The workmanship of the wheels *was* like the
workmanship of a chariot wheel; their axle pins, their rims, their spokes, and
their hubs *were* all of cast *bronze.* 34 And *there were* four supports at the four
corners of each cart; its supports *were* part of the cart itself. 35 On the top of
the cart, at the height of half a cubit, *it was* perfectly round. And on the top of
the cart, its flanges and its panels *were* of the same casting. 36 On the plates of
its flanges and on its panels he engraved cherubim, lions, and palm trees,
wherever there was a clear space on each, with wreaths all around. 37 Thus he
made the ten carts. All of them were of the same mold, one measure, *and* one
shape.

38 Then he made ten lavers of bronze; each laver contained forty baths, *and*
each laver *was* four cubits. On each of the ten carts *was* a laver. 39 And he put
five carts on the right side of the house, and five on the left side of the house.
He set the Sea on the right side of the house, toward the southeast.

## FURNISHINGS OF THE TEMPLE

40 Huram[a] made the lavers and the shovels and the bowls. So Huram
finished doing all the work that he was to do for King Solomon *for* the house
of the LORD: 41 the two pillars, the *two* bowl-shaped capitals that *were* on top
of the two pillars; the two networks covering the two bowl-shaped capitals
which *were* on top of the pillars; 42 four hundred pomegranates for the two

networks (two rows of pomegranates for each network, to cover the two bowl-shaped capitals that *were* on top of the pillars); [43]the ten carts, and ten lavers on the carts; [44]one Sea, and twelve oxen under the Sea; [45]the pots, the shovels, and the bowls.

All these articles which Huram[a] made for King Solomon *for* the house of the LORD *were of* burnished bronze. [46]In the plain of Jordan the king had them cast in clay molds, between Succoth and Zaretan. [47]And Solomon did not weigh all the articles, because *there were* so many; the weight of the bronze was not determined.

[48]Thus Solomon had all the furnishings made for the house of the LORD: the altar of gold, and the table of gold on which *was* the showbread; [49]the lampstands of pure gold, five on the right *side* and five on the left in front of the inner sanctuary, with the flowers and the lamps and the wick-trimmers of gold; [50]the basins, the trimmers, the bowls, the ladles, and the censers of pure gold; and the hinges of gold, *both* for the doors of the inner room (the Most Holy *Place*) *and* for the doors of the main hall of the temple.

[51]So all the work that King Solomon had done for the house of the LORD was finished; and Solomon brought in the things which his father David had dedicated: the silver and the gold and the furnishings. He put them in the treasuries of the house of the LORD.

## THE ARK BROUGHT INTO THE TEMPLE

**8** Now Solomon assembled the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes,
the chief fathers of the children of Israel, to King Solomon in Jerusalem,
that they might bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD from the City of
David, which *is* Zion. 2Therefore all the men of Israel assembled with King
Solomon at the feast in the month of Ethanim, which *is* the seventh month.
3So all the elders of Israel came, and the priests took up the ark. 4Then they
brought up the ark of the LORD, the tabernacle of meeting, and all the holy
furnishings that *were* in the tabernacle. The priests and the Levites brought
them up. 5Also King Solomon, and all the congregation of Israel who were
assembled with him, *were* with him before the ark, sacrificing sheep and
oxen that could not be counted or numbered for multitude. 6Then the priests
brought in the ark of the covenant of the LORD to its place, into the inner
sanctuary of the temple, to the Most Holy *Place,* under the wings of the
cherubim. 7For the cherubim spread *their* two wings over the place of the ark,
and the cherubim overshadowed the ark and its poles. 8The poles extended so
that the ends of the poles could be seen from the holy *place,* in front of the
inner sanctuary; but they could not be seen from outside. And they are there
to this day. 9Nothing *was* in the ark except the two tablets of stone which
Moses put there at Horeb, when the LORD made *a covenant* with the children
of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt.

10And it came to pass, when the priests came out of the holy *place,* that the
cloud filled the house of the LORD, 11so that the priests could not continue
ministering because of the cloud; for the glory of the LORD filled the house of
the LORD.

12Then Solomon spoke:

"The LORD said He would dwell in the dark cloud.

13 I have surely built You an exalted house, And a place for You to dwell in
forever."

## SOLOMON'S SPEECH AT COMPLETION OF THE WORK

14Then the king turned around and blessed the whole assembly of Israel,

while all the assembly of Israel was standing. [15]And he said: “Blessed *be* the LORD God of Israel, who spoke with His mouth to my father David, and with His hand has fulfilled *it*, saying, [16]‘Since the day that I brought My people Israel out of Egypt, I have chosen no city from any tribe of Israel *in which* to build a house, that My name might be there; but I chose David to be over My people Israel.’ [17]Now it was in the heart of my father David to build a temple[a] for the name of the LORD God of Israel. [18]But the LORD said to my father David, ‘Whereas it was in your heart to build a temple for My name, you did well that it was in your heart. [19]Nevertheless you shall not build the temple, but your son who will come from your body, he shall build the temple for My name.’ [20]So the LORD has fulfilled His word which He spoke; and I have filled the position of my father David, and sit on the throne of Israel, as the LORD promised; and I have built a temple for the name of the LORD God of Israel. [21]And there I have made a place for the ark, in which *is* the covenant of the LORD which He made with our fathers, when He brought them out of the land of Egypt.”

The glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD.
1 KINGS 8:11

**SOLOMON’S PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

[22]Then Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the assembly of Israel, and spread out his hands toward heaven; [23]and he said: “LORD God of Israel, *there is* no God in heaven above or on earth below like You, who keep *Your* covenant and mercy with Your servants who walk before You with all their hearts. [24]You have kept what You promised Your servant David my father; You have both spoken with Your mouth and fulfilled *it* with Your hand, as *it is* this day.

[25]Therefore, LORD God of Israel, now keep what You promised Your servant David my father, saying, ‘You shall not fail to have a man sit before Me on the throne of Israel, only if your sons take heed to their way, that they walk before Me as you have walked before Me.’ [26]And now I pray, O God of Israel, let Your word come true, which You have spoken to Your servant David my father.

27 “But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven
of heavens cannot contain You. How much less this temple which I have
built! 28 Yet regard the prayer of Your servant and his supplication, O LORD
my God, and listen to the cry and the prayer which Your servant is praying
before You to-day: 29 that Your eyes may be open toward this temple night
and day, toward the place of which You said, ‘My name shall be there,’ that
You may hear the prayer which Your servant makes toward this place. 30 And
may You hear the supplication of Your servant and of Your people Israel,
when they pray toward this place. Hear in heaven Your dwelling place; and
when You hear, forgive.

31 “When anyone sins against his neighbor, and is forced to take an oath,
and comes *and* takes an oath before Your altar in this temple, 32 then hear in
heaven, and act, and judge Your servants, condemning the wicked, bringing
his way on his head, and justifying the righteous by giving him according to
his righteousness.

33 “When Your people Israel are defeated before an enemy because they
have sinned against You, and when they turn back to You and confess Your
name, and pray and make supplication to You in this temple, 34 then hear in
heaven, and forgive the sin of Your people Israel, and bring them back to the
land which You gave to their fathers.

35 “When the heavens are shut up and there is no rain because they have
sinned against You, when they pray toward this place and confess Your
name, and turn from their sin because You afflict them, 36 then hear in
heaven, and forgive the sin of Your servants, Your people Israel, that You
may teach them the good way in which they should walk; and send rain on
Your land which You have given to Your people as an inheritance.

37 “When there is famine in the land, pestilence *or* blight *or* mildew, locusts
*or* grasshoppers; when their enemy besieges them in the land of their cities;
whatever plague or whatever sickness *there is;* 38 whatever prayer, whatever
supplication is made by anyone, *or* by all Your people Israel, when each one
knows the plague of his own heart, and spreads out his hands toward this
temple: 39 then hear in heaven Your dwelling place, and forgive, and act, and
give to everyone according to all his ways, whose heart You know (for You

alone know the hearts of all the sons of men), [40]that they may fear You all the days that they live in the land which You gave to our fathers.

[41]"Moreover, concerning a foreigner, who *is* not of Your people Israel, but has come from a far country for Your name's sake [42](for they will hear of Your great name and Your strong hand and Your outstretched arm), when he comes and prays toward this temple, [43]hear in heaven Your dwelling place, and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to You, that all peoples of the earth may know Your name and fear You, as *do* Your people Israel, and that they may know that this temple which I have built is called by Your name.

[44]"When Your people go out to battle against their enemy, wherever You send them, and when they pray to the LORD toward the city which You have chosen and the temple which I have built for Your name, [45]then hear in heaven their prayer and their supplication, and maintain their cause.

[46]"When they sin against You (for *there is* no one who does not sin), and You become angry with them and deliver them to the enemy, and they take them captive to the land of the enemy, far or near; [47]*yet* when they come to themselves in the land where they were carried captive, and repent, and make supplication to You in the land of those who took them captive, saying, 'We have sinned and done wrong, we have committed wickedness' [48]and *when* they return to You with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their enemies who led them away captive, and pray to You toward their land which You gave to their fathers, the city which You have chosen and the temple which I have built for Your name: [49]then hear in heaven Your dwelling place their prayer and their supplication, and maintain their cause, [50]and forgive Your people who have sinned against You, and all their transgressions which they have transgressed against You; and grant them compassion before those who took them captive, that they may have compassion on them [51](for they *are* Your people and Your inheritance, whom You brought out of Egypt, out of the iron furnace), [52]that Your eyes may be open to the supplication of Your servant and the supplication of Your people Israel, to listen to them whenever they call to You. [53]For You separated them from among all the peoples of the earth *to be* Your inheritance, as You spoke

by Your servant Moses, when You brought our fathers out of Egypt, O Lord GOD."

## SOLOMON BLESSES THE ASSEMBLY

54 And so it was, when Solomon had finished praying all this prayer and supplication to the LORD, that he arose from before the altar of the LORD, from kneeling on his knees with his hands spread up to heaven. 55 Then he stood and blessed all the assembly of Israel with a loud voice, saying: 56 "Blessed *be* the LORD, who has given rest to His people Israel, according to all that He promised. There has not failed one word of all His good promise, which He promised through His servant Moses. 57 May the LORD our God be with us, as He was with our fathers. May He not leave us nor forsake us, 58 that He may incline our hearts to Himself, to walk in all His ways, and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments, which He commanded our fathers. 59 And may these words of mine, with which I have made supplication before the LORD, be near the LORD our God day and night, that He may maintain the cause of His servant and the cause of His people Israel, as each day may require, 60 that all the peoples of the earth may know that the LORD *is* God; *there is* no other. 61 Let your heart therefore be loyal to the LORD our God, to walk in His statutes and keep His commandments, as at this day."

## SOLOMON DEDICATES THE TEMPLE

62 Then the king and all Israel with him offered sacrifices before the LORD. 63 And Solomon offered a sacrifice of peace offerings, which he offered to the LORD, twenty-two thousand bulls and one hundred and twenty thousand sheep. So the king and all the children of Israel dedicated the house of the LORD. 64 On the same day the king consecrated the middle of the court that *was* in front of the house of the LORD; for there he offered burnt offerings, grain offerings, and the fat of the peace offerings, because the bronze altar that *was* before the LORD *was* too small to receive the burnt offerings, the grain offerings, and the fat of the peace offerings.

65 At that time Solomon held a feast, and all Israel with him, a great assembly from the entrance of Hamath to the Brook of Egypt, before the

LORD our God, seven days and seven *more* days-fourteen days. [66]On the eighth day he sent the people away; and they blessed the king, and went to their tents joyful and glad of heart for all the good that the LORD had done for His servant David, and for Israel His people.

**SOUL NOTE**

**God Hears** *(8:22-30)* Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple is one of the exemplary prayers of the Old Testament. He acknowledged the Lord God of Israel, keeper of the covenant and giver of mercy. Solomon asked God to hear the prayers of His people when they came to the temple to pray (8:30). The glorious God, who is greater than the heavens, heard and answered Solomon's prayer, and He hears and answers ours. Those who humbly come to God in reverence and awe, bringing their praise and requests, will not be disappointed. **Topic: Prayer**

**SOUL NOTE**

**Just a Prayer Away** *(8:33-40)* The temple was to be a house of prayer and a place of repentance. When the people of Israel sinned, Solomon prayed that God would hear their prayers of repentance and forgive them. This would happen continually, for sin is a constant reality. Solomon's prayer reveals God's compassion in dealing with His people when they have failed. God wants to forgive, and He offers it when He sees our repentance and change of heart. He wants His people to come to Him, so He can heal and forgive. **Topic: Sin**

**VICTORIOUS LIVING**

# RON HAWKINS

## (1 Kings 8:31-40)

**N**o one likes to talk about sin. We risk being labeled old-fashioned and insensitive if we insist that sin is a central issue in the struggles people face. However, insist we must, for it is the clear teaching of Scripture that sin is: (1) a condition inherited from Adam, (2) a lifelong challenge for Christians, and (3) a series of battles that can be won through the power of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

### SIN-A CONDITION INHERITED FROM ADAM

All of humanity finds its origin in the union of Adam and Eve. Tragically, this connection means that we are controlled by Adam's fallen sinful nature-hence, we are sinners who need change. In the Bible, sin is described as: lawlessness and faithlessness, falling short of the mark, rebellion against authority, and an indifference to or crossing of established boundaries. Above all, sin destroys a vital relationship with God. Failure to deal with sin results in a corruption of our being and, ultimately, spiritual and physical death (Rom. 6:23).

### SIN-A LIFELONG CHALLENGE

The Bible says that God loves people, pursues sinners, and has done all that is necessary to restore us to fellowship with Himself. However, we must believe and confess Christ as Savior in order to be set free from sin (Rom. 10:9, 10). Then the indwelling Holy Spirit

provides us with the power to overcome sin on a daily basis and make progress toward Christlike character. When we fail to be obedient to Christ's teachings, God insists that we acknowledge these failures as sin, repent, confess, seek forgiveness, recommit to obedience, and seek restoration to God and one another (1 John 1:9). Yet sin will continue to be a challenge as long as we live. Paul recognized this as he battled with his sin (Rom. 7:19-25).

**TRAINING, NOT TRYING, TO OVERCOME SIN**

Believers have been delivered from sin, but they still must work to overcome sinful habits. This is accomplished not by "trying" to overcome sin, but by engaging in a training regimen that results in the mastery of disciplines that help us make the right choices. In our everyday life and soul care ministries, we must remind ourselves and God's children that overcoming sinful thoughts and behaviors must be the goal, and that the pattern for overcoming sin transcends times and cultures. This pattern is fleshed out for the nation of Israel in 1 Kings 8:31-40. The consequences of un-confessed sin are broken fellowship with God and others, as well as the experience of God's discipline.

Sincere Christians can train for godliness by making godly choices with regard to various areas of life. For example:

*The Mind*- The Bible is the centerpiece in God's plan for transforming us from the old ways in Adam to the new ways in Christ. The reading and memorizing of God's Word, and the instruction received through it, are God's primary agents for helping His children in their battle against sin. Making certain that God's Word is richly dwelling in the mind is the first priority for people who desire to overcome sin.

*The Will*-Truth in the mind must be acted upon. We have been given by our Creator the freedom to choose and are responsible for our choices. The will is open or closed to the Spirit and others as a

consequence of these choices. In our battle against sin, we must *choose* to put off old behaviors that appealed to the flesh and replace them with new behaviors like Bible study, worship, prayer, and fasting, which foster richer connections with God and others.

*The Body* -The body is the seat of appetites like hunger, thirst, and physical desire. God intends that we should enjoy these appetites within the guidelines provided in Scripture. We must learn these guidelines and stay within them in order to keep our bodies away from sin.

*The Emotions*- We must choose to pay careful attention to our emotions. The absence of positive emotions is often the first indication that someone is believing or behaving poorly. When beliefs are based in error or left unsupported by appropriate actions, people experience the loss of joy. Emotions are powerful allies in our quest to determine whether one's beliefs and behavior are supported by truth.

*The Holy Spirit*-Paul insists that fulfilling the will of God requires the filling of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:15-21). The crucial issue is the *choice* to follow the Spirit's lead. God's Word richly nestled in the mind is a prerequisite for and a companion to the Spirit-filled life. The list of behaviors and experiences that flow from the life of one whose mind is "richly" filled with the Word of God (Col. 3:12-21) is virtually identical to the list of behaviors that flow from the Spirit-filled life (Gal. 5:22-25). Choosing to be filled with the Holy Spirit moment by moment is vitally important for those who would experience God's peace and power.

*Community*-The believing community that we call the church is essential for soul care and the healing of hurts. We grow to maturity in Christ only when we choose to be surrounded by a group of people who love us, share with us, dream with us, exhort us regarding our shortcomings, and applaud us for our advances.

Overcoming sin is possible through good choices and the power of the resurrected Christ. Believers will not be “sinless” until heaven, but in the meantime, we can experience marvelous victories in our battle with our enemy called “sin.”

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of sin include:

- John 3:1-8
- 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20
- 2 Corinthians 5:17-21
- Ephesians 5:1-21
- 2 Timothy 3:15-17
- Hebrews 4:12; 12:1, 2
- James 1:15; 4:17
- 1 John 2:15, 16; 3:1-9

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on sin at 1 John 1:9. See also the personality profile of Isaiah-set free from Sin.

**SOUL NOTE**

**God Never Changes** *(8:56)* God keeps His promises. “There has not failed one word of all His good promise, which He promised through His servant Moses.” God had promised to deliver Israel from Egypt, lead them through the wilderness, and guide them into the Promised Land. Hundreds of years had passed; many of the people had sinned and faced punishment. This generation of Israelites reemphasized their confidence in God’s promises. God’s Word contains His promises to the faithful. Believers can still claim those promises, for

God will never change and will always keep His promises. **Topic: God’s Promises**

## GOD'S SECOND APPEARANCE TO SOLOMON

**9** And it came to pass, when Solomon had finished building the house of the LORD and the king's house, and all Solomon's desire which he wanted to do, 2that the LORD appeared to Solomon the second time, as He had appeared to him at Gibeon. 3And the LORD said to him: "I have heard your prayer and your supplication that you have made before Me; I have consecrated this house which you have built to put My name there forever, and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually. 4Now if you walk before Me as your father David walked, in integrity of heart and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded you, *and* if you keep My statutes and My judgments, 5then I will establish the throne of your kingdom over Israel forever, as I promised David your father, saying, 'You shall not fail to have a man on the throne of Israel.' 6*But* if you or your sons at all turn from following Me, and do not keep My commandments *and* My statutes which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods and worship them, 7then I will cut off Israel from the land which I have given them; and this house which I have consecrated for My name I will cast out of My sight. Israel will be a proverb and a byword among all peoples. 8And *as for* this house, *which* is exalted, everyone who passes by it will be astonished and will hiss, and say, 'Why has the LORD done thus to this land and to this house?' 9Then they will answer, 'Because they forsook the LORD their God, who brought their fathers out of the land of Egypt, and have embraced other gods, and worshiped them and served them; therefore the LORD has brought all this calamity on them.' "

## SOLOMON AND HIRAM EXCHANGE GIFTS

10Now it happened at the end of twenty years, when Solomon had built the two houses, the house of the LORD and the king's house 11(Hiram the king of Tyre had supplied Solomon with cedar and cypress and gold, as much as he desired), *that* King Solomon then gave Hiram twenty cities in the land of Galilee. 12Then Hiram went from Tyre to see the cities which Solomon had given him, but they did not please him. 13So he said, "What *kind of* cities *are* these which you have given me, my brother?" And he called them the land of

Cabul,[a] as they are to this day. [14]Then Hiram sent the king one hundred and twenty talents of gold.

**SOLOMON'S ADDITIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS**

[15]And this *is* the reason for the labor force which King Solomon raised: to build the house of the LORD, his own house, the Millo,[a] the wall of Jerusalem, Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer. [16](Pharaoh king of Egypt had gone up and taken Gezer and burned it with fire, had killed the Canaanites who dwelt in the city, and had given it *as* a dowry to his daughter, Solomon's wife.) [17]And Solomon built Gezer, Lower Beth Horon, [18]Baalath, and Tadmor in the wilderness, in the land *of Judah*, [19]all the storage cities that Solomon had, cities for his chariots and cities for his cavalry, and whatever Solomon desired to build in Jerusalem, in Lebanon, and in all the land of his dominion.

[20]All the people *who were* left of the Amo-rites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebu-sites, who *were* not of the children of Israel-[21]that is, their descendants who were left in the land after them, whom the children of Israel had not been able to destroy completely-from these Solomon raised forced labor, as it is to this day. [22]But of the children of Israel Solomon made no forced laborers, because they *were* men of war and his servants: his officers, his captains, commanders of his chariots, and his cavalry.

[23]Others *were* chiefs of the officials who *were* over Solomon's work: five hundred and fifty, who ruled over the people who did the work.

[24]But Pharaoh's daughter came up from the City of David to her house which *Solomon*[a] had built for her. Then he built the Millo.

[25]Now three times a year Solomon offered burnt offerings and peace offerings on the altar which he had built for the LORD, and he burned incense with them *on the altar* that *was* before the LORD. So he finished the temple.

[26]King Solomon also built a fleet of ships at Ezion Geber, which *is* near Elath[a] on the shore of the Red Sea, in the land of Edom. [27]Then Hiram sent his servants with the fleet, seamen who knew the sea, to work with the servants of Solomon. [28]And they went to Ophir, and acquired four hundred and twenty talents of gold from there, and brought *it* to King Solomon.

## SOUL NOTE

**Seriously** *(9:5)* God told Solomon that He would establish his kingdom forever. At the same time, God warned Solomon that if he turned away from Him, He would deal severely with both Solomon and Israel. This passage contains both potential blessings and curses, based on people's responses. Believers are accountable to God. Their choices will not only affect them, but others as well, such as family and friends. The king's choices affected the entire nation. God is serious about His relationship with us; we should be just as serious in our responses to Him. **Topic: Accountability**

## THE QUEEN OF SHEBA'S PRAISE OF SOLOMON

**10** Now when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning
the name of the LORD, she came to test him with hard questions. 2She
came to Jerusalem with a very great retinue, with camels that bore spices,
very much gold, and precious stones; and when she came to Solomon, she
spoke with him about all that was in her heart. 3So Solomon answered all her
questions; there was nothing so difficult for the king that he could not explain
*it* to her. 4And when the queen of Sheba had seen all the wisdom of Solomon,
the house that he had built, 5the food on his table, the seating of his servants,
the service of his waiters and their apparel, his cupbearers, and his entryway
by which he went up to the house of the LORD, there was no more spirit in
her. 6Then she said to the king: "It was a true report which I heard in my own
land about your words and your wisdom. 7However I did not believe the
words until I came and saw with my own eyes; and indeed the half was not
told me. Your wisdom and prosperity exceed the fame of which I heard.
8Happy *are* your men and happy *are* these your servants, who stand
continually before you *and* hear your wisdom! 9Blessed be the LORD your
God, who delighted in you, setting you on the throne of Israel! Because the
LORD has loved Israel forever, therefore He made you king, to do justice and
righteousness."

10Then she gave the king one hundred and twenty talents of gold, spices in
great quantity, and precious stones. There never again came such abundance
of spices as the queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon. 11Also, the ships of
Hiram, which brought gold from Ophir, brought great *quantities* of
almug[a] wood and precious stones from Ophir. 12And the king made steps of
the almug wood for the house of the LORD and for the king's house, also
harps and stringed instruments for singers. There never again came such
almug wood, nor has the like been seen to this day.

13Now King Solomon gave the queen of Sheba all she desired, whatever
she asked, besides what Solomon had given her according to the royal
generosity. So she turned and went to her own country, she and her servants.

**SOLOMON'S GREAT WEALTH**

14 The weight of gold that came to Solomon yearly was six hundred and
sixty-six talents of gold, 15 besides *that* from the traveling merchants, from the
income of traders, from all the kings of Arabia, and from the governors of the
country.

16 And King Solomon made two hundred large shields *of* hammered gold;
six hundred *shekels* of gold went into each shield. 17 He also *made* three
hundred shields *of* hammered gold; three minas of gold went into each shield.
The king put them in the House of the Forest of Lebanon.

18 Moreover the king made a great throne of ivory, and overlaid it with pure
gold. 19 The throne had six steps, and the top of the throne *was* round at the
back; *there were* armrests on either side of the place of the seat, and two lions
stood beside the armrests. 20 Twelve lions stood there, one on each side of the
six steps; nothing like *this* had been made for any *other* kingdom.

21 All King Solomon's drinking vessels *were* gold, and all the vessels of the
House of the Forest of Lebanon *were* pure gold. Not *one was* silver, for this
was accounted as nothing in the days of Solomon. 22 For the king had
merchant ships[a] at sea with the fleet of Hiram. Once every three years the
merchant ships came bringing gold, silver, ivory, apes, and monkeys. [b] 23 So
King Solomon surpassed all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom.

24 Now all the earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom,
which God had put in his heart. 25 Each man brought his present: articles of
silver and gold, garments, armor, spices, horses, and mules, at a set rate year
by year.

26 And Solomon gathered chariots and horsemen; he had one thousand four
hundred chariots and twelve thousand horsemen, whom he stationed[a] in the
chariot cities and with the king at Jerusalem. 27 The king made silver *as*
*common* in Jerusalem as stones, and he made cedar trees as abundant as the
sycamores which *are* in the lowland.

28 Also Solomon had horses imported from Egypt and Keveh; the king's
merchants bought them in Keveh at the *current* price. 29 Now a chariot that
was imported from Egypt cost six hundred *shekels* of silver, and a horse one

hundred and fifty; and thus, through their agents,[a] they exported *them* to all the kings of the Hittites and the kings of Syria.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Wise Words, Wise Acts** *(10:1-13)* Solomon's wisdom was divinely given and internationally acclaimed (4:29-34; 10:23, 24). The queen of Sheba traveled a long distance "to test him with hard questions" (10:1), only to discover that Solomon could answer every one. The queen was overwhelmed and could only praise the God of Israel for giving His people such a leader. Wisdom attracts others and points them to God. The wise actions and wise words that sprinkle our everyday lives will reflect to others our great God. **Topic: Wisdom**

**SOUL NOTE**

**Heavenly Accounting** *(10:14-29)* Solomon's wisdom resulted in great wealth, just as God had promised (3:13). Solomon's choices led to an incredible abundance of blessing for the nation so that they could build the nation and the glorious temple. Solomon also enriched himself, just as Samuel had warned many years before (1 Sam. 8:10-18). Money can be a great blessing and can do much for God and His people. It can also be used to enrich oneself at the expense of others. **Topic: Money**

## SOLOMON'S HEART TURNS FROM THE LORD

**11** But King Solomon loved many foreign women, as well as the daughter
of Pharaoh: women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians,
*and* Hittites-2from the nations of whom the LORD had said to the children of
Israel, "You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you. Surely they
will turn away your hearts after their gods." Solomon clung to these in love.
3And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines;
and his wives turned away his heart. 4For it was so, when Solomon was old,
that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to
the LORD his God, as *was* the heart of his father David. 5For Solomon went
after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the
abomination of the Ammonites. 6Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD,
and did not fully follow the LORD, as *did* his father David. 7Then Solomon
built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, on the hill that *is*
east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the abomination of the people of Am-mon.
8And he did likewise for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and
sacrificed to their gods.

9So the LORD became angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned
from the LORD God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice, 10and had
commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods;
but he did not keep what the LORD had commanded. 11Therefore the LORD
said to Solomon, "Because you have done this, and have not kept My
covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear
the kingdom away from you and give it to your servant. 12Nevertheless I will
not do it in your days, for the sake of your father David; I will tear it out of
the hand of your son. 13However I will not tear away the whole kingdom; I
will give one tribe to your son for the sake of My servant David, and for the
sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen."

## ADVERSARIES OF SOLOMON

14Now the LORD raised up an adversary against Solomon, Hadad the
Edomite; he *was* a descendant of the king in Edom. 15For it happened, when
David was in Edom, and Joab the commander of the army had gone up to

bury the slain, after he had killed every male in Edom [16](because for six months Joab remained there with all Israel, until he had cut down every male in Edom), [17]that Hadad fled to go to Egypt, he and certain Edomites of his father's servants with him. Hadad *was* still a little child. [18]Then they arose from Midian and came to Paran; and they took men with them from Paran and came to Egypt, to Pharaoh king of Egypt, who gave him a house, apportioned food for him, and gave him land. [19]And Hadad found great favor in the sight of Pharaoh, so that he gave him as wife the sister of his own wife, that is, the sister of Queen Tah-penes. [20]Then the sister of Tahpenes bore him Genubath his son, whom Tahpenes weaned in Pharaoh's house. And Genubath was in Pharaoh's household among the sons of Pharaoh.

[21]So when Hadad heard in Egypt that David rested with his fathers, and that Joab the commander of the army was dead, Hadad said to Pharaoh, "Let me depart, that I may go to my own country."

[22]Then Pharaoh said to him, "But what have you lacked with me, that suddenly you seek to go to your own country?"

So he answered, "Nothing, but do let me go anyway."

[23]And God raised up *another* adversary against him, Rezon the son of Eliadah, who had fled from his lord, Hadadezer king of Zo-bah. [24]So he gathered men to him and became captain over a band *of raiders,* when David killed those *of Zobah.* And they went to Damascus and dwelt there, and reigned in Damascus. [25]He was an adversary of Israel all the days of Solomon (besides the trouble that Ha-dad *caused*); and he abhorred Israel, and reigned over Syria.

**JEROBOAM'S REBELLION**

[26]Then Solomon's servant, Jeroboam the son of Nebat, an Ephraimite from Zereda, whose mother's name *was* Zeruah, a widow, also rebelled against the king.

[27]And this *is* what caused him to rebel against the king: Solomon had built the Millo *and* repaired the damages to the City of David his father. [28]The man Jeroboam *was* a mighty man of valor; and Solomon, seeing that the young man was industrious, made him the officer over all the labor force of

the house of Joseph.

[29]Now it happened at that time, when Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem, that the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite met him on the way; and he had clothed himself with a new garment, and the two *were* alone in the field. [30]Then Ahijah took hold of the new garment that *was* on him, and tore it *into* twelve pieces. [31]And he said to Jeroboam, "Take for yourself ten pieces, for thus says the LORD, the God of Is-rael: 'Behold, I will tear the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon and will give ten tribes to you [32](but he shall have one tribe for the sake of My servant David, and for the sake of Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel), [33]because they have[a] forsaken Me, and worshiped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Milcom the god of the people of Ammon, and have not walked in My ways to do *what is* right in My eyes and *keep* My statutes and My judgments, as *did* his father David. [34]However I will not take the whole kingdom out of his hand, because I have made him ruler all the days of his life for the sake of My servant David, whom I chose because he kept My commandments and My statutes. [35]But I will take the kingdom out of his son's hand and give it to you-ten tribes. [36]And to his son I will give one tribe, that My servant David may always have a lamp before Me in Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen for Myself, to put My name there. [37]So I will take you, and you shall reign over all your heart desires, and you shall be king over Israel. [38]Then it shall be, if you heed all that I command you, walk in My ways, and do *what is* right in My sight, to keep My statutes and My commandments, as My servant David did, then I will be with you and build for you an enduring house, as I built for David, and will give Israel to you. [39]And I will afflict the descendants of David because of this, but not forever.' "

[40]Solomon therefore sought to kill Jeroboam. But Jeroboam arose and fled to Egypt, to Shishak king of Egypt, and was in Egypt until the death of Solomon.

**DEATH OF SOLOMON**

[41]Now the rest of the acts of Solomon, all that he did, and his wisdom, *are* they not written in the book of the acts of Solomon? [42]And the period that

Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel *was* forty years. [43]Then Solomon rested with his fathers, and was buried in the City of David his father. And Rehoboam his son reigned in his place.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Closer or Farther Away?** *(11:1-13)* What a sad commentary on a great king! Solomon had been blessed with world-acclaimed wisdom and wealth, but his wisdom did not extend to his passions. God gave the nation peace, but Solomon continued the age-old tradition of marrying foreign women to obtain alliances. Solomon "loved many foreign women" and "clung to these in love" (11:1, 2). These relationships led to his downfall, for these women turned his heart to other gods. Our relationships can help us grow closer to God, or they can cause us to turn from Him. We must make careful choices in marriage and friendship. **Topic: Relationships**

## THE REVOLT AGAINST REHOBOAM

**12** And Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all Israel had gone to Shechem to
make him king. 2So it happened, when Jeroboam the son of Nebat heard
*it* (he was still in Egypt, for he had fled from the presence of King Solomon
and had been dwelling in Egypt), 3that they sent and called him. Then
Jeroboam and the whole assembly of Israel came and spoke to Rehoboam,
saying, 4"Your father made our yoke heavy; now therefore, lighten the
burdensome service of your father, and his heavy yoke which he put on us,
and we will serve you."

5So he said to them, "Depart *for* three days, then come back to me." And
the people departed.

6Then King Rehoboam consulted the elders who stood before his father
Solomon while he still lived, and he said, "How do you advise *me* to answer
these people?"

7And they spoke to him, saying, "If you will be a servant to these people
today, and serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then
they will be your servants forever."

8But he rejected the advice which the elders had given him, and consulted
the young men who had grown up with him, who stood before him. 9And he
said to them, "What advice do you give? How should we answer this people
who have spoken to me, saying, 'Lighten the yoke which your father put on
us'?"

10Then the young men who had grown up with him spoke to him, saying,
"Thus you should speak to this people who have spoken to you, saying,
'Your father made our yoke heavy, but you make *it* lighter on us'-thus you
shall say to them: 'My little *finger* shall be thicker than my father's waist!
11And now, whereas my father put a heavy yoke on you, I will add to your
yoke; my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with
scourges!' "[a]

12So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the
king had directed, saying, "Come back to me the third day." 13Then the king

answered the people roughly, and rejected the advice which the elders had given him; [14]and he spoke to them according to the advice of the young men, saying, “My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke; my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scourges!”[a] [15]So the king did not listen to the people; for the turn *of events* was from the LORD, that He might fulfill His word, which the LORD had spoken by Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat.

[16]Now when all Israel saw that the king did not listen to them, the people answered the king, saying:

> “What share have we in David?
>
> *We have* no inheritance in the son of Jesse.
>
> To your tents, O Israel!
>
> Now, see to your own house, O David!”

So Israel departed to their tents. [17]But Rehoboam reigned over the children of Israel who dwelt in the cities of Judah.

[18]Then King Rehoboam sent Adoram, who *was* in charge of the revenue; but all Israel stoned him with stones, and he died. Therefore King Rehoboam mounted his chariot in haste to flee to Jerusalem. [19]So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day.

[20]Now it came to pass when all Israel heard that Jeroboam had come back, they sent for him and called him to the congregation, and made him king over all Israel. There was none who followed the house of David, but the tribe of Judah only.

[21]And when Rehoboam came to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah with the tribe of Benjamin, one hundred and eighty thousand chosen *men* who were warriors, to fight against the house of Israel, that he might restore the kingdom to Rehoboam the son of Solomon. [22]But the word of God came to She-maiah the man of God, saying, [23]“Speak to Rehoboam the son of Solomon, king of Judah, to all the house of Judah and Benjamin, and to the rest of the people, saying, [24]‘Thus says the LORD: “You shall not go up nor fight against your brethren the children of Israel. Let every man return to his house, for this thing is from Me.” ’ ” Therefore they obeyed the word of the

LORD, and turned back, according to the word of the LORD.

## JEROBOAM'S GOLD CALVES

25 Then Jeroboam built Shechem in the mountains of Ephraim, and dwelt there. Also he went out from there and built Penuel. 26 And Jeroboam said in his heart, "Now the kingdom may return to the house of David: 27 If these people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will turn back to their lord, Rehoboam king of Judah, and they will kill me and go back to Rehoboam king of Judah."

28 Therefore the king asked advice, made two calves of gold, and said to the people, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt!" 29 And he set up one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan. 30 Now this thing became a sin, for the people went *to worship* before the one as far as Dan. 31 He made shrines[a] on the high places, and made priests from every class of people, who were not of the sons of Levi.

32 Jeroboam ordained a feast on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, like the feast that *was* in Judah, and offered sacrifices on the altar. So he did at Bethel, sacrificing to the calves that he had made. And at Bethel he installed the priests of the high places which he had made. 33 So he made offerings on the altar which he had made at Bethel on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, in the month which he had devised in his own heart. And he ordained a feast for the children of Israel, and offered sacrifices on the altar and burned incense.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Wise Counsel** *(12:8-11)* Solomon had been a wise king with wise advisors, but he did not have a wise son. Rehoboam failed to heed the counsel of the older men who had served his father, listening instead

to his peers. Rehoboam's unwillingness to listen to the older and wiser men ultimately led to the division of his kingdom. It is wise to seek counsel, but then we must compare that advice to God's Word. God knows the way we should go. **Topic: Decision Making**

## SOUL NOTE

**Convenient Religion** *(12:25-33)* After Israel divided into northern and southern kingdoms, the new king in the north, Jeroboam, did not want his people traveling into the southern kingdom to Jerusalem to worship at the temple. So he made convenient worship places for them, two shrines in the northern kingdom where his people could worship golden calves. The people took advantage of this convenient religion. Today, a smorgasbord of religions is available and close at hand. But anything other than Christianity is false. Seek after God alone. **Topic: Cults**

## THE MESSAGE OF THE MAN OF GOD

**13** And behold, a man of God went from Judah to Bethel by the word of the LORD, and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense. 2Then he cried out against the altar by the word of the LORD, and said, “O altar, altar! Thus says the LORD: ‘Behold, a child, Josiah by name, shall be born to the house of David; and on you he shall sacrifice the priests of the high places who burn incense on you, and men’s bones shall be burned on you.’ ” 3And he gave a sign the same day, saying, “This *is* the sign which the LORD has spoken: Surely the altar shall split apart, and the ashes on it shall be poured out.”

4So it came to pass when King Jeroboam heard the saying of the man of God, who cried out against the altar in Bethel, that he stretched out his hand from the altar, saying, “Arrest him!” Then his hand, which he stretched out toward him, withered, so that he could not pull it back to himself. 5The altar also was split apart, and the ashes poured out from the altar, according to the sign which the man of God had given by the word of the LORD. 6Then the king answered and said to the man of God, “Please entreat the favor of the LORD your God, and pray for me, that my hand may be restored to me.”

So the man of God entreated the LORD, and the king’s hand was restored to him, and became as before. 7Then the king said to the man of God, “Come home with me and refresh yourself, and I will give you a reward.”

8But the man of God said to the king, “If you were to give me half your house, I would not go in with you; nor would I eat bread nor drink water in this place. 9For so it was commanded me by the word of the LORD, saying, ‘You shall not eat bread, nor drink water, nor return by the same way you came.’ ” 10So he went another way and did not return by the way he came to Bethel.

## DEATH OF THE MAN OF GOD

11Now an old prophet dwelt in Bethel, and his sons came and told him all the works that the man of God had done that day in Bethel; they also told their father the words which he had spoken to the king. 12And their father said to them, “Which way did he go?[a] which way the man of God went who

came from Judah. [13]Then he said to his sons, “Saddle the donkey for me.” So they saddled the donkey for him; and he rode on it, [14]and went after the man of God, and found him sitting under an oak. Then he said to him, “*Are* you the man of God who came from Judah?”

And he said, “I *am.* ”

[15]Then he said to him, “Come home with me and eat bread.”

[16]And he said, “I cannot return with you nor go in with you; neither can I eat bread nor drink water with you in this place. [17]For I have been told by the word of the LORD, ‘You shall not eat bread nor drink water there, nor return by going the way you came.’ ”

[18]He said to him, “I too *am* a prophet as you *are*, and an angel spoke to me by the word of the LORD, saying, ‘Bring him back with you to your house, that he may eat bread and drink water.’ ” (He was lying to him.)

[19]So he went back with him, and ate bread in his house, and drank water.

[20]Now it happened, as they sat at the table, that the word of the LORD came to the prophet who had brought him back; [21]and he cried out to the man of God who came from Judah, saying, “Thus says the LORD: ‘Because you have disobeyed the word of the LORD, and have not kept the commandment which the LORD your God commanded you, [22]but you came back, ate bread, and drank water in the place of which *the LORD* said to you, “Eat no bread and drink no water,” your corpse shall not come to the tomb of your fathers.’ ”

[23]So it was, after he had eaten bread and after he had drunk, that he saddled the donkey for him, the prophet whom he had brought back. [24]When he was gone, a lion met him on the road and killed him. And his corpse was thrown on the road, and the donkey stood by it. The lion also stood by the corpse. [25]And there, men passed by and saw the corpse thrown on the road, and the lion standing by the corpse. Then they went and told *it* in the city where the old prophet dwelt.

[26]Now when the prophet who had brought him back from the way heard *it*, he said, “It *is* the man of God who was disobedient to the word of the LORD. Therefore the LORD has delivered him to the lion, which has torn him and killed him, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke to him.”

[27]And he spoke to his sons, saying, “Saddle the donkey for me.” So they saddled *it.* [28]Then he went and found his corpse thrown on the road, and the donkey and the lion standing by the corpse. The lion had not eaten the corpse nor torn the donkey. [29]And the prophet took up the corpse of the man of God, laid it on the donkey, and brought it back. So the old prophet came to the city to mourn, and to bury him. [30]Then he laid the corpse in his own tomb; and they mourned over him, *saying,* “Alas, my brother!” [31]So it was, after he had buried him, that he spoke to his sons, saying, “When I am dead, then bury me in the tomb where the man of God *is* buried; lay my bones beside his bones. [32]For the saying which he cried out by the word of the LORD against the altar in Bethel, and against all the shrines[a] on the high places which *are* in the cities of Samaria, will surely come to pass.”

[33]After this event Jeroboam did not turn from his evil way, but again he made priests from every class of people for the high places; whoever wished, he consecrated him, and he became *one* of the priests of the high places. [34]And this thing was the sin of the house of Jeroboam, so as to exterminate and destroy *it* from the face of the earth.

## JUDGMENT ON THE HOUSE OF JEROBOAM

**14** At that time Abijah the son of Jeroboam became sick. 2And Jeroboam said to his wife, “Please arise, and disguise yourself, that they may not recognize you as the wife of Jeroboam, and go to Shiloh. Indeed, Ahijah the prophet *is* there, who told me that *I would be* king over this people. 3Also take with you ten loaves, *some* cakes, and a jar of honey, and go to him; he will tell you what will become of the child.” 4And Jeroboam’s wife did so; she arose and went to Shiloh, and came to the house of Ahijah. But Ahijah could not see, for his eyes were glazed by reason of his age.

5Now the LORD had said to Ahijah, “Here is the wife of Jeroboam, coming to ask you something about her son, for he *is* sick. Thus and thus you shall say to her; for it will be, when she comes in, that she will pretend *to be* another *woman.* ”

6And so it was, when Ahijah heard the sound of her footsteps as she came through the door, he said, “Come in, wife of Jeroboam. Why do you pretend *to be* another *person?* For I *have been* sent to you *with* bad *news.* 7Go, tell Jeroboam, ‘Thus says the LORD God of Is-rael: “Because I exalted you from among the people, and made you ruler over My people Israel, 8and tore the kingdom away from the house of David, and gave it to you; and *yet* you have not been as My servant David, who kept My commandments and who followed Me with all his heart, to do only *what was* right in My eyes; 9but you have done more evil than all who were before you, for you have gone and made for yourself other gods and molded images to provoke Me to anger, and have cast Me behind your back-10therefore behold! I will bring disaster on the house of Jeroboam, and will cut off from Jeroboam every male in Israel, bond and free; I will take away the remnant of the house of Jeroboam, as one takes away refuse until it is all gone. 11The dogs shall eat whoever belongs to Jeroboam and dies in the city, and the birds of the air shall eat whoever dies in the field; for the LORD has spoken!” ’ 12Arise therefore, go to your own house. When your feet enter the city, the child shall die. 13And all Israel shall mourn for him and bury him, for he is the only one of Jeroboam who shall come to the grave, because in him there is found something good toward the LORD God of Israel in the house of Jeroboam.

14 “Moreover the LORD will raise up for Himself a king over Israel who
shall cut off the house of Jeroboam; this is the day. What? Even now! 15 For
the LORD will strike Israel, as a reed is shaken in the water. He will uproot
Israel from this good land which He gave to their fathers, and will scatter
them beyond the River,[a] because they have made their wooden images,[b]
provoking the LORD to anger. 16 And He will give Israel up because of the sins
of Jeroboam, who sinned and who made Israel sin.”

17 Then Jeroboam’s wife arose and departed, and came to Tirzah. When she
came to the threshold of the house, the child died. 18 And they buried him; and
all Israel mourned for him, according to the word of the LORD which He
spoke through His servant Ahijah the prophet.

## DEATH OF JEROBOAM

19 Now the rest of the acts of Jeroboam, how he made war and how he
reigned, indeed they *are* written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of
Israel. 20 The period that Jeroboam reigned *was* twenty-two years. So he
rested with his fathers. Then Nadab his son reigned in his place.

## REHOBOAM REIGNS IN JUDAH

21 And Rehoboam the son of Solomon reigned in Judah. Rehoboam *was*
forty-one years old when he became king. He reigned seventeen years in
Jerusalem, the city which the LORD had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel,
to put His name there. His mother’s name *was* Naamah, an Ammonitess.
22 Now Judah did evil in the sight of the LORD, and they provoked Him to
jealousy with their sins which they committed, more than all that their fathers
had done. 23 For they also built for themselves high places, *sacred* pillars, and
wooden images on every high hill and under every green tree. 24 And there
were also perverted persons[a] in the land. They did according to all the
abominations of the nations which the LORD had cast out before the children
of Israel.

25 It happened in the fifth year of King Rehoboam *that* Shishak king of
Egypt came up against Jerusalem. 26 And he took away the treasures of the
house of the LORD and the treasures of the king’s house; he took away

everything. He also took away all the gold shields which Solomon had made.
27 Then King Rehoboam made bronze shields in their place, and committed
*them* to the hands of the captains of the guard, who guarded the doorway of
the king's house. 28 And whenever the king entered the house of the LORD, the
guards carried them, then brought them back into the guardroom.

29 Now the rest of the acts of Rehoboam, and all that he did, *are* they not
written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? 30 And there was
war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all *their* days. 31 So Rehoboam rested
with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the City of David. His
mother's name *was* Naamah, an Ammonitess. Then Abijam[a] his son reigned
in his place.

## ABIJAM REIGNS IN JUDAH

**15** In the eighteenth year of King Jeroboam the son of Nebat, Abijam
became king over Judah. [2]He reigned three years in Jerusalem. His
mother's name *was* Maachah the granddaughter of Abishalom. [3]And he
walked in all the sins of his father, which he had done before him; his heart
was not loyal to the LORD his God, as was the heart of his father David.
[4]Nevertheless for David's sake the LORD his God gave him a lamp in
Jerusalem, by setting up his son after him and by establishing Jerusalem;
[5]because David did *what was* right in the eyes of the LORD, and had not
turned aside from anything that He commanded him all the days of his life,
except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite. [6]And there was war between
Rehoboam[a] and Jeroboam all the days of his life. [7]Now the rest of the acts of
Abijam, and all that he did, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles
of the kings of Judah? And there was war between Abijam and Jeroboam.

[8]So Abijam rested with his fathers, and they buried him in the City of
David. Then Asa his son reigned in his place.

## ASA REIGNS IN JUDAH

[9]In the twentieth year of Jeroboam king of Israel, Asa became king over
Judah. [10]And he reigned forty-one years in Jerusalem. His grandmother's
name *was* Maachah the granddaughter of Abishalom. [11]Asa did *what was*
right in the eyes of the LORD, as *did* his father David. [12]And he banished the
perverted persons[a] from the land, and removed all the idols that his fathers
had made. [13]Also he removed Maachah his grandmother from *being* queen
mother, because she had made an obscene image of Asherah.[a] And Asa cut
down her obscene image and burned *it* by the Brook Kidron. [14]But the high
places were not removed. Nevertheless Asa's heart was loyal to the LORD all
his days. [15]He also brought into the house of the LORD the things which his
father had dedicated, and the things which he himself had dedicated: silver
and gold and utensils.

[16]Now there was war between Asa and Baasha king of Israel all their days.
[17]And Baasha king of Israel came up against Judah, and built Ramah, that he

might let none go out or come in to Asa king of Judah. [18]Then Asa took all the silver and gold *that was* left in the treasuries of the house of the LORD and the treasuries of the king's house, and delivered them into the hand of his servants. And King Asa sent them to Ben-Hadad the son of Tabrimmon, the son of Hezion, king of Syria, who dwelt in Damascus, saying, [19]"*Let there be* a treaty between you and me, as there was between my father and your father. See, I have sent you a present of silver and gold. Come and break your treaty with Baasha king of Israel, so that he will withdraw from me."

[20]So Ben-Hadad heeded King Asa, and sent the captains of his armies against the cities of Israel. He attacked Ijon, Dan, Abel Beth Maachah, and all Chinneroth, with all the land of Naphtali. [21]Now it happened, when Baasha heard *it,* that he stopped building Ramah, and remained in Tirzah.

[22]Then King Asa made a proclamation throughout all Judah; none *was* exempted. And they took away the stones and timber of Ramah, which Baasha had used for building; and with them King Asa built Geba of Benjamin, and Mizpah. [23]The rest of all the acts of Asa, all his might, all that he did, and the cities which he built, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? But in the time of his old age he was diseased in his feet. [24]So Asa rested with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the City of David his father. Then Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his place.

**NADAB REIGNS IN ISRAEL**

[25]Now Nadab the son of Jeroboam became king over Israel in the second year of Asa king of Judah, and he reigned over Israel two years.

[26]And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of his father, and in his sin by which he had made Israel sin.

[27]Then Baasha the son of Ahijah, of the house of Issachar, conspired against him. And Baasha killed him at Gibbethon, which *belonged* to the Philistines, while Nadab and all Israel laid siege to Gibbethon. [28]Baasha killed him in the third year of Asa king of Judah, and reigned in his place. [29]And it was so, when he became king, *that* he killed all the house of Jeroboam. He did not leave to Jeroboam anyone that breathed, until he had

destroyed him, according to the word of the LORD which He had spoken by His servant Ahijah the Shilonite, [30]because of the sins of Jeroboam, which he had sinned and by which he had made Israel sin, because of his provocation with which he had provoked the LORD God of Israel to anger.

[31]Now the rest of the acts of Nadab, and all that he did, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? [32]And there was war between Asa and Baasha king of Israel all their days.

**BAASHA REIGNS IN ISRAEL**

[33]In the third year of Asa king of Judah, Baasha the son of Ahijah became king over all Israel in Tirzah, and *reigned* twenty-four years. [34]He did evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin by which he had made Israel sin.

**16** Then the word of the LORD came to Jehu the son of Hanani, against
Baasha, saying: 2"Inasmuch as I lifted you out of the dust and made you
ruler over My people Israel, and you have walked in the way of Jeroboam,
and have made My people Israel sin, to provoke Me to anger with their sins,
3surely I will take away the posterity of Baasha and the posterity of his house,
and I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat. 4The
dogs shall eat whoever belongs to Baasha and dies in the city, and the birds
of the air shall eat whoever dies in the fields."

5Now the rest of the acts of Baasha, what he did, and his might, *are* they not
written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? 6So Baasha rested
with his fathers and was buried in Tirzah. Then Elah his son reigned in his
place.

7And also the word of the LORD came by the prophet Jehu the son of
Hanani against Baa-sha and his house, because of all the evil that he did in
the sight of the LORD in provoking Him to anger with the work of his hands,
in being like the house of Jeroboam, and because he killed them.

**ELAH REIGNS IN ISRAEL**

8In the twenty-sixth year of Asa king of Judah, Elah the son of Baasha
became king over Israel, *and reigned* two years in Tirzah. 9Now his servant
Zimri, commander of half *his* chariots, conspired against him as he was in
Tirzah drinking himself drunk in the house of Arza, steward of *his* house in
Tirzah. 10And Zimri went in and struck him and killed him in the twenty-
seventh year of Asa king of Judah, and reigned in his place.

11Then it came to pass, when he began to reign, as soon as he was seated
on his throne, *that* he killed all the household of Baasha; he did not leave him
one male, neither of his relatives nor of his friends. 12Thus Zimri destroyed
all the household of Baasha, according to the word of the LORD, which He
spoke against Baasha by Jehu the prophet, 13for all the sins of Baasha and the
sins of Elah his son, by which they had sinned and by which they had made
Israel sin, in provoking the LORD God of Israel to anger with their idols.

14Now the rest of the acts of Elah, and all that he did, *are* they not written
in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

## ZIMRI REIGNS IN ISRAEL

15 In the twenty-seventh year of Asa king of Judah, Zimri had reigned in
Tirzah seven days. And the people *were* encamped against Gibbethon, which
*belonged* to the Philistines.

16 Now the people *who were* encamped heard it said, “Zimri has conspired
and also has killed the king.” So all Israel made Omri, the commander of the
army, king over Israel that day in the camp. 17 Then Omri and all Israel with
him went up from Gibbethon, and they besieged Tirzah. 18 And it happened,
when Zimri saw that the city was taken, that he went into the citadel of the
king’s house and burned the king’s house down upon himself with fire, and
died, 19 because of the sins which he had committed in doing evil in the sight
of the LORD, in walking in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin which he had
committed to make Israel sin.

20 Now the rest of the acts of Zimri, and the treason he committed, *are* they
not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

## OMRI REIGNS IN ISRAEL

21 Then the people of Israel were divided into two parts: half of the people
followed Tibni the son of Ginath, to make him king, and half followed Omri.
22 But the people who followed Omri prevailed over the people who followed
Tibni the son of Ginath. So Tibni died and Omri reigned. 23 In the thirty-first
year of Asa king of Judah, Omri became king over Israel, *and reigned* twelve
years. Six years he reigned in Tirzah. 24 And he bought the hill of Samaria
from Shemer for two talents of silver; then he built on the hill, and called the
name of the city which he built, Samaria, after the name of Shemer, owner of
the hill. 25 Omri did evil in the eyes of the LORD, and did worse than all who
*were* before him. 26 For he walked in all the ways of Jeroboam the son of
Nebat, and in his sin by which he had made Israel sin, provoking the LORD
God of Israel to anger with their idols.

27 Now the rest of the acts of Omri which he did, and the might that he
showed, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of
Israel?

28 So Omri rested with his fathers and was buried in Samaria. Then Ahab

his son reigned in his place.

**AHAB REIGNS IN ISRAEL**

[29]In the thirty-eighth year of Asa king of Judah, Ahab the son of Omri became king over Israel; and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty-two years. [30]Now Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD, more than all who *were* before him. [31]And it came to pass, as though it had been a trivial thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took as wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians; and he went and served Baal and worshiped him. [32]Then he set up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. [33]And Ahab made a wooden image.[a] Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him. [34]In his days Hiel of Bethel built Jericho. He laid its foundation with Abiram his firstborn, and with his youngest *son* Segub he set up its gates, according to the word of the LORD, which He had spoken through Joshua the son of Nun.[a]

## ELIJAH PROCLAIMS A DROUGHT

**17** And Elijah the Tishbite, of the inhabitants of Gilead, said to Ahab, "*As* the LORD God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, except at my word."

2 Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying, 3 "Get away from here and turn eastward, and hide by the Brook Cherith, which flows into the Jordan. 4 And it will be *that* you shall drink from the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there."

5 So he went and did according to the word of the LORD, for he went and stayed by the Brook Cherith, which flows into the Jordan. 6 The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening; and he drank from the brook. 7 And it happened after a while that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land.

## ELIJAH AND THE WIDOW

8 Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying, 9 "Arise, go to Zarephath, which *belongs* to Sidon, and dwell there. See, I have commanded a widow there to provide for you." 10 So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, indeed a widow *was* there gathering sticks. And he called to her and said, "Please bring me a little water in a cup, that I may drink." 11 And as she was going to get *it,* he called to her and said, "Please bring me a morsel of bread in your hand."

12 So she said, "As the LORD your God lives, I do not have bread, only a handful of flour in a bin, and a little oil in a jar; and see, I *am* gathering a couple of sticks that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it, and die."

13 And Elijah said to her, "Do not fear; go *and* do as you have said, but make me a small cake from it first, and bring *it* to me; and afterward make *some* for yourself and your son. 14 For thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'The bin of flour shall not be used up, nor shall the jar of oil run dry, until the day the LORD sends rain on the earth.' "

15 So she went away and did according to the word of Elijah; and she and

he and her household ate for *many* days. [16]The bin of flour was not used up, nor did the jar of oil run dry, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke by Elijah.

**ELIJAH REVIVES THE WIDOW'S ON**

[17]Now it happened after these things *that* the son of the woman who owned the house became sick. And his sickness was so serious that there was no breath left in him. [18]So she said to Elijah, "What have I to do with you, O man of God? Have you come to me to bring my sin to remembrance, and to kill my son?"

[19]And he said to her, "Give me your son." So he took him out of her arms and carried him to the upper room where he was staying, and laid him on his own bed. [20]Then he cried out to the LORD and said, "O LORD my God, have You also brought tragedy on the widow with whom I lodge, by killing her son?" [21]And he stretched himself out on the child three times, and cried out to the LORD and said, "O LORD my God, I pray, let this child's soul come back to him."

[22]Then the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came back to him, and he revived. [23]And Elijah took the child and brought him down from the upper room into the house, and gave him to his mother. And Elijah said, "See, your son lives!" [24]Then the woman said to Elijah, "Now by this I know that you *are* a man of God, *and* that the word of the LORD in your mouth *is* the truth."

## ELIJAH'S MESSAGE TO AHAB

**18** And it came to pass *after* many days that the word of the LORD came to Elijah, in the third year, saying, "Go, present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the earth."

2So Elijah went to present himself to Ahab; and *there was* a severe famine in Samaria. 3And Ahab had called Obadiah, who *was* in charge of *his* house. (Now Obadiah feared the LORD greatly. 4For so it was, while Jezebel massacred the prophets of the LORD, that Oba-diah had taken one hundred prophets and hidden them, fifty to a cave, and had fed them with bread and water.) 5And Ahab had said to Obadiah, "Go into the land to all the springs of water and to all the brooks; perhaps we may find grass to keep the horses and mules alive, so that we will not have to kill any livestock." 6So they divided the land between them to explore it; Ahab went one way by himself, and Obadiah went another way by himself.

7Now as Obadiah was on his way, suddenly Elijah met him; and he recognized him, and fell on his face, and said, "*Is* that you, my lord Elijah?"

8And he answered him, "*It is* I. Go, tell your master, 'Elijah *is here.*' "

9So he said, "How have I sinned, that you are delivering your servant into the hand of Ahab, to kill me? 10*As* the LORD your God lives, there is no nation or kingdom where my master has not sent someone to hunt for you; and when they said, '*He is* not *here,*' he took an oath from the kingdom or nation that they could not find you. 11And now you say, 'Go, tell your master, "Elijah *is here*" '! 12And it shall come to pass, *as soon as* I am gone from you, that the Spirit of the LORD will carry you to a place I do not know; so when I go and tell Ahab, and he cannot find you, he will kill me.

But I your servant have feared the LORD from my youth. 13Was it not reported to my lord what I did when Jezebel killed the prophets of the LORD, how I hid one hundred men of the LORD's prophets, fifty to a cave, and fed them with bread and water? 14And now you say, 'Go, tell your master, "Elijah *is here.*" ' He will kill me!"

15Then Elijah said, "*As* the LORD of hosts lives, before whom I stand, I will

surely present myself to him today."

16 So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him; and Ahab went to meet Elijah.

17 Then it happened, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said to him, "*Is that* you, O troubler of Israel?"

18 And he answered, "I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father's house *have*, in that you have forsaken the commandments of the LORD and have followed the Baals. 19 Now therefore, send *and* gather all Israel to me on Mount Carmel, the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, and the four hundred prophets of Asherah,[a] who eat at Jezebel's table."

**ELIJAH'S MOUNT CARMEL VICTORY**

20 So Ahab sent for all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together on Mount Carmel. 21 And Elijah came to all the people, and said, "How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD *is* God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him." But the people answered him not a word. 22 Then Elijah said to the people, "I alone am left a prophet of the LORD; but Baal's prophets *are* four hundred and fifty men. 23 Therefore let them give us two bulls; and let them choose one bull for themselves, cut it in pieces, and lay *it* on the wood, but put no fire *under it;* and I will prepare the other bull, and lay *it* on the wood, but put no fire *under it.* 24 Then you call on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD; and the God who answers by fire, He is God."

So all the people answered and said, "It is well spoken."

25 Now Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, "Choose one bull for yourselves and prepare *it* first, for you *are* many; and call on the name of your god, but put no fire *under it.* "

26 So they took the bull which was given them, and they prepared *it*, and called on the name of Baal from morning even till noon, saying, "O Baal, hear us!" But *there was* no voice; no one answered. Then they leaped about the altar which they had made.

27 And so it was, at noon, that Elijah mocked them and said, "Cry aloud, for

he *is* a god; either he is meditating, or he is busy, or he is on a journey, *or* perhaps he is sleeping and must be awakened." [28]So they cried aloud, and cut themselves, as was their custom, with knives and lances, until the blood gushed out on them. [29]And when midday was past, they prophesied until the *time* of the offering of the *evening* sacrifice. But *there was* no voice; no one answered, no one paid attention.

[30]Then Elijah said to all the people, "Come near to me." So all the people came near to him. And he repaired the altar of the LORD *that was* broken down. [31]And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the LORD had come, saying, "Israel shall be your name."[a] [32]Then with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD; and he made a trench around the altar large enough to hold two seahs of seed. [33]And he put the wood in order, cut the bull in pieces, and laid *it* on the wood, and said, "Fill four waterpots with water, and pour *it* on the burnt sacrifice and on the wood." [34]Then he said, "Do *it* a second time," and they did *it* a second time; and he said, "Do *it* a third time," and they did *it* a third time. [35]So the water ran all around the altar; and he also filled the trench with water.

[36]And it came to pass, at *the time of* the offering of the *evening* sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near and said, "LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that You *are* God in Israel and I *am* Your servant, and *that* I have done all these things at Your word. [37]Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that You *are* the LORD God, and *that* You have turned their hearts back *to You* again."

[38]Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood and the stones and the dust, and it licked up the water that *was* in the trench. [39]Now when all the people saw *it*, they fell on their faces; and they said, "The LORD, He *is* God! The LORD, He *is* God!"

[40]And Elijah said to them, "Seize the prophets of Baal! Do not let one of them escape!" So they seized them; and Elijah brought them down to the Brook Kishon and executed them there.

**THE DROUGHT ENDS**

41 Then Elijah said to Ahab, “Go up, eat and drink; for *there is* the sound of
abundance of rain.” 42 So Ahab went up to eat and drink. And Elijah went up
to the top of Carmel; then he bowed down on the ground, and put his face
between his knees, 43 and said to his servant, “Go up now, look toward the
sea.”

So he went up and looked, and said, “*There is* nothing.” And seven times
he said, “Go again.”

44 Then it came to pass the seventh *time,* that he said, “There is a cloud, as
small as a man’s hand, rising out of the sea!” So he said, “Go up, say to
Ahab, ‘Prepare *your chariot,* and go down before the rain stops you.’ ”

45 Now it happened in the meantime that the sky became black with clouds
and wind, and there was a heavy rain. So Ahab rode away and went to
Jezreel. 46 Then the hand of the LORD came upon Elijah; and he girded up his
loins and ran ahead of Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.

**SOUL NOTE**

**No Other God** *(18:26)* One of the great religious confrontations of all time occurred between Elijah and the prophets of Baal. Elijah had challenged the prophets of Baal to build an altar, lay a sacrifice on it, and call on their god to send fire from the sky to consume the sacrifice. No answer came. When Elijah called on the one true God, however, “the fire of the LORD fell” (18:38). There is no other God. No matter how dominant evil appears to be, no matter what foothold it is gaining, God rules supreme. **Topic: Cults**

## ELIJAH ESCAPES FROM JEZEBEL

**19** And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, also how he had executed all the prophets with the sword. 2Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, “So let the gods do *to me,* and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time.” 3And when he saw *that,* he arose and ran for his life, and went to Beer-sheba, which *belongs* to Judah, and left his servant there.

4But he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he prayed that he might die, and said, “It is enough! Now, LORD, take my life, for I *am* no better than my fathers!”

5Then as he lay and slept under a broom tree, suddenly an angel[a] touched him, and said to him, “Arise *and* eat.” 6Then he looked, and there by his head *was* a cake baked on coals, and a jar of water. So he ate and drank, and lay down again. 7And the angel[a] of the LORD came back the second time, and touched him, and said, “Arise *and* eat, because the journey *is* too great for you.” 8So he arose, and ate and drank; and he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights as far as Horeb, the mountain of God.

9And there he went into a cave, and spent the night in that place; and behold, the word of the LORD *came* to him, and He said to him, “What are you doing here, Elijah?”

10So he said, “I have been very zealous for the LORD God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life.”

## GOD’S REVELATION TO ELIJAH

11Then He said, “Go out, and stand on the mountain before the LORD.” And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the LORD, *but* the LORD *was* not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, *but* the LORD *was* not in the earthquake; 12and after the earthquake a fire, *but* the LORD *was* not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice.

[13]So it was, when Elijah heard *it,* that he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. Suddenly a voice *came* to him, and said, “What are you doing here, Elijah?”

[14]And he said, “I have been very zealous for the LORD God of hosts; because the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life.”

[15]Then the LORD said to him: “Go, return on your way to the Wilderness of Damascus; and when you arrive, anoint Hazael *as* king over Syria. [16]Also you shall anoint Jehu the son of Nimshi *as* king over Israel. And Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah you shall anoint *as* prophet in your place. [17]It shall be *that* whoever escapes the sword of Hazael, Jehu will kill; and whoever escapes the sword of Jehu, Elisha will kill. [18]Yet I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.”

**ELISHA FOLLOWS ELIJAH**

[19]So he departed from there, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who *was* plowing *with* twelve yoke *of oxen* before him, and he was with the twelfth. Then Elijah passed by him and threw his mantle on him. [20]And he left the oxen and ran after Elijah, and said, “Please let me kiss my father and my mother, and *then* I will follow you.”

And he said to him, “Go back again, for what have I done to you?”

[21]So *Elisha* turned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen and slaughtered them and boiled their flesh, using the oxen’s equipment, and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he arose and followed Elijah, and became his servant.

**KEY PASSAGE**

# FINDING A WAY THROUGH THE DARKNESS

## (19:1-18)

Exhausted by his confrontation with the prophets of Baal and fearing for his own life, Elijah fled into the wilderness. There, all alone, he prayed that he might die (19:4). Elijah had just seen God accomplish a great miracle at his hand and spark a revival among the people. Yet, alone and afraid, Elijah couldn‘t take it anymore.

Life has highs and lows, and as in a mountain range, the lows often come right after the highs. We may scale the heights of spiritual victory only to soon find ourselves in the dark valley of depression. While certain forms of clinical depression should be professionally treated, many depressed feelings are part of life’s ups and downs. It helps to keep our perspective so as not to be surprised by the down times. Like Elijah, we should listen for God’s “still small voice” (19:12) to comfort us.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about The Valley of Depression. See also the personality profile of Elijah And The Darkness Of Depression.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# ELIJAH AND THE DARKNESS OF DEPRESSION

## (1 KINGS 19:1-18)

Depression has an insidious way of draining energy, twisting values, and assaulting faith. And depression can affect anyone, even a great prophet of God. Elijah stands out as one of Israel's greatest prophets. He exuded great courage in the face of evil, fearlessly confronting King Ahab and the false prophets of Baal (1 Kin. 18:17-40). Yet when Queen Jezebel threatened to kill him, Elijah ran for his life and lapsed into a deep depression.

Elijah prayed to God to let him die. He lost his appetite; his thinking was disturbed; he withdrew from everyone. During this dark period, he curled up under a tree, wanting to die. Elijah's painful experience teaches that even the most courageous and spiritually mature believer can struggle with depression.

Elijah acted courageously, but when Jezebel threatened him, he reacted in fear. Fear is prevalent in many kinds of depression-anxiety and depression coexist in 70 percent of those diagnosed with depression. As Proverbs 12:25 reveals: "Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression, but a good word makes it glad."

God responded mercifully. He did not castigate or condemn Elijah for his condition-something that many depressed Christians expect from God. Instead, God provided rest and food and then encouraged Elijah to "go" and continue his ministry. This reveals the best principles for helping a person who is depressed:

- encourage the person to take care of himself or herself physically;
- encourage action but keep it simple;
- encourage the person to be goal-directed and then support every accomplishment.

God also addressed Elijah's distorted thinking. In his isolation, Elijah missed the fact that he was not the only faithful one left in Israel-God told him that 7,000 others had not bowed to Baal. Next, God sent Elijah to train Elisha for his future work in Israel (1 Kin.

19:19-21). The call to help others is a common antidote to the disabling self-absorption and social withdrawal of depression.

Through all of this, Elijah learned that God would never forsake him. Even in the depths of depression God shows loving concern and a way out.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about The Valley of Depression. See also the key passage note at 1 Kings 19:1-18.

## SOUL NOTE

**A Still Small Voice** *(19:12)* Elijah had just gained a great spiritual victory for Israel against the prophets of Baal (18:16-40). Elijah knew God intimately and served Him faithfully. After his great victory, however, Elijah felt alone and depressed, so God lovingly reached out to His servant. God had miraculously delivered fire from heaven; now God could speak in "a still small voice." God had worked national revival; He was also at work in individual lives, like Elijah's. God may perform great miracles; more often, however, He is quietly at work in the souls of His people. **Topic: Knowing God**

## PERSONALITY PROFILE

# ELIJAH AND ELISHA: A TOUGH ACT TO FOLLOW

# (1 KINGS 19:19)

The mantle (or cloak) that Elijah tossed over Elisha's shoulders carried heavy responsibility. Elijah had served God faithfully for many years as a prophet with an unpopular message. He had served God and the nation well, but in order for such service to continue, he needed to train a successor. God provided one in Elisha.

God told Elijah to anoint Elisha "as prophet in your place" (1 Kin. 19:16). Elijah lost no time finding Elisha, throwing his mantle on him, and then taking him along as prophet-in-training. Leaving home, Elisha literally burned his bridges behind him-slaughtering his twelve yoke of oxen and burning his farming equipment. Elisha took up the mantle and didn't look back. He followed Elijah and learned from him, realizing that he would one day replace the great prophet. Elijah became a faithful teacher and beloved mentor; Elisha became a willing and capable student.

The day of reckoning finally came. Even though Elisha had been well-trained, he did not look forward to losing his master and mentor. Elisha knew something big was about to happen, so he refused to leave his mentor's side. In fact, it seems that everyone knew that Elijah would soon be taken away, even the prophets at Jericho (2 Kin. 2:5). Before he was to go to heaven, Elijah asked what last act he could do for Elisha. The student wisely answered, "Please let a double portion of your spirit be upon me" (2 Kin. 2:9). Elisha did not want more fame or more miracle-working power; he merely wanted to be able to serve well and to follow faithfully in his mentor's footsteps.

The mentoring relationship is not just for replacements-it also applies to all believers who share and teach the faith. New believers need to be trained in the basics of God's Word and in how to live for Him. Older and wiser believers can help them by taking seriously the role of mentor. Younger believers should find someone who can train

them in the faith.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Master Mentoring. See also the key passage note at 2 Timothy 2:2.

## AHAB DEFEATS THE SYRIANS

**20** Now Ben-Hadad the king of Syria gathered all his forces together; thirty-
two kings *were* with him, with horses and chariots. And he went up and
besieged Samaria, and made war against it. 2Then he sent messengers into the
city to Ahab king of Israel, and said to him, “Thus says Ben-Hadad: 3‘Your
silver and your gold *are* mine; your loveliest wives and children are mine.’ ”

4And the king of Israel answered and said, “My lord, O king, just as you
say, I and all that I have *are* yours.”

5Then the messengers came back and said, “Thus speaks Ben-Hadad,
saying, ‘Indeed I have sent to you, saying, “You shall deliver to me your
silver and your gold, your wives and your children”; 6but I will send my
servants to you tomorrow about this time, and they shall search your house
and the houses of your servants. And it shall be, *that* whatever is pleasant in
your eyes, they will put *it* in their hands and take *it.*’ ”

7So the king of Israel called all the elders of the land, and said, “Notice,
please, and see how this *man* seeks trouble, for he sent to me for my wives,
my children, my silver, and my gold; and I did not deny him.”

8And all the elders and all the people said to him, “Do not listen or
consent.”

9Therefore he said to the messengers of Ben-Hadad, “Tell my lord the
king, ‘All that you sent for to your servant the first time I will do, but this
thing I cannot do.’ ”

And the messengers departed and brought back word to him.

10Then Ben-Hadad sent to him and said, “The gods do so to me, and more
also, if enough dust is left of Samaria for a handful for each of the people
who follow me.”

11So the king of Israel answered and said, “Tell *him*, ‘Let not the one who
puts on *his armor* boast like the one who takes *it off.*’ ”

12And it happened when *Ben-Hadad* heard this message, as he and the
kings *were* drinking at the command post, that he said to his servants, “Get
ready.” And they got ready to attack the city.

[13]Suddenly a prophet approached Ahab king of Israel, saying, “Thus says the LORD: ‘Have you seen all this great multitude? Behold, I will deliver it into your hand today, and you shall know that I *am* the LORD.’ ”

[14]So Ahab said, “By whom?”

And he said, “Thus says the

And he said, “Thus says the LORD: ‘By the young leaders of the provinces.’ ”

Then he said, “Who will set the battle in order?”

And he answered, “You.”

[15]Then he mustered the young leaders of the provinces, and there were two hundred and thirty-two; and after them he mustered all the people, all the children of Israel-seven thousand.

[16]So they went out at noon. Meanwhile Ben Hadad and the thirty-two kings helping him were getting drunk at the command post.

[17]The young leaders of the provinces went out first. And Ben-Hadad sent out *a patrol,* and they told him, saying, “Men are coming out of Samaria!” [18]So he said, “If they have come out for peace, take them alive; and if they have come out for war, take them alive.”

[19]Then these young leaders of the provinces went out of the city with the army which followed them. [20]And each one killed his man; so the Syrians fled, and Israel pursued them; and Ben-Hadad the king of Syria escaped on a horse with the cavalry. [21]Then the king of Israel went out and attacked the horses and chariots, and killed the Syrians with a great slaughter.

[22]And the prophet came to the king of Israel and said to him, “Go, strengthen yourself; take note, and see what you should do, for in the spring of the year the king of Syria will come up against you.”

**THE SYRIANS AGAIN DEFEATED**

[23]Then the servants of the king of Syria said to him, “Their gods *are* gods of the hills. Therefore they were stronger than we; but if we fight against them in the plain, surely we will be stronger than they. [24]So do this thing:

Dismiss the kings, each from his position, and put captains in their places;
25 and you shall muster an army like the army that you have lost, horse for
horse and chariot for chariot. Then we will fight against them in the plain;
surely we will be stronger than they."

And he listened to their voice and did so.

26 So it was, in the spring of the year, that Ben-Hadad mustered the Syrians
and went up to Aphek to fight against Israel. 27 And the children of Israel
were mustered and given provisions, and they went against them. Now the
children of Israel encamped before them like two little flocks of goats, while
the Syrians filled the countryside.

28 Then a man of God came and spoke to the king of Israel, and said, "Thus
says the LORD: 'Because the Syrians have said, "The LORD *is* God of the hills,
but He *is* not God of the valleys," therefore I will deliver all this great
multitude into your hand, and you shall know that I *am* the LORD.' " 29 And
they encamped opposite each other for seven days. So it was that on the
seventh day the battle was joined; and the children of Israel killed one
hundred thousand foot soldiers *of* the Syrians in one day. 30 But the rest fled
to Aphek, into the city; then a wall fell on twenty-seven thousand of the men
*who were* left.

And Ben-Hadad fled and went into the city, into an inner chamber.

## AHAB'S TREATY WITH BEN-HADAD

31 Then his servants said to him, "Look now, we have heard that the kings
of the house of Israel *are* merciful kings. Please, let us put sackcloth around
our waists and ropes around our heads, and go out to the king of Israel;
perhaps he will spare your life." 32 So they wore sackcloth around their waists
and *put* ropes around their heads, and came to the king of Israel and said,
"Your servant BenHadad says, 'Please let me live.' "

And he said, "*Is* he still alive? He *is* my brother."

33 Now the men were watching closely to see whether *any sign of mercy
would come* from him; and they quickly grasped *at this word* and said, "Your
brother Ben-Hadad."

So he said, “Go, bring him.” Then Ben

Hadad came out to him; and he had him come up into the chariot.

34So *Ben-Hadad* said to him, “The cities which my father took from your father I will restore; and you may set up marketplaces for yourself in Damascus, as my father did in Samaria.”

Then *Ahab said,* “I will send you away with this treaty.” So he made a treaty with him and sent him away.

**AHAB CONDEMNED**

35Now a certain man of the sons of the prophets said to his neighbor by the word of the LORD, “Strike me, please.” And the man refused to strike him. 36Then he said to him, “Because you have not obeyed the voice of the LORD, surely, as soon as you depart from me, a lion shall kill you.” And as soon as he left him, a lion found him and killed him.

37And he found another man, and said, “Strike me, please.” So the man struck him, inflicting a wound. 38Then the prophet departed and waited for the king by the road, and disguised himself with a bandage over his eyes. 39Now as the king passed by, he cried out to the king and said, “Your servant went out into the midst of the battle; and there, a man came over and brought a man to me, and said, ‘Guard this man; if by any means he is missing, your life shall be for his life, or else you shall pay a talent of silver.’ 40While your servant was busy here and there, he was gone.”

Then the king of Israel said to him, “So *shall* your judgment *be;* you yourself have decided *it.* ”

41And he hastened to take the bandage away from his eyes; and the king of Israel recognized him as one of the prophets. 42Then he said to him, “Thus says the LORD: ‘Because you have let slip out of *your* hand a man whom I appointed to utter destruction, therefore your life shall go for his life, and your people for his people.’ ”

43So the king of Israel went to his house sullen and displeased, and came to Samaria.

## NABOTH IS MURDERED FOR HIS VINEYARD

**21** And it came to pass after these things *that* Naboth the Jezreelite had a
vineyard which *was* in Jezreel, next to the palace of Ahab king of
Samaria. 2So Ahab spoke to Naboth, saying, “Give me your vineyard, that I
may have it for a vegetable garden, because it *is* near, next to my house; and
for it I will give you a vineyard better than it. *Or,* if it seems good to you, I
will give you its worth in money.”

3But Naboth said to Ahab, “The LORD forbid that I should give the
inheritance of my fathers to you!”

4So Ahab went into his house sullen and displeased because of the word
which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him; for he had said, “I will not
give you the inheritance of my fathers.” And he lay down on his bed, and
turned away his face, and would eat no food. 5But Jezebel his wife came to
him, and said to him, “Why is your spirit so sullen that you eat no food?”

6He said to her, “Because I spoke to Naboth the Jezreelite, and said to him,
‘Give me your vineyard for money; or else, if it pleases you, I will give you
*another* vineyard for it.’ And he answered, ‘I will not give you my vineyard.’
”

7Then Jezebel his wife said to him, “You now exercise authority over
Israel! Arise, eat food, and let your heart be cheerful; I will give you the
vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.”

8And she wrote letters in Ahab’s name, sealed *them* with his seal, and sent
the letters to the elders and the nobles who *were* dwelling in the city with
Naboth. 9She wrote in the letters, saying,

> Proclaim a fast, and seat Naboth with high honor among the people; 10and seat two men,
> scoundrels, before him to bear witness against him, saying, “You have blasphemed God and
> the king.” *Then* take him out, and stone him, that he may die.

11So the men of his city, the elders and nobles who were inhabitants of his
city, did as Jezebel had sent to them, as it *was* written in the letters which she
had sent to them. 12They proclaimed a fast, and seated Naboth with high
honor among the people. 13And two men, scoundrels, came in and sat before
him; and the scoundrels witnessed against him, against Naboth, in the

presence of the people, saying, “Naboth has blasphemed God and the king!” Then they took him outside the city and stoned him with stones, so that he died. 14Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, “Naboth has been stoned and is dead.”

15And it came to pass, when Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned and was dead, that Jezebel said to Ahab, “Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreel-ite, which he refused to give you for money; for Naboth is not alive, but dead.” 16So it was, when Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, that Ahab got up and went down to take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.

**THE LORD CONDEMNS AHAB**

17Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, 18“Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, who *lives* in Samaria. There *he is*, in the vineyard of Naboth, where he has gone down to take possession of it. 19You shall speak to him, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD: “Have you murdered and also taken possession?” ’ And you shall speak to him, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD: “In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, dogs shall lick your blood, even yours.” ’ ”

20So Ahab said to Elijah, “Have you found me, O my enemy?”

And he answered, “I have found *you*, because you have sold yourself to do evil in the sight of the LORD: 21‘Behold, I will bring calamity on you. I will take away your posterity, and will cut off from Ahab every male in Is rael, both bond and free. 22I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, because of the provocation with which you have provoked *Me* to anger, and made Israel sin.’ 23And concerning Jezebel the LORD also spoke, saying, ‘The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall[a] of Jezreel.’ 24The dogs shall eat whoever belongs to Ahab and dies in the city, and the birds of the air shall eat whoever dies in the field.”

25But there was no one like Ahab who sold himself to do wickedness in the sight of the LORD, because Jezebel his wife stirred him up. 26And he behaved very abominably in following idols, according to all *that* the Amorites had

done, whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel.

27So it was, when Ahab heard those words, that he tore his clothes and put sackcloth on his body, and fasted and lay in sackcloth, and went about mourning.

28And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, 29"See how Ahab has humbled himself before Me? Because he has humbled himself before Me, I will not bring the calamity in his days. In the days of his son I will bring the calamity on his house."

**SOUL NOTE**

**Catch Up** *(21:1-16)* It is difficult to read the tragic story of innocent Naboth being killed so a pouting king could have another vineyard. Naboth had been correct in refusing to sell the land, for it was a part of his family inheritance. But Ahab and Jezebel, the most evil twosome to reign in Israel, got their way. Jezebel schemed to have Naboth killed. Eventually, Jezebel died a horrible death, experiencing the violence she had used against others (2 Kin. 9:30-37). Violence has a way of catching up with people. **Topic: Violence**

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# NABOTH: IN THE PATH OF AN EVIL KING

# (1 KINGS 21)

King Ahab ruled Samaria with an iron fist. He and his wife Jezebel have become synonymous with evil. “There was no one like Ahab who sold himself to do wickedness in the sight of the LORD, because Jezebel his wife stirred him up” (1 Kin. 21:25). These two made a truly gruesome twosome, as the story of Naboth’s vineyard reveals.

Naboth was in the wrong place at the wrong time. His beautiful vineyard, a part of his family inheritance, sat within yearning distance of the king’s palace in Samaria. Ahab decided that he wanted to own that lovely vineyard, and so he offered to buy it. But Naboth refused. He did not want to sell off a piece of property that had been in his family for generations. So he was well within his rights to refuse.

Ahab went home and pouted. Like a child who didn’t get his way, Ahab lay on his bed and refused to eat.

Enter Jezebel, the scheming wife who would stop at nothing to get *her* way. She heard Ahab’s complaint and took matters into her own hands. If Ahab wouldn’t exercise his authority as king to take the vineyard, then Jezebel would get it for him another way. She devised a plan whereby Naboth would be both defamed and murdered. After the plan was carried out, Ahab simply “went down to take possession of the vineyard of Naboth” (1 Kin. 21:16). He thought he had gotten away with it until the prophet Elijah knocked on his door with some bad news.

History is filled with evil people who stopped at nothing to get their way, and violence against godly people is a reality of life. Believers cannot assume that they will be exempt from violence. God is still in charge, however. Jezebel had bloody hands, and her awful death would be a fitting end to her horrible life (1 Kin. 21:23; 2 Kin. 9:30-37). Violence only breeds violence. In the end, God will have the final say. He promises to one day destroy evil forever.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Violence. See also the key passage note at Psalm 11:5.

## MICAIAH WARNS AHAB

**22** Now three years passed without war between Syria and Israel. 2Then it
came to pass, in the third year, that Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went
down to *visit* the king of Israel.

3And the king of Israel said to his servants, “Do you know that Ramoth in
Gilead *is* ours, but we hesitate to take it out of the hand of the king of Syria?”
4So he said to Jehoshaphat, “Will you go with me to fight at Ramoth
Gilead?”

Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, “I *am* as you *are,* my people as your
people, my horses as your horses.” 5Also Jehoshaphat said to the king of
Israel, “Please inquire for the word of the LORD today.”

6Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about four hundred
men, and said to them, “Shall I go against Ramoth Gilead to fight, or shall I
refrain?”

So they said, “Go up, for the Lord will deliver *it* into the hand of the king.”

7And Jehoshaphat said, “*Is there* not still a prophet of the LORD here, that
we may inquire of Him?”[a]

8So the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, “*There is* still one man, Micaiah
the son of Im-lah, by whom we may inquire of the LORD; but I hate him,
because he does not prophesy good concerning me, but evil.”

And Jehoshaphat said, “Let not the king say such things!”

9Then the king of Israel called an officer and said, “Bring Micaiah the son
of Imlah quickly!”

10The king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, having put on *their*
robes, sat each on his throne, at a threshing floor at the entrance of the gate of
Samaria; and all the prophets prophesied before them. 11Now Zedekiah the
son of Chenaanah had made horns of iron for himself; and he said, “Thus
says the LORD: ‘With these you shall gore the Syrians until they are
destroyed.’ ” 12And all the prophets prophesied so, saying, “Go up to Ra-
moth Gilead and prosper, for the LORD will deliver *it* into the king’s hand.”

13 Then the messenger who had gone to call Micaiah spoke to him, saying, “Now listen, the words of the prophets with one accord encourage the king. Please, let your word be like the word of one of them, and speak encouragement.”

14 And Micaiah said, “*As* the LORD lives, whatever the LORD says to me, that I will speak.”

15 Then he came to the king; and the king said to him, “Micaiah, shall we go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or shall we refrain?”

And he answered him, “Go and prosper, for the LORD will deliver *it* into the hand of the king!”

16 So the king said to him, “How many times shall I make you swear that you tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?”

17 Then he said, “I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd. And the LORD said, ‘These have no master. Let each return to his house in peace.’ ”

18 And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, “Did I not tell you he would not prophesy good concerning me, but evil?”

19 Then *Micaiah* said, “Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by, on His right hand and on His left. 20 And the LORD said, ‘Who will persuade Ahab to go up, that he may fall at Ramoth Gilead?’ So one spoke in this manner, and another spoke in that manner. 21 Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD, and said, ‘I will persuade him.’ 22 The LORD said to him, ‘In what way?’ So he said, ‘I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.’ And the LORD said, ‘You shall persuade *him*, and also prevail. Go out and do so.’ 23 Therefore look! The LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these prophets of yours, and the LORD has declared disaster against you.”

24 Now Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah went near and struck Micaiah on the cheek, and said, “Which way did the spirit from the LORD go from me to speak to you?”

25 And Micaiah said, “Indeed, you shall see on that day when you go into

an inner chamber to hide!”

[26]So the king of Israel said, “Take Micaiah, and return him to Amon the governor of the city and to Joash the king’s son; [27]and say, ‘Thus says the king: “Put this *fellow* in prison, and feed him with bread of affliction and water of affliction, until I come in peace.” ’ ”

[28]But Micaiah said, “If you ever return in peace, the LORD has not spoken by me.” And he said, “Take heed, all you people!”

**AHAB DIES IN BATTLE**

[29]So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went up to Ramoth Gilead. [30]And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, “I will disguise myself and go into battle; but you put on your robes.” So the king of Israel disguised himself and went into battle.

[31]Now the king of Syria had commanded the thirty-two captains of his chariots, saying, “Fight with no one small or great, but only with the king of Israel.” [32]So it was, when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, “Surely it *is* the king of Israel!” Therefore they turned aside to fight against him, and Jehoshaphat cried out. [33]And it happened, when the captains of the chariots saw that it *was* not the king of Israel, that they turned back from pursuing him. [34]Now a *certain* man drew a bow at random, and struck the king of Israel between the joints of his armor. So he said to the driver of his chariot, “Turn around and take me out of the battle, for I am wounded.”

[35]The battle increased that day; and the king was propped up in his chariot, facing the Syrians, and died at evening. The blood ran out from the wound onto the floor of the chariot.

[36]Then, as the sun was going down, a shout went throughout the army, saying, “Every man to his city, and every man to his own country!”

[37]So the king died, and was brought to Samaria. And they buried the king in Samaria. [38]Then *someone* washed the chariot at a pool in Samaria, and the dogs licked up his blood while the harlots bathed,[a] according to the word of the LORD which He had spoken.

[39]Now the rest of the acts of Ahab, and all that he did, the ivory house

which he built and all the cities that he built, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? [40]So Ahab rested with his fathers. Then Ahaziah his son reigned in his place.

## JEHOSHAPHAT REIGNS IN JUDAH

[41]Jehoshaphat the son of Asa had become king over Judah in the fourth year of Ahab king of Israel. [42]Jehoshaphat *was* thirty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother's name *was* Azubah the daughter of Shilhi. [43]And he walked in all the ways of his father Asa. He did not turn aside from them, doing *what was* right in the eyes of the LORD. Nevertheless the high places were not taken away, *for* the people offered sacrifices and burned incense on the high places. [44]Also Jehoshaphat made peace with the king of Israel.

[45]Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, the might that he showed, and how he made war, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? [46]And the rest of the perverted persons,[a] who remained in the days of his father Asa, he banished from the land. [47]*There was* then no king in Edom, only a deputy of the king.

[48]Jehoshaphat made merchant ships[a] to go to Ophir for gold; but they never sailed, for the ships were wrecked at Ezion Geber. [49]Then Ahaziah the son of Ahab said to Jehoshaphat, "Let my servants go with your servants in the ships." But Jehoshaphat would not.

[50]And Jehoshaphat rested with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the City of David his father. Then Jehoram his son reigned in his place.

## AHAZIAH REIGNS IN ISRAEL

[51]Ahaziah the son of Ahab became king over Israel in Samaria in the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned two years over Israel. [52]He did evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of his father and in the way of his mother and in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had made Israel sin; [53]for he served Baal and worshiped him, and provoked the LORD God of Israel to anger, according to all that his father had done.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# MICAIAH: WHEN THE TRUTH IS NOT TOLERATED

## (1 KINGS 22:8)

How valuable is the lone voice of truth amongst the clamor of lies! How brave is the one who speaks the truth when no one wants to hear it! Micaiah was a prophet who would not tolerate anything but the truth. Ahab was a king who could not tolerate the truth. When these two met, sparks flew.

Ahab, king of Israel, and Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, were forming an alliance to go to war against Syria. This was a bad idea in the first place-Ahab was an evil king who worshiped idols and surrounded himself with false prophets; Jehoshaphat had been a good king who led his nation back to God. So at their summit meeting, Jehoshaphat requested guidance from the Lord as to whether they should go to war. Ahab marched in 400 prophets who, not surprisingly, prophesied great success. Jehoshaphat felt a bit uneasy and asked for a true prophet of the Lord. Ahab knew of such a prophet, but hated him because “he does not prophesy good concerning me, but evil.”

Micaiah was brought to the summit meeting. He played along at first, just to reveal the silliness of kings who seek prophecies to confirm what they want to hear. When pressed for the truth, however, Micaiah came through with a flourish, predicting defeat for the kings and death for Ahab should they go to war. Micaiah was outvoted 400 to 1, so the kings went to war, only to be defeated. Thinking he could

outwit the prophecy, Ahab disguised himself. But God's word could not be thwarted, and Ahab was killed.

The mantra in today's culture is tolerance. People must tolerate anything and everything, except those who don't do the same. People love to hear what they want to hear, but find it hard to tolerate those who speak truth when it doesn't agree with them. Their refusal to listen doesn't make the truth any less true. In a world clamoring with lies, God needs people who are unafraid to speak the truth.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Truth and Tolerance. See also the key passage note at 2 Peter 2:12-22.

# 2 Kings



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# 2 Kings

Nobody really gets away with anything. Sin always has a price tag-consequences-and has an effect on someone else. “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap” (Gal. 6:7).

The theme of the terrible results of sin, so prominent in 1 Kings, is also dominant in 2 Kings. Possibly written by Jeremiah, this book reveals how idolatry and pagan worship infected the Israelites. Chapters 1-17 focus on the steady spiritual decline of both nations and conclude with the Assyrian captivity of the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 B.C. Chapters 18-25 document the demise of the southern kingdom of Judah at the hands of the Babylonians in 586 B.C.

Against the dark backdrop of the Hebrews’ degradation and decline, the faithfulness and mercy of God is clearly seen. He sends a steady stream of prophets-Elijah, Elisha, and Isaiah-to call His people back to righteousness, but to no avail. He raises up a handful of godly kings in Judah, but each of their attempts at reform is eventually overshadowed by godless living. In the end, Jerusalem is sacked by the Babylonians, the temple is destroyed, and the people are taken away in captivity.

Many of the applications of 2 Kings are intensely personal: Are we living in sin? Are we ignoring God’s attempts to draw us back to Himself? Do we really believe we can escape the terrible consequences of disobedience? Ask God to speak to you as you read this eye-opening book.

**SOUL CONCERNS IN**

## 2 KINGS

MONEY (5:20-27)

## DEATH (20:1-3)

## GOD JUDGES AHAZIAH

**1** Moab rebelled against Israel after the death of Ahab.

[2]Now Ahaziah fell through the lattice of his upper room in Samaria, and was injured; so he sent messengers and said to them, “Go, inquire of Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron, whether I shall recover from this injury.” [3]But the angel[a] of the LORD said to Elijah the Tish-bite, “Arise, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria, and say to them, ‘*Is it* because *there is* no God in Israel *that* you are going to inquire of Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron?’ [4]Now therefore, thus says the LORD: ‘You shall not come down from the bed to which you have gone up, but you shall surely die.’ ” So Elijah departed.

[5]And when the messengers returned to him, he said to them, “Why have you come back?”

[6]So they said to him, “A man came up to meet us, and said to us, ‘Go, return to the king who sent you, and say to him, “Thus says the LORD: ‘*Is it* because *there is* no God in Israel *that* you are sending to inquire of Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore you shall not come down from the bed to which you have gone up, but you shall surely die.’ ” ’ ”

[7]Then he said to them, “What kind of man *was it* who came up to meet you and told you these words?”

[8]So they answered him, “A hairy man wearing a leather belt around his waist.”

And he said, “It *is* Elijah the Tishbite.”

[9]Then the king sent to him a captain of fifty with his fifty men. So he went up to him; and there he was, sitting on the top of a hill. And he spoke to him: “Man of God, the king has said, ‘Come down!’ ”

[10]So Elijah answered and said to the captain of fifty, “If I *am* a man of God, then let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty men.” And fire came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty.

[11]Then he sent to him another captain of fifty with his fifty men.

And he answered and said to him: “Man of God, thus has the king said,

‘Come down quickly!’ ”

12So Elijah answered and said to them, “If I *am* a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty men.” And the fire of God came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty.

13Again, he sent a third captain of fifty with his fifty men. And the third captain of fifty went up, and came and fell on his knees before Elijah, and pleaded with him, and said to him: “Man of God, please let my life and the life of these fifty servants of yours be precious in your sight. 14Look, fire has come down from heaven and burned up the first two captains of fifties with their fifties. But let my life now be precious in your sight.”

15And the angel[a] of the LORD said to Elijah, “Go down with him; do not be afraid of him.” So he arose and went down with him to the king. 16Then he said to him, “Thus says the LORD: ‘Because you have sent messengers to inquire of Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron, *is it* because *there is* no God in Israel to inquire of His word? Therefore you shall not come down from the bed to which you have gone up, but you shall surely die.’ ”

17So *Ahaziah* died according to the word of the LORD which Elijah had spoken. Because he had no son, Jehoram[a] became king in his place, in the second year of Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah.

18Now the rest of the acts of Ahaziah which he did, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

**SOUL NOTE**

**Facing Mortality** *(1:6)* King Ahaziah feared that he might not recover from a serious injury. He sent messengers to “inquire of Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron” whether he would live or die. People most often do not want to face their own mortality. In Ahaziah’s case, he sought help from a false god instead of turning to the Lord. People

facing death often come to grips with the reality of their need for a relationship with God. Be ready to share your faith with those who are looking for answers in a time of great need. **Topic: Death**

## ELIJAH ASCENDS TO HEAVEN

**2** And it came to pass, when the LORD was about to take up Elijah into
heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal. [2]Then
Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here, please, for the LORD has sent me on to
Bethel."

But Elisha said, "*As* the LORD lives, and *as* your soul lives, I will not leave you!" So they went down to Bethel.

[3]Now the sons of the prophets who *were* at Bethel came out to Elisha, and said to him, "Do you know that the LORD will take away your master from over you today?"

And he said, "Yes, I know; keep silent!"

[4]Then Elijah said to him, "Elisha, stay here, please, for the LORD has sent me on to Jericho."

But he said, "*As* the LORD lives, and *as* your soul lives, I will not leave you!" So they came to Jericho.

[5]Now the sons of the prophets who *were* at Jericho came to Elisha and said to him, "Do you know that the LORD will take away your master from over you today?"

So he answered, "Yes, I know; keep silent!"

[6]Then Elijah said to him, "Stay here, please, for the LORD has sent me on to the Jordan."

But he said, "*As* the LORD lives, and *as* your soul lives, I will not leave you!" So the two of them went on. [7]And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went and stood facing *them* at a distance, while the two of them stood by the Jordan. [8]Now Elijah took his mantle, rolled *it* up, and struck the water; and it was divided this way and that, so that the two of them crossed over on dry ground.

[9]And so it was, when they had crossed over, that Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask! What may I do for you, before I am taken away from you?"

Elisha said, "Please let a double portion of your spirit be upon me."

[10]So he said, “You have asked a hard thing. *Nevertheless*, if you see me *when I am* taken from you, it shall be so for you; but if not, it shall not be *so.*”
[11]Then it happened, as they continued on and talked, that suddenly a chariot of fire *appeared* with horses of fire, and separated the two of them; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

[12]And Elisha saw *it,* and he cried out, “My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and its horsemen!” So he saw him no more. And he took hold of his own clothes and tore them into two pieces. [13]He also took up the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and went back and stood by the bank of the Jordan. [14]Then he took the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and struck the water, and said, “Where *is* the LORD God of Elijah?” And when he also had struck the water, it was divided this way and that; and Elisha crossed over.

[15]Now when the sons of the prophets who *were* from Jericho saw him, they said, “The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha.” And they came to meet him, and bowed to the ground before him. [16]Then they said to him, “Look now, there are fifty strong men with your servants. Please let them go and search for your master, lest perhaps the Spirit of the LORD has taken him up and cast him upon some mountain or into some valley.”

And he said, “You shall not send anyone.”

[17]But when they urged him till he was ashamed, he said, “Send *them!*” Therefore they sent fifty men, and they searched for three days but did not find him. [18]And when they came back to him, for he had stayed in Jericho, he said to them, “Did I not say to you, ‘Do not go’?”

## ELISHA PERFORMS MIRACLES

[19]Then the men of the city said to Elisha, “Please notice, the situation of this city *is* pleasant, as my lord sees; but the water *is* bad, and the ground barren.”

[20]And he said, “Bring me a new bowl, and put salt in it.” So they brought *it* to him.

[21]Then he went out to the source of the water, and cast in the salt there, and said, “Thus says the LORD: ‘I have healed this water; from it there shall be no

more death or barrenness.’ ” [22]So the water remains healed to this day, according to the word of Elisha which he spoke.

[23]Then he went up from there to Bethel; and as he was going up the road, some youths came from the city and mocked him, and said to him, “Go up, you baldhead! Go up, you baldhead!”

[24]So he turned around and looked at them, and pronounced a curse on them in the name of the LORD. And two female bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of the youths.

[25]Then he went from there to Mount Carmel, and from there he returned to Samaria.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Sell Out** *(2:6)* The relationship between Elijah, the elder prophet, and Elisha, the prophet-in-training, exemplifies the influence of a strong mentor. When Elijah asked Elisha, “What may I do for you, before I am taken away from you?” (2:9), Elisha knew what he wanted. He had seen what God had done through Elijah, and Elisha wanted God to use him even more. A life lived for God will inspire others to be sold out for God as well. Invest in someone else what God has entrusted to you. **Topic: Mentoring**

## MOAB REBELS AGAINST ISRAEL

**3** Now Jehoram the son of Ahab became king over Israel at Samaria in the
eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned twelve years.
2 And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, but not like his father and mother;
for he put away the *sacred* pillar of Baal that his father had made.
3 Nevertheless he persisted in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had
made Israel sin; he did not depart from them.

4 Now Mesha king of Moab was a sheep-breeder, and he regularly paid the
king of Israel one hundred thousand lambs and the wool of one hundred
thousand rams. 5 But it happened, when Ahab died, that the king of Moab
rebelled against the king of Israel.

6 So King Jehoram went out of Samaria at that time and mustered all Israel.
7 Then he went and sent to Jehoshaphat king of Judah, saying, "The king of
Moab has rebelled against me. Will you go with me to fight against Moab?"

And he said, "I will go up; I *am* as you *are*, my people as your people, my
horses as your horses." 8 Then he said, "Which way shall we go up?"

And he answered, "By way of the Wilderness of Edom."

9 So the king of Israel went with the king of Judah and the king of Edom,
and they marched on that roundabout route seven days; and there was no
water for the army, nor for the animals that followed them. 10 And the king of
Israel said, "Alas! For the LORD has called these three kings together to
deliver them into the hand of Moab."

11 But Jehoshaphat said, "*Is there* no prophet of the LORD here, that we may
inquire of the LORD by him?"

So one of the servants of the king of Israel answered and said, "Elisha the
son of Shaphat *is* here, who poured water on the hands of Elijah."

12 And Jehoshaphat said, "The word of the LORD is with him." So the king
of Israel and Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom went down to him.

13 Then Elisha said to the king of Israel, "What have I to do with you? Go
to the prophets of your father and the prophets of your mother."

But the king of Israel said to him, “No, for the LORD has called these three kings *together* to deliver them into the hand of Moab.”

14 And Elisha said, “*As* the LORD of hosts lives, before whom I stand, surely were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, I would not look at you, nor see you. 15 But now bring me a musician.”

Then it happened, when the musician played, that the hand of the LORD came upon him. 16 And he said, “Thus says the LORD: ‘Make this valley full of ditches.’ 17 For thus says the LORD: ‘You shall not see wind, nor shall you see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, so that you, your cattle, and your animals may drink.’ 18 And this is a simple matter in the sight of the LORD; He will also deliver the Moabites into your hand. 19 Also you shall attack every fortified city and every choice city, and shall cut down every good tree, and stop up every spring of water, and ruin every good piece of land with stones.”

20 Now it happened in the morning, when the grain offering was offered, that suddenly water came by way of Edom, and the land was filled with water.

21 And when all the Moabites heard that the kings had come up to fight against them, all who were able to bear arms and older were gathered; and they stood at the border. 22 Then they rose up early in the morning, and the sun was shining on the water; and the Moabites saw the water on the other side *as* red as blood. 23 And they said, “This is blood; the kings have surely struck swords and have killed one another; now therefore, Moab, to the spoil!”

24 So when they came to the camp of Israel, Israel rose up and attacked the Moabites, so that they fled before them; and they entered *their* land, killing the Moabites. 25 Then they destroyed the cities, and each man threw a stone on every good piece of land and filled it; and they stopped up all the springs of water and cut down all the good trees. But they left the stones of Kir Haraseth *intact.* However the slingers surrounded and attacked it.

26 And when the king of Moab saw that the battle was too fierce for him, he took with him seven hundred men who drew swords, to break through to the king of Edom, but they could not. 27 Then he took his eldest son who would

have reigned in his place, and offered him *as* a burnt offering upon the wall; and there was great indignation against Israel. So they departed from him and returned to *their own* land.

## ELISHA AND THE WIDOW'S OIL

**4** A certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets cried out to Elisha, saying, "Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that your servant feared the LORD. And the creditor is coming to take my two sons to be his slaves."

2So Elisha said to her, "What shall I do for you? Tell me, what do you have in the house?" And she said, "Your maidservant has nothing in the house but a jar of oil."

3Then he said, "Go, borrow vessels from everywhere, from all your neighbors-empty vessels; do not gather just a few. 4And when you have come in, you shall shut the door behind you and your sons; then pour it into all those vessels, and set aside the full ones."

5So she went from him and shut the door behind her and her sons, who brought *the vessels* to her; and she poured *it* out. 6Now it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said to her son, "Bring me another vessel."

And he said to her, "*There is* not another vessel." So the oil ceased. 7Then she came and told the man of God. And he said, "Go, sell the oil and pay your debt; and you *and* your sons live on the rest."

## ELISHA RAISES THE SHUNAMMITE'S SON

8Now it happened one day that Elisha went to Shunem, where there *was* a notable woman, and she persuaded him to eat some food. So it was, as often as he passed by, he would turn in there to eat some food. 9And she said to her husband, "Look now, I know that this *is* a holy man of God, who passes by us regularly. 10Please, let us make a small upper room on the wall; and let us put a bed for him there, and a table and a chair and a lampstand; so it will be, whenever he comes to us, he can turn in there."

11And it happened one day that he came there, and he turned in to the upper room and lay down there. 12Then he said to Gehazi his servant, "Call this Shunammite woman." When he had called her, she stood before him. 13And he said to him, "Say now to her, 'Look, you have been concerned for us with all this care. What *can I* do for you? Do you want me to speak on

your behalf to the king or to the commander of the army?' "

She answered, "I dwell among my own people."

14 So he said, "What then *is* to be done for her?"

And Gehazi answered, "Actually, she has no son, and her husband is old."

15 So he said, "Call her." When he had called her, she stood in the doorway.
16 Then he said, "About this time next year you shall embrace a son."

And she said, "No, my lord. Man of God, do not lie to your maidservant!"

17 But the woman conceived, and bore a son when the appointed time had come, of which Elisha had told her.

18 And the child grew. Now it happened one day that he went out to his father, to the reapers. 19 And he said to his father, "My head, my head!"

So he said to a servant, "Carry him to his mother." 20 When he had taken him and brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees till noon, and *then* died. 21 And she went up and laid him on the bed of the man of God, shut *the door* upon him, and went out. 22 Then she called to her husband, and said, "Please send me one of the young men and one of the donkeys, that I may run to the man of God and come back."

23 So he said, "Why are you going to him today? *It is* neither the New Moon nor the Sabbath."

And she said, "*It is* well." 24 Then she saddled a donkey, and said to her servant, "Drive, and go forward; do not slacken the pace for me unless I tell you." 25 And so she departed, and went to the man of God at Mount Carmel.

So it was, when the man of God saw her afar off, that he said to his servant Gehazi, "Look, the Shunammite woman! 26 Please run now to meet her, and say to her, '*Is it* well with you? *Is it* well with your husband? *Is it* well with the child?' "

And she answered, "*It is* well." 27 Now when she came to the man of God at the hill, she caught him by the feet, but Gehazi came near to push her away. But the man of God said, "Let her alone; for her soul *is* in deep distress, and the LORD has hidden *it* from me, and has not told me."

28So she said, “Did I ask a son of my lord? Did I not say, ‘Do not deceive me’?”

29Then he said to Gehazi, “Get yourself ready, and take my staff in your hand, and be on your way. If you meet anyone, do not greet him; and if anyone greets you, do not answer him; but lay my staff on the face of the child.”

30And the mother of the child said, “*As* the LORD lives, and *as* your soul lives, I will not leave you.” So he arose and followed her. 31Now Gehazi went on ahead of them, and laid the staff on the face of the child; but *there was* neither voice nor hearing. Therefore he went back to meet him, and told him, saying, “The child has not awakened.”

32When Elisha came into the house, there was the child, lying dead on his bed. 33He went in therefore, shut the door behind the two of them, and prayed to the LORD. 34And he went up and lay on the child, and put his mouth on his mouth, his eyes on his eyes, and his hands on his hands; and he stretched himself out on the child, and the flesh of the child became warm. 35He returned and walked back and forth in the house, and again went up and stretched himself out on him; then the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes. 36And he called Gehazi and said, “Call this Shunammite woman.” So he called her. And when she came in to him, he said, “Pick up your son.” 37So she went in, fell at his feet, and bowed to the ground; then she picked up her son and went out.

**ELISHA PURIFIES THE POT OF STEW**

38And Elisha returned to Gilgal, and *there was* a famine in the land. Now the sons of the prophets *were* sitting before him; and he said to his servant, “Put on the large pot, and boil stew for the sons of the prophets.” 39So one went out into the field to gather herbs, and found a wild vine, and gathered from it a lapful of wild gourds, and came and sliced *them* into the pot of stew, though they did not know *what they were.* 40Then they served it to the men to eat. Now it happened, as they were eating the stew, that they cried out and said, “Man of God, *there is* death in the pot!” And they could not eat *it.*

41So he said, “Then bring some flour.” And he put *it* into the pot, and said,

“Serve *it* to the people, that they may eat.” And there was nothing harmful in the pot.

**ELISHA FEEDS ONE HUNDRED MEN**

42 Then a man came from Baal Shalisha, and brought the man of God bread of the firstfruits, twenty loaves of barley bread, and newly ripened grain in his knapsack. And he said, “Give *it* to the people, that they may eat.”

43 But his servant said, “What? Shall I set this before one hundred men?”

He said again, “Give it to the people, that they may eat; for thus says the LORD: ‘They shall eat and have *some* left over.’ ” 44 So he set *it* before them; and they ate and had *some* left over, according to the word of the LORD.

## NAAMAN'S LEPROSY HEALED

**5** Now Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Syria, was a great
and honorable man in the eyes of his master, because by him the LORD had
given victory to Syria. He was also a mighty man of valor, *but* a leper. 2And
the Syrians had gone out on raids, and had brought back captive a young girl
from the land of Israel. She waited on Naaman's wife. 3Then she said to her
mistress, "If only my master *were* with the prophet who *is* in Samaria! For he
would heal him of his leprosy." 4And *Naaman* went in and told his master,
saying, "Thus and thus said the girl who *is* from the land of Israel."

5Then the king of Syria said, "Go now, and I will send a letter to the king
of Israel."

So he departed and took with him ten talents of silver, six thousand *shekels*
of gold, and ten changes of clothing. 6Then he brought the letter to the king
of Israel, which said,

> Now be advised, when this letter comes
> to you, that I have sent Naaman my
> servant to you, that you may heal him of
> his leprosy.

7And it happened, when the king of Israel read the letter, that he tore his
clothes and said, "*Am* I God, to kill and make alive, that this man sends a man
to me to heal him of his leprosy? Therefore please consider, and see how he
seeks a quarrel with me."

8So it was, when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had
torn his clothes, that he sent to the king, saying, "Why have you torn your
clothes? Please let him come to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet
in Israel."

9Then Naaman went with his horses and chariot, and he stood at the door
of Elisha's house. 10And Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go and
wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored to you, and
*you shall* be clean." 11But Naaman became furious, and went away and said,
"Indeed, I said to myself, 'He will surely come out *to me*, and stand and call
on the name of the LORD his God, and wave his hand over the place, and heal

the leprosy.’ [12]*Are* not the Abanah[a] and the Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?” So he turned and went away in a rage. [13]And his servants came near and spoke to him, and said, “My father, *if* the prophet had told you *to do* something great, would you not have done *it?* How much more then, when he says to you, ‘Wash, and be clean’?” [14]So he went down and dipped seven times in the Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

[15]And he returned to the man of God, he and all his aides, and came and stood before him; and he said, “Indeed, now I know that *there is* no God in all the earth, except in Israel; now therefore, please take a gift from your servant.”

[16]But he said, “*As* the LORD lives, before whom I stand, I will receive nothing.” And he urged him to take *it,* but he refused.

[17]So Naaman said, “Then, if not, please let your servant be given two mule-loads of earth; for your servant will no longer offer either burnt offering or sacrifice to other gods, but to the LORD. [18]Yet in this thing may the LORD pardon your servant: when my master goes into the temple of Rimmon to worship there, and he leans on my hand, and I bow down in the temple of Rimmon-when I bow down in the temple of Rimmon, may the LORD please pardon your servant in this thing.”

[19]Then he said to him, “Go in peace.” So he departed from him a short distance.

## GEHAZI’S GREED

[20]But Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said, “Look, my master has spared Naaman this Syrian, while not receiving from his hands what he brought; but *as* the LORD lives, I will run after him and take something from him.” [21]So Gehazi pursued Naaman. When Naaman saw *him* running after him, he got down from the chariot to meet him, and said, “*Is* all well?”

[22]And he said, “All *is* well. My master has sent me, saying, ‘Indeed, just now two young men of the sons of the prophets have come to me from the

mountains of Ephraim. Please give them a talent of silver and two changes of garments.' "

[23]So Naaman said, "Please, take two talents." And he urged him, and bound two talents of silver in two bags, with two changes of garments, and handed *them* to two of his servants; and they carried *them* on ahead of him. [24]When he came to the citadel, he took *them* from their hand, and stored *them* away in the house; then he let the men go, and they departed. [25]Now he went in and stood before his master. Elisha said to him, "Where *did you go,* Gehazi?"

And he said, "Your servant did not go anywhere."

[26]Then he said to him, "Did not my heart go *with you* when the man turned back from his chariot to meet you? *Is it* time to receive money and to receive clothing, olive groves and vineyards, sheep and oxen, male and female servants? [27]Therefore the leprosy of Naaman shall cling to you and your descendants forever." And he went out from his presence leprous, *as white* as snow.

**MASTERING YOUR MONEY**

# RON BLUE

## (2 Kings 5:20-27)

**A**ccording to a financial analyst for a major television network, financial and emotional security are inextricably linked. From a secular perspective, financial security is often synonymous with affluence and success. The world thinks that the person who has enough money will feel safe and satisfied.

From a Christian perspective, financial and emotional security run much deeper. Paul advised Timothy to pursue godliness along with contentment, pointing out that "the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil" (1 Tim. 6:10). Paul recognized what countless others have discovered: Either we will master our money, or it will master us. Furthermore, it is the financial freedom that comes with mastering our money-rather than the actual amount of money that we have-that serves as the link between financial security and emotional well-being.

## WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT MASTERING YOUR MONEY

Mastering our money begins with discovering what the Bible says about financial management. Jesus Christ talked about money-and how to handle it-more than any other single issue. Why? Because "where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matt. 6:21).

Our treasure is what is most important to us, where the heart is. God knows that our hearts cannot be devoted both to Him and to wealth or material pursuits. "You cannot serve God and mammon [money]" (Matt. 6:24). Jesus didn't say it would be *difficult* to serve both; He said it would be *impossible*. We *cannot*; therefore, we must choose.

When it comes to choosing our treasure, we really have only two options. Either we can store up treasures on earth, or we can store up treasure in heaven (Matt. 6:19, 20). Jesus recommends the latter-and if we want to follow His advice, we must start by acknowledging God's ownership of everything that we have.

The bottom line is this: *God owns it all.* What does that mean in practical terms? First, it means that God has the right to take or use whatever He wants whenever He wants. We are simply managers of the resources He entrusts to us.

Second, if we acknowledge God's position as the ultimate owner,

then every spending decision we make becomes a spiritual decision. Instead of asking whether or not we can afford to buy something, our questions should revolve around whether or not God would want us to use His resources in that way.

Finally, the proof, as they say, is in the pudding. If we really believe that God owns it all, our convictions will show up in our checkbook. What does our checkbook say about our goals and priorities? What does it say about who is in charge?

Have we mastered our money-or is it mastering us?

## WHAT TO DO TO MASTER YOUR MONEY

Four biblically based principles for mastering our money have stood the tests of time and experience:

1. *Spend less than you earn*. No matter how much money people have, there will always be unlimited ways to spend it. Spending less than we earn is the number one key to achieving financial freedom and security-regardless of what happens in the overall economy.

2. *Avoid the use of debt*. The average American family devotes 25 percent of its spendable income-the amount left after taxes-to paying off outstanding debts! Not only does going into debt presume upon the future, but it precommits our resources, limits our financial flexibility, and dictates what we can (and cannot) afford to do down the road.

3. *Maintain liquidity*. We must build liquidity-that is, cash or assets that can be readily converted to cash-before we embark on more sophisticated investment strategies. By keeping at least three- to six-months worth of living expenses in a bank account or money market fund, we can ride out minor emergencies and unexpected expenses that might otherwise derail our budget and cause us to take on unwanted debt.

4. *Set long-term goals.* Any financial advisor will say that setting goals is the cornerstone of sound financial planning. Goals provide direction in life-and the longer-term our perspective is, the better our current financial decisions will be.

## GENEROSITY: THE KEY TO CONTENTMENT

These four principles-spend less than we earn, avoid debt, maintain liquidity, and set goals-provide a framework for gaining control of our finances. But finding true peace, contentment, and security goes beyond wise investing, careful budgeting, and debt-free living. These are all valuable, but the real secret to financial freedom and emotional health comes when we learn to hold our resources with an open hand. In order to experience genuine joy, we must be willing to give.

The Bible commands believers to be generous. Why is God so interested in our generosity? It's not because He needs the money. Rather, God asks us to give because of what giving does for us: It breaks the power of money. The world's perspective-that accumulation equals success-creates a bondage to money. Under this philosophy, any thought of giving money away comes as a threat to our security. Consumed by the need to stockpile funds, we become slaves to our finances.

When we give, on the other hand, we acknowledge our dependence on God and our willingness to love and serve Him. We stand on the promise of Matthew 6:8, that our heavenly Father knows what we need before we ask Him. Money no longer has a hold on us-and we become free to give God that which He wants most of all: our hearts. Where our treasure is, our hearts will be also.

## FURTHER MEDITATION:

Other passages to study about the issue of money include:

- Proverbs 3:9, 10; 11:24-26; 17:18, 23; 19:17; 21:13, 20; 22:7, 9,

26, 27

- Haggai 1:3-11
- Matthew 19:16-30
- Luke 6:38; 12:16-21; 14:16-24; 16:1-9; 21:1-4

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on money at 1 Timothy 6:6-10. See also the personality profile of the rich young ruler Rich Man, Poor Man.

## THE FLOATING AX HEAD

**6** And the sons of the prophets said to Elisha, “See now, the place where we
dwell with you is too small for us. 2 Please, let us go to the Jordan, and let
every man take a beam from there, and let us make there a place where we
may dwell.”

So he answered, “Go.”

3 Then one said, “Please consent to go with your servants.”

And he answered, “I will go.” 4 So he went with them. And when they
came to the Jordan, they cut down trees. 5 But as one was cutting down a tree,
the iron *ax head* fell into the water; and he cried out and said, “Alas, master!
For it was borrowed.”

6 So the man of God said, “Where did it fall?” And he showed him the
place. So he cut off a stick, and threw *it* in there; and he made the iron float.
7 Therefore he said, “Pick *it* up for yourself.” So he reached out his hand and
took it.

## THE BLINDED SYRIANS CAPTURED

8 Now the king of Syria was making war against Israel; and he consulted
with his servants, saying, “My camp *will be* in such and such a place.” 9 And
the man of God sent to the king of Israel, saying, “Beware that you do not
pass this place, for the Syrians are coming down there.” 10 Then the king of
Israel sent *someone* to the place of which the man of God had told him. Thus
he warned him, and he was watchful there, not just once or twice.

11 Therefore the heart of the king of Syria was greatly troubled by this
thing; and he called his servants and said to them, “Will you not show me
which of us *is* for the king of Israel?”

12 And one of his servants said, “None, my lord, O king; but Elisha, the
prophet who *is* in Israel, tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in
your bedroom.”

13 So he said, “Go and see where he *is*, that I may send and get him.”

And it was told him, saying, “Surely *he is* in Dothan.”

[14]Therefore he sent horses and chariots and a great army there, and they came by night and surrounded the city. [15]And when the servant of the man of God arose early and went out, there was an army, surrounding the city with horses and chariots. And his servant said to him, “Alas, my master! What shall we do?”

[16]So he answered, “Do not fear, for those who *are* with us *are* more than those who *are* with them.” [17]And Elisha prayed, and said, “LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.” Then the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain *was* full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. [18]So when *the Syrians* came down to him, Elisha prayed to the LORD, and said, “Strike this people, I pray, with blindness.” And He struck them with blindness according to the word of Elisha.

[19]Now Elisha said to them, “This *is* not the way, nor *is* this the city. Follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom you seek.” But he led them to Samaria.

[20]So it was, when they had come to Samaria, that Elisha said, “LORD, open the eyes of these *men,* that they may see.” And the LORD opened their eyes, and they saw; and there *they were,* inside Samaria!

[21]Now when the king of Israel saw them, he said to Elisha, “My father, shall I kill *them?* Shall I kill *them?* ”

[22]But he answered, “You shall not kill *them.* Would you kill those whom you have taken captive with your sword and your bow? Set food and water before them, that they may eat and drink and go to their master.” [23]Then he prepared a great feast for them; and after they ate and drank, he sent them away and they went to their master. So the bands of Syrian *raiders* came no more into the land of Israel.

**SYRIA BESIEGES SAMARIA IN FAMINE**

[24]And it happened after this that Ben-Hadad king of Syria gathered all his army, and went up and besieged Samaria. [25]And there was a great famine in Samaria; and indeed they besieged it until a donkey’s head was *sold* for eighty *shekels* of silver, and one-fourth of a kab of dove droppings for five *shekels* of silver.

[26]Then, as the king of Israel was passing by on the wall, a woman cried out to him, saying, “Help, my lord, O king!”

[27]And he said, “If the LORD does not help you, where can I find help for you? From the threshing floor or from the winepress?” [28]Then the king said to her, “What is troubling you?”

And she answered, “This woman said to me, ‘Give your son, that we may eat him today, and we will eat my son tomorrow.’ [29]So we boiled my son, and ate him. And I said to her on the next day, ‘Give your son, that we may eat him’; but she has hidden her son.”

[30]Now it happened, when the king heard the words of the woman, that he tore his clothes; and as he passed by on the wall, the people looked, and there underneath *he had* sackcloth on his body. [31]Then he said, “God do so to me and more also, if the head of Elisha the son of Shaphat remains on him today!”

[32]But Elisha was sitting in his house, and the elders were sitting with him. And *the king* sent a man ahead of him, but before the messenger came to him, he said to the elders, “Do you see how this son of a murderer has sent someone to take away my head? Look, when the messenger comes, shut the door, and hold him fast at the door. *Is* not the sound of his master’s feet behind him?” [33]And while he was still talking with them, there was the messenger, coming down to him; and then *the king* said, “Surely this calamity *is* from the LORD; why should I wait for the LORD any longer?”

7 Then Elisha said, “Hear the word of the LORD. Thus says the LORD: ‘Tomorrow about this time a seah of fine flour *shall be sold* for a shekel, and two seahs of barley for a shekel, at the gate of Samaria.’ ”

2So an officer on whose hand the king leaned answered the man of God and said, “Look, *if* the LORD would make windows in heaven, could this thing be?”

And he said, “In fact, you shall see *it* with your eyes, but you shall not eat of it.”

**THE SYRIANS FLEE**

3Now there were four leprous men at the entrance of the gate; and they said to one another, “Why are we sitting here until we die? 4If we say, ‘We will enter the city,’ the famine *is* in the city, and we shall die there. And if we sit here, we die also. Now therefore, come, let us surrender to the army of the Syrians. If they keep us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall only die.” 5And they rose at twilight to go to the camp of the Syrians; and when they had come to the outskirts of the Syrian camp, to their surprise no one *was* there. 6For the LORD had caused the army of the Syrians to hear the noise of chariots and the noise of horses-the noise of a great army; so they said to one another, “Look, the king of Israel has hired against us the kings of the Hittites and the kings of the Egyptians to attack us!” 7Therefore they arose and fled at twilight, and left the camp intact-their tents, their horses, and their donkeys-and they fled for their lives. 8And when these lepers came to the outskirts of the camp, they went into one tent and ate and drank, and carried from it silver and gold and clothing, and went and hid *them;* then they came back and entered another tent, and carried *some* from there *also,* and went and hid *it.*

9Then they said to one another, “We are not doing right. This day *is* a day of good news, and we remain silent. If we wait until morning light, some punishment will come upon us. Now therefore, come, let us go and tell the king’s household.” 10So they went and called to the gatekeepers of the city, and told them, saying, “We went to the Syrian camp, and surprisingly no one *was* there, not a human sound-only horses and donkeys tied, and the tents intact.” 11And the gatekeepers called out, and they told *it* to the king’s

household inside.

12So the king arose in the night and said to his servants, “Let me now tell you what the Syrians have done to us. They know that we *are* hungry; therefore they have gone out of the camp to hide themselves in the field, saying, ‘When they come out of the city, we shall catch them alive, and get into the city.’ ”

13And one of his servants answered and said, “Please, let several *men* take five of the remaining horses which are left in the city. Look, they *may either become* like all the multitude of Israel that are left in it; or indeed, *I say,* they *may become* like all the multitude of Israel left from those who are consumed; so let us send them and see.” 14Therefore they took two chariots with horses; and the king sent them in the direction of the Syrian army, saying, “Go and see.” 15And they went after them to the Jordan; and indeed all the road *was* full of garments and weapons which the Syrians had thrown away in their haste. So the messengers returned and told the king. 16Then the people went out and plundered the tents of the Syrians. So a seah of fine flour was *sold* for a shekel, and two seahs of barley for a shekel, according to the word of the LORD.

17Now the king had appointed the officer on whose hand he leaned to have charge of the gate. But the people trampled him in the gate, and he died, just as the man of God had said, who spoke when the king came down to him. 18So it happened just as the man of God had spoken to the king, saying, “Two seahs of barley for a shekel, and a seah of fine flour for a shekel, shall be *sold* tomorrow about this time in the gate of Samaria.”

19Then that officer had answered the man of God, and said, “Now look, *if* the LORD would make windows in heaven, could such a thing be?”

And he had said, “In fact, you shall see *it* with your eyes, but you shall not eat of it.” 20And so it happened to him, for the people trampled him in the gate, and he died.

## THE KING RESTORES THE SHUNAMMITE'S LAND

**8** Then Elisha spoke to the woman whose son he had restored to life, saying, "Arise and go, you and your household, and stay wherever you can; for the LORD has called for a famine, and furthermore, it will come upon the land for seven years." 2So the woman arose and did according to the saying of the man of God, and she went with her household and dwelt in the land of the Philistines seven years.

3It came to pass, at the end of seven years, that the woman returned from the land of the Philistines; and she went to make an appeal to the king for her house and for her land. 4Then the king talked with Gehazi, the servant of the man of God, saying, "Tell me, please, all the great things Elisha has done." 5Now it happened, as he was telling the king how he had restored the dead to life, that there was the woman whose son he had restored to life, appealing to the king for her house and for her land. And Gehazi said, "My lord, O king, this *is* the woman, and this *is* her son whom Elisha restored to life." 6And when the king asked the woman, she told him.

So the king appointed a certain officer for her, saying, "Restore all that *was* hers, and all the proceeds of the field from the day that she left the land until now."

## DEATH OF BEN-HADAD

7Then Elisha went to Damascus, and BenHadad king of Syria was sick; and it was told him, saying, "The man of God has come here." 8And the king said to Hazael, "Take a present in your hand, and go to meet the man of God, and inquire of the LORD by him, saying, 'Shall I recover from this disease?' " 9So Hazael went to meet him and took a present with him, of every good thing of Damascus, forty camel-loads; and he came and stood before him, and said, "Your son Ben-Hadad king of Syria has sent me to you, saying, 'Shall I recover from this disease?' "

10And Elisha said to him, "Go, say to him, 'You shall certainly recover.' However the LORD has shown me that he will really die." 11Then he set his countenance in a stare until he was ashamed; and the man of God wept.

12 And Hazael said, “Why is my lord weeping?”

He answered, “Because I know the evil that you will do to the children of Israel: Their strongholds you will set on fire, and their young men you will kill with the sword; and you will dash their children, and rip open their women with child.”

13 So Hazael said, “But what *is* your servant-a dog, that he should do this gross thing?”

And Elisha answered, “The LORD has shown me that you *will become* king over Syria.”

14 Then he departed from Elisha, and came to his master, who said to him, “What did Elisha say to you?” And he answered, “He told me you would surely recover.” 15 But it happened on the next day that he took a thick cloth and dipped *it* in water, and spread *it* over his face so that he died; and Hazael reigned in his place.

## JEHORAM REIGNS IN JUDAH

16 Now in the fifth year of Joram the son of Ahab, king of Israel, Jehoshaphat *having been* king of Judah, Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat began to reign as king of Judah. 17 He was thirty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem. 18 And he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, just as the house of Ahab had done, for the daughter of Ahab was his wife; and he did evil in the sight of the LORD. 19 Yet the LORD would not destroy Judah, for the sake of his servant David, as He promised him to give a lamp to him *and* his sons forever.

20 In his days Edom revolted against Judah’s authority, and made a king over themselves. 21 So Joram[a] went to Zair, and all his chariots with him. Then he rose by night and attacked the Edomites who had surrounded him and the captains of the chariots; and the troops fled to their tents. 22 Thus Edom has been in revolt against Judah’s authority to this day. And Libnah revolted at that time.

23 Now the rest of the acts of Joram, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? 24 So Joram rested with

his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the City of David. Then Ahaziah his son reigned in his place.

**AHAZIAH REIGNS IN JUDAH**

25 In the twelfth year of Joram the son of Ahab, king of Israel, Ahaziah the
son of Jehoram, king of Judah, began to reign. 26 Ahaziah *was* twenty-two
years old when he became king, and he reigned one year in Jerusalem. His
mother's name *was* Athaliah the granddaughter of Omri, king of Israel.
27 And he walked in the way of the house of Ahab, and did evil in the sight of
the LORD, like the house of Ahab, for he *was* the son-in-law of the house of
Ahab.

28 Now he went with Joram the son of Ahab to war against Hazael king of
Syria at Ramoth Gilead; and the Syrians wounded Joram. 29 Then King Joram
went back to Jezreel to recover from the wounds which the Syrians had
inflicted on him at Ramah, when he fought against Hazael king of Syria. And
Ahaziah the son of Jehoram, king of Judah, went down to see Joram the son
of Ahab in Jezreel, because he was sick.

**SOUL NOTE**

**The Wrong Path** *(8:15)* Ben-Hadad, king of Syria, had sent Hazael to ask Elisha if he would recover from his disease. Elisha responded that Ben-Hadad would die and that Hazael would take his place as king. The prophet's words came true the next day, for God had revealed to Elijah the treachery in Hazael's heart. Instead of waiting for God's timing, Hazael assassinated the king. Taking matters into our own hands never accomplishes God's purposes. A life of violence brings its own path of destruction. **Topic: Violence**

## JEHU ANOINTED KING OF ISRAEL

**9** And Elisha the prophet called one of the sons of the prophets, and said to
him, “Get yourself ready, take this flask of oil in your hand, and go to
Ramoth Gilead. 2Now when you arrive at that place, look there for Jehu the
son of Jehoshaphat, the son of Nimshi, and go in and make him rise up from
among his associates, and take him to an inner room. 3Then take the flask of
oil, and pour *it* on his head, and say, ‘Thus says the LORD: “I have anointed
you king over Israel.” ’ Then open the door and flee, and do not delay.”

4So the young man, the servant of the prophet, went to Ramoth Gilead.
5And when he arrived, there *were* the captains of the army sitting; and he
said, “I have a message for you, Commander.”

Jehu said, “For which *one* of us?”

And he said, “For you, Commander.” 6Then he arose and went into the
house. And he poured the oil on his head, and said to him, “Thus says the
LORD God of Israel: ‘I have anointed you king over the people of the LORD,
over Israel. 7You shall strike down the house of Ahab your master, that I may
avenge the blood of My servants the prophets, and the blood of all the
servants of the LORD, at the hand of Jezebel. 8For the whole house of Ahab
shall perish; and I will cut off from Ahab all the males in Israel, both bond
and free. 9So I will make the house of Ahab like the house of Jeroboam the
son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah. 10The dogs
shall eat Jezebel on the plot *of ground* at Jezreel, and *there shall be* none to
bury *her*.’ ” And he opened the door and fled.

11Then Jehu came out to the servants of his master, and *one* said to him,
“*Is* all well? Why did this madman come to you?”

And he said to them, “You know the man and his babble.”

12And they said, “A lie! Tell us now.”

So he said, “Thus and thus he spoke to me, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD: “I
have anointed you king over Israel.” ’ ”

13Then each man hastened to take his garment and put *it* under him on the
top of the steps; and they blew trumpets, saying, “Jehu is king!”

**JORAM OF ISRAEL KILLED**

14So Jehu the son of Jehoshaphat, the son of Nimshi, conspired against Joram. (Now Joram had been defending Ramoth Gilead, he and all Israel, against Hazael king of Syria. 15But King Joram had returned to Jezreel to recover from the wounds which the Syrians had inflicted on him when he fought with Hazael king of Syria.) And Jehu said, "If you are so minded, let no one leave *or* escape from the city to go and tell *it* in Jezreel." 16So Jehu rode in a chariot and went to Jezreel, for Joram was laid up there; and Ahaziah king of Judah had come down to see Joram.

17Now a watchman stood on the tower in Jezreel, and he saw the company of Jehu as he came, and said, "I see a company of men."

And Joram said, "Get a horseman and send him to meet them, and let him say, '*Is it* peace?' "

18So the horseman went to meet him, and said, "Thus says the king: '*Is it* peace?' "

And Jehu said, "What have you to do with peace? Turn around and follow me."

So the watchman reported, saying, "The messenger went to them, but is not coming back."

19Then he sent out a second horseman who came to them, and said, "Thus says the king: '*Is it* peace?' "

And Jehu answered, "What have you to do with peace? Turn around and follow me."

20So the watchman reported, saying, "He went up to them and is not coming back; and the driving *is* like the driving of Jehu the son of Nimshi, for he drives furiously!"

21Then Joram said, "Make ready." And his chariot was made ready. Then Joram king of Israel and Ahaziah king of Judah went out, each in his chariot; and they went out to meet Jehu, and met him on the property of Naboth the Jezreelite. 22Now it happened, when Joram saw Jehu, that he said, "*Is it* peace, Jehu?"

So he answered, "What peace, as long as the harlotries of your mother

Jezebel and her witchcraft *are so* many?”

23 Then Joram turned around and fled, and said to Ahaziah, “Treachery,
Ahaziah!” 24 Now Jehu drew his bow with full strength and shot Jehoram
between his arms; and the arrow came out at his heart, and he sank down in
his chariot. 25 Then *Jehu* said to Bidkar his captain, “Pick *him* up, *and* throw
him into the tract of the field of Naboth the Jezreelite; for remember, when
you and I were riding together behind Ahab his father, that the LORD laid this
burden upon him: 26 ‘Surely I saw yesterday the blood of Naboth and the
blood of his sons,’ says the LORD, ‘and I will repay you in this plot,’ says the
LORD. Now therefore, take *and* throw him on the plot *of ground,* according to
the word of the LORD.”

**AHAZIAH OF JUDAH KILLED**

27 But when Ahaziah king of Judah saw *this,* he fled by the road to Beth
Haggan.[a] So Jehu pursued him, and said, “Shoot him also in the chariot.” *And*
*they shot him* at the Ascent of Gur, which is by Ibleam. Then he fled to
Megiddo, and died there. 28 And his servants carried him in the chariot to
Jerusalem, and buried him in his tomb with his fathers in the City of David.
29 In the eleventh year of Joram the son of Ahab, Ahaziah had become king
over Judah.

**JEZEBEL’S VIOLENT DEATH**

30 Now when Jehu had come to Jezreel, Jezebel heard *of it;* and she put
paint on her eyes and adorned her head, and looked through a window.
31 Then, as Jehu entered at the gate, she said, “*Is it* peace, Zimri, murderer of
your master?”

32 And he looked up at the window, and said, “Who *is* on my side? Who?”
So two *or* three eunuchs looked out at him. 33 Then he said, “Throw her
down.” So they threw her down, and *some* of her blood spattered on the wall
and on the horses; and he trampled her underfoot. 34 And when he had gone
in, he ate and drank. Then he said, “Go now, see to this accursed *woman,* and
bury her, for she was a king’s daughter.” 35 So they went to bury her, but they
found no more of her than the skull and the feet and the palms of *her* hands.

[36]Therefore they came back and told him. And he said, “This *is* the word of the LORD, which He spoke by His servant Elijah the Tishbite, saying, ‘On the plot *of ground* at Jezreel dogs shall eat the flesh of Jezebel;[a] [37]and the corpse of Jezebel shall be as refuse on the surface of the field, in the plot at Jezreel, so that they shall not say, “Here *lies* Jezebel.” ’ ”

## AHAB'S SEVENTY SONS KILLED

**10** Now Ahab had seventy sons in Samaria. And Jehu wrote and sent letters to Samaria, to the rulers of Jezreel,[a] to the elders, and to those who reared Ahab's *sons,* saying:

2 Now as soon as this letter comes to you, since your master's sons *are* with you, and you have chariots and horses, a fortified city also, and weapons, 3choose the best qualified of your master's sons, set *him* on his father's throne, and fight for your master's house.

4But they were exceedingly afraid, and said, "Look, two kings could not stand up to him; how then can we stand?" 5And he who *was* in charge of the house, and he who *was* in charge of the city, the elders also, and those who reared *the sons,* sent to Jehu, saying, "We *are* your servants, we will do all you tell us; but we will not make anyone king. Do *what is* good in your sight." 6Then he wrote a second letter to them, saying:

> If you *are* for me and will obey my
> voice, take the heads of the men, your
> master's sons, and come to me at Jezreel
> by this time tomorrow.

Now the king's sons, seventy persons, *were* with the great men of the city, *who* were rearing them. 7So it was, when the letter came to them, that they took the king's sons and slaughtered seventy persons, put their heads in baskets and sent *them* to him at Jezreel.

8Then a messenger came and told him, saying, "They have brought the heads of the king's sons."

And he said, "Lay them in two heaps at the entrance of the gate until morning."

9So it was, in the morning, that he went out and stood, and said to all the people, "You *are* righteous. Indeed I conspired against my master and killed him; but who killed all these? 10Know now that nothing shall fall to the earth of the word of the LORD which the LORD spoke concerning the house of Ahab; for the LORD has done what He spoke by His servant Elijah." 11So Jehu killed all who remained of the house of Ahab in Jezreel, and all his great

men and his close acquaintances and his priests, until he left him none remaining.

### AHAZIAH'S FORTY-TWO BROTHERS KILLED

12 And he arose and departed and went to Samaria. On the way, at Beth Eked[a] of the Shepherds, 13 Jehu met with the brothers of Ahaziah king of Judah, and said, "Who *are* you?"

So they answered, "We *are* the brothers of Ahaziah; we have come down to greet the sons of the king and the sons of the queen mother."

14 And he said, "Take them alive!" So they took them alive, and killed them at the well of Beth Eked, forty-two men; and he left none of them.

### THE REST OF AHAB'S FAMILY KILLED

15 Now when he departed from there, he met Jehonadab the son of Rechab, *coming* to meet him; and he greeted him and said to him, "Is your heart right, as my heart *is* toward your heart?"

And Jehonadab answered, "It is."

*Jehu said*, "If it is, give *me* your hand." So he gave *him* his hand, and he took him up to him into the chariot. 16 Then he said, "Come with me, and see my zeal for the LORD." So they had him ride in his chariot. 17 And when he came to Samaria, he killed all who remained to Ahab in Samaria, till he had destroyed them, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke to Elijah.

### WORSHIPERS OF BAAL KILLED

18 Then Jehu gathered all the people together, and said to them, "Ahab served Baal a little, Jehu will serve him much. 19 Now therefore, call to me all the prophets of Baal, all his servants, and all his priests. Let no one be missing, for I have a great sacrifice for Baal. Whoever is missing shall not live." But Jehu acted deceptively, with the intent of destroying the worshipers of Baal. 20 And Jehu said, "Proclaim a solemn assembly for Baal." So they proclaimed *it*. 21 Then Jehu sent throughout all Israel; and all the worshipers of Baal came, so that there was not a man left who did not come. So they came into the temple[a] of Baal, and the temple of Baal was full from one end

to the other. [22]And he said to the one in charge of the wardrobe, “Bring out vestments for all the worshipers of Baal.” So he brought out vestments for them. [23]Then Jehu and Jehonadab the son of Rechab went into the temple of Baal, and said to the worshipers of Baal, “Search and see that no servants of the LORD are here with you, but only the worshipers of Baal.” [24]So they went in to offer sacrifices and burnt offerings. Now Jehu had appointed for himself eighty men on the outside, and had said, “*If* any of the men whom I have brought into your hands escapes, *whoever lets him escape, it shall be* his life for the life of the other.”

[25]Now it happened, as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt offering, that Jehu said to the guard and to the captains, “Go in *and* kill them; let no one come out!” And they killed them with the edge of the sword; then the guards and the officers threw *them* out, and went into the inner room of the temple of Baal. [26]And they brought the *sacred* pillars out of the temple of Baal and burned them. [27]Then they broke down the *sacred* pillar of Baal, and tore down the temple of Baal and made it a refuse dump to this day. [28]Thus Jehu destroyed Baal from Israel.

[29]However Jehu did not turn away from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had made Israel sin, *that is,* from the golden calves that *were* at Bethel and Dan. [30]And the LORD said to Jehu, “Because you have done well in doing *what is* right in My sight, *and* have done to the house of Ahab all that *was* in My heart, your sons shall sit on the throne of Israel to the fourth *generation.*” [31]But Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the LORD God of Israel with all his heart; for he did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam, who had made Israel sin.

**DEATH OF JEHU**

[32]In those days the LORD began to cut off *parts* of Israel; and Hazael conquered them in all the territory of Israel [33]from the Jordan east-ward: all the land of Gilead-Gad, Reuben, and Manasseh-from Aroer, which *is* by the River Arnon, including Gilead and Bashan.

[34]Now the rest of the acts of Jehu, all that he did, and all his might, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? [35]So Jehu

rested with his fathers, and they buried him in Samaria. Then Jehoahaz his son reigned in his place. [36]And the period that Jehu reigned over Israel in Samaria *was* twenty-eight years.

## ATHALIAH REIGNS IN JUDAH

**11** When Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she
arose and destroyed all the royal heirs. [2]But Jehosheba, the daughter of
King Joram, sister of Ahaziah, took Joash the son of Ahaziah, and stole him
away from among the king's sons *who were* being murdered; and they hid
him and his nurse in the bedroom, from Athaliah, so that he was not killed.
[3]So he was hidden with her in the house of the LORD for six years, while
Athaliah reigned over the land.

## JOASH CROWNED KING OF JUDAH

[4]In the seventh year Jehoiada sent and brought the captains of hundreds-of
the bodyguards and the escorts-and brought them into the house of the LORD
to him. And he made a covenant with them and took an oath from them in the
house of the LORD, and showed them the king's son. [5]Then he commanded
them, saying, "This *is* what you shall do: One-third of you who come on duty
on the Sabbath shall be keeping watch over the king's house, [6]one-third *shall
be* at the gate of Sur, and one-third at the gate behind the escorts. You shall
keep the watch of the house, lest it be broken down. [7]The two contingents of
you who go off duty on the Sabbath shall keep the watch of the house of the
LORD for the king. [8]But you shall surround the king on all sides, every man
with his weapons in his hand; and whoever comes within range, let him be
put to death. You are to be with the king as he goes out and as he comes in."

[9]So the captains of the hundreds did according to all that Jehoiada the
priest commanded. Each of them took his men who were to be on duty on the
Sabbath, with those who were going off duty on the Sabbath, and came to
Jehoiada the priest. [10]And the priest gave the captains of hundreds the spears
and shields which *had belonged* to King David, that were in the temple of the
LORD. [11]Then the escorts stood, every man with his weapons in his hand, all
around the king, from the right side of the temple to the left side of the
temple, by the altar and the house. [12]And he brought out the king's son, put
the crown on him, and *gave him* the Testimony;[a] they made him king and
anointed him, and they clapped their hands and said, "Long live the king!"

**DEATH OF ATHALIAH**

13 Now when Athaliah heard the noise of the escorts *and* the people, she
came to the people *in* the temple of the LORD. 14 When she looked, there was
the king standing by a pillar according to custom; and the leaders and the
trumpeters were by the king. All the people of the land were rejoicing and
blowing trumpets. So Athaliah tore her clothes and cried out, “Treason!
Treason!”

15 And Jehoiada the priest commanded the captains of the hundreds, the
officers of the army, and said to them, “Take her outside under guard, and
slay with the sword whoever follows her.” For the priest had said, “Do not let
her be killed in the house of the LORD.” 16 So they seized her; and she went by
way of the horses’ entrance *into* the king’s house, and there she was killed.

17 Then Jehoiada made a covenant between the LORD, the king, and the
people, that they should be the LORD’s people, and *also* between the king and
the people. 18 And all the people of the land went to the temple of Baal, and
tore it down. They thoroughly broke in pieces its altars and images, and killed
Mattan the priest of Baal before the altars. And the priest appointed officers
over the house of the LORD. 19 Then he took the captains of hundreds, the
bodyguards, the escorts, and all the people of the land; and they brought the
king down from the house of the LORD, and went by way of the gate of the
escorts to the king’s house. Then he sat on the throne of the kings. 20 So all
the people of the land rejoiced; and the city was quiet, for they had slain
Athaliah with the sword *in* the king’s house. 21 Jehoash *was* seven years old
when he became king.

## JEHOASH REPAIRS THE TEMPLE

**12** In the seventh year of Jehu, Jehoash [a] became king, and he reigned forty
years in Jerusalem. His mother's name *was* Zibiah of Beersheba.
[2]Jehoash did *what was* right in the sight of the LORD all the days in which
Jehoiada the priest instructed him. [3]But the high places were not taken away;
the people still sacrificed and burned incense on the high places.

[4]And Jehoash said to the priests, "All the money of the dedicated gifts that
are brought into the house of the LORD-each man's census money, each
man's assessment money[a] -*and* all the money that a man purposes in his heart
to bring into the house of the LORD, [5]let the priests take *it* themselves, each
from his constituency; and let them repair the damages of the temple,
wherever any dilapidation is found."

[6]Now it was so, by the twenty-third year of King Jehoash, *that* the priests
had not repaired the damages of the temple. [7]So King Jehoash called
Jehoiada the priest and the *other* priests, and said to them, "Why have you
not repaired the damages of the temple? Now therefore, do not take *more*
money from your constituency, but deliver it for repairing the damages of the
temple." [8]And the priests agreed that they would neither receive *more* money
from the people, nor repair the damages of the temple.

[9]Then Jehoiada the priest took a chest, bored a hole in its lid, and set it
beside the altar, on the right side as one comes into the house of the LORD;
and the priests who kept the door put there all the money brought into the
house of the LORD. [10]So it was, whenever they saw that *there was* much
money in the chest, that the king's scribe and the high priest came up and put
it in bags, and counted the money that was found in the house of the LORD.
[11]Then they gave the money, which had been apportioned, into the hands of
those who did the work, who had the oversight of the house of the LORD; and
they paid it out to the carpenters and builders who worked on the house of the
LORD, [12]and to masons and stonecutters, and for buying timber and hewn
stone, to repair the damage of the house of the LORD, and for all that was paid
out to repair the temple. [13]However there were not made for the house of the
LORD basins of silver, trimmers, sprinkling-bowls, trumpets, any articles of

gold or articles of silver, from the money brought into the house of the LORD. 14But they gave that to the workmen, and they repaired the house of the LORD with it. 15Moreover they did not require an account from the men into whose hand they delivered the money to be paid to workmen, for they dealt faithfully. 16The money from the trespass offerings and the money from the sin offerings was not brought into the house of the LORD. It belonged to the priests.

## HAZAEL THREATENS JERUSALEM

17Hazael king of Syria went up and fought against Gath, and took it; then Hazael set his face to go up to Jerusalem. 18And Jehoash king of Judah took all the sacred things that his fathers, Jehoshaphat and Jehoram and Ahaziah, kings of Judah, had dedicated, and his own sacred things, and all the gold found in the treasuries of the house of the LORD and in the king's house, and sent *them* to Hazael king of Syria. Then he went away from Jerusalem.

## DEATH OF JOASH

19Now the rest of the acts of Joash,[a] and all that he did, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?

20And his servants arose and formed a conspiracy, and killed Joash in the house of the Millo,[a] which goes down to Silla. 21For Jozachar[a] the son of Shimeath and Jehozabad the son of Shomer,[b] his servants, struck him. So he died, and they buried him with his fathers in the City of David. Then Amaziah his son reigned in his place.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Childcare** *(12:1, 2)* Jehoash was a godly king who "did what was right in the sight of the LORD all the days in which Jehoiada the priest instructed him." He was only seven years old when he became king

(11:21), so he needed instruction. Children do not have natural wisdom, so they must be taught and guided by those who love them. Patient instruction and consistent mentoring will prepare children to take on the tasks God has for them. **Topic: Child Development**

## JEHOAHAZ REIGNS IN ISLAND

**13** In the twenty-third year of Joash[a] the son of Ahaziah, king of Judah,
Jehoahaz the son of Jehu became king over Israel in Samaria, *and*
*reigned* seventeen years. 2And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, and
followed the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had made Israel sin. He
did not depart from them.

3Then the anger of the LORD was aroused against Israel, and He delivered
them into the hand of Hazael king of Syria, and into the hand of Ben-Hadad
the son of Hazael, all *their* days. 4So Jehoahaz pleaded with the LORD, and
the LORD listened to him; for He saw the oppression of Israel, because the
king of Syria oppressed them. 5Then the LORD gave Israel a deliverer, so that
they escaped from under the hand of the Syrians; and the children of Israel
dwelt in their tents as before. 6Nevertheless they did not depart from the sins
of the house of Jeroboam, who had made Israel sin, *but* walked in them; and
the wooden image[a] also remained in Samaria. 7For He left of the army of
Jehoahaz only fifty horsemen, ten chariots, and ten thousand foot soldiers; for
the king of Syria had destroyed them and made them like the dust at
threshing.

8Now the rest of the acts of Jehoahaz, all that he did, and his might, *are*
they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? 9So
Jehoahaz rested with his fathers, and they buried him in Samaria. Then Joash
his son reigned in his place.

## JEHOASH REIGNS IN ISRAEL

10In the thirty-seventh year of Joash king of Judah, Jehoash[a] the son of
Jehoahaz became king over Israel in Samaria, *and reigned* sixteen years.
11And he did evil in the sight of the LORD. He did not depart from all the sins
of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel sin, *but* walked in them.

12Now the rest of the acts of Joash, all that he did, and his might with
which he fought against Amaziah king of Judah, *are* they not written in the
book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? 13So Joash rested with his
fathers. Then Jeroboam sat on his throne. And Joash was buried in Samaria

with the kings of Israel.

## DEATH OF ELISHA

14 Elisha had become sick with the illness of which he would die. Then
Joash the king of Israel came down to him, and wept over his face, and said,
"O my father, my father, the chariots of Israel and their horsemen!"

15 And Elisha said to him, "Take a bow and some arrows." So he took
himself a bow and some arrows. 16 Then he said to the king of Israel, "Put
your hand on the bow." So he put his hand *on it,* and Elisha put his hands on
the king's hands. 17 And he said, "Open the east window"; and he opened *it.*
Then Elisha said, "Shoot"; and he shot. And he said, "The arrow of the
LORD's deliverance and the arrow of deliverance from Syria; for you must
strike the Syrians at Aphek till you have destroyed *them.*" 18 Then he said,
"Take the arrows"; so he took *them.* And he said to the king of Israel, "Strike
the ground"; so he struck three times, and stopped. 19 And the man of God
was angry with him, and said, "You should have struck five or six times; then
you would have struck Syria till you had destroyed *it!* But now you will
strike Syria *only* three times."

20 Then Elisha died, and they buried him. And the *raiding* bands from
Moab invaded the land in the spring of the year. 21 So it was, as they were
burying a man, that suddenly they spied a band *of raiders;* and they put the
man in the tomb of Elisha; and when the man was let down and touched the
bones of Elisha, he revived and stood on his feet.

## ISRAEL RECAPTURES CITIES FROM SYRIA

22 And Hazael king of Syria oppressed Israel all the days of Jehoahaz. 23 But
the LORD was gracious to them, had compassion on them, and regarded them,
because of His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not yet
destroy them or cast them from His presence.

24 Now Hazael king of Syria died. Then BenHadad his son reigned in his
place. 25 And Jehoash[a] the son of Jehoahaz recaptured from the hand of Ben-
Hadad, the son of Hazael, the cities which he had taken out of the hand of
Jehoahaz his father by war. Three times Joash defeated him and recaptured

the cities of Israel.

## AMAZIAH REIGNS IN JUDAH

**14** In the second year of Joash the son of Jehoahaz, king of Israel, Amaziah
the son of Joash, king of Judah, became king. 2He was twenty-five years
old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His
mother's name was Jehoaddan of Jerusalem. 3And he did *what was* right in
the sight of the LORD, yet not like his father David; he did everything as his
father Joash had done. 4However the high places were not taken away, and
the people still sacrificed and burned incense on the high places.

5Now it happened, as soon as the kingdom was established in his hand, that
he executed his servants who had murdered his father the king. 6But the
children of the murderers he did not execute, according to what is written in
the Book of the Law of Moses, in which the LORD commanded, saying,
"Fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor shall children be put
to death for their fathers; but a person shall be put to death for his own sin."[a]

7He killed ten thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt, and took Sela by
war, and called its name Joktheel to this day.

8Then Amaziah sent messengers to Jehoash[a] the son of Jehoahaz, the son
of Jehu, king of Israel, saying, "Come, let us face one another *in battle*."
9And Jehoash king of Israel sent to Amaziah king of Judah, saying, "The
thistle that *was* in Lebanon sent to the cedar that *was* in Lebanon, saying,
'Give your daughter to my son as wife'; and a wild beast that *was* in Lebanon
passed by and trampled the thistle. 10You have indeed defeated Edom, and
your heart has lifted you up. Glory *in that,* and stay at home; for why should
you meddle with trouble so that you fall-you and Judah with you?"

11But Amaziah would not heed. Therefore Jehoash king of Israel went out;
so he and Amaziah king of Judah faced one another at Beth Shemesh, which
*belongs* to Judah. 12And Judah was defeated by Israel, and every man fled to
his tent. 13Then Jehoash king of Israel captured Amaziah king of Judah, the
son of Jehoash, the son of Ahaziah, at Beth She-mesh; and he went to
Jerusalem, and broke down the wall of Jerusalem from the Gate of Ephraim
to the Corner Gate-four hundred cubits. 14And he took all the gold and silver,
all the articles that were found in the house of the LORD and in the treasuries

of the king's house, and hostages, and returned to Samaria.

15 Now the rest of the acts of Jehoash which he did-his might, and how he
fought with Amaziah king of Judah-*are* they not written in the book of the
chronicles of the kings of Israel? 16 So Jehoash rested with his fathers, and
was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel. Then Jeroboam his son
reigned in his place.

17 Amaziah the son of Joash, king of Judah, lived fifteen years after the
death of Jehoash the son of Jehoahaz, king of Israel. 18 Now the rest of the
acts of Amaziah, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the
kings of Judah? 19 And they formed a conspiracy against him in Jerusalem,
and he fled to Lachish; but they sent after him to Lachish and killed him
there. 20 Then they brought him on horses, and he was buried at Jerusalem
with his fathers in the City of David.

21 And all the people of Judah took Azariah,[a] who *was* sixteen years old,
and made him king instead of his father Amaziah. 22 He built Elath and
restored it to Judah, after the king rested with his fathers.

**JEROBOAM II REIGNS IN ISRAEL**

23 In the fifteenth year of Amaziah the son of Joash, king of Judah,
Jeroboam the son of Jo-ash, king of Israel, became king in Samaria, *and*
*reigned* forty-one years. 24 And he did evil in the sight of the LORD; he did not
depart from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had made Israel
sin. 25 He restored the territory of Israel from the entrance of Hamath to the
Sea of the Arabah, according to the word of the LORD God of Israel, which
He had spoken through His servant Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet who
*was* from Gath Hepher. 26 For the LORD saw *that* the affliction of Israel *was*
very bitter; and whether bond or free, there was no helper for Israel. 27 And
the LORD did not say that He would blot out the name of Israel from under
heaven; but He saved them by the hand of Jeroboam the son of Joash.

28 Now the rest of the acts of Jeroboam, and all that he did-his might, how
he made war, and how he recaptured for Israel, from Damascus and Hamath,
*what had belonged* to Judah-*are* they not written in the book of the chronicles
of the kings of Israel? 29 So Jeroboam rested with his fathers, the kings of

Israel. Then Zechariah his son reigned in his place.

## AZARIAH REIGNS IN JUDAH

**15** In the twenty-seventh year of Jeroboam king of Israel, Azariah the son of
Amaziah, king of Judah, became king. 2He was sixteen years old when
he became king, and he reigned fifty-two years in Jerusalem. His mother's
name *was* Jecholiah of Jerusalem. 3And he did *what was* right in the sight of
the LORD, according to all that his father Amaziah had done, 4except that the
high places were not removed; the people still sacrificed and burned incense
on the high places. 5Then the LORD struck the king, so that he was a leper
until the day of his death; so he dwelt in an isolated house. And Jotham the
king's son *was* over the *royal* house, judging the people of the land.

6Now the rest of the acts of Azariah, and all that he did, *are* they not
written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? 7So Azariah
rested with his fathers, and they buried him with his fathers in the City of
David. Then Jotham his son reigned in his place.

## ZECHARIAH REIGNS IN ISRAEL

8In the thirty-eighth year of Azariah king of Judah, Zechariah the son of
Jeroboam reigned over Israel in Samaria six months. 9And he did evil in the
sight of the LORD, as his fathers had done; he did not depart from the sins of
Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had made Israel sin. 10Then Shallum the son
of Jabesh conspired against him, and struck and killed him in front of the
people; and he reigned in his place.

11Now the rest of the acts of Zechariah, indeed they *are* written in the book
of the chronicles of the kings of Israel.

12This *was* the word of the LORD which He spoke to Jehu, saying, "Your
sons shall sit on the throne of Israel to the fourth *generation.*"[a] And so it was.

## SHALLUM REIGNS IN ISRAEL

13Shallum the son of Jabesh became king in the thirty-ninth year of
Uzziah[a] king of Judah; and he reigned a full month in Samaria. 14For
Menahem the son of Gadi went up from Tirzah, came to Samaria, and struck
Shallum the son of Jabesh in Samaria and killed him; and he reigned in his

place.

15 Now the rest of the acts of Shallum, and the conspiracy which he led,
indeed they *are* written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel.
16 Then from Tirzah, Menahem attacked Tiphsah, all who *were* there, and its
territory. Because they did not surrender, therefore he attacked *it.* All the
women there who were with child he ripped open.

**MENAHEM REIGNS IN ISRAEL**

17 In the thirty-ninth year of Azariah king of Judah, Menahem the son of
Gadi became king over Israel, *and reigned* ten years in Samaria. 18 And he did
evil in the sight of the LORD; he did not depart all his days from the sins of
Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had made Israel sin. 19 Pul[a] king of Assyria
came against the land; and Menahem gave Pul a thousand talents of silver,
that his hand might be with him to strengthen the kingdom under his control.
20 And Menahem exacted the money from Israel, from all the very wealthy,
from each man fifty shekels of silver, to give to the king of Assyria. So the
king of Assyria turned back, and did not stay there in the land.

21 Now the rest of the acts of Menahem, and all that he did, *are* they not
written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? 22 So Menahem
rested with his fathers. Then Pekahiah his son reigned in his place.

**PEKAHIAH REIGNS IN ISRAEL**

23 In the fiftieth year of Azariah king of Judah, Pekahiah the son of
Menahem became king over Israel in Samaria, *and reigned* two years. 24 And
he did evil in the sight of the LORD; he did not depart from the sins of
Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had made Israel sin. 25 Then Pekah the son of
Remaliah, an officer of his, conspired against him and killed him in Samaria,
in the citadel of the king's house, along with Argob and Arieh; and with him
were fifty men of Gilead. He killed him and reigned in his place.

26 Now the rest of the acts of Pekahiah, and all that he did, indeed they *are*
written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel.

**PEKAH REIGNS IN ISRAEL**

[27]In the fifty-second year of Azariah king of Judah, Pekah the son of Remaliah became king over Israel in Samaria, *and reigned* twenty years. [28]And he did evil in the sight of the LORD; he did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had made Israel sin. [29]In the days of Pekah king of Israel, Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria came and took Ijon, Abel Beth Maachah, Janoah, Kedesh, Hazor, Gilead, and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali; and he carried them captive to Assyria. [30]Then Hoshea the son of Elah led a conspiracy against Pekah the son of Remaliah, and struck and killed him; so he reigned in his place in the twentieth year of Jotham the son of Uzziah.

[31]Now the rest of the acts of Pekah, and all that he did, indeed they *are* written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel.

**JOTHAM REIGNS IN JUDAH**

[32]In the second year of Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, Jotham the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, began to reign. [33]He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. His mother's name *was* Jerusha[a] the daughter of Zadok. [34]And he did *what was* right in the sight of the LORD; he did according to all that his father Uzziah had done. [35]However the high places were not removed; the people still sacrificed and burned incense on the high places. He built the Upper Gate of the house of the LORD.

[36]Now the rest of the acts of Jotham, and all that he did, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? [37]In those days the LORD began to send Rezin king of Syria and Pekah the son of Remaliah against Judah. [38]So Jotham rested with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the City of David his father. Then Ahaz his son reigned in his place.

## AHAZ REIGNS IN JUDAH

**16** In the seventeenth year of Pekah the son of Remaliah, Ahaz the son of
Jotham, king of Judah, began to reign. 2 Ahaz *was* twenty years old when
he became king, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem; and he did not do
*what was* right in the sight of the LORD his God, as his father David *had done.*
3 But he walked in the way of the kings of Israel; indeed he made his son pass
through the fire, according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD
had cast out from before the children of Israel. 4 And he sacrificed and burned
incense on the high places, on the hills, and under every green tree.

5 Then Rezin king of Syria and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel,
came up to Jerusalem to *make* war; and they besieged Ahaz but could not
overcome *him.* 6 At that time Rezin king of Syria captured Elath for Syria, and
drove the men of Judah from Elath. Then the Edomites[a] went to Elath, and
dwell there to this day.

7 So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria, saying, "I *am*
your servant and your son. Come up and save me from the hand of the king
of Syria and from the hand of the king of Israel, who rise up against me."
8 And Ahaz took the silver and gold that was found in the house of the LORD,
and in the treasuries of the king's house, and sent *it as* a present to the king of
Assyria. 9 So the king of Assyria heeded him; for the king of Assyria went up
against Damascus and took it, carried *its people* captive to Kir, and killed
Rezin.

10 Now King Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglath-Pileser king of
Assyria, and saw an altar that *was* at Damascus; and King Ahaz sent to Urijah
the priest the design of the altar and its pattern, according to all its
workmanship. 11 Then Urijah the priest built an altar according to all that
King Ahaz had sent from Damascus. So Urijah the priest made *it* before King
Ahaz came back from Damascus. 12 And when the king came back from
Damascus, the king saw the altar; and the king approached the altar and made
offerings on it. 13 So he burned his burnt offering and his grain offering; and
he poured his drink offering and sprinkled the blood of his peace offerings on
the altar. 14 He also brought the bronze altar which *was* before the LORD, from

the front of the temple-from between the *new* altar and the house of the LORD-and put it on the north side of the *new* altar. [15]Then King Ahaz commanded Urijah the priest, saying, “On the great *new* altar burn the morning burnt offering, the evening grain offering, the king’s burnt sacrifice, and his grain offering, with the burnt offering of all the people of the land, their grain offering, and their drink offerings; and sprinkle on it all the blood of the burnt offering and all the blood of the sacrifice. And the bronze altar shall be for me to inquire *by*. ” [16]Thus did Urijah the priest, according to all that King Ahaz commanded.

[17]And King Ahaz cut off the panels of the carts, and removed the lavers from them; and he took down the Sea from the bronze oxen that *were* under it, and put it on a pavement of stones. [18]Also he removed the Sabbath pavilion which they had built in the temple, and he removed the king’s outer entrance from the house of the LORD, on account of the king of Assyria.

[19]Now the rest of the acts of Ahaz which he did, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? [20]So Ahaz rested with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the City of David. Then Hezekiah his son reigned in his place.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Through the Fire** *(16:3)* Ahaz was an evil king who worshiped idols. Instead of following the example of his ancestor David, Ahaz chose to follow the other evil kings of Israel. The statement, “He made his son pass through the fire,” refers to child sacrifice to the god Molech. Such disregard for human life and abuse of children created an atmosphere of political chaos and spiritual degradation throughout his kingdom. When the most innocent are not protected, there is little safety for anyone. **Topic: Abuse**

## HOSHEA REIGNS IN ISRAEL

**17** In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah, Hoshea the son of Elah
became king of Israel in Samaria, *and he reigned* nine years. 2And he
did evil in the sight of the LORD, but not as the kings of Israel who were
before him. 3Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against him; and Hoshea
became his vassal, and paid him tribute money. 4And the king of Assyria
uncovered a conspiracy by Hoshea; for he had sent messengers to So, king of
Egypt, and brought no tribute to the king of Assyria, as *he had done* year by
year. There fore the king of Assyria shut him up, and bound him in prison.

## ISRAEL CARRIED CAPTIVE TO ASSYRIA

5Now the king of Assyria went throughout all the land, and went up to
Samaria and besieged it for three years. 6In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king
of Assyria took Samaria and carried Israel away to Assyria, and placed them
in Halah and by the Habor, the River of Gozan, and in the cities of the
Medes.

7For so it was that the children of Israel had sinned against the LORD their
God, who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand
of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and they had feared other gods, 8and had walked in
the statutes of the nations whom the LORD had cast out from before the
children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which they had made. 9Also the
children of Israel secretly did against the LORD their God things that *were* not
right, and they built for themselves high places in all their cities, from
watchtower to fortified city. 10They set up for themselves *sacred* pillars and
wooden images[a] on every high hill and under every green tree. 11There they
burned incense on all the high places, like the nations whom the LORD had
carried away before them; and they did wicked things to provoke the LORD to
anger, 12for they served idols, of which the LORD had said to them, “You
shall not do this thing.”

13Yet the LORD testified against Israel and against Judah, by all of His
prophets, every seer, saying, “Turn from your evil ways, and keep My
commandments *and* My statutes, according to all the law which I

commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by My servants the prophets.” [14]Nevertheless they would not hear, but stiffened their necks, like the necks of their fathers, who did not believe in the LORD their God. [15]And they rejected His statutes and His covenant that He had made with their fathers, and His testimonies which He had testified against them; they followed idols, became idolaters, and *went* after the nations who *were* all around them, *concerning* whom the LORD had charged them that they should not do like them. [16]So they left all the commandments of the LORD their God, made for themselves a molded image *and* two calves, made a wooden image and worshiped all the host of heaven, and served Baal. [17]And they caused their sons and daughters to pass through the fire, practiced witchcraft and soothsaying, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger. [18]Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel, and removed them from His sight; there was none left but the tribe of Judah alone.

[19]Also Judah did not keep the commandments of the LORD their God, but walked in the statutes of Israel which they made. [20]And the LORD rejected all the descendants of Israel, afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of plunderers, until He had cast them from His sight. [21]For He tore Israel from the house of David, and they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king. Then Jeroboam drove Israel from following the LORD, and made them commit a great sin. [22]For the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they did not depart from them, [23]until the LORD removed Israel out of His sight, as He had said by all His servants the prophets. So Israel was carried away from their own land to Assyria, *as it is* to this day.

**ASSYRIA RESETTLES SAMARIA**

[24]Then the king of Assyria brought *people* from Babylon, Cuthah, Ava, Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed *them* in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel; and they took possession of Samaria and dwelt in its cities. [25]And it was so, at the beginning of their dwelling there, *that* they did not fear the LORD; therefore the LORD sent lions among them, which killed *some* of them. [26]So they spoke to the king of Assyria, saying, “The nations whom you have removed and placed in the cities of Samaria do

not know the rituals of the God of the land; therefore He has sent lions among them, and indeed, they are killing them because they do not know the rituals of the God of the land." [27]Then the king of Assyria commanded, saying, "Send there one of the priests whom you brought from there; let him go and dwell there, and let him teach them the rituals of the God of the land." [28]Then one of the priests whom they had carried away from Samaria came and dwelt in Bethel, and taught them how they should fear the LORD.

[29]However every nation continued to make gods of its own, and put *them* in the shrines on the high places which the Samaritans had made, *every* nation in the cities where they dwelt. [30]The men of Babylon made Succoth Benoth, the men of Cuth made Nergal, the men of Hamath made Ashima, [31]and the Avites made Nibhaz and Tartak; and the Sepharvites burned their children in fire to Adrammelech and Anammelech, the gods of Sepharvaim. [32]So they feared the LORD, and from every class they appointed for themselves priests of the high places, who sacrificed for them in the shrines of the high places. [33]They feared the LORD, yet served their own gods-according to the rituals of the nations from among whom they were carried away.

[34]To this day they continue practicing the former rituals; they do not fear the LORD, nor do they follow their statutes or their ordinances, or the law and commandment which the LORD had commanded the children of Jacob, whom He named Israel, [35]with whom the LORD had made a covenant and charged them, saying: "You shall not fear other gods, nor bow down to them nor serve them nor sacrifice to them; [36]but the LORD, who brought you up from the land of Egypt with great power and an outstretched arm, Him you shall fear, Him you shall worship, and to Him you shall offer sacrifice. [37]And the statutes, the ordinances, the law, and the commandment which He wrote for you, you shall be careful to observe forever; you shall not fear other gods. [38]And the covenant that I have made with you, you shall not forget, nor shall you fear other gods. [39]But the LORD your God you shall fear; and He will deliver you from the hand of all your enemies." [40]However they did not obey, but they followed their former rituals. [41]So these nations feared the LORD, yet served their carved images; also their children and their children's children have continued doing as their fathers did, even to this day.

## SOUL NOTE

**The End** *(17:22, 23)* The sins of the people of the northern kingdom of Israel were so serious that God allowed Assyria to conquer and deport them. Beginning with Jeroboam, an unbroken chain of evil kings had led the nation far from God. God had sent prophets to warn them, but finally He sent punishment. Israel's downfall resulted from their flagrant disobedience. They had been given opportunities to repent, but had refused. Their failure as a nation under God followed the spiritual failure as a nation devoted to God. **Topic: Failure**

## HEZEKIAH REIGNS IN JUDAH

**18** Now it came to pass in the third year of Hoshea the son of Elah, king of
Israel, *that* Hezekiah the son of Ahaz, king of Judah, began to reign. 2He
was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-nine
years in Jerusalem. His mother's name *was* Abi[a] the daughter of Zechariah.
3And he did *what was* right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his
father David had done.

4He removed the high places and broke the *sacred* pillars, cut down the
wooden image[a] and broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made;
for until those days the children of Israel burned incense to it, and called it
Nehushtan.[b] 5He trusted in the LORD God of Israel, so that after him was none
like him among all the kings of Judah, nor who were before him. 6For he held
fast to the LORD; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His
commandments, which the LORD had commanded Moses. 7The LORD was
with him; he prospered wherever he went. And he rebelled against the king of
Assyria and did not serve him. 8He subdued the Philistines, as far as Gaza
and its territory, from watchtower to fortified city.

9Now it came to pass in the fourth year of King Hezekiah, which *was* the
seventh year of Hoshea the son of Elah, king of Israel, *that* Shalmaneser king
of Assyria came up against Samaria and besieged it. 10And at the end of three
years they took it. In the sixth year of Hezekiah, that *is*, the ninth year of
Hoshea king of Israel, Samaria was taken. 11Then the king of Assyria carried
Israel away captive to Assyria, and put them in Halah and by the Habor, the
River of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes, 12because they did not obey
the voice of the LORD their God, but transgressed His covenant *and* all that
Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded; and they would neither hear
nor do *them.*

13And in the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of
Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and took them.
14Then Hezekiah king of Judah sent to the king of Assyria at Lachish, saying,
"I have done wrong; turn away from me; whatever you impose on me I will
pay." And the king of Assyria assessed Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred

talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. [15]So Hezekiah gave *him* all the silver that was found in the house of the LORD and in the treasuries of the king's house. [16]At that time Hezekiah stripped *the gold from* the doors of the temple of the LORD, and *from* the pillars which Hezekiah king of Judah had overlaid, and gave it to the king of Assyria.

**SENNACHERIB BOASTS AGAINST THE LORD**

[17]Then the king of Assyria sent *the* Tartan,[a] *the* Rabsaris,[b] *and the* Rabshakeh[c] from Lachish, with a great army against Jerusalem, to King Hezekiah. And they went up and came to Jerusalem. When they had come up, they went and stood by the aqueduct from the upper pool, which *was* on the highway to the Fuller's Field. [18]And when they had called to the king, Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, who *was* over the household, Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph, the recorder, came out to them. [19]Then *the* Rabshakeh said to them, "Say now to Hezekiah, 'Thus says the great king, the king of Assyria: "What confidence *is* this in which you trust? [20]You speak of *having* plans and power for war; but *they are* mere words. And in whom do you trust, that you rebel against me? [21]Now look! You are trusting in the staff of this broken reed, Egypt, on which if a man leans, it will go into his hand and pierce it. So *is* Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who trust in him. [22]But if you say to me, 'We trust in the LORD our God,' *is* it not He whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah has taken away, and said to Judah and Jerusalem, 'You shall worship before this altar in Jerusalem'?" ' [23]Now therefore, I urge you, give a pledge to my master the king of Assyria, and I will give you two thousand horses-if you are able on your part to put riders on them! [24]How then will you repel one captain of the least of my master's servants, and put your trust in Egypt for chariots and horsemen? [25]Have I now come up without the LORD against this place to destroy it? The LORD said to me, 'Go up against this land, and destroy it.' "

[26]Then Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, Shebna, and Joah said to *the* Rabshakeh, "Please speak to your servants in Aramaic, for we understand *it;* and do not speak to us in Hebrew[a] in the hearing of the people who *are* on the wall."

[27]But *the* Rabshakeh said to them, “Has my master sent me to your master and to you to speak these words, and not to the men who sit on the wall, who will eat and drink their own waste with you?”

[28]Then *the* Rabshakeh stood and called out with a loud voice in Hebrew, and spoke, saying, “Hear the word of the great king, the king of Assyria! [29]Thus says the king: ‘Do not let Hezekiah deceive you, for he shall not be able to deliver you from his hand; [30]nor let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD, saying, “The LORD will surely deliver us; this city shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.” ’ [31]Do not listen to Hezekiah; for thus says the king of Assyria: ‘Make *peace* with me by a present and come out to me; and every one of you eat from his own vine and every one from his own fig tree, and every one of you drink the waters of his own cistern; [32]until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of olive groves and honey, that you may live and not die. But do not listen to Hezekiah, lest he persuade you, saying, “The LORD will deliver us.” [33]Has any of the gods of the nations at all delivered its land from the hand of the king of Assyria? [34]Where *are* the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where *are* the gods of Sepharvaim and Hena and Ivah? Indeed, have they delivered Samaria from my hand? [35]Who among all the gods of the lands have delivered their countries from my hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem from my hand?’ ”

[36]But the people held their peace and answered him not a word; for the king’s commandment was, “Do not answer him.” [37]Then Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, who *was* over the household, Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph, the recorder, came to Hezekiah with *their* clothes torn, and told him the words of *the* Rabshakeh.

## ISAIAH ASSURES DELIVERANCE

**19** And so it was, when King Hezekiah heard *it*, that he tore his clothes, covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the LORD.
2 Then he sent Eliakim, who *was* over the household, Shebna the scribe, and
the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, to Isaiah the prophet, the son
of Amoz. 3 And they said to him, "Thus says Hezekiah: 'This day *is* a day of
trouble, and rebuke, and blasphemy; for the children have come to birth, but
*there is* no strength to bring them forth. 4 It may be that the LORD your God
will hear all the words of *the* Rabshakeh, whom his master the king of
Assyria has sent to reproach the living God, and will rebuke the words which
the LORD your God has heard. Therefore lift up *your* prayer for the remnant
that is left.' "

5 So the servants of King Hezekiah came to Isaiah. 6 And Isaiah said to
them, "Thus you shall say to your master, 'Thus says the LORD: "Do not be
afraid of the words which you have heard, with which the servants of the king
of Assyria have blasphemed Me. 7 Surely I will send a spirit upon him, and he
shall hear a rumor and return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by
the sword in his own land." ' "

## SENNACHERIB'S THREAT AND HEZEKIAH'S PRAYER

8 Then *the* Rabshakeh returned and found the king of Assyria warring
against Libnah, for he heard that he had departed from Lachish. 9 And the
king heard concerning Tirhakah king of Ethiopia, "Look, he has come out to
make war with you." So he again sent messengers to Hezekiah, saying,
10 "Thus you shall speak to Hezekiah king of Judah, saying: 'Do not let your
God in whom you trust deceive you, saying, "Jerusalem shall not be given
into the hand of the king of Assyria." 11 Look! You have heard what the kings
of Assyria have done to all lands by utterly destroying them; and shall you be
delivered? 12 Have the gods of the nations delivered those whom my fathers
have destroyed, Gozan and Haran and Rezeph, and the people of Eden who
*were* in Telassar? 13 Where *is* the king of Hamath, the king of Ar-pad, and the
king of the city of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah?' "

14 And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and
read it; and Hezekiah went up to the house of the LORD, and spread it before
the LORD. 15 Then Hezekiah prayed before the LORD, and said: "O LORD God
of Israel, *the One* who dwells *between* the cherubim, You are God, You
alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth.
16 Incline Your ear, O LORD, and hear; open Your eyes, O LORD, and see; and
hear the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to reproach the living God.
17 Truly, LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste the nations and their
lands, 18 and have cast their gods into the fire; for they *were* not gods, but the
work of men's hands-wood and stone. Therefore they destroyed them. 19 Now
therefore, O LORD our God, I pray, save us from his hand, that all the
kingdoms of the earth may know that You *are* the LORD God, You alone."

> "Incline Your ear, O LORD, and hear; open Your eyes, O LORD, and see; and hear the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to reproach the living God."
> 2 KINGS 19:16

**THE WORD OF THE LORD CONCERNING SENNACHERIB**

20 Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah, saying, "Thus says the
LORD God of Israel: 'Because you have prayed to Me against Sennacherib
king of Assyria, I have heard.' 21 This *is* the word which the LORD has spoken
concerning him:

'The virgin, the daughter of Zion,
Has despised you, laughed you to scorn;
The daughter of Jerusalem
Has shaken *her* head behind your back!

22 'Whom have you reproached and blasphemed?
Against whom have you raised *your* voice,
And lifted up your eyes on high?
Against the Holy *One* of Israel.
23 By your messengers you have reproached the Lord,
And said: "By the multitude of my chariots
I have come up to the height of the mountains,
To the limits of Lebanon;

I will cut down its tall cedars
*And* its choice cypress trees;
I will enter the extremity of its borders,
*To* its fruitful forest.
24 I have dug and drunk strange water,
And with the soles of my feet I have dried up
All the brooks of defense.”
25 ‘Did you not hear long ago
*How* I made it,
From ancient times that I formed it?
Now I have brought it to pass,
That you should be
For crushing fortified cities *into* heaps of ruins.
26 Therefore their inhabitants had little power;
They were dismayed and confounded;
They were *as* the grass of the field
And the green herb,
*As* the grass on the housetops
And *grain* blighted before it is grown.
27 ‘But I know your dwelling place,
Your going out and your coming in,
And your rage against Me.
28 Because your rage against Me and your tumult
Have come up to My ears,
Therefore I will put My hook in your nose
And My bridle in your lips,
And I will turn you back
By the way which you came.
29 ‘This *shall be* a sign to you:
You shall eat this year such as grows of itself,
And in the second year what springs from the same;
Also in the third year sow and reap,
Plant vineyards and eat the fruit of them.
30 And the remnant who have escaped of the house of Judah
Shall again take root downward,

And bear fruit upward.
31 For out of Jerusalem shall go a remnant,
And those who escape from Mount Zion.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts[a] will do this.’
32 “Therefore thus says the LORD concerning the king of Assyria:
‘ He shall not come into this city,
Nor shoot an arrow there,
Nor come before it with shield,
Nor build a siege mound against it.
33 By the way that he came,
By the same shall he return;
And he shall not come into this city,’ Says the LORD.
34 ‘For I will defend this city, to save it
For My own sake and for My servant
David’s sake.’ ”

**SENNACHERIB’S DEFEAT AND DEATH**

35 And it came to pass on a certain night that the angel[a] of the LORD went out, and killed in the camp of the Assyrians one hundred and eighty-five thousand; and when *people* arose early in the morning, there were the corpses-all dead. 36 So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and went away, returned *home*, and remained at Nineveh. 37 Now it came to pass, as he was worshiping in the temple of Nisroch his god, that his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer struck him down with the sword; and they escaped into the land of Ararat. Then Esarhaddon his son reigned in his place.

## HEZEKIAH'S LIFE EXTENDED

**20** In those days Hezekiah was sick and near death. And Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, went to him and said to him, "Thus says the LORD: 'Set your house in order, for you shall die, and not live.' "

2 Then he turned his face toward the wall, and prayed to the LORD, saying,
3 "Remember now, O LORD, I pray, how I have walked before You in truth and with a loyal heart, and have done *what was* good in Your sight." And Hezekiah wept bitterly.

4 And it happened, before Isaiah had gone out into the middle court, that the word of the LORD came to him, saying, 5 "Return and tell Hezekiah the leader of My people, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of David your father: "I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; surely I will heal you. On the third day you shall go up to the house of the LORD. 6 And I will add to your days fifteen years. I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city for My own sake, and for the sake of My servant David." ' "

7 Then Isaiah said, "Take a lump of figs." So they took and laid *it* on the boil, and he recovered.

8 And Hezekiah said to Isaiah, "What *is* the sign that the LORD will heal me, and that I shall go up to the house of the LORD the third day?"

9 Then Isaiah said, "This is the sign to you from the LORD, that the LORD will do the thing which He has spoken: *shall* the shadow go forward ten degrees or go backward ten degrees?"

10 And Hezekiah answered, "It is an easy thing for the shadow to go down ten degrees; no, but let the shadow go backward ten degrees."

11 So Isaiah the prophet cried out to the LORD, and He brought the shadow ten degrees backward, by which it had gone down on the sundial of Ahaz.

## THE BABYLONIAN ENVOYS

12 At that time Berodach-Baladan[a] the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah, for he heard that Hezekiah had been

sick. 13And Hezekiah was attentive to them, and showed them all the house of his treasures-the silver and gold, the spices and precious ointment, and all[a] his armory-all that was found among his treasures. There was nothing in his house or in all his dominion that Hezekiah did not show them.

14Then Isaiah the prophet went to King Hezekiah, and said to him, "What did these men say, and from where did they come to you?"

So Hezekiah said, "They came from a far country, from Babylon."

15And he said, "What have they seen in your house?"

So Hezekiah answered, "They have seen all that *is* in my house; there is nothing among my treasures that I have not shown them."

16Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Hear the word of the LORD: 17'Behold, the days are coming when all that *is* in your house, and what your fathers have accumulated until this day, shall be carried to Babylon; nothing shall be left,' says the LORD. 18'And they shall take away some of your sons who will descend from you, whom you will beget; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.' "

19So Hezekiah said to Isaiah, "The word of the LORD which you have spoken *is* good!" For he said, "Will there not be peace and truth at least in my days?"

## DEATH OF HEZEKIAH

20Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah-all his might, and how he made a pool and a tunnel and brought water into the city-*are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? 21So Hezekiah rested with his fathers. Then Manasseh his son reigned in his place.

**FINALLY HOME**

# WOODROW KROLL

## (2 Kings 20:1-3)

**T**ears, sorrow, anguish, dread, fear: All of these words apply to death. Joy, freedom, healing, newness, eternity: For believers, these words as well apply to death. Loss hurts. Even Jesus wept at the death of a loved one ( John 11:35). While we sorrow, however, we sorrow not as those who have no hope. Along with the tears and sorrow, believers know that death is only the end of life on earth and the beginning of life in heaven.

Death was not God's original desire for humanity. God created human beings for life, not death. Adam had received the breath of life (Gen. 2:7). It was not until Adam and Eve sinned that death arrived. God said that Adam's punishment for his sin would be as follows: "In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return" (Gen. 3:19). Genesis 5:5 says, "So all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years; and *he died*" (italics mine). So began the cycle of birth and death that will continue until Christ returns. The apostle Paul explained it this way: "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned" (Rom. 5:12).

Death is difficult because it is loss-real and painful because loved ones are gone; symbolic because it reminds us of lost innocence, sin, and punishment. Death is a painful reality faced by every person. We lose people we love; we will one day die ourselves. How should believers view this dreaded event called death?

### HOW SHOULD I VIEW DEATH?

Death is distasteful and dreaded; few would say they look forward to it. Death is viewed very differently from God's perspective, however.

Humans see death as something to be avoided as long as possible; God views it as something to be anticipated. Humans see death as a gloomy, dark night; God describes it as a glorious new day. Humans see death as the end of the journey; God sees it as the beginning of the best journey of all. Your perspective on death will dramatically affect your ability to handle it.

For Christians, the approach of death can be a time of positive anticipation because we enjoy God and long to be with Him forever. Like Abraham, we are looking for a city "whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11:10). Death is not a time to be feared or shunned; it is a time to anticipate hearing our Master say, "Well done, good and faithful servant. . . . Enter into the joy of your lord" (Matt. 25:21). Who would not anticipate that reception?

Death is not a dark, gloomy night, nor is it the end of everything. Instead, death is a door to a bright new future. It brings closure to one phase of life, but opens up an eternal phase that will be far better than humans can even imagine.

## AM I PREPARED TO DIE?

Death is a reality. No one has found a cure for it. Sooner or later, therefore, all people have to face death. Each person must eventually ask the question, "Am I prepared to die?" The Bible is clear about how to prepare for our eternal future. In fact, it is as simple as ABC. All people need to:

**A**dmit that they are not ready to go to heaven when they die because they are sinners. The Bible says, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). All people have sinned; therefore, no one deserves to be in heaven with God for eternity. "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). Fortunately, God made a provision so that people can join Him in heaven. They must . . .

**B**elieve that although they are sinners, Jesus Christ died to pay the

penalty for sin and save them from its punishment. Salvation is not a matter of turning over a new leaf or trying to live so that good works outweigh bad works. Salvation is the loving act of God whereby He sent His Son, Jesus, to die on Calvary's cross to pay sin's death penalty. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). Those who believe this must then . . .

**C**onfess to God that they believe what God's Word says, that they are sinners, and that they believe Jesus died to save them from sin and its penalty. The apostle Paul wrote, "If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Rom. 10:9).

**HOWWILL IT ALL END?**

For Christians, physical pain and suffering may not be alleviated on earth, but it is only temporary. God has a glorious future for us because we have trusted Jesus Christ as our Savior, our Healer, our coming King. For the Christian, death is not the end. "O Death, where is your sting?" exulted Paul. "Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:55, 57). Death is the doorway to our final destination-eternal life with God in heaven. Then we will finally be home.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of death include:

- Psalm 116:15
- John 11:1-44
- Romans 6:23
- 1 Corinthians 15:12-58
- 2 Corinthians 5:8

- 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18
- Revelation 21; 22

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on death at 1 Corinthians 15:20-22. See also the personality profile of Hezekiah The Unwelcome Visitor.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Ultimate Healing** *(20:1-11)* God does not heal every person who prays for healing. He does, however, heal many who ask. Hezekiah's experience teaches the importance of throwing ourselves on God's mercy. God can and does still heal. He has the power to do so. At times healing a person is within His plan; at other times it is not. We must always remember, however, that total and permanent healing will come when we see Him face to face. God will work in our brokenness to show His deep love and give His abiding peace. **Topic: Healing/Recovery**

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# THE UNWELCOME VISITOR

## (2 KINGS 20:1-3)

Death happens to everyone, and no one escapes it this side of the

Lord's return. The Bible records just two men, Enoch and Elijah, who were allowed to arrive in heaven without passing through this dreadful portal. Everyone else eventually meets that unwelcome visitor, even as the Son of God Himself did.

One day death knocked on King Hezekiah's door. He was a good and godly king who ruled over the southern kingdom of Judah. After the evil reign of Ahaz, the new king Hezekiah cleaned house-literally. He tore down pagan altars and "trusted in the LORD God of Israel" (2 Kin. 18:5). When the Assyrians attacked the nation, Hezekiah went to the temple and prayed for God's deliverance. God miraculously intervened, killing most of the enemy army and sending their king scurrying home, where he was assassinated. Judah was safe for a while.

But then Hezekiah became very ill, and Isaiah arrived to tell him to set his house in order because he would soon die. Hezekiah reacted predictably-he "wept bitterly" (20:3) and pleaded with God for his life. And God answered, giving Hezekiah fifteen more years.

Believers know that the joys of heaven are on the other side of death's door, but we still cling to this life. What person has not, upon receiving news of impending death, wept bitterly to God? Many have stories of God's mercy and healing. But even those who have died could tell us stories of healing-ultimate healing upon seeing the face of their Lord!

The greatest fear is the unknown. We know of heaven, but we don't understand it. We prepare for death by faith, knowing we must go through the door alone. But believers have the truth that God who knows and loves them is on the other side, waiting with open arms. For believers, death is not the end-it is the beginning of eternity with God.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about death Finally Home. See also the key passage note at 1 Corinthians 15:20-22.

## SOUL NOTE

**Doctor's Orders** *(20:7)* God promised to heal Hezekiah. He could have intervened miraculously; He could have sent Isaiah to touch and heal him. Instead, God sent Isaiah with a prescription. The phrase, "Take a lump of figs," probably referred to a poultice that would relieve the boil. When we are ill, we should seek healing. God may intervene miraculously, or He may send doctors and medicines. In either case, He is ultimately in control to heal His people or to bring them home to Him. **Topic: Health/Spirituality**

**MANASSEH REIGNS IN JUDAH**

**21** Manasseh *was* twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned
fifty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother's name *was* Hephzibah. [2]And
he did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to the abominations of the
nations whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel. [3]For he
rebuilt the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed; he raised up
altars for Baal, and made a wooden image,[a] as Ahab king of Israel had done;
and he worshiped all the host of heaven[b] and served them. [4]He also built
altars in the house of the LORD, of which the LORD had said, "In Jerusalem I
will put My name." [5]And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two
courts of the house of the LORD. [6]Also he made his son pass through the fire,
practiced soothsaying, used witchcraft, and consulted spiritists and mediums.
He did much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke *Him* to anger. [7]He even
set a carved image of Asherah[a] that he had made, in the house of which the
LORD had said to David and to Solomon his son, "In this house and in
Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will put My
name forever; [8]and I will not make the feet of Israel wander anymore from
the land which I gave their fathers-only if they are careful to do according to
all that I have commanded them, and according to all the law that My servant
Moses commanded them." [9]But they paid no attention, and Manasseh
seduced them to do more evil than the nations whom the LORD had destroyed
before the children of Israel.

[10]And the LORD spoke by His servants the prophets, saying, [11]"Because
Manasseh king of Judah has done these abominations (he has acted more
wickedly than all the Amorites who *were* before him, and has also made
Judah sin with his idols), [12]therefore thus says the LORD God of Israel:
'Behold, *I* am bringing *such* calamity upon Jerusalem and Judah, that
whoever hears of it, both his ears will tingle. [13]And I will stretch over
Jerusalem the measuring line of Samaria and the plummet of the house of
Ahab; I will wipe Jerusalem as *one* wipes a dish, wiping *it* and turning *it*
upside down. [14]So I will forsake the remnant of My inheritance and deliver
them into the hand of their enemies; and they shall become victims of plunder
to all their enemies, [15]because they have done evil in My sight, and have

provoked Me to anger since the day their fathers came out of Egypt, even to this day.' "

16 Moreover Manasseh shed very much innocent blood, till he had filled
Jerusalem from one end to another, besides his sin by which he made Judah
sin, in doing evil in the sight of the LORD.

17 Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh-all that he did, and the sin that he
committed-*are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of
Judah? 18 So Manasseh rested with his fathers, and was buried in the garden
of his own house, in the garden of Uzza. Then his son Amon reigned in his
place.

**AMON'S REIGN AND DEATH**

19 Amon *was* twenty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned
two years in Jerusalem. His mother's name *was* Meshullemeth the daughter
of Haruz of Jotbah. 20 And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, as his father
Manasseh had done. 21 So he walked in all the ways that his father had
walked; and he served the idols that his father had served, and worshiped
them. 22 He forsook the LORD God of his fathers, and did not walk in the way
of the LORD.

23 Then the servants of Amon conspired against him, and killed the king in
his own house. 24 But the people of the land executed all those who had
conspired against King Amon. Then the people of the land made his son
Josiah king in his place.

25 Now the rest of the acts of Amon which he did, *are* they not written in
the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? 26 And he was buried in his
tomb in the garden of Uzza. Then Josiah his son reigned in his place.

**SOUL NOTE**

**A Dangerous World** *(21:6)* Manasseh was one of many evil kings who reigned in Judah. He encouraged idolatry and occult practices. Like Ahaz (16:3), he sacrificed his son in the fire, practiced soothsaying, used witchcraft, and consulted spiritists and mediums. Extensive witchcraft and satanic worship even culminated in Manasseh's setting up an idol in God's temple (21:7). The occult is a dangerous trap-a world of darkness, horror, and death. While some may be fascinated by its power, they must understand that it is power that seeks only to destroy them eventually. **Topic: Occult**

## JOSIAH REIGNS IN JUDAH

**22** Josiah *was* eight years old when he became king, and he reigned thirty-
one years in Jerusalem. His mother's name *was* Jedidah the daughter of
Adaiah of Bozkath. 2And he did *what was* right in the sight of the LORD, and
walked in all the ways of his father David; he did not turn aside to the right
hand or to the left.

## HILKIAH FINDS THE BOOK OF THE LAW

3Now it came to pass, in the eighteenth year of King Josiah, *that* the king
sent Shaphan the scribe, the son of Azaliah, the son of Meshullam, to the
house of the LORD, saying: 4"Go up to Hilkiah the high priest, that he may
count the money which has been brought into the house of the LORD, which
the doorkeepers have gathered from the people. 5And let them deliver it into
the hand of those doing the work, who are the overseers in the house of the
LORD; let them give it to those who *are* in the house of the LORD doing the
work, to repair the damages of the house-6to carpenters and builders and
masons-and to buy timber and hewn stone to repair the house. 7However
there need be no accounting made with them of the money delivered into
their hand, because they deal faithfully."

8Then Hilkiah the high priest said to Shaphan the scribe, "I have found the
Book of the Law in the house of the LORD." And Hilkiah gave the book to
Shaphan, and he read it. 9So Shaphan the scribe went to the king, bringing the
king word, saying, "Your servants have gathered the money that was found in
the house, and have delivered it into the hand of those who do the work, who
oversee the house of the LORD." 10Then Shaphan the scribe showed the king,
saying, "Hilkiah the priest has given me a book." And Shaphan read it before
the king.

11Now it happened, when the king heard the words of the Book of the Law,
that he tore his clothes. 12Then the king commanded Hilkiah the priest,
Ahikam the son of Shaphan, Achbor[a] the son of Michaiah, Shaphan the
scribe, and Asaiah a servant of the king, saying, 13"Go, inquire of the LORD
for me, for the people and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book

that has been found; for great *is* the wrath of the LORD that is aroused against us, because our fathers have not obeyed the words of this book, to do according to all that is written concerning us."

14So Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam, Achbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe. (She dwelt in Jerusalem in the Second Quarter.) And they spoke with her. 15Then she said to them, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel, 'Tell the man who sent you to Me, 16"Thus says the LORD: 'Behold, I will bring calamity on this place and on its inhabitants-all the words of the book which the king of Judah has read-17because they have forsaken Me and burned incense to other gods, that they might provoke Me to anger with all the works of their hands. Therefore My wrath shall be aroused against this place and shall not be quenched.' " ' 18But as for the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the LORD, in this manner you shall speak to him, 'Thus says the LORD God of Israel: "*Concerning* the words which you have heard-19because your heart was tender, and you humbled yourself before the LORD when you heard what I spoke against this place and against its inhabitants, that they would become a desolation and a curse, and you tore your clothes and wept before Me, I also have heard *you*," says the LORD. 20"Surely, therefore, I will gather you to your fathers, and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace; and your eyes shall not see all the calamity which I will bring on this place." ' " So they brought back word to the king.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Just One Child** *(22:1, 2)* After the evil reigns of Manasseh and Amon, Josiah became king. Josiah saw the evil legacy left by his grandfather and father, and apparently wanted to rule differently. Somehow Josiah learned about God and chose to serve Him. Perhaps he had learned about God from the godly people in the land. Maybe it was his mother, Jedidah, mentioned here. Someone told this young

boy the truth about God, and during his years as king he turned the nation around. We never know how our lives might affect one child who may grow up to serve the Lord. **Topic: Mentoring**

## SOUL NOTE

**Back in Line** *(22:11)* When the Book of the Law was rediscovered in the temple and read to King Josiah, the king "tore his clothes," showing his extreme sorrow over how far the nation had strayed from God's commands. He also realized how angry God must have been at the nation (22:13). Josiah repented for himself and on behalf of the nation, and then acted immediately to bring them back to God. When we are made aware of sin, we should act immediately-repenting and turning our lives around in order to get back in line with God's will. **Topic: Repentance**

## JOSIAH RESTORES TRUE WORSHIP

**23** Now the king sent them to gather all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem
to him. 2The king went up to the house of the LORD with all the men of
Judah, and with him all the inhabitants of Jerusalem-the priests and the
prophets and all the people, both small and great. And he read in their hearing
all the words of the Book of the Covenant which had been found in the house
of the LORD.

3Then the king stood by a pillar and made a covenant before the LORD, to
follow the LORD and to keep His commandments and His testimonies and His
statutes, with all *his* heart and all *his* soul, to perform the words of this
covenant that were written in this book. And all the people took a stand for
the covenant. 4And the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest, the priests of
the second order, and the doorkeepers, to bring out of the temple of the LORD
all the articles that were made for Baal, for Asherah,[a] and for all the host of
heaven;[b] and he burned them outside Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron, and
carried their ashes to Bethel. 5Then he removed the idolatrous priests whom
the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense on the high places in the
cities of Judah and in the places all around Jerusalem, and those who burned
incense to Baal, to the sun, to the moon, to the constellations, and to all the
host of heaven. 6And he brought out the wooden image[a] from the house of
the LORD, to the Brook Kidron outside Jerusalem, burned it at the Brook
Kidron and ground *it* to ashes, and threw its ashes on the graves of the
common people. 7Then he tore down the *ritual* booths of the perverted
persons[a] that *were* in the house of the LORD, where the women wove
hangings for the wooden image. 8And he brought all the priests from the
cities of Judah, and defiled the high places where the priests had burned
incense, from Geba to Beersheba; also he broke down the high places at the
gates which *were* at the entrance of the Gate of Joshua the governor of the
city, which *were* to the left of the city gate. 9Nevertheless the priests of the
high places did not come up to the altar of the LORD in Jerusalem, but they
ate unleavened bread among their brethren.

10And he defiled Topheth, which *is* in the Valley of the Son[a] of Hinnom,
that no man might make his son or his daughter pass through the fire to

Molech. [11]Then he removed the horses that the kings of Judah had dedicated to the sun, at the entrance to the house of the LORD, by the chamber of Nathan-Melech, the officer who *was* in the court; and he burned the chariots of the sun with fire. [12]The altars that *were* on the roof, the upper chamber of Ahaz, which the kings of Judah had made, and the altars which Manasseh had made in the two courts of the house of the LORD, the king broke down and pulverized there, and threw their dust into the Brook Kidron. [13]Then the king defiled the high places that *were* east of Jerusalem, which *were* on the south of the Mount of Corruption, which Solomon king of Israel had built for Ashtoreth the abomination of the Sidonians, for Chemosh the abomination of the Moabites, and for Milcom the abomination of the people of Ammon. [14]And he broke in pieces the *sacred* pillars and cut down the wooden images, and filled their places with the bones of men.

[15]Moreover the altar that *was* at Bethel, *and* the high place which Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel sin, had made, both that altar and the high place he broke down; and he burned the high place *and* crushed *it* to powder, and burned the wooden image. [16]As Josiah turned, he saw the tombs that *were* there on the mountain. And he sent and took the bones out of the tombs and burned *them* on the altar, and defiled it according to the word of the LORD which the man of God proclaimed, who proclaimed these words. [17]Then he said, "What gravestone *is* this that I see?"

So the men of the city told him, "*It is* the tomb of the man of God who came from Judah and proclaimed these things which you have done against the altar of Bethel."

[18]And he said, "Let him alone; let no one move his bones." So they let his bones alone, with the bones of the prophet who came from Samaria.

[19]Now Josiah also took away all the shrines of the high places that *were* in the cities of Samaria, which the kings of Israel had made to provoke the LORD[a] to anger; and he did to them according to all the deeds he had done in Bethel. [20]He executed all the priests of the high places who *were* there, on the altars, and burned men's bones on them; and he returned to Jerusalem.

[21]Then the king commanded all the people, saying, "Keep the Passover to the LORD your God, as *it is* written in this Book of the Covenant." [22]Such a

Passover surely had never been held since the days of the judges who judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel and the kings of Judah. [23]But in the eighteenth year of King Josiah this Passover was held before the LORD in Jerusalem. [24]Moreover Josiah put away those who consulted mediums and spiritists, the household gods and idols, all the abominations that were seen in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, that he might perform the words of the law which were written in the book that Hilkiah the priest found in the house of the LORD. [25]Now before him there was no king like him, who turned to the LORD with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses; nor after him did *any* arise like him.

**IMPENDING JUDGMENT ON JUDAH**

[26]Nevertheless the LORD did not turn from the fierceness of His great wrath, with which His anger was aroused against Judah, because of all the provocations with which Manasseh had provoked Him. [27]And the LORD said, "I will also remove Judah from My sight, as I have removed Israel, and will cast off this city Jerusalem which I have chosen, and the house of which I said, 'My name shall be there.' "[a]

**JOSIAH DIES IN BATTLE**

[28]Now the rest of the acts of Josiah, and all that he did, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? [29]In his days Pharaoh Necho king of Egypt went to the aid of the king of Assyria, to the River Euphrates; and King Josiah went against him. And *Pharaoh Necho* killed him at Megiddo when he confronted him. [30]Then his servants moved his body in a chariot from Megiddo, brought him to Jerusalem, and buried him in his own tomb. And the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah, anointed him, and made him king in his father's place.

**THE REIGN AND CAPTIVITY OF JEHOAHAZ**

[31]Jehoahaz *was* twenty-three years old when he became king, and he reigned three months in Jerusalem. His mother's name *was* Hamutal the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. [32]And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his fathers had done. [33]Now Pharaoh Necho put him in

prison at Riblah in the land of Hamath, that he might not reign in Jerusalem; and he imposed on the land a tribute of one hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold. [34]Then Pharaoh Necho made Eliakim the son of Josiah king in place of his father Josiah, and changed his name to Jehoiakim. And *Pharaoh* took Jehoahaz and went to Egypt, and he[a] died there.

**JEHOIAKIM REIGNS IN JUDAH**

[35]So Jehoiakim gave the silver and gold to Pharaoh; but he taxed the land to give money according to the command of Pharaoh; he exacted the silver and gold from the people of the land, from every one according to his assessment, to give *it* to Pharaoh Necho. [36]Jehoiakim *was* twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. His mother's name *was* Zebudah the daughter of Pedaiah of Rumah. [37]And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his fathers had done.

## JUDAH OVERRUN BY ENEMIES

**24** In his days Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up, and Jehoiakim
became his vassal *for* three years. Then he turned and rebelled against
him. 2And the LORD sent against him *raiding* bands of Chaldeans, bands of
Syrians, bands of Moabites, and bands of the people of Ammon; He sent
them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the LORD which He
had spoken by His servants the prophets. 3Surely at the commandment of the
LORD *this* came upon Judah, to remove *them* from His sight because of the
sins of Manasseh, according to all that he had done, 4and also because of the
innocent blood that he had shed; for he had filled Jerusalem with innocent
blood, which the LORD would not pardon.

5Now the rest of the acts of Jehoiakim, and all that he did, *are* they not
written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? 6So Jehoiakim
rested with his fathers. Then Jehoiachin his son reigned in his place.

7And the king of Egypt did not come out of his land anymore, for the king
of Babylon had taken all that belonged to the king of Egypt from the Brook
of Egypt to the River Euphrates.

## THE REIGN AND CAPTIVITY OF JEHOIACHIN

8Jehoiachin *was* eighteen years old when he became king, and he reigned
in Jerusalem three months. His mother's name *was* Nehushta the daughter of
Elnathan of Jerusalem. 9And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to
all that his father had done.

10At that time the servants of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up
against Jerusalem, and the city was besieged. 11And Nebuchadnezzar king of
Babylon came against the city, as his servants were besieging it. 12Then
Jehoiachin king of Judah, his mother, his servants, his princes, and his
officers went out to the king of Babylon; and the king of Babylon, in the
eighth year of his reign, took him prisoner.

## THE CAPTIVITY OF JERUSALEM

13And he carried out from there all the treasures of the house of the LORD

and the treasures of the king's house, and he cut in pieces all the articles of gold which Solomon king of Israel had made in the temple of the LORD, as the LORD had said. [14]Also he carried into captivity all Jerusalem: all the captains and all the mighty men of valor, ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and smiths. None remained except the poorest people of the land. [15]And he carried Jehoiachin captive to Babylon. The king's mother, the king's wives, his officers, and the mighty of the land he carried into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon. [16]All the valiant men, seven thousand, and craftsmen and smiths, one thousand, all *who were* strong *and* fit for war, these the king of Babylon brought captive to Babylon.

## ZEDEKIAH REIGNS IN JUDAH

[17]Then the king of Babylon made Mattaniah, *Jehoiachin's*[a] uncle, king in his place, and changed his name to Zedekiah.

[18]Zedekiah *was* twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. His mother's name *was* Hamutal the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. [19]He also did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that Jehoiakim had done. [20]For because of the anger of the LORD *this* happened in Jerusalem and Judah, that He finally cast them out from His presence. Then Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.

## THE FALL AND CAPTIVITY OF JUDAH

**25** Now it came to pass in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, on
the tenth *day* of the month, *that* Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and all
his army came against Jerusalem and encamped against it; and they built a
siege wall against it all around. 2So the city was besieged until the eleventh
year of King Zedekiah. 3By the ninth *day* of the *fourth* month the famine had
become so severe in the city that there was no food for the people of the land.

4Then the city wall was broken through, and all the men of war *fled* at
night by way of the gate between two walls, which was by the king's garden,
even though the Chaldeans *were* still encamped all around against the city.
And *the king*[a] went by way of the plain.[b] 5But the army of the Chaldeans
pursued the king, and they overtook him in the plains of Jericho. All his army
was scattered from him. 6So they took the king and brought him up to the
king of Babylon at Riblah, and they pronounced judgment on him. 7Then
they killed the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, put out the eyes of Zedekiah,
bound him with bronze fetters, and took him to Babylon.

8And in the fifth month, on the seventh *day* of the month (which *was* the
nineteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon), Nebuzaradan the
captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem.
9He burned the house of the LORD and the king's house; all the houses of
Jerusalem, that is, all the houses of the great, he burned with fire. 10And all
the army of the Chaldeans who *were with* the captain of the guard broke
down the walls of Jerusalem all around.

11Then Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried away captive the rest
of the people *who* remained in the city and the defectors who had deserted to
the king of Babylon, with the rest of the multitude. 12But the captain of the
guard left *some* of the poor of the land as vinedressers and farmers. 13The
bronze pillars that *were* in the house of the LORD, and the carts and the bronze
Sea that *were* in the house of the LORD, the Chaldeans broke in pieces, and
carried their bronze to Babylon. 14They also took away the pots, the shovels,
the trimmers, the spoons, and all the bronze utensils with which the priests
ministered. 15The firepans and the basins, the things of solid gold and solid

silver, the captain of the guard took away. [16]The two pillars, one Sea, and the carts, which Solomon had made for the house of the LORD, the bronze of all these articles was beyond measure. [17]The height of one pillar *was* eighteen cubits, and the capital on it *was* of bronze. The height of the capital was three cubits, and the network and pomegranates all around the capital were all of bronze. The second pillar was the same, with a network.

[18]And the captain of the guard took Seraiah the chief priest, Zephaniah the second priest, and the three doorkeepers. [19]He also took out of the city an officer who had charge of the men of war, five men of the king's close associates who were found in the city, the chief recruiting officer of the army, who mustered the people of the land, and sixty men of the people of the land *who were* found in the city. [20]So Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, took these and brought them to the king of Babylon at Riblah. [21]Then the king of Babylon struck them and put them to death at Riblah in the land of Hamath. Thus Judah was carried away captive from its own land.

## GEDALIAH MADE GOVERNOR OF JUDAH

[22]Then he made Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, governor over the people who remained in the land of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had left. [23]Now when all the captains of the armies, they and *their* men, heard that the king of Babylon had made Gedaliah governor, they came to Gedaliah at Mizpah-Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, Johanan the son of Careah, Seraiah the son of Tanhumeth the Netophathite, and Jaazaniah[a] the son of a Maachathite, they and their men. [24]And Gedaliah took an oath before them and their men, and said to them, "Do not be afraid of the servants of the Chaldeans. Dwell in the land and serve the king of Babylon, and it shall be well with you."

[25]But it happened in the seventh month that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, the son of Elishama, of the royal family, came with ten men and struck and killed Gedaliah, the Jews, as well as the Chaldeans who were with him at Mizpah. [26]And all the people, small and great, and the captains of the armies, arose and went to Egypt; for they were afraid of the Chaldeans.

## JEHOIACHIN RELEASED FROM PRISON

27 Now it came to pass in the thirty-seventh year of the captivity of
Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the twenty-seventh *day* of
the month, *that* Evil-Merodach[a] king of Babylon, in the year that he began to
reign, released Jehoiachin king of Judah from prison. 28 He spoke kindly to
him, and gave him a more prominent seat than those of the kings who *were*
with him in Babylon. 29 So Jehoiachin changed from his prison garments, and
he ate bread regularly before the king all the days of his life. 30 And as for his
provisions, *there was* a regular ration given him by the king, a portion for
each day, all the days of his life.

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# 1 Chronicles

It's been said that it is possible for humans to live several weeks without food, and a few days without water; however, it is impossible for us to live for any length of time without hope. Can you think of anything defeated, discouraged, and weary people need more than the comforting assurance that God is in control?

First and Second Chronicles are a short history of Israel written to the Hebrews returning from Israel's 70-year exile in Babylon. These Jews faced the immense task of rebuilding their city Jerusalem, their temple-in fact, their whole nation. This is why the author, thought to be Ezra, emphasized the best of Israel's history in order to provide much-needed encouragement. The books rely heavily on 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings, and are intended to show that God's promises will be fulfilled regardless of the faithfulness of the people and the nation.

The first nine chapters of 1 Chronicles focus on the royal line of David-the line from which Messiah would come. What a comfort this reminder must have been! Interestingly, the author focused only on the most positive aspects of David's reign, skipping his sin with Bathsheba and its consequences. By highlighting David's triumphs, he gave the exiles a blueprint of sorts for how to rebuild their nation.

The Israelites needed a renewal of hope at this daunting time in their history. Perhaps similar encouragement is your biggest need right now. Let the promises of God's faithfulness minister to your soul as you read.

**SOUL CONCERNS IN**

## 1 CHRONICLES

FATHERHOOD (3:1)
VIOLENCE (11:23)

LIFE TRANSITIONS (CH. 23)

## THE FAMILY OF ADAM-SETH TO ABRAHAM

**1** Adam, Seth, Enosh, 2 Cainan,[a] Shem, Ham, and Japheth.3 Enoch,
Methuselah, Lamech, 4 Noah,[a] Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

5 The sons of Japheth *were* Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech,
and Tiras. 6 The sons of Gomer *were* Ashkenaz, Diphath,[a] and Togarmah.
7 The sons of Javan were Elishah, Tarshishah,[a] Kittim, and Rodanim.[b]

8 The sons of Ham *were* Cush, Mizraim, Put, and Canaan. 9 The sons of
Cush *were* Seba, Havilah, Sabta,[a] Raama,[b] and Sabtecha. The sons of Raama
*were* Sheba and Dedan. 10 Cush begot Nimrod; he began to be a mighty one
on the earth. 11 Mizraim begot Ludim, Anamim, Lehabim, Naphtuhim,
12 Pathrusim, Casluhim (from whom came the Philistines and the Caphtorim).
13 Canaan begot Sidon, his firstborn, and Heth; 14 the Jebusite, the Amorite,
and the Girgashite; 15 the Hivite, the Arkite, and the Sinite; 16 the Arvadite, the
Zemarite, and the Hamathite.

17 The sons of Shem *were* Elam, Asshur, Arphaxad, Lud, Aram, Uz, Hul,
Gether, and Meshech.[a] 18 Arphaxad begot Shelah, and Shelah begot Eber.
19 To Eber were born two sons: the name of one was Peleg,[a] for in his days
the earth was divided; and his brother's name was Joktan. 20 Joktan begot
Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, 21 Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, 22 Ebal,[a]
Abimael, Sheba, 23 Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab. All these *were* the sons of
Joktan.

24 Shem, Arphaxad, Shelah, 25 Eber, Peleg, Reu, 26 Serug, Nahor, Terah,
27 and Abram, who *is* Abraham. 28 The sons of Abraham *were* Isaac and
Ishmael.

## THE FAMILY OF ISHMAEL

29 These *are* their genealogies: The firstborn of Ishmael *was* Nebajoth; then
Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, 30 Mishma, Dumah, Massa, Hadad,[a] Tema, 31 Jetur,
Naphish, and Kedemah. These *were* the sons of Ishmael.

## THE FAMILY OF KETURAH

[32]Now the sons born to Keturah, Abraham's concubine, *were* Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah. The sons of Jokshan *were* Sheba and Dedan. [33]The sons of Midian *were* Ephah, Epher, Hanoch, Abida, and Eldaah. All these were the children of Keturah.

**THE FAMILY OF ISAAC**

[34]And Abraham begot Isaac. The sons of Isaac *were* Esau and Israel. [35]The sons of Esau *were* Eliphaz, Reuel, Jeush, Jaalam, and Korah. [36]And the sons of Eliphaz *were* Teman, Omar, Zephi,[a] Gatam, and Kenaz; and by Timna[b] Amalek. [37]The sons of Reuel *were* Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah.

**THE FAMILY OF SEIR**

[38]The sons of Seir *were* Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan. [39]And the sons of Lotan *were* Hori and Homam; Lotan's sister *was* Timna. [40]The sons of Shobal *were* Alian,[a] Manahath, Ebal, Shephi, [b] and Onam. The sons of Zibeon were Ajah and Anah. [41]The son of Anah was Dishon. The sons of Dishon were Hamran,[a] Eshban, Ithran, and Cheran. [42]The sons of Ezer were Bilhan, Zaavan, and Jaakan.[a] The sons of Dishan *were* Uz and Aran.

**THE KINGS OF EDOM**

[43]Now these *were* the kings who reigned in the land of Edom before a king reigned over the children of Israel: Bela the son of Beor, and the name of his city was Dinhabah. [44]And when Bela died, Jobab the son of Zerah of Bozrah reigned in his place. [45]When Jobab died, Husham of the land of the Temanites reigned in his place. [46]And when Husham died, Hadad the son of Bedad, who attacked Midian in the field of Moab, reigned in his place. The name of his city *was* Avith. [47]When Hadad died, Samlah of Masrekah reigned in his place. [48]And when Samlah died, Saul of Rehoboth-by-the-River reigned in his place. [49]When Saul died, Baal-Hanan the son of Achbor reigned in his place. [50]And when Baal-Hanan died, Hadad[a] reigned in his place; and the name of his city was Pai.[b] His wife's name was Mehetabel the daughter of Matred, the daughter of Mezahab. [51]Hadad died also. And the

chiefs of Edom were Chief Timnah, Chief Aliah,[a] Chief Jetheth, [52]Chief Aholibamah, Chief Elah, Chief Pinon, [53]Chief Kenaz, Chief Teman, Chief Mibzar, [54]Chief Magdiel, and Chief Iram. These were the chiefs of Edom.

**SOUL NOTE**

**You Matter** *(ch. 1)* The genealogies in 1 Chronicles were compiled after the people of Judah had been taken into captivity in Babylon. The people did not want the records of their heritage to be lost. Although the Bible tells nothing about most of these people, each name listed represents a life-a person created in God's image and valuable to Him. Our lives may never be recorded for history, but we have a moment in eternity to serve God and make a difference in others' lives. God knows the name, face, and life of each person-and He knows you. **Topic: Self-Esteem**

## THE FAMILY OF ISRAEL

**2** These *were* the sons of Israel: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar,
Zebulun, [2]Dan, Joseph, Benjamin, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher.

## FROM JUDAH TO DAVID

[3]The sons of Judah *were* Er, Onan, and Shelah. *These* three were born to
him by the daughter of Shua, the Canaanitess. Er, the firstborn of Judah, was
wicked in the sight of the LORD; so He killed him. [4]And Tamar, his daughter-
in-law, bore him Perez and Zerah. All the sons of Judah *were* five.

[5]The sons of Perez *were* Hezron and Hamul. [6]The sons of Zerah *were*
Zimri, Ethan, Heman, Calcol, andDara-five of them in all.

[7]The son of Carmi *was* Achar,[a] the troubler of Israel, who transgressed in
the accursed thing.

[8]The son of Ethan *was* Azariah.

[9]Also the sons of Hezron who were born to him *were* Jerahmeel, Ram, and
Chelubai.[a] [10]Ram begot Amminadab, and Amminadab begot Nahshon, leader
of the children of Judah; [11]Nahshon begot Salma,[a] and Salma begot Boaz;
[12]Boaz begot Obed, and Obed begot Jesse; [13]Jesse begot Eliab his firstborn,
Abinadab the second, Shimea[a] the third, [14]Nethanel the fourth, Raddai the
fifth, [15]Ozem the sixth, *and* David the seventh.

[16]Now their sisters *were* Zeruiah and Abigail. And the sons of Zeruiah
*were* Abishai, Joab, and Asahel–three. [17]Abigail bore Amasa; and the father
of Amasa *was* Jether the Ishmaelite.[a]

## THE FAMILY OF HEZRON

[18]Caleb the son of Hezron had children by Azubah, *his* wife, and by
Jerioth. Now these were her sons: Jesher, Shobab, and Ardon. [19]When
Azubah died, Caleb took Ephrath[a] as his wife, who bore him Hur. [20]And Hur
begot Uri, and Uri begot Bezalel.

[21]Now afterward Hezron went in to the daughter of Machir the father of

Gilead, whom he married when he *was* sixty years old; and she bore him Segub. [22]Segub begot Jair, who had twenty-three cities in the land of Gilead. [23](Geshur and Syria took from them the towns of Jair, with Kenath and its towns–sixty towns.) All these *belonged to* the sons of Machir the father of Gilead. [24]After Hezron died in Caleb Ephrathah, Hezron's wife Abijah bore him Ashhur the father of Tekoa.

**THE FAMILY OF JERAHMEEL**

[25]The sons of Jerahmeel, the firstborn of Hezron, *were* Ram, the firstborn, and Bunah, Oren, Ozem, *and* Ahijah. [26]Jerahmeel had another wife, whose name was Atarah; she was the mother of Onam. [27]The sons of Ram, the firstborn of Jerahmeel, were Maaz, Jamin, and Eker. [28]The sons of Onam were Shammai and Jada. The sons of Shammai *were* Nadab and Abishur.

[29]And the name of the wife of Abishur *was* Abihail, and she bore him Ahban and Molid. [30]The sons of Nadab *were* Seled and Appaim; Seled died without children. [31]The son of Appaim *was* Ishi, the son of Ishi *was* Sheshan, and Sheshan's son *was* Ahlai. [32]The sons of Jada, the brother of Shammai, *were* Jether and Jonathan; Jether died without children. [33]The sons of Jonathan *were* Peleth and Zaza. These were the sons of Jerahmeel.

[34]Now Sheshan had no sons, only daughters. And Sheshan had an Egyptian servant whose name *was* Jarha. [35]Sheshan gave his daughter to Jarha his servant as wife, and she bore him Attai. [36]Attai begot Nathan, and Nathan begot Zabad; [37]Zabad begot Ephlal, and Ephlal begot Obed; [38]Obed begot Jehu, and Jehu begot Azariah; [39]Azariah begot Helez, and Helez begot Eleasah; [40]Eleasah begot Sis-mai, and Sismai begot Shallum; [41]Shallum begot Jekamiah, and Jekamiah begot Elishama.

**THE FAMILY OF CALEB**

[42]The descendants of Caleb the brother of Jerahmeel *were* Mesha, his firstborn, who was the father of Ziph, and the sons of Mareshah the father of Hebron. [43]The sons of Hebron *were* Korah, Tappuah, Rekem, and Shema. [44]Shema begot Raham the father of Jorkoam, and Rekem begot Shammai. [45]And the son of Shammai *was* Maon, and Maon *was* the father of Beth Zur.

[46]Ephah, Caleb’s concubine, bore Haran, Moza, and Gazez; and Haran
begot Gazez. [47]And the sons of Jahdai *were* Regem, Jotham, Geshan, Pelet,
Ephah, and Shaaph.

[48]Maachah, Caleb’s concubine, bore Sheber and Tirhanah. [49]She also bore
Shaaph the father of Madmannah, Sheva the father of Machbenah and the
father of Gibea. And the daughter of Caleb *was* Achsah.

[50]These were the descendants of Caleb: The sons of Hur, the firstborn of
Ephrathah, *were* Shobal the father of Kirjath Jearim, [51]Salma the father of
Bethlehem, *and* Hareph the father of Beth Gader.

[52]And Shobal the father of Kirjath Jearim had descendants: Haroeh, *and*
half of the *families of* Manuhoth.[a] [53]The families of Kirjath Jearim *were* the
Ithrites, the Puthites, the Shu-mathites, and the Mishraites. From these came
the Zorathites and the Eshtaolites.

[54]The sons of Salma *were* Bethlehem, the Netophathites, Atroth Beth Joab,
half of the Manahethites, and the Zorites.

[55]And the families of the scribes who dwelt at Jabez *were* the Tirathites,
the Shimeathites, *and* the Suchathites. These *were* the Kenites who came
from Hammath, the father of the house of Rechab.

## THE FAMILY OF DAVID

**3** Now these were the sons of David who were born to him in Hebron: The
firstborn *was* Amnon, by Ahinoam the Jezreelitess; the second, Daniel,[a] by
Abigail the Carmelitess; 2the third, Absalom the son of Maacah, the daughter
of Talmai, king of Geshur; the fourth, Adonijah the son of Haggith; 3the fifth,
Shephatiah, by Abital; the sixth, Ithream, by his wife Eglah.

4*These* six were born to him in Hebron. There he reigned seven years and
six months, and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty-three years. 5And these were
born to him in Jerusalem: Shimea,[a] Shobab, Nathan, and Solomon-four by
Bathshua[b] the daughter of Ammiel.[c] 6Also there were Ibhar, Elishama,[a]
Eliphelet,[b] 7Nogah, Nepheg, Japhia, 8Elishama, Eliada,[a] and Eliphelet-nine *in
all.* 9*These were* all the sons of David, besides the sons of the concubines, and
Tamar their sister.

## THE FAMILY OF SOLOMON

10Solomon's son *was* Rehoboam; Abijah[a] *was* his son, Asa his son,
Jehoshaphat his son, 11Joram[a] his son, Ahaziah his son, Joash[b] his son,
12Amaziah his son, Azariah[a] his son, Jo-tham his son, 13Ahaz his son,
Hezekiah his son, Manasseh his son, 14Amon his son, *and* Josiah his son.
15The sons of Josiah *were* Joha-nan the firstborn, the second Jehoiakim, the
third Zedekiah, and the fourth Shallum.[a] 16The sons of Jehoiakim *were*
Jeconiah his son *and* Zedekiah[a] his son.

## THE FAMILY OF JECONIAH

17And the sons of Jeconiah[a] *were* Assir,[b] Shealtiel his son, 18*and*
Malchiram, Pedaiah, Shenazzar, Jecamiah, Hoshama, and Neda-biah. 19The
sons of Pedaiah *were* Zerubbabel and Shimei. The sons of Zerubbabel *were*
Me-shullam, Hananiah, Shelomith their sister, 20and Hashubah, Ohel,
Berechiah, Hasadiah, and Jushab-Hesed-five *in all.*

21The sons of Hananiah *were* Pelatiah and Jeshaiah, the sons of Rephaiah,
the sons of Ar-nan, the sons of Obadiah, and the sons of Shechaniah. 22The

son of Shechaniah was Shemaiah. The sons of Shemaiah *were* Hat-tush, Igal, Bariah, Neariah, and Shaphat-six *in all.* [23]The sons of Neariah *were* Elioenai, Hezekiah, and Azrikam-three *in all.* [24]The sons of Elioenai *were* Hodaviah, Eliashib, Pe-laiah, Akkub, Johanan, Delaiah, and Anani-seven *in all.*

**SOMEONE SPECIAL**

# ROBERT WOLGEMUTH

## (1 Chronicles 3:1)

**"A**ny man can become a father, but it takes a special man to be a dad."

In September of 1971, just a few hours after our first baby was born, a close friend handed me a greeting card with the above inscription printed on the front. Earlier that morning I had become "any man." *I'm a father!* I whispered to myself. *Now what am I going to do?*

My primary training for this day came from my own parents. From the time I was small, I had watched them negotiate conflict among themselves. They loved and honored each other and this mutual respect gave my siblings and me a great sense of security. We knew our dad and mother had always consulted one another first.

From their example, I learned the most important thing any father can learn. It's the secret to successfully making the transition from father to dad and, amazingly, it has nothing to do with parenting skills. The secret to being a great dad is for a man to always love and

serve his wife-his children's mother-first.

Missing this truth is as dangerous as a coach preparing his team for the game next week rather than the one this week. It's as treacherous as a sailor studying the weather maps for tomorrow's forecast instead of preparing for the storm today.

Proverbs 17:6 tantalizes a man with the possibility of being the "glory" of his children. However, being a great dad isn't achieved by pursuing fathering greatness; it's the byproduct-the investment dividend-of a selfless commitment to a successful marriage.

## SEVEN TACTICAL STEPS TO BECOMING A GREAT DAD

Once a man has determined that his love for his wife is his priority, he then needs to build a game plan for success as a dad.

1. *Protection: Love Stands Guard*

"I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go" (Ps. 32:8). One of the most amazing things that God has built into parents is the need to protect their young. A dad's job is to guard his children physically when they're young and defenseless, and emotionally as they grow and mature. This protection spans every conceivable dimension, from teaching his son to respect power tools to interviewing the boys who intend on taking his daughter out for a date.

2. *Conversation: Just Keep Talking*

"[Joseph] kissed all his brothers and . . . [they] talked with him" (Gen. 45:15). Giving his children the things they need is the job of every dad. The most precious gift, however, isn't a *thing*, it's a *skill*. That skill is the art of conversation. When his children are young, learning to ask good questions and listening carefully to their answers builds a bridge that connects their hearts for a lifetime. And, by the way, a dad

needs to learn to listen with his eyes as well as his ears!

3. *Affection: The Power of Touch*

"[Jesus] took [the children] up in His arms" (Mark 10:16). There may be nothing more important for a dad to learn than to understand the power of holding his children. A dad's touch communicates security and worth to a little person's heart. Not being satisfied with simply greeting the children with a smile and a nod, Jesus also touched them.

*4. Discipline: Love Must Be Painful*

"For whom the LORD loves He corrects" (Prov. 3:12). Discipline is both a verb and a noun. A dad's goal is to be able to say, "My children have discipline." That's the noun-and guess where it comes from. That's right-discipline, the verb. When children learn the rigors of discipline-modeled by a father with *self*-discipline-their lives are filled with the confidence of having discipline.

5. *Laughter: Fun to Live With*

"A merry heart makes a cheerful countenance" (Prov. 15:13). Admit it. Most men are . . . well, they're *boring.* We're too task-oriented, too focused, and too preoccupied to be any fun. And what can we do about this? Years ago, I went to a bookstore and found some help. I bought riddle books, cartoon books, and humor books. We watched a little less television, read those books, and played a few more games that didn't plug into a wall or need batteries. It worked.

6. *Faith: Jesus Loves Me*

"For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved" (John 3:17). There may be no more horrible word in the English language than the word "lost." And there may be no more wonderful word than the word "found." Every dad begins his life as a lost man. Only Jesus Christ has the power to truly find-save-that man. When a dad discovers this,

then lives it before his family, nothing is ever the same again.

7. *Conduct: Loving Well, Living Right*

"For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace. What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!" (Rom. 6:14, 15). My uncle Allon Dourte was a master fruit grower. His apples and peaches were the envy of farmers from nearly every surrounding zip code. Ironically, Uncle Allon spent very little time working on his fruit. Instead, most of his effort was spent on the health of the trees-pruning, spraying, and fertilizing. Good conduct is good fruit. Protection, conversation, affection, discipline, laughter, and faith make for good kids.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of fatherhood include:

- Deuteronomy 6:6-9
- Proverbs 17:6
- Ephesians 6:4
- Colossians 3:21

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on fatherhood at Ephesians 6:4. See also the personality profile of The Prodigal Son's Loving Father.

## THE FAMILY OF JUDAH

**4** The sons of Judah *were* Perez, Hezron, Carmi, Hur, and Shobal. 2And
Reaiah the son of Shobal begot Jahath, and Jahath begot Ahumai and
Lahad. These *were* the families of the Zorathites. 3These *were* the sons *of the father* of Etam: Jezreel, Ishma, and Idbash; and the name of their sister *was* Hazelelponi; 4and Penuel *was* the father of Gedor, and Ezer *was the* father of Hushah.

These *were* the sons of Hur, the firstborn of Ephrathah the father of Bethlehem.

5And Ashhur the father of Tekoa had two wives, Helah and Naarah. 6Naarah bore him Ahuzzam, Hepher, Temeni, and Haahashtari. These *were* the sons of Naarah. 7The sons of Helah *were* Zereth, Zohar, and Ethnan; 8and Koz begot Anub, Zobebah, and the families of Aharhel the son of Harum.

9Now Jabez was more honorable than his brothers, and his mother called his name Jabez,[a] saying, "Because I bore *him* in pain." 10And Jabez called on the God of Israel saying, "Oh, that You would bless me indeed, and enlarge my territory, that Your hand would be with me, and that You would keep *me* from evil, that I may not cause pain!" So God granted him what he requested.

11Chelub the brother of Shuhah begot Mehir, who *was* the father of Eshton. 12And Eshton begot Beth-Rapha, Paseah, and Tehinnah the father of Ir-Nahash. These *were* the men of Rechah.

13The sons of Kenaz *were* Othniel and Seraiah. The sons of Othniel *were* Hathath,[a] 14and Meonothai who begot Ophrah. Seraiah begot Joab the father of Ge Harashim,[a] for they were craftsmen. 15The sons of Caleb the son of Jephunneh *were* Iru, Elah, and Naam. The son of Elah *was* Kenaz. 16The sons of Jehallelel *were* Ziph, Ziphah, Tiria, and Asarel. 17The sons of Ezrah *were* Jether, Mered, Epher, and Jalon. And *Mered's wife*[a]*bore* Miriam, Sham-mai, and Ishbah the father of Eshtemoa. 18(His wife Jehudijah[a] bore Jered the father of Gedor, Heber the father of Sochoh, and Jekuthiel the father of Zanoah.) And these were the sons of Bithiah the daughter of Pharaoh, whom Me-red took.

[19]The sons of Hodiah's wife, the sister of Naham, *were* the fathers of Keilah the Garmite and of Eshtemoa the Maachathite. [20]And the sons of Shimon *were* Amnon, Rinnah, Ben Hanan, and Tilon. And the sons of Ishi *were* Zoheth and Ben-Zoheth.

[21]The sons of Shelah the son of Judah *were* Er the father of Lecah, Laadah the father of Mareshah, and the families of the house of the linen workers of the house of Ashbea; [22]also Jokim, the men of Chozeba, and Joash; Saraph, who ruled in Moab, and Jashubi-Lehem. Now the records are ancient. [23]These *were* the potters and those who dwell at Netaim[a] and Gederah;[b] there they dwelt with the king for his work.

**THE FAMILY OF SIMEON**

[24]The sons of Simeon *were* Nemuel, Jamin, Jarib, [a] Zerah,[b] *and* Shaul, [25]Shallum his son, Mibsam his son, and Mishma his son. [26]And the sons of Mishma *were* Hamuel his son, Zacchur his son, and Shimei his son. [27]Shimei had sixteen sons and six daughters; but his brothers did not have many children, nor did any of their families multiply as much as the children of Judah.

[28]They dwelt at Beersheba, Moladah, Hazar Shual, [29]Bilhah, Ezem, Tolad, [30]Bethuel, Hor-mah, Ziklag, [31]Beth Marcaboth, Hazar Susim, Beth Biri, and at Shaaraim. These *were* their cities until the reign of David. [32]And their villages *were* Etam, Ain, Rimmon, Tochen, and Ashan-five cities- [33]and all the villages that *were* around these cities as far as Baal.[a] These *were* their dwelling places, and they maintained their genealogy: [34]Meshobab, Jamlech, and Joshah the son of Amaziah; [35]Joel, and Jehu the son of Joshibiah, the son of Seraiah, the son of Asiel; [36]Elioenai, Jaakobah, Jesho-haiah, Asaiah, Adiel, Jesimiel, and Benaiah; [37]Ziza the son of Shiphi, the son of Allon, the son of Jedaiah, the son of Shimri, the son of Shemaiah- [38]these mentioned by name *were* leaders in their families, and their father's house increased greatly.

[39]So they went to the entrance of Gedor, as far as the east side of the valley, to seek pasture for their flocks. [40]And they found rich, good pasture, and the land *was* broad, quiet, and peaceful; for some Hamites formerly lived there.

[41]These recorded by name came in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah; and they attacked their tents and the Meunites who were found there, and utterly destroyed them, as it is to this day. So they dwelt in their place, because *there was* pasture for their flocks there. [42]Now *some* of them, five hundred men of the sons of Simeon, went to Mount Seir, having as their captains Pelatiah, Neariah, Rephaiah, and Uzziel, the sons of Ishi. [43]And they defeated the rest of the Amalekites who had escaped. They have dwelt there to this day.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Bless Me** *(4:9, 10)* Little is written about most of the people in these lists beyond their names, but Jabez is described as a man “more honorable than his brothers,” who “called on the God of Israel.” Jabez prayed that God would bless him and keep him from evil so he would not cause anyone pain. Because God honored his prayer, we see that we too can pray for God’s blessing on our lives. Our motivation should be so that we can use God’s blessing to be a blessing to others.
**Topic: Prayer**

## THE FAMILY OF REUBEN

**5** Now the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel-he *was* indeed the firstborn,
but because he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given to the sons
of Joseph, the son of Israel, so that the genealogy is not listed according to
the birthright; [2]yet Judah prevailed over his brothers, and from him *came* a
ruler, although the birthright was Joseph's- [3]the sons of Reuben the firstborn
of Israel were Ha-noch, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi.

[4]The sons of Joel *were* Shemaiah his son, Gog his son, Shimei his son,
[5]Micah his son, Reaiah his son, Baal his son, [6]and Beerah his son, whom
Tiglath-Pileser[a] king of Assyria carried into captivity. He *was* leader of the
Reubenites. [7]And his brethren by their families, when the genealogy of their
generations was registered: the chief, Jeiel, and Zechariah, [8]and Bela the son
of Azaz, the son of Shema, the son of Joel, who dwelt in Aroer, as far as
Nebo and Baal Meon. [9]Eastward they settled as far as the entrance of the
wilderness this side of the River Euphrates, because their cattle had
multiplied in the land of Gilead.

[10]Now in the days of Saul they made war with the Hagrites, who fell by
their hand; and they dwelt in their tents throughout the entire *area* east of
Gilead.

## THE FAMILY OF GAD

[11]And the children of Gad dwelt next to them in the land of Bashan as far
as Salcah: [12]Joel *was* the chief, Shapham the next, then Jaanai and Shaphat in
Bashan, [13]and their brethren of their father's house: Michael, Meshullam,
Sheba, Jorai, Jachan, Zia, and Eber-seven *in all*. [14]These *were* the children of
Abihail the son of Huri, the son of Jaroah, the son of Gil-ead, the son of
Michael, the son of Jeshishai, the son of Jahdo, the son of Buz; [15]Ahi the son
of Abdiel, the son of Guni, *was* chief of their father's house. [16]And *the*
*Gadites* dwelt in Gil-ead, in Bashan and in its villages, and in all the
common-lands of Sharon within their borders. [17]All these were registered by
genealogies in the days of Jotham king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam
king of Israel.

18 The sons of Reuben, the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh *had*
forty-four thousand seven hundred and sixty valiant men, men able to bear
shield and sword, to shoot with the bow, and skillful in war, who went to war.
19 They made war with the Hagrites, Jetur, Na-phish, and Nodab. 20 And they
were helped against them, and the Hagrites were delivered into their hand,
and all who *were* with them, for they cried out to God in the battle. He
heeded their prayer, because they put their trust in Him. 21 Then they took
away their livestock-fifty thousand of their camels, two hundred and fifty
thousand of their sheep, and two thousand of their donkeys-also one hundred
thousand of their men; 22 for many fell dead, because the war *was* God's. And
they dwelt in their place until the captivity.

**THE FAMILY OF MANASSEH (EAST)**

23 So the children of the half-tribe of Manas-seh dwelt in the land. Their
*numbers* increased from Bashan to Baal Hermon, that is, to Senir, or Mount
Hermon. 24 These *were* the heads of their fathers' houses: Epher, Ishi, Eli-el,
Azriel, Jeremiah, Hodaviah, and Jahdiel. They were mighty men of valor,
famous men, *and* heads of their fathers' houses.

25 And they were unfaithful to the God of their fathers, and played the
harlot after the gods of the peoples of the land, whom God had destroyed
before them. 26 So the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul king of
Assyria, that is, Tiglath-Pileser[a] king of Assyria. He carried the Reubenites,
the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh into captivity. He took them to
Halah, Habor, Hara, and the river of Gozan to this day.

## THE FAMILY OF LEVI

**6** The sons of Levi *were* Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. [2]The sons of Kohath
*were* Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel. [3]The children of Amram *were*
Aaron, Moses, and Miriam. And the sons of Aaron *were* Nadab, Abihu,
Eleazar, and Ithamar. [4]Eleazar begot Phinehas, *and* Phinehas begot Abishua;
[5]Abishua begot Bukki, and Bukki begot Uzzi; [6]Uzzi begot Zerahiah, and
Zerahiah begot Me-raioth; [7]Meraioth begot Amariah, and Ama-riah begot
Ahitub; [8]Ahitub begot Zadok, and Zadok begot Ahimaaz; [9]Ahimaaz begot
Aza-riah, and Azariah begot Johanan; [10]Johanan begot Azariah (it was he
who ministered as priest in the temple that Solomon built in Je-rusalem);
[11]Azariah begot Amariah, and Ama-riah begot Ahitub; [12]Ahitub begot
Zadok, and Zadok begot Shallum; [13]Shallum begot Hil-kiah, and Hilkiah
begot Azariah; [14]Azariah begot Seraiah, and Seraiah begot Jehozadak.
[15]Jehozadak went *into captivity* when the LORD carried Judah and Jerusalem
into captivity by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar.

[16]The sons of Levi *were* Gershon,[a]Kohath, and Merari. [17]These are the
names of the sons of Gershon: Libni and Shimei. [18]The sons of Kohath *were*
Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzzi-el. [19]The sons of Merari *were* Mahli and
Mu-shi. Now these *are* the families of the Levites according to their fathers:
[20]Of Gershon *were* Libni his son, Jahath his son, Zimmah his son, [21]Joah his
son, Iddo his son, Zerah his son, *and* Jeatherai his son. [22]The sons of Kohath
*were* Amminadab his son, Korah his son, Assir his son, [23]Elkanah his son,
Ebiasaph his son, Assir his son, [24]Tahath his son, Uriel his son, Uzziah his
son, and Shaul his son. [25]The sons of Elkanah *were* Amasai and Ahimoth.
[26]*As for* Elkanah,[a] the sons of Elkanah *were* Zophai[b] his son, Nahath[c] his son,
[27]Eliab[a] his son, Je-roham his son, *and* Elkanah his son. [28]The sons of
Samuel *were Joel*[a] the firstborn, and Abijah the second.[b] [29]The sons of
Merari *were* Mahli, Libni his son, Shimei his son, Uzzah his son, [30]Shimea
his son, Haggiah his son, *and* Asaiah his son.

## MUSICIANS IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD

[31]Now these are the men whom David appointed over the service of song

in the house of the LORD, after the ark came to rest. [32]They were ministering with music before the dwelling place of the tabernacle of meeting, until Solomon had built the house of the LORD in Jerusalem, and they served in their office according to their order.

[33]And these *are* the ones who ministered with their sons: Of the sons of the Kohathites *were* Heman the singer, the son of Joel, the son of Samuel, [34]the son of Elkanah, the son of Jeroham, the son of Eliel,[a] the son of Toah,[b] [35]the son of Zuph, the son of Elkanah, the son of Mahath, the son of Amasai, [36]the son of El-kanah, the son of Joel, the son of Azariah, the son of Zephaniah, [37]the son of Tahath, the son of Assir, the son of Ebiasaph, the son of Korah, [38]the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, the son of Israel. [39]And his brother Asaph, who stood at his right hand, *was* Asaph the son of Berachiah, the son of Shimea, [40]the son of Michael, the son of Baaseiah, the son of Malchijah, [41]the son of Ethni, the son of Zerah, the son of Adaiah, [42]the son of Ethan, the son of Zimmah, the son of Shimei, [43]the son of Jahath, the son of Gershon, the son of Levi.

[44]Their brethren, the sons of Merari, on the left hand, *were* Ethan the son of Kishi, the son of Abdi, the son of Malluch, [45]the son of Hash-abiah, the son of Amaziah, the son of Hilkiah, [46]the son of Amzi, the son of Bani, the son of Shamer, [47]the son of Mahli, the son of Mushi, the son of Merari, the son of Levi.

[48]And their brethren, the Levites, *were* appointed to every kind of service of the tabernacle of the house of God.

**THE FAMILY OF AARON**

[49]But Aaron and his sons offered sacrifices on the altar of burnt offering and on the altar of incense, for all the work of the Most Holy *Place*, and to make atonement for Israel, according to all that Moses the servant of God had commanded. [50]Now these *are* the sons of Aaron: Eleazar his son, Phinehas his son, Abishua his son, [51]Bukki his son, Uzzi his son, Zerahiah his son, [52]Meraioth his son, Amariah his son, Ahitub his son, [53]Zadok his son, *and* Ahimaaz his son.

## DWELLING PLACES OF THE LEVITES

54 Now these *are* their dwelling places throughout their settlements in their
territory, for they were *given* by lot to the sons of Aaron, of the family of the
Kohathites: 55 They gave them Hebron in the land of Judah, with its
surrounding common-lands. 56 But the fields of the city and its villages they
gave to Caleb the son of Jephunneh. 57 And to the sons of Aaron they gave
*one of* the cities of refuge, Hebron; also Libnah with its common-lands, Jattir,
Eshtemoa with its common-lands, 58 Hilen[a] with its common-lands, Debir
with its common-lands, 59 Ashan[a] with its common-lands, and Beth Shemesh
with its common-lands. 60 And from the tribe of Benjamin: Geba with its
common-lands, Alemeth[a] with its common-lands, and Anathoth with its
common-lands. All their cities among their families *were* thirteen.

61 To the rest of the family of the tribe of the Kohathites *they gave* by lot
ten cities from half the tribe of Manasseh. 62 And to the sons of Gershon,
throughout their families, *they gave* thirteen cities from the tribe of Issachar,
from the tribe of Asher, from the tribe of Naphtali, and from the tribe of
Manasseh in Bashan. 63 To the sons of Merari, throughout their families, *they
gave* twelve cities from the tribe of Reuben, from the tribe of Gad, and from
the tribe of Zebulun. 64 So the children of Israel gave *these* cities with their
common-lands to the Levites. 65 And they gave by lot from the tribe of the
children of Judah, from the tribe of the children of Simeon, and from the tribe
of the children of Benjamin these cities which are called by *their* names.

66 Now some of the families of the sons of Kohath *were given* cities as their
territory from the tribe of Ephraim. 67 And they gave them *one of* the cities of
refuge, Shechem with its common-lands, in the mountains of Ephraim, also
Gezer with its common-lands, 68 Jok-meam with its common-lands, Beth
Horon with its common-lands, 69 Aijalon with its common-lands, and Gath
Rimmon with its common-lands. 70 And from the half-tribe of Manasseh:
Aner with its common-lands and Bileam with its common-lands, for the rest
of the family of the sons of Kohath.

71 From the family of the half-tribe of Manas-seh the sons of Gershon *were
given* Golan in Bashan with its common-lands and Ashtaroth with its
common-lands. 72 And from the tribe of Issachar: Kedesh with its common-

lands, Daberath with its common-lands, [73]Ramoth with its common-lands, and Anem with its common-lands. [74]And from the tribe of Asher: Mashal with its common-lands, Abdon with its common-lands, [75]Hukok with its common-lands, and Rehob with its common-lands. [76]And from the tribe of Naphtali: Kedesh in Galilee with its common-lands, Hammon with its common-lands, and Kirjathaim with its common-lands.

[77]From the tribe of Zebulun the rest of the children of Merari *were given* Rimmon[a] with its common-lands and Tabor with its common-lands. [78]And on the other side of the Jordan, across from Jericho, on the east side of the Jordan, *they were given* from the tribe of Reuben: Bezer in the wilderness with its common-lands, Jahzah with its common-lands, [79]Kede-moth with its common-lands, and Mephaath with its common-lands. [80]And from the tribe of Gad: Ramoth in Gilead with its common-lands, Mahanaim with its common-lands, [81]Heshbon with its common-lands, and Jazer with its common-lands.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Sing Along** *(6:31)* David selected a number of people to minister at the tabernacle with music and singing. Their job was to lead the people in worship. David was a writer of many of the psalms and a singer of songs of praise to the Lord. It is only fitting that he would institute music as a major part of worship. Today, the ministry of praise and worship in our churches owes much of its origin to David. As we sing hymns and choruses in church, we join a choir across the centuries that has praised God in song. **Topic: Praise and Worship**

## THE FAMILY OF ISSACHAR

7 The sons of Issachar *were* Tola, Puah,[a] Ja-shub, and Shimron-four *in all.*
2 The sons of Tola *were* Uzzi, Rephaiah, Jeriel, Jahmai, Jibsam, and
Shemuel, heads of their father's house. *The sons* of Tola *were* mighty men of
valor in their generations; their number in the days of David *was* twenty-two
thousand six hundred. 3 The son of Uzzi *was* Izrahiah, and the sons of
Izrahiah *were* Michael, Obadiah, Joel, and Ishiah. All five of them *were* chief
men. 4 And with them, by their generations, according to their fathers' houses,
*were* thirty-six thousand troops ready for war; for they had many wives and
sons.

5 Now their brethren among all the families of Issachar *were* mighty men of
valor, listed by their genealogies, eighty-seven thousand in all.

## THE FAMILY OF BENJAMIN

6 *The sons* of Benjamin *were* Bela, Becher, and Jediael-three *in all.* 7 The
sons of Bela were Ezbon, Uzzi, Uzziel, Jerimoth, and Iri-five *in all.* They
*were* heads of *their* fathers' houses, and they were listed by their genealogies,
twenty-two thousand and thirty-four mighty men of valor.

8 The sons of Becher *were* Zemirah, Joash, Eliezer, Elioenai, Omri,
Jerimoth, Abijah, Ana-thoth, and Alemeth. All these *are* the sons of Becher.
9 And they were recorded by genealogy according to their generations, heads
of their fathers' houses, twenty thousand two hundred mighty men of valor.
10 The son of Jediael *was* Bilhan, and the sons of Bilhan *were* Jeush,
Benjamin, Ehud, Chenaanah, Zethan, Tharsh-ish, and Ahishahar.

11 All these sons of Jediael *were* heads of their fathers' houses; *there were*
seventeen thousand two hundred mighty men of valor fit to go out for war
*and* battle. 12 Shuppim and Huppim[a] *were* the sons of Ir, *and* Hushim *was* the
son of Aher.

## THE FAMILY OF NAPHTALI

13 The sons of Naphtali *were* Jahziel,[a] Guni, Jezer, and Shallum,[b] the sons
of Bilhah.

## THE FAMILY OF MANASSEH (WEST)

14 The descendants of Manasseh: his Syrian concubine bore him Machir the
father of Gil-ead, the father of Asriel.[a] 15 Machir took as his wife *the sister* of
Huppim and Shuppim,[a] whose name *was* Maachah. The name of *Gilead's*
grandson[b] *was* Zelophehad,[c] but Ze-lophehad begot only daughters.
16 (Maachah the wife of Machir bore a son, and she called his name Peresh.
The name of his brother *was* Sheresh, and his sons *were* Ulam and Rakem.
17 The son of Ulam *was* Bedan.) These *were* the descendants of Gilead the son
of Machir, the son of Manasseh.

18 His sister Hammoleketh bore Ishhod, Abi-ezer, and Mahlah.

19 And the sons of Shemida were Ahian, She-chem, Likhi, and Aniam.

## THE FAMILY OF EPHRAIM

20 The sons of Ephraim *were* Shuthelah, Be-red his son, Tahath his son,
Eladah his son, Ta-hath his son, 21 Zabad his son, Shuthelah his son, and Ezer
and Elead. The men of Gath who were born in *that* land killed *them* because
they came down to take away their cattle. 22 Then Ephraim their father
mourned many days, and his brethren came to comfort him.

23 And when he went in to his wife, she conceived and bore a son; and he
called his name Beriah,[a] because tragedy had come upon his house. 24 Now
his daughter *was* Sheerah, who built Lower and Upper Beth Horon and
Uzzen Sheerah; 25 and Rephah *was* his son, *as well* as Resheph, and Telah his
son, Tahan his son, 26 Laadan his son, Ammihud his son, Elishama his son,
27 Nun[a] his son, and Joshua his son.

28 Now their possessions and dwelling places *were* Bethel and its towns: to
the east Naaran, to the west Gezer and its towns, and Shechem and its towns,
as far as Ayyah[a] and its towns; 29 and by the borders of the children of
Manasseh *were* Beth Shean and its towns, Taanach and its towns, Megiddo
and its towns, Dor and its towns. In these dwelt the children of Joseph, the
son of Israel.

## THE FAMILY OF ASHER

30 The sons of Asher *were* Imnah, Ishvah, Ishvi, Beriah, and their sister
Serah. 31 The sons of Beriah *were* Heber and Malchiel, who was the father of
Birzaith.[a] 32 And Heber begot Japhlet, Shomer,[a] Hotham,[b] and their sister
Shua. 33 The sons of Japhlet *were* Pasach, Bim-hal, and Ashvath. These *were*
the children of Japhlet. 34 The sons of Shemer *were* Ahi, Roh-gah, Jehubbah,
and Aram. 35 And the sons of his brother Helem *were* Zophah, Imna, She-
lesh, and Amal. 36 The sons of Zophah *were* Suah, Harnepher, Shual, Beri,
Imrah, 37 Bezer, Hod, Shamma, Shilshah, Jithran,[a] and Beera. 38 The sons of
Jether *were* Jephunneh, Pispah, and Ara. 39 The sons of Ulla *were* Arah,
Haniel, and Rizia.

40 All these *were* the children of Asher, heads of *their* fathers' houses,
choice men, mighty men of valor, chief leaders. And they were recorded by
genealogies among the army fit for battle; their number *was* twenty-six
thousand.

## THE FAMILY TREE OF KING SAUL OF BENJAMIN

**8** Now Benjamin begot Bela his firstborn, Ashbel the second, Aharah[a]the
third, [2]Nohah the fourth, and Rapha the fifth. [3]The sons of Bela *were*
Addar,[a] Gera, Abihud, [4]Abishua, Naaman, Ahoah, [5]Gera, Shephu-phan, and
Huram.

[6]These *are* the sons of Ehud, who were the heads of the fathers' *houses* of
the inhabitants of Geba, and who forced them to move to Man-ahath:
[7]Naaman, Ahijah, and Gera who forced them to move. He begot Uzza and
Ahihud.

[8]Also Shaharaim had children in the country of Moab, after he had sent
away Hushim and Baara his wives. [9]By Hodesh his wife he begot Jobab,
Zibia, Mesha, Malcam, [10]Jeuz, Sachiah, and Mirmah. These *were* his sons,
heads of their fathers' *houses.*

[11]And by Hushim he begot Abitub and Elpa-al. [12]The sons of Elpaal *were*
Eber, Misham, and Shemed, who built Ono and Lod with its towns; [13]and
Beriah and Shema, who *were* heads of their fathers' *houses* of the inhabitants
of Aijalon, who drove out the inhabitants of Gath. [14]Ahio, Shashak,
Jeremoth, [15]Zebadiah, Arad, Eder, [16]Michael, Ispah, and Joha *were* the sons
of Beriah. [17]Zebadiah, Me-shullam, Hizki, Heber, [18]Ishmerai, Jizliah, and
Jobab *were* the sons of Elpaal. [19]Jakim, Zichri, Zabdi, [20]Elienai, Zillethai,
Eliel, [21]Adaiah, Ber-aiah, and Shimrath *were* the sons of Shimei. [22]Ishpan,
Eber, Eliel, [23]Abdon, Zichri, Hanan, [24]Hananiah, Elam, Antothijah,
[25]Iphdeiah, and Penuel *were* the sons of Shashak. [26]Sham-sherai, Shehariah,
Athaliah, [27]Jaareshiah, Elijah, and Zichri *were* the sons of Jeroham.

[28]These *were* heads of the fathers' *houses* by their generations, chief men.
These dwelt in Jerusalem.

[29]Now the father of Gibeon, whose wife's name *was* Maacah, dwelt at
Gibeon. [30]And his firstborn son *was* Abdon, then Zur, Kish, Baal, Nadab,
[31]Gedor, Ahio, Zecher, [32]and Mikloth, *who* begot Shimeah.[a]They also dwelt
alongside their relatives in Jerusalem, with their brethren. [33]Ner[a] begot Kish,
Kish begot Saul, and Saul begot Jonathan, Malchishua, Abinadab,[b]and Esh-

Baal.[c][34]The son of Jonathan *was* Merib-Baal,[a]and Merib-Baal begot Micah. [35]The sons of Micah *were* Pithon, Me-lech, Tarea, and Ahaz. [36]And Ahaz begot Jehoaddah;[a]Jehoaddah begot Alemeth, Az-maveth, and Zimri; and Zimri begot Moza. [37]Moza begot Binea, Raphah[a] his son, Eleasah his son, *and* Azel his son.

[38]Azel had six sons whose names *were* these: Azrikam, Bocheru, Ishmael, Sheariah, Obadiah, and Hanan. All these *were* the sons of Azel. [39]And the sons of Eshek his brother *were* Ulam his firstborn, Jeush the second, and Eliphelet the third.

[40]The sons of Ulam were mighty men of valor-archers. *They* had many sons and grandsons, one hundred and fifty *in all.* These *were* all sons of Benjamin.

**9** So all Israel was recorded by genealogies, and indeed, they *were* inscribed in the book of the kings of Israel. But Judah was carried away captive to Babylon because of their unfaithfulness. 2And the first inhabitants who *dwelt* in their possessions in their cities *were* Israelites, priests, Levites, and the Nethinim.

**DWELLERS IN JERUSALEM**

3Now in Jerusalem the children of Judah dwelt, and some of the children of Benjamin, and of the children of Ephraim and Manasseh: 4Uthai the son of Ammihud, the son of Omri, the son of Imri, the son of Bani, of the descendants of Perez, the son of Judah. 5Of the Shilo-nites: Asaiah the firstborn and his sons. 6Of the sons of Zerah: Jeuel, and their brethren-six hundred and ninety. 7Of the sons of Benja-min: Sallu the son of Meshullam, the son of Hodaviah, the son of Hassenuah; 8Ibneiah the son of Jeroham; Elah the son of Uzzi, the son of Michri; Meshullam the son of Shephatiah, the son of Reuel, the son of Ibnijah; 9and their brethren, according to their generations-nine hundred and fifty-six. All these men *were* heads of a father's *house* in their fathers' houses.

**THE PRIESTS AT JERUSALEM**

10Of the priests: Jedaiah, Jehoiarib, and Jachin; 11Azariah the son of Hilkiah, the son of Meshullam, the son of Zadok, the son of Meraioth, the son of Ahitub, the officer over the house of God; 12Adaiah the son of Jero-ham, the son of Pashur, the son of Malchijah; Maasai the son of Adiel, the son of Jahzerah, the son of Meshullam, the son of Meshille-mith, the son of Immer; 13and their brethren, heads of their fathers' *houses*-one thousand seven hundred and sixty. *They were* very able men for the work of the service of the house of God.

**THE LEVITES AT JERUSALEM**

14Of the Levites: Shemaiah the son of Has-shub, the son of Azrikam, the son of Hasha-biah, of the sons of Merari; 15Bakbakkar, Heresh, Galal, and Mattaniah the son of Micah, the son of Zichri, the son of Asaph; 16Obadiah the son of Shemaiah, the son of Galal, the son of Jeduthun; and Berechiah the

son of Asa, the son of Elkanah, who lived in the villages of the Netophathites.

## THE LEVITE GATEKEEPERS

17 And the gatekeepers *were* Shallum, Ak-kub, Talmon, Ahiman, and their
brethren. Shallum *was* the chief. 18 Until then *they had been* gatekeepers for
the camps of the children of Levi at the King's Gate on the east.

19 Shallum the son of Kore, the son of Ebia-saph, the son of Korah, and his
brethren, from his father's house, the Korahites, *were* in charge of the work
of the service, gatekeepers of the tabernacle. Their fathers had been keepers
of the entrance to the camp of the LORD. 20 And Phinehas the son of Eleazar
had been the officer over them in time past; the LORD *was* with him.
21 Zechariah the son of Meshele-miah *was* keeper of the door of the tabernacle
of meeting.

22 All those chosen as gatekeepers *were* two hundred and twelve. They
were recorded by their genealogy, in their villages. David and Samuel the
seer had appointed them to their trusted office. 23 So they and their children
*were* in charge of the gates of the house of the LORD, the house of the
tabernacle, by assignment. 24 The gatekeepers were assigned to the four
directions: the east, west, north, and south. 25 And their brethren in their
villages *had* to come with them from time to time for seven days. 26 For in
this trusted office *were* four chief gatekeepers; they were Levites. And they
had charge over the chambers and treasuries of the house of God. 27 And they
lodged *all* around the house of God because they *had* the responsibility, and
they *were* in charge of opening *it* every morning.

## OTHER LEVITE RESPONSIBILITIES

28 Now *some* of them were in charge of the serving vessels, for they
brought them in and took them out by count. 29 *Some* of them *were* appointed
over the furnishings and over all the implements of the sanctuary, and over
the fine flour and the wine and the oil and the incense and the spices. 30 And
*some* of the sons of the priests made the ointment of the spices.

31 Mattithiah of the Levites, the firstborn of Shallum the Korahite, had the
trusted office over the things that were baked in the pans. 32 And some of their

brethren of the sons of the Kohathites *were* in charge of preparing the showbread for every Sabbath.

[33]These are the singers, heads of the fathers' *houses* of the Levites, *who lodged* in the chambers, *and were* free *from other duties;* for they were employed in *that* work day and night. [34]These heads of the fathers' *houses* of the Le-vites *were* heads throughout their generations. They dwelt at Jerusalem.

**THE FAMILY OF KING SAUL**

[35]Jeiel the father of Gibeon, whose wife's name *was* Maacah, dwelt at Gibeon. [36]His firstborn son *was* Abdon, then Zur, Kish, Baal, Ner, Nadab, [37]Gedor, Ahio, Zechariah,[a] and Mikloth. [38]And Mikloth begot Shimeam.[a] They also dwelt alongside their relatives in Jerusalem, with their brethren. [39]Ner begot Kish, Kish begot Saul, and Saul begot Jonathan, Malchishua, Abinadab, and Esh-Baal. [40]The son of Jonathan *was* Merib-Baal, and Merib-Baal begot Micah. [41]The sons of Micah *were* Pithon, Melech, Tahrea,[a] and Ahaz.[b] [42]And Ahaz begot Jarah;[a] Jarah begot Ale-meth, Azmaveth, and Zimri; and Zimri begot Moza; [43]Moza begot Binea, Rephaiah[a] his son, Eleasah his son, and Azel his son.

[44]And Azel had six sons whose names *were* these: Azrikam, Bocheru, Ishmael, Sheariah, Obadiah, and Hanan; these *were* the sons of Azel.

## TRAGIC END OF SAUL AND HIS SONS

**10** Now the Philistines fought against Israel; and the men of Israel fled from
before the Philistines, and fell slain on Mount Gilboa. 2Then the
Philistines followed hard after Saul and his sons. And the Philistines killed
Jonathan, Abinadab, and Malchishua, Saul's sons. 3The battle became fierce
against Saul. The archers hit him, and he was wounded by the archers. 4Then
Saul said to his armorbearer, "Draw your sword, and thrust me through with
it, lest these uncircumcised men come and abuse me." But his armor-bearer
would not, for he was greatly afraid. Therefore Saul took a sword and fell on
it. 5And when his armorbearer saw that Saul was dead, he also fell on his
sword and died. 6So Saul and his three sons died, and all his house died
together. 7And when all the men of Israel who *were* in the valley saw that
they had fled and that Saul and his sons were dead, they forsook their cities
and fled; then the Philistines came and dwelt in them.

8So it happened the next day, when the Philistines came to strip the slain,
that they found Saul and his sons fallen on Mount Gilboa. 9And they stripped
him and took his head and his armor, and sent word *throughout* the land of
the Philistines to proclaim the news *in the temple* of their idols and among the
people. 10Then they put his armor in the temple of their gods, and fastened
his head in the temple of Dagon.

11And when all Jabesh Gilead heard all that the Philistines had done to
Saul, 12all the valiant men arose and took the body of Saul and the bodies of
his sons; and they brought them to Jabesh, and buried their bones under the
tamarisk tree at Jabesh, and fasted seven days.

13So Saul died for his unfaithfulness which he had committed against the
LORD, because he did not keep the word of the LORD, and also because he
consulted a medium for guidance. 14But *he* did not inquire of the LORD;
therefore He killed him, and turned the kingdom over to David the son of
Jesse.

## SOUL NOTE

**Unwilling to Trust** *(10:4)* Saul had been defeated in his battle against the Philistines. Having been wounded by the archers, he asked his armorbearer to kill him so that his enemies would not be able to capture him alive. When the armorbearer refused, Saul took his own life. The choice to end one's life is always a desperate one and reflects an unwillingness to trust God with life today and in the future. Saul had spent years failing to obey God. His self-destructive end came as a result of a series of self-destructive choices that he had made throughout his life. **Topic: Suicide**

## DAVID MADE KING OVER ALL ISRAEL

**11** Then all Israel came together to David at Hebron, saying, “Indeed we
*are* your bone and your flesh. 2 Also, in time past, even when Saul was
king, you *were* the one who led Israel out and brought them in; and the LORD
your God said to you, ‘You shall shepherd My people Israel, and be ruler
over My people Israel.’ ” 3 Therefore all the elders of Israel came to the king
at Hebron, and David made a covenant with them at Hebron before the LORD.
And they anointed David king over Israel, according to the word of the LORD
by Samuel.

## THE CITY OF DAVID

4 And David and all Israel went to Jerusalem, which is Jebus, where the
Jebusites *were,* the inhabitants of the land. 5 But the inhabitants of Jebus said
to David, “You shall not come in here!” Nevertheless David took the
stronghold of Zion (that is, the City of David). 6 Now David said, “Whoever
attacks the Jebu-sites first shall be chief and captain.” And Joab the son of
Zeruiah went up first, and became chief. 7 Then David dwelt in the
stronghold; therefore they called it the City of David. 8 And he built the city
around it, from the Millo[a] to the surrounding area. Joab repaired the rest of
the city. 9 So David went on and became great, and the LORD of hosts *was*
with him.

## THE MIGHTY MEN OF DAVID

10 Now these *were* the heads of the mighty men whom David had, who
strengthened themselves with him in his kingdom, with all Israel, to make
him king, according to the word of the LORD concerning Israel.

11 And this *is* the number of the mighty men whom David had: Jashobeam
the son of a Hachmonite, chief of the captains;[a] he had lifted up his spear
against three hundred, killed *by him* at one time.

12 After him *was* Eleazar the son of Dodo, the Ahohite, who *was one* of the
three mighty men. 13 He was with David at Pasdammim. Now there the
Philistines were gathered for battle, and there was a piece of ground full of

barley. So the people fled from the Philistines. [14]But they stationed themselves in the middle of *that* field, defended it, and killed the Philistines. So the LORD brought about a great victory.

[15]Now three of the thirty chief men went down to the rock to David, into the cave of Adullam; and the army of the Philistines encamped in the Valley of Rephaim. [16]David *was* then in the stronghold, and the garrison of the Philistines *was* then in Bethlehem. [17]And David said with longing, "Oh, that someone would give me a drink of water from the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!" [18]So the three broke through the camp of the Philistines, drew water from the well of Bethlehem that *was* by the gate, and took *it* and brought *it* to David. Nevertheless David would not drink it, but poured it out to the LORD. [19]And he said, "Far be it from me, O my God, that I should do this! Shall I drink the blood of these men *who have put* their lives *in jeopardy?* For at the risk of their lives they brought it." Therefore he would not drink it. These things were done by the three mighty men.

[20]Abishai the brother of Joab was chief of *another* three.[a] He had lifted up his spear against three hundred *men,* killed *them,* and won a name among *these* three. [21]Of the three he was more honored than the other two men. Therefore he became their captain. However he did not attain to the *first* three.

[22]Benaiah was the son of Jehoiada, the son of a valiant man from Kabzeel, who had done many deeds. He had killed two lion-like heroes of Moab. He also had gone down and killed a lion in the midst of a pit on a snowy day. [23]And he killed an Egyptian, a man of *great* height, five cubits tall. In the Egyptian's hand *there was* a spear like a weaver's beam; and he went down to him with a staff, wrested the spear out of the Egyptian's hand, and killed him with his own spear. [24]These *things* Benaiah the son of Jehoiada did, and won a name among three mighty men. [25]Indeed he was more honored than the thirty, but he did not attain to the *first* three. And David appointed him over his guard.

[26]Also the mighty warriors *were* Asahel the brother of Joab, Elhanan the son of Dodo of Bethlehem, [27]Shammoth the Harorite,[a] Helez the Pelonite,[b] [28]Ira the son of Ikkesh the Te-koite, Abiezer the Anathothite, [29]Sibbechai the

Hushathite, Ilai the Ahohite, [30]Maharai the Netophathite, Heled[a] the son of Baanah the Netophathite, [31]Ithai[a] the son of Ribai of Gib-eah, of the sons of Benjamin, Benaiah the Pir-athonite, [32]Hurai[a] of the brooks of Gaash, Abiel[b] the Arbathite, [33]Azmaveth the Baharu-mite, [a] Eliahba the Shaalbonite, [34]the sons of Hashem the Gizonite, Jonathan the son of Shageh the Hararite, [35]Ahiam the son of Sacar the Hararite, Eliphal the son of Ur, [36]Hepher the Mecherathite, Ahijah the Pelonite, [37]Hez-ro the Carmelite, Naarai the son of Ezbai, [38]Joel the brother of Nathan, Mibhar the son of Hagri, [39]Zelek the Ammonite, Naharai the Berothite[a] (the armorbearer of Joab the son of Zeruiah), [40]Ira the Ithrite, Gareb the Ith-rite, [41]Uriah the Hittite, Zabad the son of Ah-lai, [42]Adina the son of Shiza the Reubenite (a chief of the Reubenites) and thirty with him, [43]Hanan the son of Maachah, Joshaphat the Mithnite, [44]Uzzia the Ashterathite, Shama and Jeiel the sons of Hotham the Aroerite, [45]Jediael the son of Shimri, and Joha his brother, the Tizite, [46]Eliel the Mahavite, Jeri-bai and Joshaviah the sons of Elnaam, Ithmah the Moabite, [47]Eliel, Obed, and Jaasiel the Me-zobaite.

**VIOLENCE**

# LESLIE VERNICK

## (1 Chronicles 11:23)

**M**urders, muggings, rapes, riots-daily we are assaulted with reports of hideous crimes perpetrated upon innocent victims. But violence isn't new. As early as Genesis, the Bible tells us that the "earth was filled with violence" (Gen. 6:11). The Old Testament reveals humankind's tendency to resort to violence as a means of gaining control, taking

revenge, fighting back, or asserting authority. The reasons for violence in the Bible are the same reasons people use it today.

Violence is evil and God hates those who love it (Ps. 11:5). He warns believers not to envy people of violence or choose any of their behaviors (Prov. 3:31). A Christian's life is to be characterized by love, kindness, humility, gentleness, and forgiveness-not selfishness, anger and violence (Col. 3:1-17).

Christians are not immune to the devastating effects of violence or the temptation to use it, however. Many have been victims, not only perpetrated by strangers, but by the very people they live with and love. Behind the closed doors of many homes a secret kind of violence lurks, leaving tragic scars on its victims and causing lifelong consequences. People in such cases have suffered silently from relentless verbal cruelty, or physical and sometimes sexual abuse.

God cares deeply for the victims of violence. Throughout the psalms, David cries out for deliverance from the hand of the oppressor. God has a tender heart toward those who have been victimized by cruelty and violence (Ps. 5; 7; 10; 140). They can take comfort in the fact that a decisive judgment awaits those who oppress and hurt others (Rom. 12:19).

How are Christians to respond to violence when they face it? Should they resist when someone is violent toward them? The apostle Paul wrote that in his own life, he *did* fight back against violence. Instead of fists, guns, knives, or ugly words however, he used the weapons of righteousness (2 Cor. 6:3-10). Believers are in a war -a war of good versus evil, but they are not to fight a war like the world does (2 Cor. 10:3, 4). They can win this war against evil by overcoming evil with good. *Overcome* is a fighting word. How do they win over evil with good? And what does this kind of good look like?

1. *It is good to protect ourselves from violent people.*

Proverbs 27:12 says “a prudent man foresees evil and hides himself.” The angel of the Lord warned Joseph to take the baby Jesus and escape to Egypt because Herod was plotting to kill Him. The apostle Paul escaped from those who sought to stone him. Believers should do what they can to remove themselves from violent or potentially violent situations.

2. *It is good to expose deeds done in darkness.*

Ephesians 5:11 says that believers are to “have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.” A woman was sexually assaulted by a male nurse after her surgery. Eventually she mustered up the courage to tell someone and expose the violence done to her. Her speaking up brought about changes in the way patients were handled after surgery, and hospital employees were more rigorously screened. Evil attacked this woman, but she exposed it to keep it from harming others, and thus overcame it.

3. *It is good to speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:25).*

One woman’s husband attacked her with violent, ugly words. She was afraid to confront him. Although her fears were legitimate, the only pathway to overcome this evil in her marriage was to speak the truth that his behavior was sinful, hurtful, and not a legitimate form of headship in the home. By speaking the truth from a loving heart, she demonstrated to her husband that she wasn’t attacking him but, instead, was genuinely concerned for their relationship and his own spiritual well-being. She overcame evil with good.

4. *It is good to allow violent people to experience the consequences of their actions (Prov. 19:19).*

One of life’s great teachers is consequences. When someone is sinned against by a violent person, it is not wrong to use the legal means of protection and justice that God provides. It is entirely legitimate to call the police, press charges, and separate oneself so that the violent person learns that this kind of behavior is unacceptable.

5. *It is good to be gracious to an enemy (Rom. 12:20).*

The last thing that people feel like doing is to be gracious to someone who has hurt them. Yet God speaks of kindness as a means of shaming an enemy. Joseph was kind and gracious to his brothers in spite of their cruelty toward him. Being kind and gracious doesn't mean to ignore the wrong or pretend it didn't happen. It means that the sin doesn't define the one sinned against. It doesn't shape them or make them into something evil. It was by Joseph's response to violence, injustice, deceit, and treachery that good won out. He reminded his brothers, "You meant evil against me; but God meant it for good" (Gen. 50:20).

God gives His people the weapons of righteousness to fight against evil and violence. These weapons may seem feeble to a spiritually untrained eye, but Paul says that they are "mighty in God" (2 Cor. 10:4). So let's "take up the whole armor of God" (Eph. 6:13) so that we can stand firm and fight the fight against evil and violence in our homes and communities.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of violence include:

- Proverbs 13:2
- Isaiah 53:5
- Matthew 5:38-48
- Ephesians 4:26-32
- 1 Peter 4:15

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on violence at Psalm 11:5. See also the personality profile of Naboth and Ahab Naboth: In the Path of an Evil King.

## THE GROWTH OF DAVID'S ARMY

**12** Now these *were* the men who came to David at Ziklag while he was still
a fugitive from Saul the son of Kish; and they *were* among the mighty
men, helpers in the war, 2armed with bows, using both the right hand and the
left in *hurling* stones and *shooting* arrows with the bow. *They were* of
Benjamin, Saul's brethren.

3The chief *was* Ahiezer, then Joash, the sons of Shemaah the Gibeathite;
Jeziel and Pelet the sons of Azmaveth; Berachah, and Jehu the Anathothite;
4Ishmaiah the Gibeon-ite, a mighty man among the thirty, and over the thirty;
Jeremiah, Jahaziel, Johanan, and Jozabad the Gederathite; 5Eluzai, Jerimoth,
Bealiah, Shemariah, and Shephatiah the Haru-phite; 6Elkanah, Jisshiah,
Azarel, Joezer, and Jashobeam, the Korahites; 7and Joelah and Zebadiah the
sons of Jeroham of Gedor.

8*Some* Gadites joined David at the stronghold in the wilderness, mighty
men of valor, men trained for battle, who could handle shield and spear,
whose faces *were like* the faces of lions, and *were* as swift as gazelles on the
mountains: 9Ezer the first, Obadiah the second, Eliab the third,
10Mishmannah the fourth, Jeremiah the fifth, 11Attai the sixth, Eliel the
seventh, 12Johanan the eighth, El-zabad the ninth, 13Jeremiah the tenth, and
Machbanai the eleventh. 14These *were* from the sons of Gad, captains of the
army; the least was over a hundred, and the greatest was over a thousand.
15These *are* the ones who crossed the Jordan in the first month, when it had
overflowed all its banks; and they put to flight all *those* in the valleys, to the
east and to the west.

16Then some of the sons of Benjamin and Judah came to David at the
stronghold. 17And David went out to meet them, and answered and said to
them, "If you have come peaceably to me to help me, my heart will be united
with you; but if to betray me to my enemies, since *there is* no wrong in my
hands, may the God of our fathers look and bring judgment." 18Then the
Spirit came upon Amasai, chief of the captains, *and he said:*

"*We are* yours, O David;
We *are* on your side, O son of Jesse!

Peace, peace to you, And peace to your helpers!
For your God helps you.”

So David received them, and made them captains of the troop.

19 And *some* from Manasseh defected to David when he was going with the
Philistines to battle against Saul; but they did not help them, for the lords of
the Philistines sent him away by agreement, saying, “He may defect to his
master Saul *and endanger* our heads.” 20 When he went to Ziklag, those of
Manasseh who defected to him were Adnah, Jozabad, Jediael, Michael,
Jozabad, Elihu, and Zille-thai, captains of the thousands who *were* from
Manasseh. 21 And they helped David against the bands *of raiders,* for they
*were* all mighty men of valor, and they were captains in the army. 22 For at
*that* time they came to David day by day to help him, until *it was* a great
army, like the army of God.

## DAVID’S ARMY AT HEBRON

23 Now these *were* the numbers of the divisions *that were* equipped for war,
*and* came to David at Hebron to turn *over* the kingdom of Saul to him,
according to the word of the LORD: 24 of the sons of Judah bearing shield and
spear, six thousand eight hundred armed for war; 25 of the sons of Simeon,
mighty men of valor fit for war, seven thousand one hundred; 26 of the sons of
Levi four thousand six hundred; 27 Jehoiada, the leader of the Aaronites, and
with him three thousand seven hundred; 28 Zadok, a young man, a valiant
warrior, and from his father’s house twenty-two captains; 29 of the sons of
Benjamin, relatives of Saul, three thousand (until then the greatest part of
them had remained loyal to the house of Saul); 30 of the sons of Ephraim
twenty thousand eight hundred, mighty men of valor, famous men throughout
their father’s house; 31 of the half-tribe of Manasseh eighteen thousand, who
were designated by name to come and make David king; 32 of the sons of
Issachar who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to
do, their chiefs were two hundred; and all their brethren were at their
command; 33 of Zebulun there were fifty thousand who went out to battle,
expert in war with all weapons of war, stouthearted men who could keep
ranks; 34 of Naphtali one thousand captains, and with them thirty-seven
thousand with shield and spear; 35 of the Danites who could keep battle

formation, twenty-eight thousand six hundred; [36]of Asher, those who could go out to war, able to keep battle formation, forty thousand; [37]of the Reubenites and the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh, from the other side of the Jordan, one hundred and twenty thousand armed for battle with every *kind* of weapon of war.

[38]All these men of war, who could keep ranks, came to Hebron with a loyal heart, to make David king over all Israel; and all the rest of Israel *were* of one mind to make David king. [39]And they were there with David three days, eating and drinking, for their brethren had prepared for them. [40]Moreover those who were near to them, from as far away as Issa-char and Zebulun and Naphtali, were bringing food on donkeys and camels, on mules and oxen-provisions of flour and cakes of figs and cakes of raisins, wine and oil and oxen and sheep abundantly, for *there was* joy in Israel.

## THE ARK BROUGHT FROM KIRJATH JEARIM

**13** Then David consulted with the captains of thousands and hundreds, *and* with every leader. 2And David said to all the assembly of Israel, "If *it seems* good to you, and if it is of the LORD our God, let us send out to our brethren everywhere *who are* left in all the land of Israel, and with them to the priests and Levites *who are* in their cities *and* their common-lands, that they may gather together to us; 3and let us bring the ark of our God back to us, for we have not inquired at it since the days of Saul." 4Then all the assembly said that they would do so, for the thing was right in the eyes of all the people.

5So David gathered all Israel together, from Shihor in Egypt to as far as the entrance of Hamath, to bring the ark of God from Kirjath Jearim. 6And David and all Israel went up to Baalah,[a] to Kirjath Jearim, which belonged to Judah, to bring up from there the ark of God the LORD, who dwells *between* the cherubim, where *His* name is proclaimed. 7So they carried the ark of God on a new cart from the house of Abinadab, and Uzza and Ahio drove the cart. 8Then David and all Israel played *music* before God with all *their* might, with singing, on harps, on stringed instruments, on tambourines, on cymbals, and with trumpets.

9And when they came to Chidon's[a] threshing floor, Uzza put out his hand to hold the ark, for the oxen stumbled. 10Then the anger of the LORD was aroused against Uzza, and He struck him because he put his hand to the ark; and he died there before God. 11And David became angry because of the LORD's outbreak against Uzza; therefore that place is called Perez Uzza[a] to this day. 12David was afraid of God that day, saying, "How can I bring the ark of God to me?"

13So David would not move the ark with him into the City of David, but took it aside into the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite. 14The ark of God remained with the family of Obed-Edom in his house three months. And the LORD blessed the house of Obed-Edom and all that he had.

## SOUL NOTE

**Seek God's Plans First** *(13:9-12)* Moses had instructed that the ark of the covenant was to be carried only with poles and only by priests (Num. 4:1-16). Uzza's intentions may have been noble, but this casual mistreatment of the ark led to his death. The entire incident shook David deeply. David stopped, stowed the ark safely, and went back to find out the correct manner for transporting it. God's people must take His commands seriously. To treat them casually is to face severe consequences. **Topic: Knowing God**

## DAVID ESTABLISHED AT JERUSALEM

**14** Now Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, and cedar trees, with
masons and carpenters, to build him a house. 2So David knew that the
LORD had established him as king over Israel, for his kingdom was highly
exalted for the sake of His people Israel.

3Then David took more wives in Jerusalem, and David begot more sons
and daughters. 4And these are the names of his children whom he had in
Jerusalem: Shammua,*a* Sho-bab, Nathan, Solomon, 5Ibhar, Elishua,*a* Elpelet,*b*
6Nogah, Nepheg, Japhia, 7Elishama, Beeliada,*a* and Eliphelet.

## THE PHILISTINES DEFEATED

8Now when the Philistines heard that David had been anointed king over
all Israel, all the Philistines went up to search for David. And David heard *of*
*it* and went out against them. 9Then the Philistines went and made a raid on
the Valley of Rephaim. 10And David inquired of God, saying, "Shall I go up
against the Philistines? Will You deliver them into my hand?"

The LORD said to him, "Go up, for I will deliver them into your hand."

11So they went up to Baal Perazim, and David defeated them there. Then
David said, "God has broken through my enemies by my hand like a
breakthrough of water." Therefore they called the name of that place Baal
Perazim.*a* 12And when they left their gods there, David gave a
commandment, and they were burned with fire.

13Then the Philistines once again made a raid on the valley. 14Therefore
David inquired again of God, and God said to him, "You shall not go up after
them; circle around them, and come upon them in front of the mulberry trees.
15And it shall be, when you hear a sound of marching in the tops of the
mulberry trees, then you shall go out to battle, for God has gone out before
you to strike the camp of the Philistines." 16So David did as God commanded
him, and they drove back the army of the Philistines from Gibeon as far as
Gezer. 17Then the fame of David went out into all lands, and the LORD
brought the fear of him upon all nations.

## THE ARK BROUGHT TO JERUSALEM

**15** *David* built houses for himself in the City of David; and he prepared a
place for the ark of God, and pitched a tent for it. [2]Then David said, “No
one may carry the ark of God but the Levites, for the LORD has chosen them
to carry the ark of God and to minister before Him forever.” [3]And David
gathered all Israel together at Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the LORD to its
place, which he had prepared for it. [4]Then David assembled the children of
Aaron and the Levites: [5]of the sons of Kohath, Uriel the chief, and one
hundred and twenty of his brethren; [6]of the sons of Merari, Asaiah the chief,
and two hundred and twenty of his brethren; [7]of the sons of Gershom, Joel
the chief, and one hundred and thirty of his brethren; [8]of the sons of
Elizaphan, Shemaiah the chief, and two hundred of his brethren; [9]of the sons
of Hebron, Eliel the chief, and eighty of his brethren; [10]of the sons of Uzziel,
Am-minadab the chief, and one hundred and twelve of his brethren.

[11]And David called for Zadok and Abiathar the priests, and for the Levites:
for Uriel, Asa-iah, Joel, Shemaiah, Eliel, and Amminadab. [12]He said to them,
“You *are* the heads of the fathers’ *houses* of the Levites; sanctify yourselves,
you and your brethren, that you may bring up the ark of the LORD God of
Israel to *the place* I have prepared for it. [13]For because you *did* not *do it* the
first *time*, the LORD our God broke out against us, because we did not consult
Him about the proper order.”

[14]So the priests and the Levites sanctified themselves to bring up the ark of
the LORD God of Israel. [15]And the children of the Levites bore the ark of God
on their shoulders, by its poles, as Moses had commanded according to the
word of the LORD.

[16]Then David spoke to the leaders of the Le-vites to appoint their brethren
*to be* the singers accompanied by instruments of music, stringed instruments,
harps, and cymbals, by raising the voice with resounding joy. [17]So the
Levites appointed Heman the son of Joel; and of his brethren, Asaph the son
of Berechiah; and of their brethren, the sons of Merari, Ethan the son of
Kushaiah; [18]and with them their brethren of the second *rank:* Zechariah,
Ben,[a]Jaaziel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Unni, Eliab, Be-naiah, Maaseiah,

Mattithiah, Elipheleh, Mikne-iah, Obed-Edom, and Jeiel, the gatekeepers;
19 the singers, Heman, Asaph, and Ethan, *were* to sound the cymbals of
bronze; 20 Zechariah, Aziel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Unni, Eliab, Maa-seiah, and
Benaiah, with strings according to Alamoth; 21 Mattithiah, Elipheleh,
Mikneiah, Obed-Edom, Jeiel, and Azaziah, to direct with harps on the
Sheminith; 22 Chenaniah, leader of the Levites, was instructor *in charge of* the
music, because he *was* skillful; 23 Berechiah and Elkanah *were* doorkeepers
for the ark; 24 Shebaniah, Joshaphat, Nethanel, Amasai, Zechariah, Benaiah,
and Eliezer, the priests, were to blow the trumpets before the ark of God; and
Obed-Edom and Jehiah, doorkeepers for the ark.

25 So David, the elders of Israel, and the captains over thousands went to
bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD from the house of Obed-Edom
with joy. 26 And so it was, when God helped the Levites who bore the ark of
the covenant of the LORD, that they offered seven bulls and seven rams.
27 David was clothed with a robe of fine linen, as were all the Levites who
bore the ark, the singers, and Chenaniah the music master *with* the singers.
David also wore a linen ephod. 28 Thus all Israel brought up the ark of the
covenant of the LORD with shouting and with the sound of the horn, with
trumpets and with cymbals, making music with stringed instruments and
harps.

29 And it happened, *as* the ark of the covenant of the LORD came to the City
of David, that Michal, Saul's daughter, looked through a window and saw
King David whirling and playing music; and she despised him in her heart.

## THE ARK PLACED IN THE TABERNACLE

**16** So they brought the ark of God, and set it in the midst of the tabernacle
that David had erected for it. Then they offered burnt offerings and
peace offerings before God. 2And when David had finished offering the burnt
offerings and the peace offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the
LORD. 3Then he distributed to everyone of Israel, both man and woman, to
everyone a loaf of bread, a piece *of meat,* and a cake of raisins.

4And he appointed some of the Levites to minister before the ark of the
LORD, to commemorate, to thank, and to praise the LORD God of Israel:
5Asaph the chief, and next to him Zechariah, *then* Jeiel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel,
Mattithiah, Eliab, Benaiah, and Obed-Edom: Jeiel with stringed instruments
and harps, but Asaph made music with cymbals; 6Benaiah and Jahaziel the
priests regularly *blew* the trumpets before the ark of the covenant of God.

## DAVID'S SONG OF THANKSGIVING

7On that day David first delivered *this psalm* into the hand of Asaph and
his brethren, to thank the LORD:

8 Oh, give thanks to the LORD!
Call upon His name;
Make known His deeds among the
peoples!
9Sing to Him, sing psalms to Him;
Talk of all His wondrous works!
10 Glory in His holy name;
Let the hearts of those rejoice who seek
the LORD!
11 Seek the LORD and His strength;
Seek His face evermore!
12 Remember His marvelous works which
He has done,
His wonders, and the judgments of His
mouth,

13 O seed of Israel His servant,
You children of Jacob, His chosen ones!
14 He *is* the LORD our God;
His judgments *are* in all the earth.
15 Remember His covenant forever,
The word which He commanded, for a
thousand generations,
16 *The covenant which* He made with
Abraham,
And His oath to Isaac,
17 And confirmed it to Jacob for a statute,
To Israel *for* an everlasting covenant,
18 Saying, "To you I will give the land of
Canaan
As the allotment of your inheritance,"
19 When you were few in number, Indeed very few, and strangers in it.
20 When they went from one nation to
another,
And from *one* kingdom to another
people,
21 He permitted no man to do them wrong;
Yes, He rebuked kings for their sakes,
22 *Saying*, "Do not touch My anointed
ones,
And do My prophets no harm."[a]
23 Sing to the LORD, all the earth;
Proclaim the good news of His salvation
from day to day.
24 Declare His glory among the nations,
His wonders among all peoples.
25 For the LORD *is* great and greatly to be
praised;
He *is* also to be feared above all gods.
26 For all the gods of the peoples *are* idols,

But the LORD made the heavens.
27 Honor and majesty *are* before Him;
Strength and gladness are in His place.
28 Give to the LORD, O families of the peoples,
Give to the LORD glory and strength.
29 Give to the LORD the glory *due* His name;
Bring an offering, and come before Him.
Oh, worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness!
30 Tremble before Him, all the earth.
The world also is firmly established,
It shall not be moved.
31 Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad;
And let them say among the nations,
"The LORD reigns."
32 Let the sea roar, and all its fullness;
Let the field rejoice, and all that *is* in it.
33 Then the trees of the woods shall rejoice before the LORD,
For He is coming to judge the earth.[a]
34 Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for *He is* good!
For His mercy *endures* forever.[a]
35 And say, "Save us, O God of our salvation;
Gather us together, and deliver us from the Gentiles,
To give thanks to Your holy name,
To triumph in Your praise."
36 Blessed *be* the LORD God of Israel
From everlasting to everlasting![a]

And all the people said, “Amen!” and praised the LORD.

**REGULAR WORSHIP MAINTAINED**

[37]So he left Asaph and his brothers there before the ark of the covenant of the LORD to minister before the ark regularly, as every day’s work required; [38]and Obed-Edom with his sixty-eight brethren, including Obed-Edom the son of Jeduthun, and Hosah, *to be* gatekeepers; [39]and Zadok the priest and his brethren the priests, before the tabernacle of the LORD at the high place that *was* at Gibeon, [40]to offer burnt offerings to the LORD on the altar of burnt offering regularly morning and evening, and *to do* according to all that is written in the Law of the LORD which He commanded Israel; [41]and with them Heman and Jeduthun and the rest who were chosen, who were designated by name, to give thanks to the LORD, because His mercy *endures* forever; [42]and with them Heman and Jeduthun, to sound aloud with trumpets and cymbals and the musical instruments of God. Now the sons of Jedu-thun *were* gatekeepers.

[43]Then all the people departed, every man to his house; and David returned to bless his house.

## GOD'S COVENANT WITH DAVID

**17** Now it came to pass, when David was dwelling in his house, that David said to Nathan the prophet, "See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of the covenant of the LORD *is* under tent curtains."

2 Then Nathan said to David, "Do all that *is* in your heart, for God *is* with you."

3 But it happened that night that the word of God came to Nathan, saying,
4 "Go and tell My servant David, 'Thus says the LORD: "You shall not build Me a house to dwell in. 5 For I have not dwelt in a house since the time that I brought up Israel, even to this day, but have gone from tent to tent, and from *one* tabernacle *to another*. 6 Wherever I have moved about with all Israel, have I ever spoken a word to any of the judges of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd My people, saying, 'Why have you not built Me a house of cedar?' " ' 7 Now therefore, thus shall you say to My servant David, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts: "I took you from the sheepfold, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people Israel. 8 And I have been with you wherever you have gone, and have cut off all your enemies from before you, and have made you a name like the name of the great men who *are* on the earth. 9 Moreover I will appoint a place for My people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own and move no more; nor shall the sons of wickedness oppress them anymore, as previously, 10 since the time that I commanded judges *to be* over My people Israel. Also I will subdue all your enemies. Furthermore I tell you that the LORD will build you a house.[a]
11 And it shall be, when your days are fulfilled, when you must go *to be* with your fathers, that I will set up your seed after you, who will be of your sons; and I will establish his kingdom. 12 He shall build Me a house, and I will establish his throne forever. 13 I will be his Father, and he shall be My son; and I will not take My mercy away from him, as I took *it* from *him* who was before you. 14 And I will establish him in My house and in My kingdom forever; and his throne shall be established forever." ' "

15 According to all these words and according to all this vision, so Nathan spoke to David.

16 Then King David went in and sat before the LORD; and he said: “Who *am* I, O LORD God? And what is my house, that You have brought me this far? 17 And *yet* this was a small thing in Your sight, O God; and You have *also* spoken of Your servant’s house for a great while to come, and have regarded me according to the rank of a man of high degree, O LORD God. 18 What more can David *say* to You for the honor of Your servant? For You know Your servant. 19 O LORD, for Your servant’s sake, and according to Your own heart, You have done all this greatness, in making known all these great things. 20 O LORD, *there is* none like You, nor *is there any* God besides You, according to all that we have heard with our ears. 21 And who *is* like Your people Israel, the one nation on the earth whom God went to redeem for Himself *as* a people-to make for Yourself a name by great and awesome deeds, by driving out nations from before Your people whom You redeemed from Egypt? 22 For You have made Your people Israel Your very own people forever; and You, LORD, have become their God.

23 “And now, O LORD, the word which You have spoken concerning Your servant and concerning his house, *let it* be established forever, and do as You have said. 24 So let it be established, that Your name may be magnified forever, saying, ‘The LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, *is* Israel’s God.’ And let the house of Your servant David be established before You. 25 For You, O my God, have revealed to Your servant that You will build him a house. Therefore Your servant has found it *in his heart* to pray before You. 26 And now, LORD, You are God, and have promised this goodness to Your servant. 27 Now You have been pleased to bless the house of Your servant, that it may continue before You forever; for You have blessed it, O LORD, and *it shall be* blessed forever.”

**SOUL NOTE**

**His Kingdom Forever** *(17:12)* David told the prophet Nathan that he

wanted to build a temple to house the ark of the covenant. But the Lord told Nathan that David was not to build that temple; rather, his son Solomon would do so. God promised of Solomon, “He shall build Me a house, and I will establish his throne forever.” Solomon *did* build a beautiful temple for God in Jerusalem. And a King from David’s line-Jesus Christ-still sits on the throne and will do so forever. God always keeps His promises. **Topic: God’s Promises**

## DAVID'S FURTHER CONQUESTS

**18** After this it came to pass that David attacked the Philistines, subdued them, and took Gath and its towns from the hand of the Philistines. 2Then he defeated Moab, and the Moabites became David's servants, *and* brought tribute.

3And David defeated Hadadezer[a] king of Zobah *as far as* Hamath, as he went to establish his power by the River Euphrates. 4David took from him one thousand chariots, seven thousand[a] horsemen, and twenty thousand foot soldiers. Also David hamstrung all the chariot *horses,* except that he spared enough of them for one hundred chariots.

5When the Syrians of Damascus came to help Hadadezer king of Zobah, David killed twenty-two thousand of the Syrians. 6Then David put *garrisons* in Syria of Damascus; and the Syrians became David's servants, *and* brought tribute. So the LORD preserved David wherever he went. 7And David took the shields of gold that were on the servants of Hadadezer, and brought them to Jerusalem. 8Also from Tibhath[a] and from Chun, cities of Hadadezer, David brought a large amount of bronze, with which Solomon made the bronze Sea, the pillars, and the articles of bronze.

9Now when Tou[a] king of Hamath heard that David had defeated all the army of Hadadezer king of Zobah, 10he sent Hadoram[a] his son to King David, to greet him and bless him, because he had fought against Hadadezer and defeated him (for Hadadezer had been at war with Tou); and *Hadoram brought with him* all kinds of articles of gold, silver, and bronze. 11King David also dedicated these to the LORD, along with the silver and gold that he had brought from all *these* nations-from Edom, from Moab, from the people of Ammon, from the Philistines, and from Amalek.

12Moreover Abishai the son of Zeruiah killed eighteen thousand Edomites[a] in the Valley of Salt. 13He also put garrisons in Edom, and all the Edomites became David's servants. And the LORD preserved David wherever he went.

## DAVID'S ADMINISTRATION

14So David reigned over all Israel, and administered judgment and justice

to all his people. [15]Joab the son of Zeruiah *was* over the army; Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud *was* recorder; [16]Zadok the son of Ahitub and Abime-lech the son of Abiathar *were* the priests; Shavsha[a] *was* the scribe; [17]Benaiah the son of Jehoiada *was* over the Cherethites and the Pel-ethites; and David's sons *were* chief ministers at the king's side.

## THE AMMONITES AND SYRIANS DEFEATED

**19** It happened after this that Nahash the king of the people of Ammon died,
and his son reigned in his place. 2Then David said, “I will show kindness
to Hanun the son of Nahash, because his father showed kindness to me.” So
David sent messengers to comfort him concerning his father. And David’s
servants came to Hanun in the land of the people of Ammon to comfort him.

3And the princes of the people of Ammon said to Hanun, “Do you think
that David really honors your father because he has sent comforters to you?
Did his servants not come to you to search and to overthrow and to spy out
the land?”

4Therefore Hanun took David’s servants, shaved them, and cut off their
garments in the middle, at their buttocks, and sent them away. 5Then *some*
went and told David about the men; and he sent to meet them, because the
men were greatly ashamed. And the king said, “Wait at Jericho until your
beards have grown, and *then* return.”

6When the people of Ammon saw that they had made themselves repulsive
to David, Ha-nun and the people of Ammon sent a thousand talents of silver
to hire for themselves chariots and horsemen from Mesopotamia,[a] from
Syrian Maacah, and from Zobah.[b] 7So they hired for themselves thirty-two
thousand chariots, with the king of Maacah and his people, who came and
encamped before Medeba. Also the people of Ammon gathered together from
their cities, and came to battle.

8Now when David heard *of it,* he sent Joab and all the army of the mighty
men. 9Then the people of Ammon came out and put themselves in battle
array before the gate of the city, and the kings who had come *were* by
themselves in the field.

10When Joab saw that the battle line was against him before and behind, he
chose some of Israel’s best, and put *them* in battle array against the Syrians.
11And the rest of the people he put under the command of Abishai his
brother, and they set *themselves* in battle array against the people of Ammon.
12Then he said, “If the Syrians are too strong for me, then you shall help me;
but if the people of Ammon are too strong for you, then I will help you. 13Be

of good courage, and let us be strong for our people and for the cities of our God. And may the LORD do *what is* good in His sight.”

14So Joab and the people who *were* with him drew near for the battle against the Syrians, and they fled before him. 15When the people of Ammon saw that the Syrians were fleeing, they also fled before Abishai his brother, and entered the city. So Joab went to Jerusalem.

16Now when the Syrians saw that they had been defeated by Israel, they sent messengers and brought the Syrians who were beyond the River,[a] and Shophach[b] the commander of Hadadezer’s army *went* before them. 17When it was told David, he gathered all Israel, crossed over the Jordan and came upon them, and set up in battle array against them. So when David had set up in *battle* array against the Syrians, they fought with him. 18Then the Syrians fled before Israel; and David killed seven thousand[a] charioteers and forty thousand foot soldiers[b] of the Syrians, and killed Shophach the commander of the army. 19And when the servants of Hadadezer saw that they were defeated by Israel, they made peace with David and became his servants. So the Syrians were not willing to help the people of Ammon anymore.

## RABBAH IS CONQUERED

**20** It happened in the spring of the year, at the time kings go out *to battle,*
that Joab led out the armed forces and ravaged the country of the people
of Ammon, and came and besieged Rabbah. But David stayed at Jerusalem.
And Joab defeated Rabbah and overthrew it. [2]Then David took their king's
crown from his head, and found it to weigh a talent of gold, and *there were*
precious stones in it. And it was set on David's head. Also he brought out the
spoil of the city in great abundance. [3]And he brought out the people who
*were* in it, and put *them* to work[a] with saws, with iron picks, and with axes.
So David did to all the cities of the people of Ammon. Then David and all the
people returned *to* Jerusalem.

## PHILISTINE GIANTS DESTROYED

[4]Now it happened afterward that war broke out at Gezer with the
Philistines, at which time Sibbechai the Hushathite killed Sippai,[a] *who was*
*one* of the sons of the giant. And they were subdued.

[5]Again there was war with the Philistines, and Elhanan the son of Jair[a]
killed Lahmi the brother of Goliath the Gittite, the shaft of whose spear *was*
like a weaver's beam.

[6]Yet again there was war at Gath, where there was a man of *great* stature,
with twenty-four fingers and toes, six *on each hand* and six *on each foot;* and
he also was born to the giant. [7]So when he defied Israel, Jonathan the son of
Shimea,[a] David's brother, killed him.

[8]These were born to the giant in Gath, and they fell by the hand of David
and by the hand of his servants.

## THE CENSUS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH

**21** Now Satan stood up against Israel, and moved David to number Israel.
2So David said to Joab and to the leaders of the people, “Go, number
Israel from Beer-sheba to Dan, and bring the number of them to me that I
may know *it.*”

3And Joab answered, “May the LORD make His people a hundred times
more than they are. But, my lord the king, *are* they not all my lord’s
servants? Why then does my lord require this thing? Why should he be a
cause of guilt in Israel?”

4Nevertheless the king’s word prevailed against Joab. Therefore Joab
departed and went throughout all Israel and came to Jerusalem. 5Then Joab
gave the sum of the number of the people to David. All Israel *had* one million
one hundred thousand men who drew the sword, and Judah *had* four hundred
and seventy thousand men who drew the sword. 6But he did not count Levi
and Benjamin among them, for the king’s word was abominable to Joab.

7And God was displeased with this thing; therefore He struck Israel. 8So
David said to God, “I have sinned greatly, because I have done this thing; but
now, I pray, take away the iniquity of Your servant, for I have done very
foolishly.”

9Then the LORD spoke to Gad, David’s seer, saying, 10“Go and tell David,
saying, ‘Thus says the LORD: “I offer you three *things;* choose one of them
for yourself, that I may do *it* to you.” ’ ”

11So Gad came to David and said to him, “Thus says the LORD: ‘Choose
for yourself, 12either three[a] years of famine, or three months to be defeated by
your foes with the sword of your enemies overtaking *you,* or else for three
days the sword of the LORD-the plague in the land, with the angel[b] of the
LORD destroying throughout all the territory of Israel.’ Now consider what
answer I should take back to Him who sent me.”

13And David said to Gad, “I am in great distress. Please let me fall into the
hand of the LORD, for His mercies *are* very great; but do not let me fall into
the hand of man.”

14 So the LORD sent a plague upon Israel, and seventy thousand men of
Israel fell. 15 And God sent an angel to Jerusalem to destroy it. As he[a] was
destroying, the LORD looked and relented of the disaster, and said to the angel
who was destroying, “It is enough; now restrain your[b] hand.” And the angel
of the LORD stood by the threshing floor of Ornan[c] the Jeb-usite.

16 Then David lifted his eyes and saw the angel of the LORD standing
between earth and heaven, having in his hand a drawn sword stretched out
over Jerusalem. So David and the elders, clothed in sackcloth, fell on their
faces. 17 And David said to God, “Was it not I who commanded the people to
be numbered? I am the one who has sinned and done evil indeed; but these
sheep, what have they done? Let Your hand, I pray, O LORD my God, be
against me and my father’s house, but not against Your people that they
should be plagued.”

18 Therefore, the angel of the LORD commanded Gad to say to David that
David should go and erect an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of
Ornan the Jebusite. 19 So David went up at the word of Gad, which he had
spoken in the name of the LORD. 20 Now Ornan turned and saw the angel; and
his four sons *who were* with him hid themselves, but Ornan continued
threshing wheat. 21 So David came to Ornan, and Ornan looked and saw
David. And he went out from the threshing floor, and bowed before David
with *his* face to the ground. 22 Then David said to Ornan, “Grant me the place
of *this* threshing floor, that I may build an altar on it to the LORD. You shall
grant it to me at the full price, that the plague may be withdrawn from the
people.”

23 But Ornan said to David, “Take *it* to yourself, and let my lord the king do
*what is* good in his eyes. Look, I *also* give *you* the oxen for burnt offerings,
the threshing implements for wood, and the wheat for the grain offering; I
give *it* all.”

24 Then King David said to Ornan, “No, but I will surely buy *it* for the full
price, for I will not take what is yours for the LORD, nor offer burnt offerings
with *that which* costs *me* nothing.” 25 So David gave Ornan six hundred
shekels of gold by weight for the place. 26 And David built there an altar to
the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, and called on the

LORD; and He answered him from heaven by fire on the altar of burnt offering.

[27]So the LORD commanded the angel, and he returned his sword to its sheath.

[28]At that time, when David saw that the LORD had answered him on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, he sacrificed there. [29]For the tabernacle of the LORD and the altar of the burnt offering, which Moses had made in the wilderness, *were* at that time at the high place in Gibeon. [30]But David could not go before it to inquire of God, for he was afraid of the sword of the angel of the LORD.

**SOUL NOTE**

**In His Hands** *(21:13)* God dealt severely with David for his sin of numbering the people, and He gave him three choices of punishment. David's response was that he would rather "fall into the hand of the LORD" than into the hands of his enemies. Yet David still agonized because, either way, many people would pay for his sin. Even in the anguish of the moment, however, David realized, as we all must, that our lives are ultimately in God's hands. **Topic: Crises**

## DAVID PREPARES TO BUILD THE TEMPLE

**22** Then David said, “This *is* the house of the LORD God, and this *is* the
altar of burnt offering for Israel.” 2So David commanded to gather the
aliens who *were* in the land of Israel; and he appointed masons to cut hewn
stones to build the house of God. 3And David prepared iron in abundance for
the nails of the doors of the gates and for the joints, and bronze in abundance
beyond measure, 4and cedar trees in abundance; for the Sidonians and those
from Tyre brought much cedar wood to David.

5Now David said, “Solomon my son *is* young and inexperienced, and the
house to be built for the LORD *must be* exceedingly magnificent, famous and
glorious throughout all countries. I will now make preparation for it.” So
David made abundant preparations before his death.

6Then he called for his son Solomon, and charged him to build a house for
the LORD God of Israel. 7And David said to Solomon: “My son, as for me, it
was in my mind to build a house to the name of the LORD my God; 8but the
word of the LORD came to me, saying, ‘You have shed much blood and have
made great wars; you shall not build a house for My name, because you have
shed much blood on the earth in My sight. 9Behold, a son shall be born to
you, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies
all around. His name shall be Solomon,[a] for I will give peace and quietness to
Israel in his days. 10He shall build a house for My name, and he shall be My
son, and I *will be* his Father; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom
over Israel forever.’ 11Now, my son, may the LORD be with you; and may you
prosper, and build the house of the LORD your God, as He has said to you.
12Only may the LORD give you wisdom and understanding, and give you
charge concerning Israel, that you may keep the law of the LORD your God.
13Then you will prosper, if you take care to fulfill the statutes and judgments
with which the LORD charged Moses concerning Israel. Be strong and of
good courage; do not fear nor be dismayed. 14Indeed I have taken much
trouble to prepare for the house of the LORD one hundred thousand talents of
gold and one million talents of silver, and bronze and iron beyond measure,
for it is so abundant. I have prepared timber and stone also, and you may add

to them. [15]Moreover *there are* workmen with you in abun-dance: woodsmen and stonecutters, and all types of skillful men for every kind of work. [16]Of gold and silver and bronze and iron *there is* no limit. Arise and begin working, and the LORD be with you."

[17]David also commanded all the leaders of Israel to help Solomon his son, *saying*, [18]"*Is* not the LORD your God with you? And has He *not* given you rest on every side? For He has given the inhabitants of the land into my hand, and the land is subdued before the LORD and before His people. [19]Now set your heart and your soul to seek the LORD your God. Therefore arise and build the sanctuary of the LORD God, to bring the ark of the covenant of the LORD and the holy articles of God into the house that is to be built for the name of the LORD."

## THE DIVISIONS OF THE LEVITES

**23** So when David was old and full of days, he made his son Solomon king over Israel.

2And he gathered together all the leaders of Israel, with the priests and the Levites. 3Now the Levites were numbered from the age of thirty years and above; and the number of individual males was thirty-eight thousand. 4Of these, twenty-four thousand *were* to look after the work of the house of the LORD, six thousand *were* officers and judges, 5four thousand *were* gatekeepers, and four thousand praised the LORD with *musical* instruments, "which I made," *said David*, "for giving praise."

6Also David separated them into divisions among the sons of Levi: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.

7Of the Gershonites: Laadan[a] and Shimei. 8The sons of Laadan: the first Jehiel, then Ze-tham and Joel-three *in all.* 9The sons of Shimei: Shelomith, Haziel, and Haran-three *in all.* These were the heads of the fathers' *houses* of Laadan. 10And the sons of Shimei: Jahath, Zina,[a] Jeush, and Beriah. These *were* the four sons of Shimei. 11Jahath was the first and Zizah the second. But Jeush and Beriah did not have many sons; therefore they were assigned as one father's house.

12The sons of Kohath: Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel-four *in all.* 13The sons of Amram: Aaron and Moses; and Aaron was set apart, he and his sons forever, that he should sanctify the most holy things, to burn incense before the LORD, to minister to Him, and to give the blessing in His name forever. 14Now the sons of Moses the man of God were reckoned to the tribe of Levi. 15The sons of Moses *were* Gershon[a] and Eliezer. 16Of the sons of Gershon, Shebuel[a] *was* the first. 17Of the descendants of Eliezer, Rehabiah was the first. And Eliezer had no other sons, but the sons of Rehabiah were very many. 18Of the sons of Iz-har, Shelomith *was* the first. 19Of the sons of Hebron, Jeriah *was* the first, Amariah the second, Jahaziel the third, and Jekameam the fourth. 20Of the sons of Uzziel, Michah *was* the first and Jesshiah the second.

[21]The sons of Merari *were* Mahli and Mushi. The sons of Mahli *were* Eleazar and Kish. [22]And Eleazar died, and had no sons, but only daughters; and their brethren, the sons of Kish, took them *as wives.* [23]The sons of Mushi *were* Mahli, Eder, and Jeremoth-three *in all.*

[24]These *were* the sons of Levi by their fathers' houses-the heads of the fathers' *houses* as they were counted individually by the number of their names, who did the work for the service of the house of the LORD, from the age of twenty years and above.

[25]For David said, "The LORD God of Israel has given rest to His people, that they may dwell in Jerusalem forever"; [26]and also to the Levites, "They shall no longer carry the tabernacle, or any of the articles for its service." [27]For by the last words of David the Levites *were* numbered from twenty years old and above; [28]because their duty *was* to help the sons of Aaron in the service of the house of the LORD, in the courts and in the chambers, in the purifying of all holy things and the work of the service of the house of God, [29]both with the showbread and the fine flour for the grain offering, with the unleavened cakes and *what is baked in* the pan, with what is mixed and with all kinds of measures and sizes; [30]to stand every morning to thank and praise the LORD, and likewise at evening; [31]and at every presentation of a burnt offering to the LORD on the Sabbaths and on the New Moons and on the set feasts, by number according to the ordinance governing them, regularly before the LORD; [32]and that they should attend to the needs of the tabernacle of meeting, the needs of the holy *place*, and the needs of the sons of Aaron their brethren in the work of the house of the LORD.

Life Transitions

SEASONS OF LIFE

FREDA V. CREWS

(1 Chronicles 23)

**C**hange can challenge and grow us. Life transitions are important changes that occur throughout the life cycle from the cradle to the grave. Although some transitions come easy, others roll in like angry tidal waves, leaving total devastation in their path. Transitions can be as simple as leaving a comfortable bed to begin a new day; they can be as painful as having to learn to go on alone after losing a lifetime mate.

We can allow the seasons of change to transform us, or we can resist them. To resist these changes will complicate the process, since resistance will inevitably retard and restrict the transforming power of life transitions.

## LIFE IS A PERPETUAL TRANSITION

In the earliest stages of life, we are not consciously aware of the changes that are occurring and the transitions we are making. As we continue our development, we become more conscious of the changes that are taking place in our lives. At this point, it becomes healthy and necessary to recognize the inevitable role changes and transitions play in our personal development. Passively sitting by while "nature takes its course" will prove to be a self-defeating decision. Rather, we can decide to be aggressively engaged in becoming the people God intended us to be by learning to navigate the passages and transitions of life.

## PARADOXES OF LIFE TRANSITIONS

There is a rhythm of opposite seasons recorded in Ecclesiastes 3:1-8. Without opposites, how do we know the reality of any experience? For example, how would we know darkness without light? How do people know they are well if they have never been sick? We read, "To everything there is a season . . . a time to weep, and a time to

laugh" (Eccl. 3:1, 4). Life transitions are both predictable and unpredictable. Like the four seasons, certain seasons of life are predictable, but many of them are not. None of us can predict our seasons of weeping and laughter or our season of death. A personal crisis, such as divorce or loss of a job, can suddenly thrust any one of us into unexpected change.

Life transitions can be both sad and joyful, as there is "a time to mourn, and a time to dance" (Eccl. 3:4). A wedding is usually a time of rejoicing for everyone. But it can also bring sadness with the realization that a season of life is left behind. At the same time, a transition can be full of hope and hopelessness. A newly married couple, full of hope for their union, can soon experience the hopelessness that comes with the inability to resolve their unexpected conflicts.

Life transitions signal an ending and a beginning. The end of a stage of development, such as adolescence, signals the beginning of both the freedom and responsibility of young adulthood. Sometimes it is difficult to envision a beginning while experiencing the loss that comes from an ending. We must give ourselves permission to grieve our endings, and be encouraged by the hope of new beginnings.

## HANDLING LIFE TRANSITIONS

Life transitions are inevitable. Accepting this reality is the first step necessary to effectively handling life's passages. We can avoid, or even prevent, some painful changes, but transitions are ultimately a way of life for everyone. Accepting this truth enables us to embrace life with its seasons of growth and development. For example, when we suffer grief through a death, divorce, or other significant loss, we can choose to remain angry, depressed, and hopeless, or we can choose to allow the pain to forge a passage into a new, hopeful, and meaningful life.

The second step is to allow change to work. Transitions help us

become who we were meant to be. “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose” (Rom. 8:28). When struggling with change, it is comforting to know that God is manipulating the situation for good. Because this is true, it makes sense to stop the resistance and go with the flow! Our faith has really kicked in when we are able to submit ourselves and our life transitions to God (1 Pet. 5:6).

The third step is perseverance-the ability to hang in there during difficult circumstances. “And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope” (Rom. 5:3, 4). God wants His children to grow strong spiritual muscles. He actually forces them to grow deep spiritual roots so they will be able to endure the storms of life (1 Pet. 1:6, 7). Character can be cultivated as we persevere through the pain of change. When we’re passing through a painful transition, God’s promises give hope. Hope when we are hopeless can come only through a relationship with the God who gives us such promises as: “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope” (Jer. 29:11).

The final step is to wait for the purposes of God to unfold. When a change is painful, we can trust that God has a purpose in it. We, like nature, require the winter seasons for renewal and growth. For Christians, death is the last life transition-a passage from winter into an eternal spring. Awaiting us at the end of our final passage, Jesus will say: “Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For lo, the winter is past” (Song 2:10, 11).

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of life transitions include:

- Psalm 16:7

- Proverbs 20:29; 23:22
- Malachi 3:6
- 1 Corinthians 13:11
- Galatians 6:9

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on life transitions at Ecclesiastes 3:1-11. See also the personality profile of Timothy: Lots of Changes.

## THE DIVISIONS OF THE PRIESTS

**24** Now *these are* the divisions of the sons of Aaron. The sons of Aaron *were* Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. [2]And Na-dab and Abihu died before their father, and had no children; therefore Eleazar and Itha-mar ministered as priests. [3]Then David with Zadok of the sons of Eleazar, and Ahimelech of the sons of Ithamar, divided them according to the schedule of their service.

[4]There were more leaders found of the sons of Eleazar than of the sons of Ithamar, and *thus* they were divided. Among the sons of El-eazar *were* sixteen heads of *their* fathers' houses, and eight heads of their fathers' houses among the sons of Ithamar. [5]Thus they were divided by lot, one group as another, for there were officials of the sanctuary and officials *of the house* of God, from the sons of Ele-azar and from the sons of Ithamar. [6]And the scribe, Shemaiah the son of Nethanel, *one of* the Levites, wrote them down before the king, the leaders, Zadok the priest, Ahimelech the son of Abiathar, and the heads of the fathers' *houses* of the priests and Levites, one father's house taken for Eleazar and *one* for Ithamar.

[7]Now the first lot fell to Jehoiarib, the second to Jedaiah, [8]the third to Harim, the fourth to Seorim, [9]the fifth to Malchijah, the sixth to Mijamin, [10]the seventh to Hakkoz, the eighth to Abijah, [11]the ninth to Jeshua, the tenth to Shecaniah, [12]the eleventh to Eliashib, the twelfth to Jakim, [13]the thirteenth to Huppah, the fourteenth to Jeshebeab, [14]the fifteenth to Bilgah, the sixteenth to Immer, [15]the seventeenth to Hezir, the eighteenth to Happizzez,[a] [16]the nineteenth to Pethahiah, the twentieth to Jehezekel,[a] [17]the twenty-first to Jachin, the twenty-second to Gamul, [18]the twenty-third to Delaiah, the twenty-fourth to Maaziah.

[19]This *was* the schedule of their service for coming into the house of the LORD according to their ordinance by the hand of Aaron their father, as the LORD God of Israel had commanded him.

## OTHER LEVITES

[20]And the rest of the sons of Levi: of the sons of Amram, Shubael;[a] of the

sons of Shu-bael, Jehdeiah. [21]Concerning Rehabiah, of the sons of Rehabiah, the first *was* Isshiah. [22]Of the Izharites, Shelomoth;[a]of the sons of Shelomoth, Jahath. [23]Of the sons *of Hebron,*[a]Jeriah *was the first,*[b] Amariah the second, Ja-haziel the third, *and* Jekameam the fourth. [24]*Of* the sons of Uzziel, Michah; of the sons of Michah, Shamir. [25]The brother of Michah, Is-shiah; of the sons of Isshiah, Zechariah. [26]The sons of Merari *were* Mahli and Mushi; the son of Jaaziah, Beno. [27]The sons of Merari by Jaa-ziah *were* Beno, Shoham, Zaccur, and Ibri. [28]Of Mahli: Eleazar, who had no sons. [29]Of Kish: the son of Kish, Jerahmeel.

[30]Also the sons of Mushi *were* Mahli, Eder, and Jerimoth. These *were* the sons of the Le-vites according to their fathers' houses.

[31]These also cast lots just as their brothers the sons of Aaron did, in the presence of King David, Zadok, Ahimelech, and the heads of the fathers' *houses* of the priests and Levites. The chief fathers *did* just as their younger brethren.

**THE MUSICIANS**

**25** Moreover David and the captains of the army separated for the service
*some* of the sons of Asaph, of Heman, and of Jeduthun, who *should*
prophesy with harps, stringed instruments, and cymbals. And the number of
the skilled men performing their service was: [2]Of the sons of Asaph: Zaccur,
Joseph, Nethaniah, and Asharelah;[a] the sons of Asaph *were* under the
direction of Asaph, who prophesied according to the order of the king. [3]Of
Jeduthun, the sons of Jeduthun: Gedaliah, Zeri,[a] Jeshaiah, Shimei, Hashabiah,
and Mat-tithiah, six,[b] under the direction of their father Jeduthun, who
prophesied with a harp to give thanks and to praise the LORD. [4]Of Heman, the
sons of Heman: Bukkiah, Mattaniah, Uzziel,[a] Shebuel,[b] Jerimoth,[c] Hananiah,
Hanani, Elia-thah, Giddalti, Romamti-Ezer, Joshbekashah, Mallothi, Hothir,
*and* Mahazioth. [5]All these *were* the sons of Heman the king's seer in the
words of God, to exalt his horn.[a] For God gave Heman fourteen sons and
three daughters.

[6]All these *were* under the direction of their father for the music *in* the
house of the LORD, with cymbals, stringed instruments, and harps, for the
service of the house of God. Asaph, Jeduthun, and Heman *were* under the
authority of the king. [7]So the number of them, with their brethren who were
instructed in the songs of the LORD, all who were skillful, *was* two hundred
and eighty-eight.

[8]And they cast lots for their duty, the small as well as the great, the teacher
with the student.

[9]Now the first lot for Asaph came out for Joseph; the second for Gedaliah,
him with his brethren and sons, twelve; [10]the third for Zac-cur, his sons and
his brethren, twelve; [11]the fourth for Jizri,[a] his sons and his brethren, twelve;
[12]the fifth for Nethaniah, his sons and his brethren, twelve; [13]the sixth for
Bukkiah, his sons and his brethren, twelve; [14]the seventh for Jesharelah,[a] his
sons and his brethren, twelve; [15]the eighth for Jeshaiah, his sons and his
brethren, twelve; [16]the ninth for Mat-taniah, his sons and his brethren, twelve;
[17]the tenth for Shimei, his sons and his brethren, twelve; [18]the eleventh for
Azarel,[a] his sons and his brethren, twelve; [19]the twelfth for Hashabiah, his

sons and his brethren, twelve; [20]the thirteenth for Shubael,[a] his sons and his brethren, twelve; [21]the fourteenth for Mattithiah, his sons and his brethren, twelve; [22]the fifteenth for Jeremoth,[a] his sons and his brethren, twelve; [23]the sixteenth for Hana-niah, his sons and his brethren, twelve; [24]the seventeenth for Joshbekashah, his sons and his brethren, twelve; [25]the eighteenth for Ha-nani, his sons and his brethren, twelve; [26]the nineteenth for Mallothi, his sons and his brethren, twelve; [27]the twentieth for Eliathah, his sons and his brethren, twelve; [28]the twenty-first for Hothir, his sons and his brethren, twelve; [29]the twenty-second for Giddalti, his sons and his brethren, twelve; [30]the twenty-third for Mahazioth, his sons and his brethren, twelve; [31]the twenty-fourth for Romamti-Ezer, his sons and his brethren, twelve.

**THE GATEKEEPERS**

**26** Concerning the divisions of the gate-keepers: of the Korahites, Meshelemiah the son of Kore, of the sons of Asaph. 2And the sons of Meshelemiah *were* Zechariah the firstborn, Jediael the second, Zebadiah the third, Jathniel the fourth, 3Elam the fifth, Je-hohanan the sixth, Eliehoenai the seventh.

4Moreover the sons of Obed-Edom *were* Shemaiah the firstborn, Jehozabad the second, Joah the third, Sacar the fourth, Nethanel the fifth, 5Ammiel the sixth, Issachar the seventh, Peulthai the eighth; for God blessed him.

6Also to Shemaiah his son were sons born who governed their fathers' houses, because they *were* men of great ability. 7The sons of Shemaiah *were* Othni, Rephael, Obed, and El-zabad, whose brothers Elihu and Semachiah *were* able men.

8All these *were* of the sons of Obed-Edom, they and their sons and their brethren, able men with strength for the work: sixty-two of Obed-Edom.

9And Meshelemiah had sons and brethren, eighteen able men.

10Also Hosah, of the children of Merari, had sons: Shimri the first (for *though* he was not the firstborn, his father made him the first), 11Hilkiah the second, Tebaliah the third, Zechariah the fourth; all the sons and brethren of Hosah *were* thirteen.

12Among these *were* the divisions of the gatekeepers, among the chief men, *having* duties just like their brethren, to serve in the house of the LORD. 13And they cast lots for each gate, the small as well as the great, according to their father's house. 14The lot for the East *Gate* fell to Shelemiah. Then they cast lots *for* his son Zechariah, a wise counselor, and his lot came out for the North Gate; 15to Obed-Edom the South Gate, and to his sons the storehouse.[a] 16To Shuppim and Hosah *the lot came out* for the West Gate, with the Shallecheth Gate on the ascending highway-watchman opposite watchman. 17On the east were *six* Levites, on the north four each day, on the south four each day, and for the storehouse[a] two by two. 18As for the Parbar[a] on the

west, *there were* four on the highway *and* two at the Parbar. [19]These were the divisions of the gatekeepers among the sons of Korah and among the sons of Merari.

**THE TREASURIES AND OTHER DUTIES**

[20]Of the Levites, Ahijah *was* over the treasuries of the house of God and over the treasuries of the dedicated things. [21]The sons of Laadan, the descendants of the Gershonites of Laadan, heads of their fathers' *houses*, of Laadan the Gershonite: Jehieli. [22]The sons of Jehieli, Zetham and Joel his brother, *were* over the treasuries of the house of the LORD. [23]Of the Amramites, the Izharites, the Hebronites, and the Uzzielites: [24]Shebuel the son of Ger-shom, the son of Moses, *was* overseer of the treasuries. [25]And his brethren by Eliezer *were* Rehabiah his son, Jeshaiah his son, Joram his son, Zichri his son, and Shelomith his son.

[26]This Shelomith and his brethren *were* over all the treasuries of the dedicated things which King David and the heads of fathers' *houses*, the captains over thousands and hundreds, and the captains of the army, had dedicated. [27]Some of the spoils won in battles they dedicated to maintain the house of the LORD. [28]And all that Samuel the seer, Saul the son of Kish, Abner the son of Ner, and Joab the son of Zeruiah had dedicated, every dedicated *thing*, was under the hand of Shelomith and his brethren.

[29]Of the Izharites, Chenaniah and his sons *performed* duties as officials and judges over Israel outside Jerusalem.

[30]Of the Hebronites, Hashabiah and his brethren, one thousand seven hundred able men, had the oversight of Israel on the west side of the Jordan for all the business of the LORD, and in the service of the king. [31]Among the Hebronites, Jerijah *was* head of the He-bronites according to his genealogy of the fathers. In the fortieth year of the reign of David they were sought, and there were found among them capable men at Jazer of Gilead. [32]And his brethren *were* two thousand seven hundred able men, heads of fathers' *houses*, whom King David made officials over the Reu-benites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Ma-nasseh, for every matter pertaining to God and the affairs of the king.

## THE MILITARY DIVISIONS

**27** And the children of Israel, according to their number, the heads of fathers' *houses,* the captains of thousands and hundreds and their officers, served the king in every matter of the *military* divisions. *These divisions* came in and went out month by month throughout all the months of the year, each division *having* twenty-four thousand.

2 Over the first division for the first month *was* Jashobeam the son of Zabdiel, and in his division *were* twenty-four thousand; 3 *he was* of the children of Perez, and the chief of all the captains of the army for the first month. 4 Over the division of the second month *was* Dodai[a] an Ahohite, and of his division Mikloth also *was* the leader; in his division *were* twenty-four thousand. 5 The third captain of the army for the third month *was* Benaiah, the son of Jehoiada the priest, who was chief; in his division *were* twenty-four thousand. 6 This was the Benaiah *who was* mighty *among* the thirty, and was over the thirty; in his division *was* Ammizabad his son. 7 The fourth *captain* for the fourth month *was* Asahel the brother of Joab, and Zebadiah his son after him; in his division *were* twenty-four thousand. 8 The fifth *captain* for the fifth month *was* Shamhuth[a] the Izrahite; in his division were twenty-four thousand. 9 The sixth *captain* for the sixth month *was* Ira the son of Ikkesh the Tekoite; in his division *were* twenty-four thousand. 10 The seventh *captain* for the seventh month *was* Helez the Pelonite, of the children of Ephraim; in his division *were* twenty-four thousand. 11 The eighth *captain* for the eighth month *was* Sibbechai the Hushathite, of the Zarhites; in his division *were* twenty-four thousand. 12 The ninth *captain* for the ninth month *was* Abiezer the Anathothite, of the Benjamites; in his division *were* twenty-four thousand. 13 The tenth *captain* for the tenth month *was* Maharai the Netophathite, of the Zarhites; in his division *were* twenty-four thousand. 14 The eleventh *captain* for the eleventh month *was* Benaiah the Pirathonite, of the children of Ephraim; in his division *were* twenty-four thousand. 15 The twelfth *captain* for the twelfth month *was* Heldai[a] the Netoph-athite, of Othniel; in his division *were* twenty-four thousand.

## LEADERS OF TRIBES

16 Furthermore, over the tribes of Israel: the officer over the Reubenites *was*
Eliezer the son of Zichri; over the Simeonites, Shephatiah the son of
Maachah; 17 *over* the Levites, Hashabiah the son of Kemuel; over the
Aaronites, Zadok; 18 *over* Judah, Elihu, *one* of David's brothers; *over*
Issachar, Omri the son of Michael; 19 *over* Zebulun, Ishmaiah the son of
Obadiah; *over* Naphtali, Jerimoth the son of Azriel; 20 *over* the children of
Ephraim, Hoshea the son of Azaziah; *over* the half-tribe of Manasseh, Joel
the son of Pedaiah; 21 *over* the half-*tribe* of Ma-nasseh in Gilead, Iddo the son
of Zechariah; *over* Benjamin, Jaasiel the son of Abner; 22 *over* Dan, Azarel
the son of Jeroham. These *were* the leaders of the tribes of Israel.

23 But David did not take the number of those twenty years old and under,
because the LORD had said He would multiply Israel like the stars of the
heavens. 24 Joab the son of Zer-uiah began a census, but he did not finish, for
wrath came upon Israel because of this census; nor was the number recorded
in the account of the chronicles of King David.

## OTHER STATE OFFICIALS

25 And Azmaveth the son of Adiel *was* over the king's treasuries; and
Jehonathan the son of Uzziah was over the storehouses in the field, in the
cities, in the villages, and in the fortresses. 26 Ezri the son of Chelub was over
those who did the work of the field for tilling the ground. 27 And Shimei the
Ramathite *was* over the vineyards, and Zabdi the Shiphmite was over the
produce of the vineyards for the supply of wine. 28 Baal-Hanan the Gederite
was over the olive trees and the sycamore trees that *were* in the lowlands, and
Joash *was* over the store of oil. 29 And Shitrai the Sharon-ite *was* over the
herds that fed in Sharon, and Shaphat the son of Adlai was over the herds *that*
*were* in the valleys. 30 Obil the Ishmaelite *was* over the camels, Jehdeiah the
Merono-thite *was* over the donkeys, 31 and Jaziz the Hagrite *was* over the
flocks. All these *were* the officials over King David's property.

32 Also Jehonathan, David's uncle, *was* a counselor, a wise man, and a
scribe; and Je-hiel the son of Hachmoni *was* with the king's sons.
33 Ahithophel *was* the king's counselor, and Hushai the Archite *was* the king's

companion. [34]After Ahithophel *was* Jehoiada the son of Benaiah, then Abiathar. And the general of the king’s army *was* Joab.

## SOLOMON INSTRUCTED TO BUILD THE TEMPLE

**28** Now David assembled at Jerusalem all the leaders of Israel: the officers of the tribes and the captains of the divisions who served the king, the captains over thousands and captains over hundreds, and the stewards over all the substance and possessions of the king and of his sons, with the officials, the valiant men, and all the mighty men of valor.

2 Then King David rose to his feet and said, "Hear me, my brethren and my people: I *had* it in my heart to build a house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and for the footstool of our God, and had made preparations to build it. 3 But God said to me, 'You shall not build a house for My name, because you *have been* a man of war and have shed blood.' 4 However the LORD God of Israel chose me above all the house of my father to be king over Israel forever, for He has chosen Judah *to be* the ruler. And of the house of Judah, the house of my father, and among the sons of my father, He was pleased with me to make *me* king over all Israel. 5 And of all my sons (for the LORD has given me many sons) He has chosen my son Solomon to sit on the throne of the kingdom of the LORD over Israel. 6 Now He said to me, 'It is your son Solomon *who* shall build My house and My courts; for I have chosen him *to be* My son, and I will be his Father. 7 Moreover I will establish his kingdom forever, if he is steadfast to observe My commandments and My judgments, as it is this day.' 8 Now therefore, in the sight of all Israel, the assembly of the LORD, and in the hearing of our God, be careful to seek out all the commandments of the LORD your God, that you may possess this good land, and leave *it* as an inheritance for your children after you forever.

9 "As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a loyal heart and with a willing mind; for the LORD searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will cast you off forever. 10 Consider now, for the LORD has chosen you to build a house for the sanctuary; be strong, and do it."

"As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a loyal heart and with a

willing mind; for the LORD searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will cast you off forever."
1 CHRONICLES 28:9

[11]Then David gave his son Solomon the plans for the vestibule, its houses, its treasuries, its upper chambers, its inner chambers, and the place of the mercy seat; [12]and the plans for all that he had by the Spirit, of the courts of the house of the LORD, of all the chambers all around, of the treasuries of the house of God, and of the treasuries for the dedicated things; [13]also for the division of the priests and the Levites, for all the work of the service of the house of the LORD, and for all the articles of service in the house of the LORD. [14]*He gave* gold by weight for *things* of gold, for all articles used in every kind of service; also *silver* for all articles of silver by weight, for all articles used in every kind of service; [15]the weight for the lampstands of gold, and their lamps of gold, by weight for each lampstand and its lamps; for the lampstands of silver by weight, for the lampstand and its lamps, according to the use of each lampstand. [16]And by weight *he gave* gold for the tables of the showbread, for each table, and silver for the tables of silver; [17]also pure gold for the forks, the basins, the pitchers of pure gold, and the golden bowls- *he gave gold* by weight for every bowl; and for the silver bowls, *silver* by weight for every bowl; [18]and refined gold by weight for the altar of incense, and for the construction of the chariot, that is, the gold cherubim that spread *their wings* and overshadowed the ark of the covenant of the LORD. [19]"All *this,*" *said David,* "the LORD made me understand in writing, by *His* hand upon me, all the works of these plans."

[20]And David said to his son Solomon, "Be strong and of good courage, and do *it;* do not fear nor be dismayed, for the LORD God-my God-*will be* with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you, until you have finished all the work for the service of the house of the LORD. [21]*Here are* the divisions of the priests and the Levites for all the service of the house of God; and every willing craftsman *will be* with you for all manner of workmanship, for every kind of service; also the leaders and all the people *will be* completely at your

command.”

## SOUL NOTE

**Omnipresent** *(28:9, 10)* David instructed Solomon to serve God “with a loyal heart and with a willing mind.” He reminded him that God “searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts.” Nothing is hidden from God. People can attempt to run from Him or hide from Him. People can pretend to be loyal to Him, but God cannot be fooled. “Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart” (1 Sam. 16:7). As believers grow spiritually, they will be sensitive to God’s presence in their lives at every moment. This will affect their every word, every action, and every thought. Remember, we always have an audience of One.
**Topic: Spiritual Growth**

## OFFERINGS FOR BUILDING THE TEMPLE

**29** Furthermore King David said to all the assembly: "My son Solomon,
whom alone God has chosen, *is* young and inexperienced; and the work
*is* great, because the temple[a] *is* not for man but for the LORD God. 2Now for
the house of my God I have prepared with all my might: gold for *things to be
made of* gold, silver for *things of* silver, bronze for *things of* bronze, iron for
*things of* iron, wood for *things of* wood, onyx stones, *stones* to be set,
glistening stones of various colors, all kinds of precious stones, and marble
slabs in abundance. 3Moreover, because I have set my affection on the house
of my God, I have given to the house of my God, over and above all that I
have prepared for the holy house, my own special treasure of gold and silver:
4three thousand talents of gold, of the gold of Ophir, and seven thousand
talents of refined silver, to overlay the walls of the houses; 5the gold for
*things of* gold and the silver for *things of* silver, and for all kinds of work *to
be done* by the hands of craftsmen. Who *then* is willing to consecrate himself
this day to the LORD?"

6Then the leaders of the fathers' *houses*, leaders of the tribes of Israel, the
captains of thousands and of hundreds, with the officers over the king's work,
offered willingly. 7They gave for the work of the house of God five thousand
talents and ten thousand darics of gold, ten thousand talents of silver,
eighteen thousand talents of bronze, and one hundred thousand talents of
iron. 8And whoever had *precious* stones gave *them* to the treasury of the
house of the LORD, into the hand of Jehiel[a] the Gershonite. 9Then the people
rejoiced, for they had offered willingly, because with a loyal heart they had
offered willingly to the LORD; and King David also rejoiced greatly.

## DAVID'S PRAISE TO GOD

10Therefore David blessed the LORD before all the assembly; and David
said:

"Blessed are You, LORD God of Israel, our
Father, forever and ever.
11 Yours, O LORD, *is* the greatness,
The power and the glory,

The victory and the majesty;
For all *that is* in heaven and in earth *is*
*Yours;*
Yours *is* the kingdom, O LORD,
And You are exalted as head over all.
12 Both riches and honor *come* from You,
And You reign over all.
In Your hand *is* power and might;
In Your hand *it is* to make great
And to give strength to all.
13 "Now therefore, our God,
We thank You
And praise Your glorious name.
14 But who *am* I, and who *are* my people,
That we should be able to offer so
willingly as this?
For all things *come* from You,
And of Your own we have given You.
15 For we *are* aliens and pilgrims before
You,
As *were* all our fathers;
Our days on earth *are* as a shadow,
And without hope.
16"O LORD our God, all this abundance that we have prepared to build You a house for Your holy name is from Your hand, and *is* all Your own. 17I know also, my God, that You test the heart and have pleasure in uprightness. As for me, in the uprightness of my heart I have willingly offered all these *things;* and now with joy I have seen Your people, who are present here to offer willingly to You. 18O LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, our fathers, keep this forever in the intent of the thoughts of the heart of Your people, and fix their heart toward You. 19And give my son Solomon a loyal heart to keep Your commandments and Your testimonies and Your statutes, to do all *these things,* and to build the temple[a] for which I have made provision."

20 Then David said to all the assembly, “Now bless the LORD your God.” So
all the assembly blessed the LORD God of their fathers, and bowed their heads
and prostrated themselves before the LORD and the king.

**SOLOMON ANOINTED KING**

21 And they made sacrifices to the LORD and offered burnt offerings to the
LORD on the next day: a thousand bulls, a thousand rams, a thousand lambs,
with their drink offerings, and sacrifices in abundance for all Israel. 22 So they
ate and drank before the LORD with great gladness on that day. And they
made Solomon the son of David king the second time, and anointed *him*
before the LORD *to be* the leader, and Zadok *to be* priest. 23 Then Solomon sat
on the throne of the LORD as king instead of David his father, and prospered;
and all Israel obeyed him. 24 All the leaders and the mighty men, and also all
the sons of King David, submitted themselves to King Solomon. 25 So the
LORD exalted Solomon exceedingly in the sight of all Israel, and bestowed on
him *such* royal majesty as had not been on any king before him in Israel.

**THE CLOSE OF DAVID’S REIGN**

26 Thus David the son of Jesse reigned over all Israel. 27 And the period that
he reigned over Israel *was* forty years; seven years he reigned in Hebron, and
thirty-three *years* he reigned in Jerusalem. 28 So he died in a good old age, full
of days and riches and honor; and Solomon his son reigned in his place.
29 Now the acts of King David, first and last, indeed they *are* written in the
book of Samuel the seer, in the book of Nathan the prophet, and in the book
of Gad the seer, 30 with all his reign and his might, and the events that
happened to him, to Israel, and to all the kingdoms of the lands.

**SOUL NOTE**

**God Has It All** *(29:10-12)* Riches and honor come from the Lord,

who reigns supreme. As David “blessed the LORD before all the assembly,” he reminded the people of Israel, as well as his son Solomon, that riches and blessing are not just the result of human work and effort, but are an expression of God’s blessing in our lives. God gives people wealth, health, wisdom, and strength so they can serve Him and build His Kingdom. **Topic: Money**

# 2 Chronicles



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# 2 Chronicles

Often things get worse before they get better. That's a theme of 2 Chronicles, "the second half" of the book written to give hope to the Hebrews following their return from exile in Babylon.

The author (likely Ezra) begins with Solomon and recounts (as he had done with David in 1 Chronicles) the highlights of his reign so as to encourage and inspire the postexilic survivors. The building of the glorious temple is a central theme, since rebuilding the temple was a primary reason the remnant had returned to Jerusalem.

Second Chronicles does document the nation's slide into idolatry and spiritual bondage. However, this bleak presentation of human depravity is seen side by side with God's redeeming love and sure promises. Though we witness the destruction of Jerusalem in the final chapter, the book ends with the divine promise that an exiled remnant would return after 70 years and rebuild Jerusalem and the temple, and that God would dwell among them.

In 2 Chronicles the contrast between good and evil kings is used to instruct and challenge the people. We see Hezekiah trusting God (and not his own resources) for military defense and victory, and we see Josiah hearing the word of the Lord and pledging to obey it, even calling the nation to follow his example. On the other hand, we see utterly evil kings like Manasseh, who made a career out of encouraging evil, constructing idols, and consulting sorcerers in the temple itself!

Second Chronicles reminds us that circumstances change and people fail, but God's promises are forever.

**SOUL CONCERNS IN**

## 2 CHRONICLES

PRIDE (26:16-19)
FAILURE (CH. 36)

## SOLOMON REQUESTS WISDOM

**1** Now Solomon the son of David was strengthened in his kingdom, and the LORD his God *was* with him and exalted him exceedingly.

2And Solomon spoke to all Israel, to the captains of thousands and of hundreds, to the judges, and to every leader in all Israel, the heads of the fathers' *houses.* 3Then Solomon, and all the assembly with him, went to the high place that *was* at Gibeon; for the tabernacle of meeting with God was there, which Moses the servant of the LORD had made in the wilderness. 4But David had brought up the ark of God from Kirjath Jearim to *the place* David had prepared for it, for he had pitched a tent for it at Jerusalem. 5Now the bronze altar that Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, had made, he put[a] before the tabernacle of the LORD; Solomon and the assembly sought Him *there.* 6And Solomon went up there to the bronze altar before the LORD, which *was* at the tabernacle of meeting, and offered a thousand burnt offerings on it.

7On that night God appeared to Solomon, and said to him, "Ask! What shall I give you?"

8And Solomon said to God: "You have shown great mercy to David my father, and have made me king in his place. 9Now, O LORD God, let Your promise to David my father be established, for You have made me king over a people like the dust of the earth in multitude. 10Now give me wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people; for who can judge this great people of Yours?"

11Then God said to Solomon: "Because this was in your heart, and you have not asked riches or wealth or honor or the life of your enemies, nor have you asked long life-but have asked wisdom and knowledge for yourself, that you may judge My people over whom I have made you king-12wisdom and knowledge *are* granted to you; and I will give you riches and wealth and honor, such as none of the kings have had who *were* before you, nor shall any after you have the like."

## SOLOMON'S MILITARY AND ECONOMIC POWER

13 So Solomon came to Jerusalem from the high place that *was* at Gibeon,
from before the tabernacle of meeting, and reigned over Israel. 14 And
Solomon gathered chariots and horsemen; he had one thousand four hundred
chariots and twelve thousand horsemen, whom he stationed in the chariot
cities and with the king in Jerusalem. 15 Also the king made silver and gold as
common in Jerusalem as stones, and he made cedars as abundant as the
sycamores which *are* in the lowland. 16 And Solomon had horses imported
from Egypt and Keveh; the king's merchants bought them in Keveh at the
*current* price. 17 They also acquired and imported from Egypt a chariot for six
hundred *shekels* of silver, and a horse for one hundred and fifty; thus, through
their agents,[a] they exported them to all the kings of the Hittites and the kings
of Syria.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Choose Wisely** *(1:11, 12)* When God asked Solomon what he wanted, Solomon chose wisdom in order to rule the nation. God was pleased that Solomon had asked for wisdom and not riches; then He gave him riches as well. Solomon could have asked for anything he wanted, but he wisely asked for the one thing every human being needs most-divine wisdom. Solomon's actions remind us of the importance of making wise choices in our lives. Wise choices may not always lead to wealth, but they will please God. Selfish choices, however, will only lead to disappointment. **Topic: Wisdom**

## SOLOMON PREPARES TO BUILD THE TEMPLE

**2** Then Solomon determined to build a temple for the name of the LORD, and
a royal house for himself. [2]Solomon selected seventy thousand men to bear
burdens, eighty thousand to quarry *stone* in the mountains, and three
thousand six hundred to oversee them.

[3]Then Solomon sent to Hiram[a] king of Tyre, saying: As you have dealt
with David my father, and sent him cedars to build himself a house to dwell
in, *so deal with me*.[4]Behold, I am building a temple for the name of the LORD
my God, to dedicate *it* to Him, to burn before Him sweet incense, for the
continual showbread, for the burnt offerings morning and evening, on the
Sabbaths, on the New Moons, and on the set feasts of the LORD our God. This
*is an ordinance* forever to Israel.

[5] And the temple which I build *will be* great, for our God is greater than all
gods. [6]But who is able to build Him a temple, since heaven and the
heaven of heavens cannot contain Him? Who *am* I then, that I should
build Him a temple, except to burn sacrifice before Him?

[7] Therefore send me at once a man skillful to work in gold and silver, in
bronze and iron, in purple and crimson and blue, who has skill to
engrave with the skillful men who are with me in Judah and Jerusalem,
whom David my father provided. [8]Also send me cedar and cypress and
algum logs from Lebanon, for I know that your servants have skill to cut
timber in Lebanon; and indeed my servants *will be* with your servants,
[9]to prepare timber for me in abundance, for the temple which I am about
to build *shall be* great and wonderful.

[10] And indeed I will give to your servants, the woodsmen who cut timber,
twenty thousand kors of ground wheat, twenty thousand kors of barley,
twenty thousand baths of wine, and twenty thousand baths of oil.

[11]Then Hiram king of Tyre answered in writing, which he sent to
Solomon:

Because the LORD loves His people, He has made you king over them.

[12]Hiram[a] also said:

Blessed *be* the LORD God of Israel, who made heaven and earth, for He has given King David

a wise son, endowed with prudence and understanding, who will build a temple for the LORD and a royal house for himself!

13 And now I have sent a skillful man, endowed with understanding,
Huram[a] my master[b] *craftsman* 14(the son of a woman of the daughters of
Dan, and his father was a man of Tyre), skilled to work in gold and
silver, bronze and iron, stone and wood, purple and blue, fine linen and
crimson, and to make any engraving and to accomplish any plan which
may be given to him, with your skillful men and with the skillful men of
my lord David your father.
15 Now therefore, the wheat, the barley, the oil, and the wine which my
lord has spoken of, let him send to his servants. 16And we will cut wood
from Lebanon, as much as you need; we will bring it to you in rafts by
sea to Joppa, and you will carry it up to Jerusalem.

17Then Solomon numbered all the aliens who *were* in the land of Israel, after the census in which David his father had numbered them; and there were found to be one hundred and fifty-three thousand six hundred. 18And he made seventy thousand of them bearers of burdens, eighty thousand stonecutters in the mountain, and three thousand six hundred overseers to make the people work.

## SOLOMON BUILDS THE TEMPLE

**3** Now Solomon began to build the house of the LORD at Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where *the LORD*[a] had appeared to his father David, at the place that David had prepared on the threshing floor of Ornan[b] the Jebusite. 2And he began to build on the second *day* of the second month in the fourth year of his reign.

3This is the foundation which Solomon laid for building the house of God: The length *was* sixty cubits (by cubits according to the former measure) and the width twenty cubits. 4And the vestibule that *was* in front *of the sanctuary*[a] was twenty cubits long across the width of the house, and the height *was* one hundred and[b] twenty. He overlaid the inside with pure gold. 5The larger room[a] he paneled with cypress which he overlaid with fine gold, and he carved palm trees and chainwork on it. 6And he decorated the house with precious stones for beauty, and the gold *was* gold from Parvaim. 7He also overlaid the house-the beams and doorposts, its walls and doors-with gold; and he carved cherubim on the walls.

8And he made the Most Holy Place. Its length was according to the width of the house, twenty cubits, and its width twenty cubits. He overlaid it with six hundred talents of fine gold. 9The weight of the nails *was* fifty shekels of gold; and he overlaid the upper area with gold. 10In the Most Holy Place he made two cherubim, fashioned by carving, and overlaid them with gold. 11The wings of the cherubim *were* twenty cubits in *overall* length: one wing *of the one cherub was* five cubits, touching the wall of the room, and the other wing *was* five cubits, touching the wing of the other cherub; 12*one* wing of the other cherub *was* five cubits, touching the wall of the room, and the other wing *also was* five cubits, touching the wing of the other cherub. 13The wings of these cherubim spanned twenty cubits overall. They stood on their feet, and they faced inward. 14And he made the veil of blue, purple, crimson, and fine linen, and wove cherubim into it.

15Also he made in front of the temple[a] two pillars thirty-five[b] cubits high, and the capital that *was* on the top of each of *them* was five cubits. 16He made wreaths of chainwork, as in the inner sanctuary, and put *them* on top of the

pillars; and he made one hundred pomegranates, and put *them* on the wreaths of chainwork. [17]Then he set up the pillars before the temple, one on the right hand and the other on the left; he called the name of the one on the right hand Jachin, and the name of the one on the left Boaz.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Well Done** *(3:1-17)* Chapters 3 and 4 describe the intricate details of the construction of the temple. The effort, the care, and the attention to detail with which the temple was constructed show that work done for God should be done well. There should be no room for shoddiness or halfhearted measures in our work for God. The quality of our service for Him reflects our attitude toward Him. **Topic: Work**

## FURNISHINGS OF THE TEMPLE

**4** Moreover he made a bronze altar: twenty cubits was its length, twenty cubits its width, and ten cubits its height.

2 Then he made the Sea of cast *bronze*, ten cubits from one brim to the other; *it was* completely round. Its height *was* five cubits, and a line of thirty cubits measured its circumference. 3 And under it *was* the likeness of oxen encircling it all around, ten to a cubit, all the way around the Sea. The oxen *were* cast in two rows, when it was cast. 4 It stood on twelve oxen: three looking toward the north, three looking toward the west, three looking toward the south, and three looking toward the east; the Sea *was set* upon them, and all their back parts *pointed* inward. 5 It *was* a handbreadth thick; and its brim was shaped like the brim of a cup, *like* a lily blossom. It contained three thousand[a] baths.

6 He also made ten lavers, and put five on the right side and five on the left, to wash in them; such things as they offered for the burnt offering they would wash in them, but the Sea *was* for the priests to wash in. 7 And he made ten lampstands of gold according to their design, and set *them* in the temple, five on the right side and five on the left. 8 He also made ten tables, and placed *them* in the temple, five on the right side and five on the left. And he made one hundred bowls of gold.

9 Furthermore he made the court of the priests, and the great court and doors for the court; and he overlaid these doors with bronze. 10 He set the Sea on the right side, toward the southeast.

11 Then Huram made the pots and the shovels and the bowls. So Huram finished doing the work that he was to do for King Solomon for the house of God: 12 the two pillars and the bowl-shaped capitals *that were* on top of the two pillars; the two networks covering the two bowl-shaped capitals which *were* on top of the pillars; 13 four hundred pomegranates for the two networks (two rows of pomegranates for each network, to cover the two bowl-shaped capitals that *were* on the pillars); 14 he also made carts and the lavers on the carts; 15 one Sea and twelve oxen under it; 16 also the pots, the shovels, the forks-and all their articles Huram his master[a] *craftsman* made of burnished

bronze for King Solomon for the house of the LORD.

17 In the plain of Jordan the king had them cast in clay molds, between
Succoth and Zeredah.[a] 18 And Solomon had all these articles made in such
great abundance that the weight of the bronze was not determined.

19 Thus Solomon had all the furnishings made for the house of God: the
altar of gold and the tables on which *was* the showbread; 20 the lamp-stands
with their lamps of pure gold, to burn in the prescribed manner in front of the
inner sanctuary, 21 with the flowers and the lamps and the wick-trimmers of
gold, of purest gold; 22 the trimmers, the bowls, the ladles, and the censers of
pure gold. As for the entry of the sanctuary, its inner doors to the Most Holy
*Place*, and the doors of the main hall of the temple, *were* gold.

**5** So all the work that Solomon had done for the house of the LORD was finished; and Solomon brought in the things which his father David had dedicated: the silver and the gold and all the furnishings. And he put *them* in the treasuries of the house of God.

**THE ARK BROUGHT INTO THE TEMPLE**

2 Now Solomon assembled the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes, the chief fathers of the children of Israel, in Jerusalem, that they might bring the ark of the covenant of the LORD up from the City of David, which *is* Zion. 3 Therefore all the men of Israel assembled with the king at the feast, which *was* in the seventh month. 4 So all the elders of Israel came, and the Levites took up the ark. 5 Then they brought up the ark, the tabernacle of meeting, and all the holy furnishings that *were* in the tabernacle. The priests and the Levites brought them up. 6 Also King Solomon, and all the congregation of Israel who were assembled with him before the ark, were sacrificing sheep and oxen that could not be counted or numbered for multitude. 7 Then the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the LORD to its place, into the inner sanctuary of the temple,[a] to the Most Holy *Place*, under the wings of the cherubim. 8 For the cherubim spread *their* wings over the place of the ark, and the cherubim overshadowed the ark and its poles. 9 The poles extended so that the ends of the poles of the ark could be seen from *the holy place*, in front of the inner sanctuary; but they could not be seen from outside. And they are there to this day. 10 Nothing was in the ark except the two tablets which Moses put *there* at Horeb, when the LORD made *a covenant* with the children of Israel, when they had come out of Egypt.

> The priests could not continue ministering because of the cloud; for the glory of the LORD filled the house of God.
> 2 CHRONICLES 5:14

11 And it came to pass when the priests came out of the *Most* Holy *Place* (for all the priests who *were* present had sanctified themselves, without keeping to their divisions), 12 and the Levites *who were* the singers, all those of Asaph and Heman and Jeduthun, with their sons and their brethren, stood at the east end of the altar, clothed in white linen, having cymbals, stringed

instruments and harps, and with them one hundred and twenty priests sounding with trumpets- [13]indeed it came to pass, when the trumpeters and singers *were* as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the LORD, and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised the LORD, *saying:*

> "*For He is* good,
> For His mercy *endures* forever,"[a]

that the house, the house of the LORD, was filled with a cloud, [14]so that the priests could not continue ministering because of the cloud; for the glory of the LORD filled the house of God.

**6** Then Solomon spoke:

"The LORD said He would dwell in the dark cloud.

2 I have surely built You an exalted house, And a place for You to dwell in forever."

## SOLOMON'S SPEECH UPON COMPLETION OF THE WORK

3 Then the king turned around and blessed the whole assembly of Israel, while all the assembly of Israel was standing. 4 And he said: "Blessed *be* the LORD God of Israel, who has fulfilled with His hands *what* He spoke with His mouth to my father David, saying, 5 'Since the day that I brought My people out of the land of Egypt, I have chosen no city from any tribe of Israel *in which* to build a house, that My name might be there, nor did I choose any man to be a ruler over My people Israel. 6 Yet I have chosen Jerusalem, that My name may be there, and I have chosen David to be over My people Israel.' 7 Now it was in the heart of my father David to build a temple[a] for the name of the LORD God of Israel. 8 But the LORD said to my father David, 'Whereas it was in your heart to build a temple for My name, you did well in that it was in your heart. 9 Nevertheless you shall not build the temple, but your son who will come from your body, he shall build the temple for My name.' 10 So the LORD has fulfilled His word which He spoke, and I have filled the position of my father David, and sit on the throne of Israel, as the LORD promised; and I have built the temple for the name of the LORD God of Israel. 11 And there I have put the ark, in which *is* the covenant of the LORD which He made with the children of Israel."

## SOLOMON'S PRAYER OF DEDICATION

12 Then *Solomon*[a] stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the assembly of Israel, and spread out his hands 13 (for Solomon had made a bronze platform five cubits long, five cubits wide, and three cubits high, and had set it in the midst of the court; and he stood on it, knelt down on his knees before all the assembly of Israel, and spread out his hands toward heaven); 14 and he said: "LORD God of Israel, *there is* no God in heaven or on earth like You, who keep *Your* covenant and mercy with Your servants who

walk before You with all their hearts. [15]You have kept what You promised
Your servant David my father; You have both spoken with Your mouth and
fulfilled *it* with Your hand, as *it is* this day. [16]Therefore, LORD God of Israel,
now keep what You promised Your servant David my father, saying, 'You
shall not fail to have a man sit before Me on the throne of Israel, only if your
sons take heed to their way, that they walk in My law as you have walked
before Me.' [17]And now, O LORD God of Israel, let Your word come true,
which You have spoken to Your servant David.

[18]"But will God indeed dwell with men on the earth? Behold, heaven and
the heaven of heavens cannot contain You. How much less this temple[a]
which I have built! [19]Yet regard the prayer of Your servant and his
supplication, O LORD my God, and listen to the cry and the prayer which
Your servant is praying before You: [20]that Your eyes may be open toward
this temple day and night, toward the place where *You* said *You would* put
Your name, that You may hear the prayer which Your servant makes toward
this place. [21]And may You hear the supplications of Your servant and of
Your people Israel, when they pray toward this place. Hear from heaven
Your dwelling place, and when You hear, forgive.

[22]"If anyone sins against his neighbor, and is forced to take an oath, and
comes *and* takes an oath before Your altar in this temple, [23]then hear from
heaven, and act, and judge Your servants, bringing retribution on the wicked
by bringing his way on his own head, and justifying the righteous by giving
him according to his righteousness.

[24]"Or if Your people Israel are defeated before an enemy because they
have sinned against You, and return and confess Your name, and pray and
make supplication before You in this temple, [25]then hear from heaven and
forgive the sin of Your people Israel, and bring them back to the land which
You gave to them and their fathers.

[26]"When the heavens are shut up and there is no rain because they have
sinned against You, when they pray toward this place and confess Your
name, and turn from their sin because You afflict them, [27]then hear *in*
heaven, and forgive the sin of Your servants, Your people Israel, that You
may teach them the good way in which they should walk; and send rain on

Your land which You have given to Your people as an inheritance.

28"When there is famine in the land, pestilence or blight or mildew, locusts or grasshoppers; when their enemies besiege them in the land of their cities; whatever plague or whatever sickness *there is;* 29whatever prayer, whatever supplication is *made* by anyone, or by all Your people Israel, when each one knows his own burden and his own grief, and spreads out his hands to this temple: 30then hear from heaven Your dwelling place, and forgive, and give to everyone according to all his ways, whose heart You know (for You alone know the hearts of the sons of men), 31that they may fear You, to walk in Your ways as long as they live in the land which You gave to our fathers.

32"Moreover, concerning a foreigner, who is not of Your people Israel, but has come from a far country for the sake of Your great name and Your mighty hand and Your outstretched arm, when they come and pray in this temple;

33then hear from heaven Your dwelling place, and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to You, that all peoples of the earth may know Your name and fear You, as *do* Your people Israel, and that they may know that this temple which I have built is called by Your name.

34"When Your people go out to battle against their enemies, wherever You send them, and when they pray to You toward this city which You have chosen and the temple which I have built for Your name, 35then hear from heaven their prayer and their supplication, and maintain their cause.

36"When they sin against You (for *there is* no one who does not sin), and You become angry with them and deliver them to the enemy, and they take them captive to a land far or near; 37*yet* when they come to themselves in the land where they were carried captive, and repent, and make supplication to You in the land of their captivity, saying, 'We have sinned, we have done wrong, and have committed wickedness'; 38and *when* they return to You with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their captivity, where they have been carried captive, and pray toward their land which You gave to their fathers, the city which You have chosen, and toward the temple which I have built for Your name: 39then hear from heaven Your dwelling place their prayer and their supplications, and maintain their cause, and forgive Your

people who have sinned against You. [40]Now, my God, I pray, let Your eyes
be open and *let* Your ears *be* attentive to the prayer *made* in this place.

[41] "Now therefore,
Arise, O LORD God, to Your resting place,
You and the ark of Your strength.
Let Your priests, O LORD God, be clothed with salvation,
And let Your saints rejoice in goodness.
[42] "O LORD God, do not turn away the face of Your Anointed;
Remember the mercies of Your servant David."[a]

**SOUL NOTE**

**God Never Fails** *(6:14-17)* Solomon had become king over Israel because of God's covenant with David, his father. God had promised David, "You shall not fail to have a man sit before Me on the throne of Israel, only if your sons take heed to their way." Even though the nation eventually went into captivity, God kept His promise, as He always does. Many of the sons (descendants) of David did not "take heed to their way," but one descendant of David does sit on the throne forever. Jesus Christ is the final fulfillment of God's promise to David, and He reigns forever. **Topic: God's Promises**

## SOLOMON DEDICATES THE TEMPLE

7 When Solomon had finished praying, fire came down from heaven and
consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD
filled the temple.[a] 2And the priests could not enter the house of the LORD,
because the glory of the LORD had filled the LORD's house. 3When all the
children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the LORD on
the temple, they bowed their faces to the ground on the pavement, and
worshiped and praised the LORD, *saying:*

"For *He is* good,
For His mercy *endures* forever."[a]

4Then the king and all the people offered sacrifices before the LORD. 5King
Solomon offered a sacrifice of twenty-two thousand bulls and one hundred
and twenty thousand sheep. So the king and all the people dedicated the
house of God. 6And the priests attended to their services; the Levites also
with instruments of the music of the LORD, which King David had made to
praise the LORD, saying, "For His mercy *endures* forever," [a] whenever David
offered praise by their ministry. The priests sounded trumpets opposite them,
while all Israel stood.

7Furthermore Solomon consecrated the middle of the court that *was* in
front of the house of the LORD; for there he offered burnt offerings and the fat
of the peace offerings, because the bronze altar which Solomon had made
was not able to receive the burnt offerings, the grain offerings, and the fat.

8At that time Solomon kept the feast seven days, and all Israel with him, a
very great assembly from the entrance of Hamath to the Brook of Egypt.[a]
9And on the eighth day they held a sacred assembly, for they observed the
dedication of the altar seven days, and the feast seven days. 10On the twenty-
third day of the seventh month he sent the people away to their tents, joyful
and glad of heart for the good that the LORD had done for David, for
Solomon, and for His people Israel. 11Thus Solomon finished the house of the
LORD and the king's house; and Solomon successfully accomplished all that
came into his heart to make in the house of the LORD and in his own house.

## GOD'S SECOND APPEARANCE TO SOLOMON

12 Then the LORD appeared to Solomon by night, and said to him: "I have
heard your prayer, and have chosen this place for Myself as a house of
sacrifice. 13 When I shut up heaven and there is no rain, or command the
locusts to devour the land, or send pestilence among My people, 14 if My
people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and
seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven,
and will forgive their sin and heal their land. 15 Now My eyes will be open
and My ears attentive to prayer *made* in this place. 16 For now I have chosen
and sanctified this house, that My name may be there forever; and My eyes
and My heart will be there perpetually. 17 As for you, if you walk before Me
as your father David walked, and do according to all that I have commanded
you, and if you keep My statutes and My judgments, 18 then I will establish
the throne of your kingdom, as I covenanted with David your father, saying,
'You shall not fail *to have* a man as ruler in Israel.'

> "If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land."
> 2 CHRONICLES 7:14

19 "But if you turn away and forsake My statutes and My commandments
which I have set before you, and go and serve other gods, and worship them,
20 then I will uproot them from My land which I have given them; and this
house which I have sanctified for My name I will cast out of My sight, and
will make it a proverb and a byword among all peoples.

21 "And *as for* this house, which is exalted, everyone who passes by it will
be astonished and say, 'Why has the LORD done thus to this land and this
house?' 22 Then they will answer, 'Because they forsook the LORD God of
their fathers, who brought them out of the land of Egypt, and embraced other
gods, and worshiped them and served them; therefore He has brought all this
calamity on them.' "

## SOLOMON'S ADDITIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS

**8** It came to pass at the end of twenty years, when Solomon had built the
house of the LORD and his own house, 2that the cities which Hiram[a] had
given to Solomon, Solomon built them; and he settled the children of Israel
there. 3And Solomon went to Hamath Zobah and seized it. 4He also built
Tadmor in the wilderness, and all the storage cities which he built in Hamath.
5He built Upper Beth Horon and Lower Beth Horon, fortified cities *with*
walls, gates, and bars, 6also Baalath and all the storage cities that Solomon
had, and all the chariot cities and the cities of the cavalry, and all that
Solomon desired to build in Jerusalem, in Lebanon, and in all the land of his
dominion.

7All the people *who were* left of the Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites,
and Jebusites, who *were* not of Israel- 8that is, their descendants who were
left in the land after them, whom the children of Israel did not destroy-from
these Solomon raised forced labor, as it is to this day. 9But Solomon did not
make the children of Israel servants for his work. Some *were* men of war,
captains of his officers, captains of his chariots, and his cavalry. 10And others
*were* chiefs of the officials of King Solomon: two hundred and fifty, who
ruled over the people.

11Now Solomon brought the daughter of Pharaoh up from the City of
David to the house he had built for her, for he said, "My wife shall not dwell
in the house of David king of Israel, because *the places* to which the ark of
the LORD has come are holy."

12Then Solomon offered burnt offerings to the LORD on the altar of the
LORD which he had built before the vestibule, 13according to the daily rate,
offering according to the commandment of Moses, for the Sabbaths, the New
Moons, and the three appointed yearly feasts-the Feast of Unleavened Bread,
the Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of Tabernacles. 14And, according to the
order of David his father, he appointed the divisions of the priests for their
service, the Levites for their duties (to praise and serve before the priests) as
the duty of each day required, and the gatekeepers by their divisions at each
gate; for so David the man of God had commanded. 15They did not depart

from the command of the king to the priests and Levites concerning any matter or concerning the treasuries.

16 Now all the work of Solomon was well-ordered from[a] the day of the
foundation of the house of the LORD until it was finished. So the house of the
LORD was completed.

17 Then Solomon went to Ezion Geber and Elath[a] on the seacoast, in the
land of Edom.

18 And Hiram sent him ships by the hand of his servants, and servants who
knew the sea. They went with the servants of Solomon to Ophir, and acquired
four hundred and fifty talents of gold from there, and brought it to King
Solomon.

## THE QUEEN OF SHEBA'S PRAISE OF SOLOMON

**9** Now when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon, she came to
Jerusalem to test Solomon with hard questions, *having* a very great retinue,
camels that bore spices, gold in abundance, and precious stones; and when
she came to Solomon, she spoke with him about all that was in her heart. 2So
Solomon answered all her questions; there was nothing so difficult for
Solomon that he could not explain it to her. 3And when the queen of Sheba
had seen the wisdom of Solomon, the house that he had built, 4the food on his
table, the seating of his servants, the service of his waiters and their apparel,
his cupbearers and their apparel, and his entryway by which he went up to the
house of the LORD, there was no more spirit in her.

5Then she said to the king: "*It was* a true report which I heard in my own
land about your words and your wisdom. 6However I did not believe their
words until I came and saw with my own eyes; and indeed the half of the
greatness of your wisdom was not told me. You exceed the fame of which I
heard. 7Happy *are* your men and happy *are* these your servants, who stand
continually before you and hear your wisdom! 8Blessed be the LORD your
God, who delighted in you, setting you on His throne *to be* king for the LORD
your God! Because your God has loved Israel, to establish them forever,
therefore He made you king over them, to do justice and righteousness."

9And she gave the king one hundred and twenty talents of gold, spices in
great abundance, and precious stones; there never were any spices such as
those the queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon.

10Also, the servants of Hiram and the servants of Solomon, who brought
gold from Ophir, brought algum[a] wood and precious stones. 11And the king
made walkways *of* the algum[a] wood for the house of the LORD and for the
king's house, also harps and stringed instruments for singers; and there were
none such *as these* seen before in the land of Judah.

12Now King Solomon gave to the queen of Sheba all she desired, whatever
she asked, *much more* than she had brought to the king. So she turned and
went to her own country, she and her servants.

## SOLOMON’S GREAT WEALTH

13 The weight of gold that came to Solomon yearly was six hundred and
sixty-six talents of gold, 14 besides *what* the traveling merchants and traders
brought. And all the kings of Arabia and governors of the country brought
gold and silver to Solomon. 15 And King Solomon made two hundred large
shields of hammered gold; six hundred *shekels* of hammered gold went into
each shield. 16 *He* also *made* three hundred shields of hammered gold; three
hundred *shekels*[a] of gold went into each shield. The king put them in the
House of the Forest of Lebanon.

17 Moreover the king made a great throne of ivory, and overlaid it with pure
gold. 18 The throne *had* six steps, with a footstool of gold, *which were*
fastened to the throne; there were armrests on either side of the place of the
seat, and two lions stood beside the armrests. 19 Twelve lions stood there, one
on each side of the six steps; nothing like *this* had been made for any *other*
kingdom.

20 All King Solomon’s drinking vessels *were* gold, and all the vessels of the
House of the Forest of Lebanon *were* pure gold. Not *one was* silver, for this
was accounted as nothing in the days of Solomon. 21 For the king’s ships went
to Tarshish with the servants of Hiram.[a] Once every three years the merchant
ships[b] came, bringing gold, silver, ivory, apes, and monkeys. [c]

22 So King Solomon surpassed all the kings of the earth in riches and
wisdom. 23 And all the kings of the earth sought the presence of Solomon to
hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart. 24 Each man brought his
present: articles of silver and gold, garments, armor, spices, horses, and
mules, at a set rate year by year.

25 Solomon had four thousand stalls for horses and chariots, and twelve
thousand horsemen whom he stationed in the chariot cities and with the king
at Jerusalem.

26 So he reigned over all the kings from the River[a] to the land of the
Philistines, as far as the border of Egypt. 27 The king made silver *as common*
in Jerusalem as stones, and he made cedar trees as abundant as the sycamores
which *are* in the lowland. 28 And they brought horses to Solomon from Egypt

and from all lands.

**DEATH OF SOLOMON**

[29]Now the rest of the acts of Solomon, first and last, *are* they not written in the book of Nathan the prophet, in the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite, and in the visions of Iddo the seer concerning Jeroboam the son of Nebat? [30]Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel forty years. [31]Then Solomon rested with his fathers, and was buried in the City of David his father. And Rehoboam his son reigned in his place.

## THE REVOLT AGAINST REHOBOAM

**10** And Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all Israel had gone to Shechem to
make him king. 2So it happened, when Jeroboam the son of Nebat heard
*it* (he was in Egypt, where he had fled from the presence of King Solomon),
that Jeroboam returned from Egypt. 3Then they sent for him and called him.
And Jeroboam and all Israel came and spoke to Rehoboam, saying, 4"Your
father made our yoke heavy; now therefore, lighten the burdensome service
of your father and his heavy yoke which he put on us, and we will serve
you."

5So he said to them, "Come back to me after three days." And the people
departed.

6Then King Rehoboam consulted the elders who stood before his father
Solomon while he still lived, saying, "How do you advise *me* to answer these
people?"

7And they spoke to him, saying, "If you are kind to these people, and
please them, and speak good words to them, they will be your servants
forever."

8But he rejected the advice which the elders had given him, and consulted
the young men who had grown up with him, who stood before him. 9And he
said to them, "What advice do you give? How should we answer this people
who have spoken to me, saying, 'Lighten the yoke which your father put on
us'?"

10Then the young men who had grown up with him spoke to him, saying,
"Thus you should speak to the people who have spoken to you, saying, 'Your
father made our yoke heavy, but you make *it* lighter on us'-thus you shall say
to them: 'My little *finger* shall be thicker than my father's waist! 11And now,
whereas my father put a heavy yoke on you, I will add to your yoke; my
father chastised you with whips, but I *will chastise you* with scourges!' "***a***

12So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam on the third day, as
the king had directed, saying, "Come back to me the third day." 13Then the
king answered them roughly. King Rehoboam rejected the advice of the

elders, [14]and he spoke to them according to the advice of the young men, saying, “My father[a] made your yoke heavy, but I will add to it; my father chastised you with whips, but I *will chastise you* with scourges!”[b] [15]So the king did not listen to the people; for the turn *of events* was from God, that the LORD might fulfill His word, which He had spoken by the hand of Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat.

[16]Now when all Israel *saw* that the king did not listen to them, the people answered the king, saying:

> “What share have we in David?
>
> *We have* no inheritance in the son of Jesse.
>
> Every man to your tents, O Israel!
>
> Now see to your own house, O David!”

So all Israel departed to their tents. [17]But Rehoboam reigned over the children of Israel who dwelt in the cities of Judah.

[18]Then King Rehoboam sent Hadoram, who *was* in charge of revenue; but the children of Israel stoned him with stones, and he died. Therefore King Rehoboam mounted *his* chariot in haste to flee to Jerusalem. [19]So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day.

**11** Now when Rehoboam came to Jerusalem, he assembled from the house of Judah and Benjamin one hundred and eighty thousand chosen *men* who were warriors, to fight against Israel, that he might restore the kingdom to Rehoboam.

2But the word of the LORD came to Shemaiah the man of God, saying, 3"Speak to Rehoboam the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and to all Israel in Judah and Benjamin, saying, 4'Thus says the LORD: "You shall not go up or fight against your brethren! Let every man return to his house, for this thing is from Me." ' " Therefore they obeyed the words of the LORD, and turned back from attacking Jeroboam.

## REHOBOAM FORTIFIES THE CITIES

5So Rehoboam dwelt in Jerusalem, and built cities for defense in Judah. 6And he built Bethlehem, Etam, Tekoa, 7Beth Zur, Sochoh, Adullam, 8Gath, Mareshah, Ziph, 9Adoraim, Lachish, Azekah, 10Zorah, Aijalon, and Hebron, which are in Judah and Benjamin, fortified cities. 11And he fortified the strongholds, and put captains in them, and stores of food, oil, and wine. 12Also in every city *he put* shields and spears, and made them very strong, having Judah and Benjamin on his side.

## PRIESTS AND LEVITES MOVE TO JUDAH

13And from all their territories the priests and the Levites who *were* in all Israel took their stand with him. 14For the Levites left their common-lands and their possessions and came to Judah and Jerusalem, for Jeroboam and his sons had rejected them from serving as priests to the LORD. 15Then he appointed for himself priests for the high places, for the demons, and the calf idols which he had made. 16And after *the Levites left,*[a] those from all the tribes of Israel, such as set their heart to seek the LORD God of Israel, came to Jerusalem to sacrifice to the LORD God of their fathers. 17So they strengthened the kingdom of Judah, and made Rehoboam the son of Solomon strong for three years, because they walked in the way of David and Solomon for three years.

**THE FAMILY OF REHOBOAM**

18 Then Rehoboam took for himself as wife Mahalath the daughter of
Jerimoth the son of David, *and of* Abihail the daughter of Eliah the son of
Jesse. 19 And she bore him children:

Jeush, Shamariah, and Zaham. 20 After her he took Maachah the
granddaughter[a] of Absalom; and she bore him Abijah, Attai, Ziza, and
Shelomith. 21 Now Rehoboam loved Maachah the granddaughter of Absalom
more than all his wives and his concubines; for he took eighteen wives and
sixty concubines, and begot twenty-eight sons and sixty daughters. 22 And
Rehoboam appointed Abijah the son of Maachah as chief, *to be* leader among
his brothers; for he *intended* to make him king. 23 He dealt wisely, and
dispersed some of his sons throughout all the territories of Judah and
Benjamin, to every fortified city; and he gave them provisions in abundance.
He also sought many wives *for them.*

## EGYPT ATTACKS JUDAH

**12** Now it came to pass, when Rehoboam had established the kingdom and
had strengthened himself, that he forsook the law of the LORD, and all
Israel along with him. 2And it happened in the fifth year of King Re-hoboam
*that* Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, because they had
transgressed against the LORD, 3with twelve hundred chariots, sixty thousand
horsemen, and people without number who came with him out of Egypt-the
Lubim and the Sukkiim and the Ethiopians. 4And he took the fortified cities
of Judah and came to Jerusalem.

5Then Shemaiah the prophet came to Reho-boam and the leaders of Judah,
who were gathered together in Jerusalem because of Shishak, and said to
them, "Thus says the LORD: 'You have forsaken Me, and therefore I also
have left you in the hand of Shishak.' "

6So the leaders of Israel and the king humbled themselves; and they said,
"The LORD *is* righteous."

7Now when the LORD saw that they humbled themselves, the word of the
LORD came to Shemaiah, saying, "They have humbled themselves; *therefore*
I will not destroy them, but I will grant them some deliverance. My wrath
shall not be poured out on Jerusalem by the hand of Shishak. 8Nevertheless
they will be his servants, that they may distinguish My service from the
service of the kingdoms of the nations."

9So Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, and took away the
treasures of the house of the LORD and the treasures of the king's house; he
took everything. He also carried away the gold shields which Solomon had
made. 10Then King Rehoboam made bronze shields in their place, and
committed *them* to the hands of the captains of the guard, who guarded the
doorway of the king's house. 11And whenever the king entered the house of
the LORD, the guard would go and bring them out; then they would take them
back into the guardroom. 12When he humbled himself, the wrath of the LORD
turned from him, so as not to destroy *him* completely; and things also went
well in Judah.

**THE END OF REHOBOAM'S REIGN**

13 Thus King Rehoboam strengthened himself in Jerusalem and reigned. Now Rehoboam *was* forty-one years old when he became king; and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which the LORD had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, to put His name there. His mother's name *was* Naamah, an Ammonitess.

14 And he did evil, because he did not prepare his heart to seek the LORD.

15 The acts of Rehoboam, first and last, *are* they not written in the book of Shemaiah the prophet, and of Iddo the seer concerning genealogies? And *there were* wars between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all their days. 16 So Rehoboam rested with his fathers, and was buried in the City of David. Then Abijah[a] his son reigned in his place.

**ABIJAH REIGNS IN JUDAH**

**13** In the eighteenth year of King Jeroboam, Abijah became king over
Judah. [2]He reigned three years in Jerusalem. His mother's name *was*
Michaiah[a] the daughter of Uriel of Gibeah.

And there was war between Abijah and Jeroboam. [3]Abijah set the battle in
order with an army of valiant warriors, four hundred thousand choice men.
Jeroboam also drew up in battle formation against him with eight hundred
thousand choice men, mighty men of valor.

[4]Then Abijah stood on Mount Zemaraim, which *is* in the mountains of
Ephraim, and said, "Hear me, Jeroboam and all Israel: [5]Should you not know
that the LORD God of Israel gave the dominion over Israel to David forever,
to him and his sons, by a covenant of salt? [6]Yet Jeroboam the son of Nebat,
the servant of Solomon the son of David, rose up and rebelled against his
lord. [7]Then worthless rogues gathered to him, and strengthened themselves
against Rehoboam the son of Solomon, when Rehoboam was young and
inexperienced and could not withstand them. [8]And now you think to
withstand the kingdom of the LORD, which is in the hand of the sons of
David; and you *are* a great multitude, and with you are the gold calves which
Jeroboam made for you as gods. [9]Have you not cast out the priests of the
LORD, the sons of Aaron, and the Levites, and made for yourselves priests,
like the peoples of *other* lands, so that whoever comes to consecrate himself
with a young bull and seven rams may be a priest of *things that are* not gods?
[10]But as for us, the LORD *is* our God, and we have not forsaken Him; and the
priests who minister to the LORD *are* the sons of Aaron, and the Levites
*attend* to *their* duties. [11]And they burn to the LORD every morning and every
evening burnt sacrifices and sweet incense; *they* also *set* the showbread *in
order on* the pure *gold* table, and the lampstand of gold with its lamps to burn
every evening; for we keep the command of the LORD our God, but you have
forsaken Him. [12]Now look, God Himself is with us as *our* head, and His
priests with sounding trumpets to sound the alarm against you. O children of
Israel, do not fight against the LORD God of your fathers, for you shall not
prosper!"

13 But Jeroboam caused an ambush to go around behind them; so they were
in front of Judah, and the ambush *was* behind them. 14 And when Judah
looked around, to their surprise the battle line *was* at both front and rear; and
they cried out to the LORD, and the priests sounded the trumpets. 15 Then the
men of Judah gave a shout; and as the men of Judah shouted, it happened that
God struck Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah. 16 And the
children of Israel fled before Judah, and God delivered them into their hand.
17 Then Abijah and his people struck them with a great slaughter; so five
hundred thousand choice men of Israel fell slain. 18 Thus the children of Israel
were subdued at that time; and the children of Judah prevailed, because they
relied on the LORD God of their fathers.

19 And Abijah pursued Jeroboam and took cities from him: Bethel with its
villages, Jesha-nah with its villages, and Ephrain[a] with its villages. 20 So
Jeroboam did not recover strength again in the days of Abijah; and the LORD
struck him, and he died.

21 But Abijah grew mighty, married fourteen wives, and begot twenty-two
sons and sixteen daughters. 22 Now the rest of the acts of Abijah, his ways,
and his sayings *are* written in the annals of the prophet Iddo.

**14** So Abijah rested with his fathers, and they buried him in the City of David. Then Asa his son reigned in his place. In his days the land was quiet for ten years.

**ASA REIGNS IN JUDAH**

2 Asa did *what was* good and right in the eyes of the LORD his God, 3 for he removed the altars of the foreign *gods* and the high places, and broke down the *sacred* pillars and cut down the wooden images. 4 He commanded Judah to seek the LORD God of their fathers, and to observe the law and the commandment. 5 He also removed the high places and the incense altars from all the cities of Judah, and the kingdom was quiet under him. 6 And he built fortified cities in Judah, for the land had rest; he had no war in those years, because the LORD had given him rest. 7 Therefore he said to Judah, "Let us build these cities and make walls around *them,* and towers, gates, and bars, *while* the land *is* yet before us, because we have sought the LORD our God; we have sought *Him,* and He has given us rest on every side." So they built and prospered. 8 And Asa had an army of three hundred thousand from Judah who carried shields and spears, and from Benjamin two hundred and eighty thousand men who carried shields and drew bows; all these *were* mighty men of valor.

9 Then Zerah the Ethiopian came out against them with an army of a million men and three hundred chariots, and he came to Mareshah. 10 So Asa went out against him, and they set the troops in battle array in the Valley of Zephathah at Mareshah. 11 And Asa cried out to the LORD his God, and said, "LORD, *it is* nothing for You to help, whether with many or with those who have no power; help us, O LORD our God, for we rest on You, and in Your name we go against this multitude. O LORD, You *are* our God; do not let man prevail against You!"

12 So the LORD struck the Ethiopians before Asa and Judah, and the Ethiopians fled. 13 And Asa and the people who *were* with him pursued them to Gerar. So the Ethiopians were overthrown, and they could not recover, for they were broken before the LORD and His army. And they carried away very much spoil.

14 Then they defeated all the cities around Gerar, for the fear of the LORD
came upon them; and they plundered all the cities, for there was exceedingly
much spoil in them. 15 They also attacked the livestock enclosures, and
carried off sheep and camels in abundance, and returned to Jerusalem.

## THE REFORMS OF ASA

**15** Now the Spirit of God came upon Aza-riah the son of Oded. 2And he
went out to meet Asa, and said to him: “Hear me, Asa, and all Judah and
Benjamin. The LORD *is* with you while you are with Him. If you seek Him,
He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you. 3For a
long time Israel *has been* without the true God, without a teaching priest, and
without law; 4but when in their trouble they turned to the LORD God of Israel,
and sought Him, He was found by them. 5And in those times *there was* no
peace to the one who went out, nor to the one who came in, but great turmoil
*was* on all the inhabitants of the lands. 6So nation was destroyed by nation,
and city by city, for God troubled them with every adversity. 7But you, be
strong and do not let your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded!”

8And when Asa heard these words and the prophecy of Oded[a] the prophet,
he took courage, and removed the abominable idols from all the land of
Judah and Benjamin and from the cities which he had taken in the mountains
of Ephraim; and he restored the altar of the LORD that *was* before the
vestibule of the LORD. 9Then he gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and those
who dwelt with them from Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon, for they came
over to him in great numbers from Israel when they saw that the LORD his
God was with him.

10So they gathered together at Jerusalem in the third month, in the fifteenth
year of the reign of Asa. 11And they offered to the LORD at that time seven
hundred bulls and seven thousand sheep from the spoil they had brought.
12Then they entered into a covenant to seek the LORD God of their fathers
with all their heart and with all their soul; 13and whoever would not seek the
LORD God of Israel was to be put to death, whether small or great, whether
man or woman. 14Then they took an oath before the LORD with a loud voice,
with shouting and trumpets and rams’ horns. 15And all Judah rejoiced at the
oath, for they had sworn with all their heart and sought Him with all their
soul; and He was found by them, and the LORD gave them rest all around.

16Also he removed Maachah, the mother of Asa the king, from *being*
queen mother, because she had made an obscene image of Asherah;[a] and Asa

cut down her obscene image, then crushed and burned *it* by the Brook Kidron. [17]But the high places were not removed from Israel. Nevertheless the heart of Asa was loyal all his days.

[18]He also brought into the house of God the things that his father had dedicated and that he himself had dedicated: silver and gold and utensils. [19]And there was no war until the thirty-fifth year of the reign of Asa.

## ASA'S TREATY WITH SYRIA

**16** In the thirty-sixth year of the reign of Asa, Baasha king of Israel came up
against Judah and built Ramah, that he might let none go out or come in
to Asa king of Judah. 2Then Asa brought silver and gold from the treasuries
of the house of the LORD and of the king's house, and sent to Ben-Hadad king
of Syria, who dwelt in Damascus, saying, 3"*Let there be* a treaty between you
and me, as there was between my father and your father. See, I have sent you
silver and gold; come, break your treaty with Baasha king of Israel, so that he
will withdraw from me."

4So Ben-Hadad heeded King Asa, and sent the captains of his armies
against the cities of Israel. They attacked Ijon, Dan, Abel Maim, and all the
storage cities of Naphtali. 5Now it happened, when Baasha heard *it*, that he
stopped building Ramah and ceased his work. 6Then King Asa took all Judah,
and they carried away the stones and timber of Ramah, which Baasha had
used for building; and with them he built Geba and Mizpah.

## HANANI'S MESSAGE TO ASA

7And at that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah, and said to
him: "Because you have relied on the king of Syria, and have not relied on
the LORD your God, therefore the army of the king of Syria has escaped from
your hand. 8Were the Ethiopians and the Lubim not a huge army with very
many chariots and horsemen? Yet, because you relied on the LORD, He
delivered them into your hand. 9For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro
throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of *those* whose
heart *is* loyal to Him. In this you have done foolishly; therefore from now on
you shall have wars." 10Then Asa was angry with the seer, and put him in
prison, for *he was* enraged at him because of this. And Asa oppressed *some*
of the people at that time.

## ILLNESS AND DEATH OF ASA

11Note that the acts of Asa, first and last, are indeed written in the book of
the kings of Judah and Israel. 12And in the thirty-ninth year of his reign, Asa
became diseased in his feet, and his malady was severe; yet in his disease he

did not seek the LORD, but the physicians.

13 So Asa rested with his fathers; he died in the forty-first year of his reign.
14 They buried him in his own tomb, which he had made for himself in the
City of David; and they laid him in the bed which was filled with spices and
various ingredients prepared in a mixture of ointments. They made a very
great burning for him.

## JEHOSHAPHAT REIGNS IN JUDAH

**17** Then Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his place, and strengthened himself
against Israel. 2And he placed troops in all the fortified cities of Judah,
and set garrisons in the land of Judah and in the cities of Ephraim which Asa
his father had taken. 3Now the LORD was with Jehoshaphat, because he
walked in the former ways of his father David; he did not seek the Baals, 4but
sought the God[a] of his father, and walked in His commandments and not
according to the acts of Israel. 5Therefore the LORD established the kingdom
in his hand; and all Judah gave presents to Jehoshaphat, and he had riches and
honor in abundance. 6And his heart took delight in the ways of the LORD;
moreover he removed the high places and wooden images from Judah.

7Also in the third year of his reign he sent his leaders, Ben-Hail, Obadiah,
Zechariah, Nethanel, and Michaiah, to teach in the cities of Judah. 8And with
them *he sent* Levites: Shemaiah, Nethaniah, Zebadiah, Asahel, Shemiramoth,
Jehonathan, Adonijah, Tobijah, and Tobadonijah-the Levites; and with them
Elishama and Jehoram, the priests. 9So they taught in Judah, and *had* the
Book of the Law of the LORD with them; they went throughout all the cities
of Judah and taught the people.

10And the fear of the LORD fell on all the kingdoms of the lands that *were*
around Judah, so that they did not make war against Jehoshaphat. 11Also
*some* of the Philistines brought Jehoshaphat presents and silver as tribute; and
the Arabians brought him flocks, seven thousand seven hundred rams and
seven thousand seven hundred male goats.

12So Jehoshaphat became increasingly powerful, and he built fortresses
and storage cities in Judah. 13He had much property in the cities of Judah;
and the men of war, mighty men of valor, *were* in Jerusalem.

14These *are* their numbers, according to their fathers' houses. Of Judah, the
captains of thousands: Adnah the captain, and with him three hundred
thousand mighty men of valor; 15and next to him *was* Jehohanan the captain,
and with him two hundred and eighty thousand; 16and next to him *was*
Amasiah the son of Zichri, who willingly offered himself to the LORD, and
with him two hundred thousand mighty men of valor. 17Of Benjamin: Eliada

a mighty man of valor, and with him two hundred thousand men armed with bow and shield; [18]and next to him *was* Jehozabad, and with him one hundred and eighty thousand prepared for war. [19]These served the king, besides those the king put in the fortified cities throughout all Judah.

## MICAIAH WARNS AHAB

**18** Jehoshaphat had riches and honor in abundance; and by marriage he
allied himself with Ahab. 2 After some years he went down to *visit* Ahab
in Samaria; and Ahab killed sheep and oxen in abundance for him and the
people who were with him, and persuaded him to go up *with him* to Ramoth
Gilead. 3 So Ahab king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat king of Judah, "Will you
go with me *against* Ramoth Gilead?"

And he answered him, "I *am* as you *are*, and my people as your people; *we will be* with you in the war."

4 Also Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, "Please inquire for the word of the LORD today."

5 Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, four hundred men, and said to them, "Shall we go to war against Ramoth Gil-ead, or shall I refrain?"

So they said, "Go up, for God will deliver it into the king's hand."

6 But Jehoshaphat said, "*Is there* not still a prophet of the LORD here, that we may inquire of Him?"[a]

7 So the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "*There is* still one man by whom we may inquire of the LORD; but I hate him, because he never prophesies good concerning me, but always evil. He *is* Micaiah the son of Imla."

And Jehoshaphat said, "Let not the king say such things!"

8 Then the king of Israel called one *of his* officers and said, "Bring Micaiah the son of Imla quickly!"

9 The king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah, clothed in *their* robes, sat each on his throne; and they sat at a threshing floor at the entrance of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets prophesied before them. 10 Now Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah had made horns of iron for himself; and he said, "Thus says the LORD: 'With these you shall gore the Syrians until they are destroyed.' "

11 And all the prophets prophesied so, saying, "Go up to Ramoth Gilead

and prosper, for the LORD will deliver *it* into the king's hand."

12 Then the messenger who had gone to call Micaiah spoke to him, saying, "Now listen, the words of the prophets with one accord encourage the king. Therefore please let your word be like *the word of* one of them, and speak encouragement."

13 And Micaiah said, "*As* the LORD lives, whatever my God says, that I will speak."

14 Then he came to the king; and the king said to him, "Micaiah, shall we go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or shall I refrain?"

And he said, "Go and prosper, and they shall be delivered into your hand!"

15 So the king said to him, "How many times shall I make you swear that you tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?"

16 Then he said, "I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd. And the LORD said, 'These have no master. Let each return to his house in peace.' "

17 And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "Did I not tell you he would not prophesy good concerning me, but evil?"

18 Then *Micaiah* said, "Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing on His right hand and His left. 19 And the LORD said, 'Who will persuade Ahab king of Israel to go up, that he may fall at Ramoth Gilead?' So one spoke in this manner, and another spoke in that manner. 20 Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD, and said, 'I will persuade him.' The LORD said to him, 'In what way?' 21 So he said, 'I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.' And *the LORD* said, 'You shall persuade *him* and also prevail; go out and do so.' 22 Therefore look! The LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouth of these prophets of yours, and the LORD has declared disaster against you."

23 Then Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah went near and struck Micaiah on the cheek, and said, "Which way did the spirit from the LORD go from me to speak to you?"

24 And Micaiah said, "Indeed you shall see on that day when you go into an

inner chamber to hide!”

25 Then the king of Israel said, “Take Micaiah, and return him to Amon the
governor of the city and to Joash the king’s son; 26 and say, ‘Thus says the
king: “Put this *fellow* in prison, and feed him with bread of affliction and
water of affliction, until I return in peace.” ’ ”

27 But Micaiah said, “If you ever return in peace, the LORD has not spoken
by me.” And he said, “Take heed, all you people!”

**AHAB DIES IN BATTLE**

28 So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went up to
Ramoth Gilead. 29 And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, “I will disguise
myself and go into battle; but you put on your robes.” So the king of Israel
disguised himself, and they went into battle.

30 Now the king of Syria had commanded the captains of the chariots who
*were* with him, saying, “Fight with no one small or great, but only with the
king of Israel.”

31 So it was, when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they
said, “It *is* the king of Israel!” Therefore they surrounded him to attack; but
Jehoshaphat cried out, and the LORD helped him, and God diverted them from
him. 32 For so it was, when the captains of the chariots saw that it was not the
king of Israel, that they turned back from pursuing him. 33 Now a certain man
drew a bow at random, and struck the king of Israel between the joints of his
armor. So he said to the driver of his chariot, “Turn around and take me out
of the battle, for I am wounded.” 34 The battle increased that day, and the king
of Israel propped *himself* up in *his* chariot facing the Syrians until evening;
and about the time of sunset he died.

**19** Then Jehoshaphat the king of Judah returned safely to his house in
Jerusalem. 2 And Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him,
and said to King Je-hoshaphat, “Should you help the wicked and love those
who hate the LORD? Therefore the wrath of the LORD *is* upon you.
3 Nevertheless good things are found in you, in that you have removed the
wooden images from the land, and have prepared your heart to seek God.”

## THE REFORMS OF JEHOSHAPHAT

4 So Jehoshaphat dwelt at Jerusalem; and he went out again among the
people from Beersheba to the mountains of Ephraim, and brought them back
to the LORD God of their fathers. 5 Then he set judges in the land throughout
all the fortified cities of Judah, city by city, 6 and said to the judges, “Take
heed to what you are doing, for you do not judge for man but for the LORD,
who *is* with you in the judgment. 7 Now therefore, let the fear of the LORD be
upon you; take care and do *it,* for *there is* no iniquity with the LORD our God,
no partiality, nor taking of bribes.”

8 Moreover in Jerusalem, for the judgment of the LORD and for
controversies, Jehoshaphat appointed some of the Levites and priests, and
some of the chief fathers of Israel, when they returned to Jerusalem.*a* 9 And he
commanded them, saying, “Thus you shall act in the fear of the LORD,
faithfully and with a loyal heart: 10 Whatever case comes to you from your
brethren who dwell in their cities, whether of bloodshed or offenses against
law or commandment, against statutes or ordinances, you shall warn them,
lest they trespass against the LORD and wrath come upon you and your
brethren. Do this, and you will not be guilty. 11 And take notice: Amariah the
chief priest *is* over you in all matters of the LORD; and Zebadiah the son of
Ishmael, the ruler of the house of Judah, for all the king’s matters; also the
Levites *will be* officials before you. Behave courageously, and the LORD will
be with the good.”

**AMMON, MOAB, AND MOUNT SEIR DEFEATED**

**20** It happened after this *that* the people of Moab with the people of Ammon, and *others* with them besides the Ammonites, [a] came to battle against Jehoshaphat. [2]Then some came and told Jehoshaphat, saying, "A great multitude is coming against you from beyond the sea, from Syria;[a] and they are in Hazazon Tamar" (which *is* En Gedi). [3]And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. [4]So Judah gathered together to ask *help* from the LORD; and from all the cities of Judah they came to seek the LORD.

[5]Then Jehoshaphat stood in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the LORD, before the new court, [6]and said: "O LORD God of our fathers, *are* You not God in heaven, and do You *not* rule over all the kingdoms of the nations, and in Your hand *is there not* power and might, so that no one is able to withstand You? [7]*Are* You not our God, *who* drove out the inhabitants of this land before Your people Israel, and gave it to the descendants of Abraham Your friend forever? [8]And they dwell in it, and have built You a sanctuary in it for Your name, saying, [9]'If disaster comes upon us-sword, judgment, pestilence, or famine-we will stand before this temple and in Your presence (for Your name *is* in this temple), and cry out to You in our affliction, and You will hear and save.' [10]And now, here are the people of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir-whom You would not let Israel invade when they came out of the land of Egypt, but they turned from them and did not destroy them- [11]here they are, rewarding us by coming to throw us out of Your possession which You have given us to inherit. [12]O our God, will You not judge them? For we have no power against this great multitude that is coming against us; nor do we know what to do, but our eyes *are* upon You."

[13]Now all Judah, with their little ones, their wives, and their children, stood before the LORD.

[14]Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, the son of Bena-iah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, in the midst of the assembly. [15]And he said, "Listen, all you of Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem, and you, King Jehoshaphat! Thus says the

LORD to you: ‘Do not be afraid nor dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle *is* not yours, but God’s. [16]Tomorrow go down against them. They will surely come up by the Ascent of Ziz, and you will find them at the end of the brook before the Wilderness of Jeruel. [17]You will not *need* to fight in this *battle.* Position yourselves, stand still and see the salvation of the LORD, who is with you, O Judah and Jerusalem!’ Do not fear or be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them, for the LORD *is* with you.”

[18]And Jehoshaphat bowed his head with *his* face to the ground, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem bowed before the LORD, worshiping the LORD. [19]Then the Levites of the children of the Kohathites and of the children of the Korahites stood up to praise the LORD God of Israel with voices loud and high.

[20]So they rose early in the morning and went out into the Wilderness of Tekoa; and as they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, “Hear me, O Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem: Believe in the LORD your God, and you shall be established; believe His prophets, and you shall prosper.” [21]And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed those who should sing to the LORD, and who should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army and were saying:

> “Praise the LORD,
> For His mercy *endures* forever.”[a]

[22]Now when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushes against the people of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah; and they were defeated. [23]For the people of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of Mount Seir to utterly kill and destroy *them.* And when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, they helped to destroy one another.

[24]So when Judah came to a place overlooking the wilderness, they looked toward the multitude; and there *were* their dead bodies, fallen on the earth. No one had escaped.

[25]When Jehoshaphat and his people came to take away their spoil, they found among them an abundance of valuables on the dead bodies,[a] and precious jewelry, which they stripped off for themselves, more than they

could carry away; and they were three days gathering the spoil because there was so much. [26]And on the fourth day they assembled in the Valley of Berachah, for there they blessed the LORD; therefore the name of that place was called The Valley of Berachah[a] until this day. [27]Then they returned, every man of Judah and Jerusalem, with Jehoshaphat in front of them, to go back to Jerusalem with joy, for the LORD had made them rejoice over their enemies. [28]So they came to Jerusalem, with stringed instruments and harps and trumpets, to the house of the LORD. [29]And the fear of God was on all the kingdoms of *those* countries when they heard that the LORD had fought against the enemies of Israel. [30]Then the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet, for his God gave him rest all around.

**THE END OF JEHOSHAPHAT'S REIGN**

[31]So Jehoshaphat was king over Judah. *He was* thirty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother's name *was* Azubah the daughter of Shilhi. [32]And he walked in the way of his father Asa, and did not turn aside from it, doing *what was* right in the sight of the LORD. [33]Nevertheless the high places were not taken away, for as yet the people had not directed their hearts to the God of their fathers.

[34]Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, first and last, indeed they *are* written in the book of Jehu the son of Hanani, which *is* mentioned in the book of the kings of Israel.

[35]After this Jehoshaphat king of Judah allied himself with Ahaziah king of Israel, who acted very wickedly. [36]And he allied himself with him to make ships to go to Tarshish, and they made the ships in Ezion Geber. [37]But Eliezer the son of Dodavah of Mareshah prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, "Because you have allied yourself with Ahaziah, the LORD has destroyed your works." Then the ships were wrecked, so that they were not able to go to Tarshish.

## SOUL NOTE

**A Desperate Call** *(20:20)* Jehoshaphat faced a serious crisis when he was attacked by his enemies on all sides. In his greatest moment of desperation, he ordered the nation of Israel to worship the Lord and call upon Him for deliverance. He said, “Believe in the LORD your God, and you shall be established.” We can call on God even in the greatest crises and challenges of life. Jehoshaphat knew that he was inadequate to win this battle without God’s help, so he focused the nation’s attention on the only One who really could deliver them, the Lord Himself. **Topic: Crises**

## JEHORAM REIGNS IN JUDAH

**21** And Jehoshaphat rested with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the City of David. Then Jehoram his son reigned in his place. 2He had brothers, the sons of Jehoshaphat: Azariah, Jehiel, Zechariah,

Azaryahu, Michael, and Shephatiah; all these *were* the sons of Jehoshaphat king of Israel. 3Their father gave them great gifts of silver and gold and precious things, with fortified cities in Judah; but he gave the kingdom to Jehoram, because he *was* the firstborn. 4Now when Jehoram was established over the kingdom of his father, he strengthened himself and killed all his brothers with the sword, and also *others* of the princes of Israel.

5Jehoram *was* thirty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem. 6And he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, just as the house of Ahab had done, for he had the daughter of Ahab as a wife; and he did evil in the sight of the LORD. 7Yet the LORD would not destroy the house of David, because of the covenant that He had made with David, and since He had promised to give a lamp to him and to his sons forever.

8In his days Edom revolted against Judah's authority, and made a king over themselves. 9So Jehoram went out with his officers, and all his chariots with him. And he rose by night and attacked the Edomites who had surrounded him and the captains of the chariots. 10Thus Edom has been in revolt against Judah's authority to this day. At that time Libnah revolted against his rule, because he had forsaken the LORD God of his fathers. 11Moreover he made high places in the mountains of Judah, and caused the inhabitants of Jerusalem to commit harlotry, and led Judah astray.

12And a letter came to him from Elijah the prophet, saying,

> Thus says the LORD God of your father David:
> Because you have not walked in the ways of Jehoshaphat your father, or in the ways of Asa king of Judah, 13but have walked in the way of the kings of Israel, and have made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to play the harlot like the harlotry of the house of Ahab, and also have killed your brothers, those of your father's household, *who were* better than yourself, 14behold, the LORD will strike your people with a serious affliction-your children, your wives, and all your possessions; 15and you *will become* very sick with a disease of your

intestines, until your intestines come out by reason of the sickness, day by day.

16 Moreover the LORD stirred up against Jehoram the spirit of the Philistines
and the Arabians who *were* near the Ethiopians. 17 And they came up into
Judah and invaded it, and carried away all the possessions that were found in
the king's house, and also his sons and his wives, so that there was not a son
left to him except Jehoahaz,[a] the youngest of his sons.

18 After all this the LORD struck him in his intestines with an incurable
disease. 19 Then it happened in the course of time, after the end of two years,
that his intestines came out because of his sickness; so he died in severe pain.
And his people made no burning for him, like the burning for his fathers.

20 He was thirty-two years old when he became king. He reigned in
Jerusalem eight years and, to no one's sorrow, departed. However they buried
him in the City of David, but not in the tombs of the kings.

## AHAZIAH REIGNS IN JUDAH

**22** Then the inhabitants of Jerusalem made Ahaziah his youngest son king in his place, for the raiders who came with the Arabians into the camp had killed all the older *sons*. So Ahaziah the son of Jehoram, king of Judah, reigned. 2Ahaziah *was* forty-two[a] years old when he became king, and he reigned one year in Jerusalem. His mother's name *was* Athaliah the granddaughter of Omri. 3He also walked in the ways of the house of Ahab, for his mother advised him to do wickedly. 4Therefore he did evil in the sight of the LORD, like the house of Ahab; for they were his counselors after the death of his father, to his destruction. 5He also followed their advice, and went with Jehoram[a] the son of Ahab king of Israel to war against Hazael king of Syria at Ramoth Gilead; and the Syrians wounded Jo-ram. 6Then he returned to Jezreel to recover from the wounds which he had received at Ramah, when he fought against Hazael king of Syria. And Azariah[a] the son of Jehoram, king of Judah, went down to see Jehoram the son of Ahab in Jezreel, because he was sick.

7His going to Joram was God's occasion for Ahaziah's downfall; for when he arrived, he went out with Jehoram against Jehu the son of Nimshi, whom the LORD had anointed to cut off the house of Ahab. 8And it happened, when Jehu was executing judgment on the house of Ahab, and found the princes of Judah and the sons of Ahaziah's brothers who served Ahaziah, that he killed them. 9Then he searched for Ahaziah; and they caught him (he was hiding in Samaria), and brought him to Jehu. When they had killed him, they buried him, "because," they said, "he is the son of Jehoshaphat, who sought the LORD with all his heart."

So the house of Ahaziah had no one to assume power over the kingdom.

## ATHALIAH REIGNS IN JUDAH

10Now when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the royal heirs of the house of Judah. 11But Jehoshabeath,[a] the daughter of the king, took Joash the son of Ahaziah, and stole him away from among the king's sons who were being murdered, and

put him and his nurse in a bedroom. So Jehoshabeath, the daughter of King Jehoram, the wife of Jehoiada the priest (for she was the sister of Ahaziah), hid him from Athaliah so that she did not kill him. [12]And he was hidden with them in the house of God for six years, while Athali-ah reigned over the land.

## JOASH CROWNED KING OF JUDAH

**23** In the seventh year Jehoiada strengthened himself, *and made a* covenant
with the captains of hundreds: Azariah the son of Jeroham, Ishmael the
son of Jehohanan, Azariah the son of Obed, Maaseiah the son of Adaiah, and
Elishaphat the son of Zichri. 2And they went throughout Judah and gathered
the Levites from all the cities of Judah, and the chief fathers of Israel, and
they came to Jerusalem.

3Then all the assembly made a covenant with the king in the house of God.
And he said to them, "Behold, the king's son shall reign, as the LORD has said
of the sons of David. 4This *is* what you shall do: One-third of you entering on
the Sabbath, of the priests and the Levites, *shall be* keeping watch over the
doors; 5one-third *shall be* at the king's house; and one-third at the Gate of the
Foundation. All the people *shall be* in the courts of the house of the LORD.
6But let no one come into the house of the LORD except the priests and those
of the Levites who serve. They may go in, for they *are* holy; but all the
people shall keep the watch of the LORD. 7And the Levites shall surround the
king on all sides, every man with his weapons in his hand; and whoever
comes into the house, let him be put to death. You are to be with the king
when he comes in and when he goes out."

8So the Levites and all Judah did according to all that Jehoiada the priest
commanded. And each man took his men who were to be on duty on the
Sabbath, with those who were going *off duty* on the Sabbath; for Jehoiada the
priest had not dismissed the divisions. 9And Jehoiada the priest gave to the
captains of hundreds the spears and the large and small shields which *had*
*belonged* to King David, that *were* in the temple of God. 10Then he set all the
people, every man with his weapon in his hand, from the right side of the
temple to the left side of the temple, along by the altar and by the temple, all
around the king. 11And they brought out the king's son, put the crown on
him, *gave him* the Testimony,[a] and made him king. Then Jehoiada and his
sons anointed him, and said, "*Long* live the king!"

## DEATH OF ATHALIAH

12 Now when Athaliah heard the noise of the people running and praising
the king, she came to the people *in* the temple of the LORD. 13 *When*
she looked, there was the king standing by his pillar at the entrance; and the
leaders and the trumpeters *were* by the king. All the people of the land were
rejoicing and blowing trumpets, also the singers with musical instruments,
and those who led in praise. So Athaliah tore her clothes and said, "Treason!
Treason!"

14 And Jehoiada the priest brought out the captains of hundreds who were
set over the army, and said to them, "Take her outside under guard, and slay
with the sword whoever follows her." For the priest had said, "Do not kill her
in the house of the LORD."

15 So they seized her; and she went by way of the entrance of the Horse
Gate *into* the king's house, and they killed her there.

16 Then Jehoiada made a covenant between himself, the people, and the
king, that they should be the LORD's people. 17 And all the people went to the
temple[a] of Baal, and tore it down. They broke in pieces its altars and images,
and killed Mattan the priest of Baal before the altars. 18 Also Jehoiada
appointed the oversight of the house of the LORD to the hand of the priests,
the Levites, whom David had assigned in the house of the LORD, to offer the
burnt offerings of the LORD, as *it is* written in the Law of Moses, with
rejoicing and with singing, *as it was established* by David. 19 And he set the
gatekeepers at the gates of the house of the LORD, so that no one *who was* in
any way unclean should enter.

20 Then he took the captains of hundreds, the nobles, the governors of the
people, and all the people of the land, and brought the king down from the
house of the LORD; and they went through the Upper Gate to the king's
house, and set the king on the throne of the kingdom. 21 So all the people of
the land rejoiced; and the city was quiet, for they had slain Athaliah with the
sword.

## JOASH REPAIRS THE TEMPLE

**24** Joash *was* seven years old when he became king, and he reigned forty
years in Jerusalem. His mother's name *was* Zibiah of Beersheba. [2]Joash
did *what was* right in the sight of the LORD all the days of Jehoiada the priest.
[3]And Jehoiada took two wives for him, and he had sons and daughters.

[4]Now it happened after this *that* Joash set his heart on repairing the house
of the LORD. [5]Then he gathered the priests and the Levites, and said to them,
"Go out to the cities of Judah, and gather from all Israel money to repair the
house of your God from year to year, and see that you do it quickly."

However the Levites did not do it quickly. [6]So the king called Jehoiada the
chief *priest,* and said to him, "Why have you not required the Levites to bring
in from Judah and from Jerusalem the collection, *according to the commandment* of Moses the servant of the LORD and of the assembly of
Israel, for the tabernacle of witness?" [7]For the sons of Athaliah, that wicked
woman, had broken into the house of God, and had also presented all the
dedicated things of the house of the LORD to the Baals.

[8]Then at the king's command they made a chest, and set it outside at the
gate of the house of the LORD. [9]And they made a proclamation throughout
Judah and Jerusalem to bring to the LORD the collection *that* Moses the
servant of God *had imposed* on Israel in the wilderness. [10]Then all the leaders
and all the people rejoiced, brought their contributions, and put *them* into the
chest until all had given. [11]So it was, at that time, when the chest was brought
to the king's official by the hand of the Levites, and when they saw that *there was* much money, that the king's scribe and the high priest's officer came
and emptied the chest, and took it and returned it to its place. Thus they did
day by day, and gathered money in abundance.

[12]The king and Jehoiada gave it to those who did the work of the service of
the house of the LORD; and they hired masons and carpenters to repair the
house of the LORD, and also those who worked in iron and bronze to restore
the house of the LORD. [13]So the workmen labored, and the work was
completed by them; they restored the house of God to its original condition
and reinforced it. [14]When they had finished, they brought the rest of the

money before the king and Jehoiada; they made from it articles for the house of the LORD, articles for serving and offering, spoons and vessels of gold and silver. And they offered burnt offerings in the house of the LORD continually all the days of Jehoiada.

## APOSTASY OF JOASH

15 But Jehoiada grew old and was full of days, and he died; *he was* one hundred and thirty years old when he died. 16 And they buried him in the City of David among the kings, because he had done good in Israel, both toward God and His house.

17 Now after the death of Jehoiada the leaders of Judah came and bowed down to the king. And the king listened to them. 18 Therefore they left the house of the LORD God of their fathers, and served wooden images and idols; and wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem because of their trespass. 19 Yet He sent prophets to them, to bring them back to the LORD; and they testified against them, but they would not listen.

20 Then the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, who stood above the people, and said to them, "Thus says God: 'Why do you transgress the commandments of the LORD, so that you cannot prosper? Because you have forsaken the LORD, He also has forsaken you.' " 21 So they conspired against him, and at the command of the king they stoned him with stones in the court of the house of the LORD. 22 Thus Joash the king did not remember the kindness which Je-hoiada his father had done to him, but killed his son; and as he died, he said, "The LORD look on *it,* and repay!"

## DEATH OF JOASH

23 So it happened in the spring of the year *that* the army of Syria came up against him; and they came to Judah and Jerusalem, and destroyed all the leaders of the people from among the people, and sent all their spoil to the king of Damascus. 24 For the army of the Syrians came with a small company of men; but the LORD delivered a very great army into their hand, because they had forsaken the LORD God of their fathers. So they executed judgment against Joash. 25 And when they had withdrawn from him (for they left him severely wounded), his own servants conspired against him because of the

blood of the sons[a] of Jehoiada the priest, and killed him on his bed. So he died. And they buried him in the City of David, but they did not bury him in the tombs of the kings.

[26]These are the ones who conspired against him: Zabad[a] the son of Shimeath the Ammonitess, and Jehozabad the son of Shimrith[b] the Moabitess. [27]Now *concerning* his sons, and the many oracles about him, and the repairing of the house of God, indeed they *are* written in the annals of the book of the kings. Then Amaziah his son reigned in his place.

## AMAZIAH REIGNS IN JUDAH

**25** Amaziah *was* twenty-five years old *when* he became king, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name *was* Jehoaddan of Jerusalem. 2And he did *what was* right in the sight of the LORD, but not with a loyal heart.

3Now it happened, as soon as the kingdom was established for him, that he executed his servants who had murdered his father the king. 4However he did not execute their children, but *did* as *it is* written in the Law in the Book of Moses, where the LORD commanded, saying, "The fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor shall the children be put to death for their fathers; but a person shall die for his own sin."[a]

## THE WAR AGAINST EDOM

5Moreover Amaziah gathered Judah together and set over them captains of thousands and captains of hundreds, according to *their* fathers' houses, throughout all Judah and Benjamin; and he numbered them from twenty years old and above, and found them to be three hundred thousand choice *men, able* to go to war, who could handle spear and shield. 6He also hired one hundred thousand mighty men of valor from Israel for one hundred talents of silver. 7But a man of God came to him, saying, "O king, do not let the army of Israel go with you, for the LORD *is* not with Israel-*not with* any of the children of Ephraim. 8But if you go, be gone! Be strong in battle! *Even so,* God shall make you fall before the enemy; for God has power to help and to overthrow."

9Then Amaziah said to the man of God, "But what *shall we* do about the hundred talents which I have given to the troops of Israel?"

And the man of God answered, "The LORD is able to give you much more than this." 10So Amaziah discharged the troops that had come to him from Ephraim, to go back home. Therefore their anger was greatly aroused against Judah, and they returned home in great anger.

11Then Amaziah strengthened himself, and leading his people, he went to the Valley of Salt and killed ten thousand of the people of Seir. 12Also the

children of Judah took captive ten thousand alive, brought them to the top of the rock, and cast them down from the top of the rock, so that they all were dashed in pieces.

13 But as for the soldiers of the army which Amaziah had discharged, so that they would not go with him to battle, they raided the cities of Judah from Samaria to Beth Horon, killed three thousand in them, and took much spoil.

14 Now it was so, after Amaziah came from the slaughter of the Edomites, that he brought the gods of the people of Seir, set them up *to be* his gods, and bowed down before them and burned incense to them. 15 Therefore the anger of the LORD was aroused against Amaziah, and He sent him a prophet who said to him, "Why have you sought the gods of the people, which could not rescue their own people from your hand?"

16 So it was, as he talked with him, that *the king* said to him, "Have we made you the king's counselor? Cease! Why should you be killed?"

Then the prophet ceased, and said, "I know that God has determined to destroy you, because you have done this and have not heeded my advice."

**ISRAEL DEFEATS JUDAH**

17 Now Amaziah king of Judah asked advice and sent to Joash[a] the son of Jehoahaz, the son of Jehu, king of Israel, saying, "Come, let us face one another *in battle*."

18 And Joash king of Israel sent to Amaziah king of Judah, saying, "The thistle that *was* in Lebanon sent to the cedar that was in Lebanon, saying, 'Give your daughter to my son as wife'; and a wild beast that *was* in Lebanon passed by and trampled the thistle. 19 Indeed you say that you have defeated the Edomites, and your heart is lifted up to boast. Stay at home now; why should you meddle with trouble, that you should fall-you and Judah with you?"

20 But Amaziah would not heed, for it *came* from God, that He might give them into the hand *of their enemies,* because they sought the gods of Edom. 21 So Joash king of Israel went out; and he and Amaziah king of Judah faced one another at Beth Shemesh, which *belongs* to Judah. 22 And Judah was defeated by Israel, and every man fled to his tent. 23 Then Joash the king of

Israel captured Ama-ziah king of Judah, the son of Joash, the son of Jehoahaz, at Beth Shemesh; and he brought him to Jerusalem, and broke down the wall of Jerusalem from the Gate of Ephraim to the Corner Gate-four hundred cubits. [24]And *he took* all the gold and silver, all the articles that were found in the house of God with Obed-Edom, the treasures of the king's house, and hostages, and returned to Samaria.

**DEATH OF AMAZIAH**

[25]Amaziah the son of Joash, king of Judah, lived fifteen years after the death of Joash the son of Jehoahaz, king of Israel. [26]Now the rest of the acts of Amaziah, from first to last, indeed *are* they not written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel? [27]After the time that Amaziah turned away from following the LORD, they made a conspiracy against him in Jerusalem, and he fled to Lachish; but they sent after him to Lachish and killed him there. [28]Then they brought him on horses and buried him with his fathers in the City of Judah.

## UZZIAH REIGNS IN JUDAH

**26** Now all the people of Judah took Uzziah,[a] who *was* sixteen years old,
and made him king instead of his father Amaziah. [2]He built Elath[a] and
restored it to Judah, after the king rested with his fathers.

[3]Uzziah *was* sixteen years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-
two years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jecholiah of Jerusalem. [4]And
he did *what was* right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father
Amaziah had done. [5]He sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had
understanding in the visions[a] of God; and as long as he sought the LORD, God
made him prosper.

[6]Now he went out and made war against the Philistines, and broke down
the wall of Gath, the wall of Jabneh, and the wall of Ashdod; and he built
cities *around* Ashdod and among the Philistines. [7]God helped him against the
Philistines, against the Arabians who lived in Gur Baal, and against the
Meunites. [8]Also the Ammonites brought tribute to Uzziah. His fame spread
as far as the entrance of Egypt, for he became exceedingly strong.

[9]And Uzziah built towers in Jerusalem at the Corner Gate, at the Valley
Gate, and at the corner buttress of the wall; then he fortified them. [10]Also he
built towers in the desert. He dug many wells, for he had much livestock,
both in the lowlands and in the plains; *he also had* farmers and vinedressers
in the mountains and in Carmel, for he loved the soil.

[11]Moreover Uzziah had an army of fighting men who went out to war by
companies, according to the number on their roll as prepared by Jeiel the
scribe and Maaseiah the officer, under the hand of Hananiah, *one* of the
king's captains. [12]The total number of chief officers[a] of the mighty men of
valor *was* two thousand six hundred. [13]And under their authority *was* an army
of three hundred and seven thousand five hundred, that made war with
mighty power, to help the king against the enemy.

[14]Then Uzziah prepared for them, for the entire army, shields, spears,
helmets, body armor, bows, and slings *to cast* stones. [15]And he made devices
in Jerusalem, invented by skillful men, to be on the towers and the corners, to

shoot arrows and large stones. So his fame spread far and wide, for he was marvelously helped till he became strong.

**THE PENALTY FOR UZZIAH'S PRIDE**

16 But when he was strong his heart was lifted up, to *his* destruction, for he transgressed against the LORD his God by entering the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense. 17 So Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him were eighty priests of the LORD-valiant men. 18 And they withstood King Uzziah, and said to him, "*It* is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the LORD, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron, who are consecrated to burn incense. Get out of the sanctuary, for you have trespassed! You *shall have* no honor from the LORD God."

19 Then Uzziah became furious; and he *had* a censer in his hand to burn incense. And while he was angry with the priests, leprosy broke out on his forehead, before the priests in the house of the LORD, beside the incense altar. 20 And Azariah the chief priest and all the priests looked at him, and there, on his forehead, he *was* leprous; so they thrust him out of that place. Indeed he also hurried to get out, because the LORD had struck him.

21 King Uzziah was a leper until the day of his death. He dwelt in an isolated house, because he was a leper; for he was cut off from the house of the LORD. Then Jotham his son *was* over the king's house, judging the people of the land.

22 Now the rest of the acts of Uzziah, from first to last, the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz wrote. 23 So Uzziah rested with his fathers, and they buried him with his fathers in the field of burial which *belonged* to the kings, for they said, "He is a leper." Then Jotham his son reigned in his place.

**PRIDE PROBLEMS**

# STUART BRISCOE

## (2 Chronicles 26:16-19)

**T**here is a fine balance between pride and confidence. On the positive side, confidence is necessary for success. On the negative side, however, pride often leads to self-destruction. We want to be confident in what God has given us to do and what God thinks of us. Yet we don't want to have a big head and an inflated opinion about ourselves. God wants us to have a good self-image, but not to be proud.

### THE PITFALLS OF PRIDE

We all need the faith to develop confidence in God, being careful not to place our confidence in ourselves. Pride motivates people to do what is best for themselves-even at the expense of others. Pride tells people that they deserve to be rewarded, promoted, and applauded. Pride won't allow people to admit their weaknesses and reach out for help. In fact, pride is the greatest factor in keeping people from seeking counseling because they don't think that they need anyone's help in dealing with their problems. Some people are so proud and self-confident that they won't even consult the Lord. They can't trust God with their lives because they prefer to trust their own instincts and abilities.

When some people begin to experience a degree of success, they become overly confident of their own abilities. They behave as if no one else in the world can do what they can do. That is to say, they get an exaggerated sense of their own importance and are puffed up with pride, making it difficult for most people to work with them. They may become boastful, arrogant, and rude. Boasting is their way of trying to look good when they suspect that they are not good. It is a private advertising business, a little campaign to publicize an image

of themselves. Arrogance is an anxious grasp for power when they fear that they are weak. Rudeness is putting people down in order to hold themselves up.

## GOD'S WORD AND PRIDE

Pride is the root expression of our sinful nature. Pride is so puffed up with its own importance that it can't listen to another voice with a contrary opinion to its own. Both the Old and New Testaments use "pride" in the negative sense. Pride caused Adam and Eve to violate God's Word (Gen. 3:4-6). Pride motivated Satan to rebel against God, which led to his fall. Isaiah 14:13, 14 and Ezekiel 28:11-19 are often taken as descriptions of Satan's fall. Pride, which motivated this powerful angel to set his will against God's, is portrayed as the culprit.

In the New Testament, Paul warns against several expressions of pride. Pride is particularly dangerous in the non-Christian who seeks to earn salvation. Because salvation is and must be a work of God for human beings rather than a work of human beings for God, reliance on one's own efforts distorts the gospel message. Salvation is a gift of God. It is through faith in Jesus Christ, not because of any self-achievement in which a person could take pride. Paul wrote, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast" (Eph. 2:8, 9).

The Bible says that God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble (Prov. 3:34). Jesus exemplified the virtues of meekness, kindness, and humility (Matt. 5:3-10).

## HUMILITY CONQUERS PRIDE

Humility, on the other hand, is always looking for someone to listen to, not for someone to talk to. Humility bends near those who are hurting, focusing attention on the need. Pride tells people they don't

need anyone else. Humility tells them that they can't do anything without God. Humility reminds people that God is the source of their gifts and abilities. He alone can empower people to serve Him. Pride is the arrogant refusal to let God be God. Pride is saying, "I'm something apart from God." Humility says, "I am something because of God."

Love, by its very nature, is humble. Love is primarily concerned with the other's well-being, irrespective of the cost to itself. Love isn't puffed up with its own importance. Love empties itself in self-sacrifice, making the other person feel good. Love is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

So how do we grow humility? First, we need a healthy view of God. When Isaiah looked through the door of heaven in prayer, he said, "I saw the Lord" (Is. 6:1). He saw the Lord in all His majesty and glory and worship, and then he saw himself and realized his own great sinfulness (Is. 6:5).

Second, we spend a lot of time in worship. We use the Word of God as a mirror. Every time we read the Bible, we look for the Lord and then we look at ourselves. When we look into God's Word, we have to see not only Him, but a reflection of who we are.

Finally, we can also do a lot of praising. Gratitude helps us cope with pride and keeps us where we should be-humbly thanking God for who He is and what He is doing through us.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of pride include:

- Deuteronomy 8:11-20
- Psalm 10:2-11
- Proverbs 8:13; 13:10; 28:25; 29:23

- Obadiah 3, 4
- Acts 12:22, 23
- Romans 12:3
- 2 Timothy 3:2-5

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on pride at James 4:6-10. See also the personality profile of The Pride of the King of Tyre.

## JOTHAM REIGNS IN JUDAH

**27** Jotham *was* twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned
sixteen years in Jerusalem. His mother's name *was* Jerushah[a] the
daughter of Zadok. 2And he did *what was* right in the sight of the LORD,
according to all that his father Uzziah had done (although he did not enter the
temple of the LORD). But still the people acted corruptly.

3He built the Upper Gate of the house of the LORD, and he built extensively
on the wall of Ophel. 4Moreover he built cities in the mountains of Judah, and
in the forests he built fortresses and towers. 5He also fought with the king of
the Ammonites and defeated them. And the people of Ammon gave him in
that year one hundred talents of silver, ten thousand kors of wheat, and ten
thousand of barley. The people of Ammon paid this to him in the second and
third years also. 6So Jotham became mighty, because he prepared his ways
before the LORD his God.

7Now the rest of the acts of Jotham, and all his wars and his ways, indeed
they *are* written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah. 8He was twenty-
five years old when he became king, and he reigned sixteen years in
Jerusalem. 9So Jotham rested with his fathers, and they buried him in the City
of David. Then Ahaz his son reigned in his place.

## AHAZ REIGNS IN JUDAH

**28** Ahaz *was* twenty years old when he became king, and he reigned sixteen
years in Jerusalem; and he did not do *what was* right in the sight of the
LORD, as his father David *had done*. 2For he walked in the ways of the kings
of Israel, and made molded images for the Baals. 3He burned incense in the
Valley of the Son of Hinnom, and burned his children in the fire, according to
the abominations of the nations whom the LORD had cast out before the
children of Israel. 4And he sacrificed and burned incense on the high places,
on the hills, and under every green tree.

## SYRIA AND ISRAEL DEFEAT JUDAH

5Therefore the LORD his God delivered him into the hand of the king of
Syria. They defeated him, and carried away a great multitude of them as
captives, and brought *them* to Damascus. Then he was also delivered into the
hand of the king of Israel, who defeated him with a great slaughter. 6For
Pekah the son of Remaliah killed one hundred and twenty thousand in Judah
in one day, all valiant men, because they had forsaken the LORD God of their
fathers. 7Zichri, a mighty man of Ephraim, killed Maaseiah the king's son,
Azrikam the officer over the house, and Elkanah *who was* second to the king.
8And the children of Israel carried away captive of their brethren two hundred
thousand women, sons, and daughters; and they also took away much spoil
from them, and brought the spoil to Samaria.

## ISRAEL RETURNS THE CAPTIVES

9But a prophet of the LORD was there, whose name *was* Oded; and he went
out before the army that came to Samaria, and said to them: "Look, because
the LORD God of your fathers was angry with Judah, He has delivered them
into your hand; but you have killed them in a rage *that* reaches up to heaven.
10And now you propose to force the children of Judah and Jerusalem to be
your male and female slaves; *but are* you not also guilty before the LORD
your God? 11Now hear me, therefore, and return the captives, whom you
have taken captive from your brethren, for the fierce wrath of the LORD *is*
upon you."

12 Then some of the heads of the children of Ephraim, Azariah the son of
Johanan, Berechiah the son of Meshillemoth, Jehizkiah the son of Shallum,
and Amasa the son of Hadlai, stood up against those who came from the war,
13 and said to them, “You shall not bring the captives here, for we *already*
have offended the LORD. You intend to add to our sins and to our guilt; for
our guilt is great, and *there is* fierce wrath against Israel.” 14 So the armed
men left the captives and the spoil before the leaders and all the assembly.
15 Then the men who were designated by name rose up and took the captives,
and from the spoil they clothed all who were naked among them, dressed
them and gave them sandals, gave them food and drink, and anointed them;
and they let all the feeble ones ride on donkeys. So they brought them to their
brethren at Jericho, the city of palm trees. Then they returned to Samaria.

## ASSYRIA REFUSES TO HELP JUDAH

16 At the same time King Ahaz sent to the kings[a] of Assyria to help him.
17 For again the Edomites had come, attacked Judah, and carried away
captives. 18 The Philistines also had invaded the cities of the lowland and of
the South of Judah, and had taken Beth Shemesh, Aijalon, Gederoth, Sochoh
with its villages, Timnah with its villages, and Gimzo with its villages; and
they dwelt there. 19 For the LORD brought Judah low because of Ahaz king of
Israel, for he had encouraged moral decline in Judah and had been
continually unfaithful to the LORD. 20 Also Tiglath-Pileser[a] king of Assyria
came to him and distressed him, and did not assist him. 21 For Ahaz took part
*of the treasures* from the house of the LORD, from the house of the king, and
from the leaders, and he gave *it* to the king of Assyria; but he did not help
him.

## APOSTASY AND DEATH OF AHAZ

22 Now in the time of his distress King Ahaz became increasingly
unfaithful to the LORD. This *is that* King Ahaz. 23 For he sacrificed to the gods
of Damascus which had defeated him, saying, “Because the gods of the kings
of Syria help them, I will sacrifice to them that they may help me.” But they
were the ruin of him and of all Israel. 24 So Ahaz gathered the articles of the
house of God, cut in pieces the articles of the house of God, shut up the doors

of the house of the LORD, and made for himself altars in every corner of Jerusalem. [25]And in every single city of Judah he made high places to burn incense to other gods, and provoked to anger the LORD God of his fathers.

[26]Now the rest of his acts and all his ways, from first to last, indeed they *are* written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. [27]So Ahaz rested with his fathers, and they buried him in the city, in Jerusalem; but they did not bring him into the tombs of the kings of Israel. Then Hezekiah his son reigned in his place.

## HEZEKIAH REIGNS IN JUDAH

**29** Hezekiah became king *when he was* twenty-five years old, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name *was* Abijah[a] the daughter of Zechariah. 2And he did *what was* right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father David had done.

## HEZEKIAH CLEANSES THE TEMPLE

3In the first year of his reign, in the first month, he opened the doors of the house of the LORD and repaired them. 4Then he brought in the priests and the Levites, and gathered them in the East Square, 5and said to them: "Hear me, Levites! Now sanctify yourselves, sanctify the house of the LORD God of your fathers, and carry out the rubbish from the holy *place*. 6For our fathers have trespassed and done evil in the eyes of the LORD our God; they have forsaken Him, have turned their faces away from the dwelling place of the LORD, and turned *their* backs *on Him*. 7They have also shut up the doors of the vestibule, put out the lamps, and have not burned incense or offered burnt offerings in the holy *place* to the God of Israel. 8Therefore the wrath of the LORD fell upon Judah and Jerusalem, and He has given them up to trouble, to desolation, and to jeering, as you see with your eyes. 9For indeed, because of this our fathers have fallen by the sword; and our sons, our daughters, and our wives *are* in captivity.

10"Now *it is* in my heart to make a covenant with the LORD God of Israel, that His fierce wrath may turn away from us. 11My sons, do not be negligent now, for the LORD has chosen you to stand before Him, to serve Him, and that you should minister to Him and burn incense."

12Then these Levites arose: Mahath the son of Amasai and Joel the son of Azariah, of the sons of the Kohathites; of the sons of Merari, Kish the son of Abdi and Azariah the son of Jehallelel; of the Gershonites, Joah the son of Zimmah and Eden the son of Joah; 13of the sons of Elizaphan, Shimri and Jeiel; of the sons of Asaph, Zechariah and Mattaniah; 14of the sons of Heman, Jehiel and Shimei; and of the sons of Jeduthun, Shemaiah and Uzziel.

15And they gathered their brethren, sanctified themselves, and went

according to the commandment of the king, at the words of the LORD, to cleanse the house of the LORD. [16]Then the priests went into the inner part of the house of the LORD to cleanse *it,* and brought out all the debris that they found in the temple of the LORD to the court of the house of the LORD. And the Levites took *it* out and carried *it* to the Brook Kidron.

[17]Now they began to sanctify on the first *day* of the first month, and on the eighth day of the month they came to the vestibule of the LORD. So they sanctified the house of the LORD in eight days, and on the sixteenth day of the first month they finished.

[18]Then they went in to King Hezekiah and said, "We have cleansed all the house of the LORD, the altar of burnt offerings with all its articles, and the table of the showbread with all its articles. [19]Moreover all the articles which King Ahaz in his reign had cast aside in his transgression we have prepared and sanctified; and there they *are,* before the altar of the LORD."

**HEZEKIAH RESTORES TEMPLE WORSHIP**

[20]Then King Hezekiah rose early, gathered the rulers of the city, and went up to the house of the LORD. [21]And they brought seven bulls, seven rams, seven lambs, and seven male goats for a sin offering for the kingdom, for the sanctuary, and for Judah. Then he commanded the priests, the sons of Aaron, to offer *them* on the altar of the LORD. [22]So they killed the bulls, and the priests received the blood and sprinkled *it* on the altar. Likewise they killed the rams and sprinkled the blood on the altar. They also killed the lambs and sprinkled the blood on the altar. [23]Then they brought out the male goats *for* the sin offering before the king and the assembly, and they laid their hands on them. [24]And the priests killed them; and they presented their blood on the altar as a sin offering to make an atonement for all Israel, for the king commanded *that* the burnt offering and the sin offering *be made* for all Israel.

[25]And he stationed the Levites in the house of the LORD with cymbals, with stringed instruments, and with harps, according to the commandment of David, of Gad the king's seer, and of Nathan the prophet; for thus *was* the commandment of the LORD by His prophets. [26]The Levites stood with the instruments of David, and the priests with the trumpets. [27]Then Hezekiah

commanded *them* to offer the burnt offering on the altar. And when the burnt offering began, the song of the LORD *also* began, with the trumpets and with the instruments of David king of Israel. [28]So all the assembly worshiped, the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded; all *this continued* until the burnt offering was finished. [29]And when they had finished offering, the king and all who were present with him bowed and worshiped. [30]Moreover King Hezekiah and the leaders commanded the Levites to sing praise to the LORD with the words of David and of Asaph the seer. So they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshiped.

[31]Then Hezekiah answered and said, "Now *that* you have consecrated yourselves to the LORD, come near, and bring sacrifices and thank offerings into the house of the LORD." So the assembly brought in sacrifices and thank offerings, and as many as were of a willing heart *brought* burnt offerings. [32]And the number of the burnt offerings which the assembly brought was seventy bulls, one hundred rams, *and* two hundred lambs; all these *were* for a burnt offering to the LORD. [33]The consecrated things *were* six hundred bulls and three thousand sheep. [34]But the priests were too few, so that they could not skin all the burnt offerings; therefore their brethren the Levites helped them until the work was ended and until the *other* priests had sanctified themselves, for the Levites were more diligent in sanctifying themselves than the priests.

[35]Also the burnt offerings *were* in abundance, with the fat of the peace offerings and *with* the drink offerings for *every* burnt offering.

So the service of the house of the LORD was set in order. [36]Then Hezekiah and all the people rejoiced that God had prepared the people, since the events took place so suddenly.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Sudden and Decisive** *(29:1, 2)* Hezekiah was determined to restore

the nation to spiritual greatness. “He did what was right in the sight of the LORD,” and challenged the priests (29:4) and the rulers (29:20) to renew their commitments to God. He cleansed the temple and restored proper worship, bringing about a dramatic spiritual revival. So dramatic were his actions that the changes seemed to have taken place suddenly (29:36). Spiritual revival may result from a long process of growth and commitment. It also may come suddenly as a result of a deliberate and decisive response to God’s calling in our lives. **Topic: Restoration**

## HEZEKIAH KEEPS THE PASSOVER

**30** And Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, and also wrote letters to
Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the LORD
at Jerusalem, to keep the Passover to the LORD God of Israel. 2For the king
and his leaders and all the assembly in Jerusalem had agreed to keep the
Passover in the second month. 3For they could not keep it at the regular
time,*a* because a sufficient number of priests had not consecrated themselves,
nor had the people gathered together at Jerusalem. 4And the matter pleased
the king and all the assembly. 5So they resolved to make a proclamation
throughout all Israel, from Beersheba to Dan, that they should come to keep
the Passover to the LORD God of Israel at Jerusalem, since they had not done
*it* for a long *time* in the *prescribed* manner.

6Then the runners went throughout all Israel and Judah with the letters
from the king and his leaders, and spoke according to the command of the
king: “Children of Israel, return to the LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and
Israel; then He will return to the remnant of you who have escaped from the
hand of the kings of Assyria. 7And do not be like your fathers and your
brethren, who trespassed against the LORD God of their fathers, so that He
gave them up to desolation, as you see. 8Now do not be stiff-necked, as your
fathers *were, but* yield yourselves to the LORD; and enter His sanctuary,
which He has sanctified forever, and serve the LORD your God, that the
fierceness of His wrath may turn away from you. 9For if you return to the
LORD, your brethren and your children *will be treated* with compassion by
those who lead them captive, so that they may come back to this land; for the
LORD your God *is* gracious and merciful, and will not turn *His* face from you
if you return to Him.”

10So the runners passed from city to city through the country of Ephraim
and Manasseh, as far as Zebulun; but they laughed at them and mocked them.
11Nevertheless some from Asher, Manasseh, and Zebulun humbled
themselves and came to Jerusalem. 12Also the hand of God was on Judah to
give them singleness of heart to obey the command of the king and the
leaders, at the word of the LORD.

13 Now many people, a very great assembly, gathered at Jerusalem to keep
the Feast of Unleavened Bread in the second month. 14 They arose and took
away the altars that *were* in Jerusalem, and they took away all the incense
altars and cast *them* into the Brook Kidron.

15 Then they slaughtered the Passover *lambs* on the fourteenth *day* of the
second month. The priests and the Levites were ashamed, and sanctified
themselves, and brought the burnt offerings to the house of the LORD. 16 They
stood in their place according to their custom, according to the Law of Moses
the man of God; the priests sprinkled the blood *received* from the hand of the
Levites. 17 For *there were* many in the assembly who had not sanctified
themselves; therefore the Levites had charge of the slaughter of the Passover
*lambs* for everyone *who was* not clean, to sanctify *them* to the LORD. 18 For a
multitude of the people, many from Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar, and
Zebulun, had not cleansed themselves, yet they ate the Passover contrary to
what was written. But Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, “May the good
LORD provide atonement for everyone 19 *who* prepares his heart to seek God,
the LORD God of his fathers, though *he is* not *cleansed* according to the
purification of the sanctuary.” 20 And the LORD listened to Hezekiah and
healed the people.

21 So the children of Israel who were present at Jerusalem kept the Feast of
Unleavened Bread seven days with great gladness; and the Levites and the
priests praised the LORD day by day, *singing* to the LORD, accompanied by
loud instruments. 22 And Hezekiah gave encouragement to all the Levites who
taught the good knowledge of the LORD; and they ate throughout the feast
seven days, offering peace offerings and making confession to the LORD God
of their fathers.

23 Then the whole assembly agreed to keep *the feast* another seven days,
and they kept it *another* seven days with gladness. 24 For Hezekiah king of
Judah gave to the assembly a thousand bulls and seven thousand sheep, and
the leaders gave to the assembly a thousand bulls and ten thousand sheep; and
a great number of priests sanctified themselves. 25 The whole assembly of
Judah rejoiced, also the priests and Levites, all the assembly that came from
Israel, the sojourners who came from the land of Israel, and those who dwelt

in Judah. [26]So there was great joy in Jerusalem, for since the time of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel, *there had* been nothing like this in Jerusalem. [27]Then the priests, the Levites, arose and blessed the people, and their voice was heard; and their prayer came *up* to His holy dwelling place, to heaven.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Return** *(30:6-12)* The northern tribes had broken away from Judah and the line of Davidic kings, setting up a system of idolatry. When Hezekiah led the southern kingdom into a spiritual revival, he wrote to the northern tribes and appealed to them to return to the temple in Jerusalem to worship the Lord. He reminded them that God is gracious and merciful to all who will return to Him. In response, some mocked God, but many humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem. God promises restoration for those who will return to Him. **Topic: Restoration**

## THE REFORMS OF HEZEKIAH

**31** Now when all this was finished, all Israel who were present went out to the cities of Judah and broke the *sacred* pillars in pieces, cut down the wooden images, and threw down the high places and the altars-from all Judah, Benjamin, Ephraim, and Manasseh-until they had utterly destroyed them all. Then all the children of Israel returned to their own cities, every man to his possession.

2 And Hezekiah appointed the divisions of the priests and the Levites according to their divisions, each man according to his service, the priests and Levites for burnt offerings and peace offerings, to serve, to give thanks, and to praise in the gates of the camp[a] of the LORD. 3 The king also *appointed* a portion of his possessions for the burnt offerings: for the morning and evening burnt offerings, the burnt offerings for the Sabbaths and the New Moons and the set feasts, as *it is* written in the Law of the LORD.

4 Moreover he commanded the people who dwelt in Jerusalem to contribute support for the priests and the Levites, that they might devote themselves to the Law of the LORD.

5 As soon as the commandment was circulated, the children of Israel brought in abundance the firstfruits of grain and wine, oil and honey, and of all the produce of the field; and they brought in abundantly the tithe of everything. 6 And the children of Israel and Judah, who dwelt in the cities of Judah, brought the tithe of oxen and sheep; also the tithe of holy things which were consecrated to the LORD their God they laid in heaps.

7 In the third month they began laying them in heaps, and they finished in the seventh month. 8 And when Hezekiah and the leaders came and saw the heaps, they blessed the LORD and His people Israel. 9 Then Hezekiah questioned the priests and the Levites concerning the heaps. 10 And Azariah the chief priest, from the house of Zadok, answered him and said, “Since *the people* began to bring the offerings into the house of the LORD, we have had enough to eat and have plenty left, for the LORD has blessed His people; and what is left *is* this great abundance.”

11 Now Hezekiah commanded *them* to prepare rooms in the house of the

LORD, and they prepared them. [12]Then they faithfully brought in the offerings, the tithes, and the dedicated things; Cononiah the Levite had charge of them, and Shimei his brother *was* the next. [13]Jehiel, Azaziah, Nahath, Asahel, Jerimoth, Jozabad, Eliel, Ismachiah, Mahath, and Benaiah *were* overseers under the hand of Cononiah and Shimei his brother, at the commandment of Hezekiah the king and Azariah the ruler of the house of God. [14]Kore the son of Imnah the Levite, the keeper of the East Gate, *was* over the freewill offerings to God, to distribute the offerings of the LORD and the most holy things. [15]And under him *were* Eden, Miniamin, Jesh-ua, Shemaiah, Amariah, and Shecaniah, *his* faithful assistants in the cities of the priests, to distribute allotments to their brethren by divisions, to the great as well as the small.

[16]Besides those males from three years old and up who were written in the genealogy, they distributed to everyone who entered the house of the LORD his daily portion for the work of his service, by his division, [17]and to the priests who were written in the genealogy according to their father's house, and to the Levites from twenty years old and up according to their work, by their divisions, [18]and to all who were written in the genealogy-their little ones and their wives, their sons and daughters, the whole company of them-for in their faithfulness they sanctified themselves in holiness.

[19]Also for the sons of Aaron the priests, *who were* in the fields of the common-lands of their cities, in every single city, *there were* men who were designated by name to distribute portions to all the males among the priests and to all who were listed by genealogies among the Levites.

[20]Thus Hezekiah did throughout all Judah, and he did what *was* good and right and true before the LORD his God. [21]And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, in the law and in the commandment, to seek his God, he did *it* with all his heart. So he prospered.

**SENNACHERIB BOASTS AGAINST THE LORD**

**32** After these deeds of faithfulness, Sennacherib king of Assyria came and
entered Judah; he encamped against the fortified cities, thinking to win
them over to himself. 2And when Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib had come,
and that his purpose was to make war against Jerusalem, 3he consulted with
his leaders and commanders[a] to stop the water from the springs which *were*
outside the city; and they helped him. 4Thus many people gathered together
who stopped all the springs and the brook that ran through the land, saying,
"Why should the kings[a] of Assyria come and find much water?" 5And he
strengthened himself, built up all the wall that was broken, raised *it* up to the
towers, and *built* another wall outside; also he repaired the Millo[a] *in* the City
of David, and made weapons and shields in abundance. 6Then he set military
captains over the people, gathered them together to him in the open square of
the city gate, and gave them encouragement, saying, 7"Be strong and
courageous; do not be afraid nor dismayed before the king of Assyria, nor
before all the multitude that *is* with him; for *there are* more with us than with
him. 8With him *is* an arm of flesh; but with us *is* the LORD our God, to help us
and to fight our battles." And the people were strengthened by the words of
Hezekiah king of Judah.

**9**After this Sennacherib king of Assyria sent his servants to Jerusalem (but
he and all the forces with him *laid siege* against Lachish), to Hezekiah king
of Judah, and to all Judah who *were* in Jerusalem, saying, 10"Thus says Sen-
nacherib king of Assyria: 'In what do you trust, that you remain under siege
in Jerusalem? 11Does not Hezekiah persuade you to give yourselves over to
die by famine and by thirst, saying, "The LORD our God will deliver us from
the hand of the king of Assyria"? 12Has not the same Hezekiah taken away
His high places and His altars, and commanded Judah and Jerusalem, saying,
"You shall worship before one altar and burn incense on it"? 13Do you not
know what I and my fathers have done to all the peoples of *other* lands?
Were the gods of the nations of those lands in any way able to deliver their
lands out of my hand? 14Who *was there* among all the gods of those nations
that my fathers utterly destroyed that could deliver his people from my hand,
that your God should be able to deliver you from my hand? 15Now therefore,

do not let Hezekiah deceive you or persuade you like this, and do not believe him; for no god of any nation or kingdom was able to deliver his people from my hand or the hand of my fathers. How much less will your God deliver you from my hand?' "

16 Furthermore, his servants spoke against the LORD God and against His servant Hezekiah.

17 He also wrote letters to revile the LORD God of Israel, and to speak against Him, saying, "As the gods of the nations of *other* lands have not delivered their people from my hand, so the God of Hezekiah will not deliver His people from my hand." 18 Then they called out with a loud voice in Hebrew[a] to the people of Jerusalem who *were* on the wall, to frighten them and trouble them, that they might take the city. 19 And they spoke against the God of Jerusalem, as against the gods of the people of the earth-the work of men's hands.

## SENNACHERIB'S DEFEAT AND DEATH

20 Now because of this King Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah, the son of Amoz, prayed and cried out to heaven. 21 Then the LORD sent an angel who cut down every mighty man of valor, leader, and captain in the camp of the king of Assyria. So he returned shamefaced to his own land. And when he had gone into the temple of his god, some of his own offspring struck him down with the sword there.

22 Thus the LORD saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sen-nacherib the king of Assyria, and from the hand of all *others*, and guided them[a] on every side. 23 And many brought gifts to the LORD at Jerusalem, and presents to Hezekiah king of Judah, so that he was exalted in the sight of all nations thereafter.

## HEZEKIAH HUMBLES HIMSELF

24 In those days Hezekiah was sick and near death, and he prayed to the LORD; and He spoke to him and gave him a sign. 25 But Hezekiah did not repay according to the favor *shown* him, for his heart was lifted up; therefore wrath was looming over him and over Judah and Jerusalem. 26 Then Hezekiah

humbled himself for the pride of his heart, he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the LORD did not come upon them in the days of Hezekiah.

## HEZEKIAH'S WEALTH AND HONOR

27 Hezekiah had very great riches and honor. And he made himself
treasuries for silver, for gold, for precious stones, for spices, for shields, and
for all kinds of desirable items; 28 storehouses for the harvest of grain, wine,
and oil; and stalls for all kinds of livestock, and folds for flocks.[a] 29 Moreover
he provided cities for himself, and possessions of flocks and herds in
abundance; for God had given him very much property. 30 This same
Hezekiah also stopped the water outlet of Upper Gihon, and brought the
water by tunnel[a] to the west side of the City of David. Hezekiah prospered in
all his works.

31 However, *regarding* the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, whom
they sent to him to inquire about the wonder that was *done* in the land, God
withdrew from him, in order to test him, that He might know all *that was* in
his heart.

## DEATH OF HEZEKIAH

32 Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah, and his goodness, indeed they *are*
written in the vision of Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, *and* in the book
of the kings of Judah and Israel. 33 So Hezekiah rested with his fathers, and
they buried him in the upper tombs of the sons of David; and all Judah and
the inhabitants of Jerusalem honored him at his death. Then Manasseh his son
reigned in his place.

## MANASSEH REIGNS IN JUDAH

**33** Manasseh *was* twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned
fifty-five years in Jerusalem. [2]But he did evil in the sight of the LORD,
according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD had cast out
before the children of Israel. [3]For he rebuilt the high places which Hezekiah
his father had broken down; he raised up altars for the Baals, and made
wooden images; and he worshiped all the host of heaven[a] and served them.
[4]He also built altars in the house of the LORD, of which the LORD had said,
"In Jerusalem shall My name be forever." [5]And he built altars for all the host
of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD. [6]Also he caused his
sons to pass through the fire in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom; he practiced
soothsaying, used witchcraft and sorcery, and consulted mediums and
spiritists. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger.
[7]He even set a carved image, the idol which he had made, in the house of
God, of which God had said to David and to Solomon his son, "In this house
and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will put
My name forever; [8]and I will not again remove the foot of Israel from the
land which I have appointed for your fathers-only if they are careful to do all
that I have commanded them, according to the whole law and the statutes and
the ordinances by the hand of Moses." [9]So Manasseh seduced Judah and the
inhabitants of Jerusalem to do more evil than the nations whom the LORD had
destroyed before the children of Israel.

## MANASSEH RESTORED AFTER REPENTANCE

[10]And the LORD spoke to Manasseh and his people, but they would not
listen. [11]Therefore the LORD brought upon them the captains of the army of
the king of Assyria, who took Manasseh with hooks,[a] bound him with bronze
*fetters,* and carried him off to Babylon. [12]Now when he was in affliction, he
implored the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of
his fathers, [13]and prayed to Him; and He received his entreaty, heard his
supplication, and brought him back to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then
Manasseh knew that the LORD *was* God.

[14]After this he built a wall outside the City of David on the west side of Gihon, in the valley, as far as the entrance of the Fish Gate; and *it* enclosed Ophel, and he raised it to a very great height. Then he put military captains in all the fortified cities of Judah. [15]He took away the foreign gods and the idol from the house of the LORD, and all the altars that he had built in the mount of the house of the LORD and in Jerusalem; and he cast *them* out of the city. [16]He also repaired the altar of the LORD, sacrificed peace offerings and thank offerings on it, and commanded Judah to serve the LORD God of Israel. [17]Nevertheless the people still sacrificed on the high places, *but* only to the LORD their God.

**DEATH OF MANASSEH**

[18]Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, his prayer to his God, and the words of the seers who spoke to him in the name of the LORD God of Israel, indeed they *are written* in the book[a] of the kings of Israel. [19]Also his prayer and *how God* received his entreaty, and all his sin and trespass, and the sites where he built high places and set up wooden images and carved images, before he was humbled, indeed they *are* written among the sayings of Hozai.[a] [20]So Manasseh rested with his fathers, and they buried him in his own house. Then his son Amon reigned in his place.

**AMON'S REIGN AND DEATH**

[21]Amon *was* twenty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned two years in Jerusalem. [22]But he did evil in the sight of the LORD, as his father Manasseh had done; for Amon sacrificed to all the carved images which his father Manasseh had made, and served them. [23]And he did not humble himself before the LORD, as his father Manasseh had humbled himself; but Amon trespassed more and more.

[24]Then his servants conspired against him, and killed him in his own house. [25]But the people of the land executed all those who had conspired against King Amon. Then the people of the land made his son Josiah king in his place.

## JOSIAH REIGNS IN JUDAH

**34** Josiah *was* eight years old when he became king, and he reigned thirty-
one years in Jerusalem. 2And he did *what was* right in the sight of the
LORD, and walked in the ways of his father David; *he* did *not* turn aside to the
right hand or to the left.

3For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was still young, he began to
seek the God of his father David; and in the twelfth year he began to purge
Judah and Jerusalem of the high places, the wooden images, the carved
images, and the molded images. 4They broke down the altars of the Baals in
his presence, and the incense altars which *were* above them he cut down; and
the wooden images, the carved images, and the molded images he broke in
pieces, and made dust of them and scattered *it* on the graves of those who had
sacrificed to them. 5He also burned the bones of the priests on their altars,
and cleansed Judah and Jerusalem. 6And *so he did* in the cities of Manasseh,
Ephraim, and Simeon, as far as Naphtali and all around, with axes.[a] 7When
he had broken down the altars and the wooden images, had beaten the carved
images into powder, and cut down all the incense altars throughout all the
land of Israel, he returned to Jerusalem.

## HILKIAH FINDS THE BOOK OF THE LAW

8In the eighteenth year of his reign, when he had purged the land and the
temple,[a] he sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, Maaseiah the governor of the
city, and Joah the son of Joahaz the recorder, to repair the house of the LORD
his God. 9When they came to Hilkiah the high priest, they delivered the
money that was brought into the house of God, which the Levites who kept
the doors had gathered from the hand of Manasseh and Ephraim, from all the
remnant of Israel, from all Judah and Benjamin, and *which* they had brought
back to Jerusalem. 10Then they put *it* in the hand of the foremen who had the
oversight of the house of the LORD; and they gave it to the workmen who
worked in the house of the LORD, to repair and restore the house. 11They gave
*it* to the craftsmen and builders to buy hewn stone and timber for beams, and
to floor the houses which the kings of Judah had destroyed. 12And the men
did the work faithfully. Their overseers *were* Jahath and Obadiah the Levites,

of the sons of Merari, and Zechariah and Meshullam, of the sons of the Kohathites, to supervise. *Others of* the Levites, all of whom were skillful with instruments of music, 13*were* over the burden bearers and *were* overseers of all who did work in any kind of service. And *some* of the Levites *were* scribes, officers, and gatekeepers.

14Now when they brought out the money that was brought into the house of the LORD, Hilkiah the priest found the Book of the Law of the LORD *given* by Moses. 15Then Hilkiah answered and said to Shaphan the scribe, "I have found the Book of the Law in the house of the LORD." And Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan. 16So Shaphan carried the book to the king, bringing the king word, saying, "All that was committed to your servants they are doing. 17And they have gathered the money that was found in the house of the LORD, and have delivered it into the hand of the over seers and the workmen." 18Then Shaphan the scribe told the king, saying, "Hilkiah the priest has given me a book." And Shaphan read it before the king.

19Thus it happened, when the king heard the words of the Law, that he tore his clothes. 20Then the king commanded Hilkiah, Ahikam the son of Shaphan, Abdon[a] the son of Micah, Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah a servant of the king, saying, 21"Go, inquire of the LORD for me, and for those who are left in Israel and Judah, concerning the words of the book that is found; for great *is* the wrath of the LORD that is poured out on us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the LORD, to do according to all that is written in this book."

22So Hilkiah and those the king *had appointed* went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tokhath,[a] the son of Hasrah,[b] keeper of the wardrobe. (She dwelt in Jerusalem in the Second Quarter.) And they spoke to her to that *effect.*

23Then she answered them, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel, 'Tell the man who sent you to Me, 24"Thus says the LORD: 'Behold, I will bring calamity on this place and on its inhabitants, all the curses that are written in the book which they have read before the king of Judah, 25because they have forsaken Me and burned incense to other gods, that they might provoke Me to anger with all the works of their hands. Therefore My wrath will be poured

out on this place, and not be quenched.' " ' [26]But as for the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the LORD, in this manner you shall speak to him, 'Thus says the LORD God of Israel: "*Concerning* the words which you have heard-[27]because your heart was tender, and you humbled yourself before God when you heard His words against this place and against its inhabitants, and you humbled yourself before Me, and you tore your clothes and wept before Me, I also have heard *you*," says the LORD. [28]"Surely I will gather you to your fathers, and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace; and your eyes shall not see all the calamity which I will bring on this place and its inhabitants." ' " So they brought back word to the king.

## JOSIAH RESTORES TRUE WORSHIP

[29]Then the king sent and gathered all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. [30]The king went up to the house of the LORD, with all the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem-the priests and the Levites, and all the people, great and small. And he read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant which had been found in the house of the LORD. [31]Then the king stood in his place and made a covenant before the LORD, to follow the LORD, and to keep His commandments and His testimonies and His statutes with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant that were written in this book. [32]And he made all who were present in Jerusalem and Benjamin take a stand. So the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers. [33]Thus Josiah removed all the abominations from all the country that *belonged* to the children of Israel, and made all who were present in Israel diligently serve the LORD their God. All his days they did not depart from following the LORD God of their fathers.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# THE DIFFERENCE ONE PERSON CAN MAKE

## (2 CHRONICLES 34:26-28)

What a difference one person can make. And when that person is a king, what a difference he can make for his country!

Josiah began to reign at age 8. In the eighth year of his reign, at age 16, he "began to seek the God of his father David." Through that seeking, God showed Josiah that he needed to "purge Judah and Jerusalem of the high places, the wooden images, the carved images, and the molded images" (2 Chr. 34:3). So Josiah faithfully purged the entire nation of idol worship. Then he began to repair God's temple. God rewarded Josiah's faithfulness by allowing Hilkiah the high priest to discover the Book of the Law. When the book was dusted off and read, Josiah realized with horror how far the nation had strayed from God's expectations. Josiah asked God what he should do next.

God explained through a prophet that Judah was suffering because of a long series of sinful choices that the leaders and people of the nation had made over a long period. God stated that the nation would indeed pay for its sins. But because Josiah's heart was tender, God promised his eyes would not see all the calamity which He would bring on Judah and its inhabitants (34:27, 28). The final demise of the kingdom would not occur during Josiah's lifetime, because Josiah had tried to turn the nation around.

God often works through His people to accomplish His will. One believer can help another person turn around a life; one believer can help an entire nation reverse its course. In each case, God works through one person whose life is surrendered to Him. Every believer has an important role to play in building God's Kingdom. Whether God uses us to bring one or millions to Him, we must seek and follow His will. The believer who is yielded to God will have an impact for

Him.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about self-esteem The Difference One Person Can Make. See also the key passage note at Matthew 10:29-31.

**JOSIAH KEEPS THE PASSOVER**

**35** Now Josiah kept a Passover to the LORD in Jerusalem, and they slaughtered the Passover *lambs* on the fourteenth *day* of the first month.
2 And he set the priests in their duties and encouraged them for the service of the house of the LORD. 3 Then he said to the Levites who taught all Israel, who were holy to the LORD: "Put the holy ark in the house which Solomon the son of David, king of Israel, built. *It shall* no longer *be* a burden on *your* shoulders. Now serve the LORD your God and His people Israel. 4 Prepare *yourselves* according to your fathers' houses, according to your divisions, following the written instruction of David king of Israel and the written instruction of Solomon his son. 5 And stand in the holy *place* according to the divisions of the fathers' houses of your brethren the *lay* people, and *according to* the division of the father's house of the Levites. 6 So slaughter the Passover *offerings,* consecrate yourselves, and prepare *them* for your brethren, that *they* may do according to the word of the LORD by the hand of Moses."

7 Then Josiah gave the *lay* people lambs and young goats from the flock, all for Passover *offerings* for all who were present, to the number of thirty thousand, as well as three thousand cattle; these *were* from the king's possessions. 8 And his leaders gave willingly to the people, to the priests, and to the Levites. Hilkiah, Zechariah, and Jehiel, rulers of the house of God, gave to the priests for the Passover *offerings* two thousand six hundred *from the flock,* and three hundred cattle. 9 Also Conaniah, his brothers Shemaiah and Nethanel, and Hashabiah and Jeiel and Jozabad, chief of the Levites, gave to the Levites for Passover *offerings* five thousand *from the flock* and five hundred cattle.

10 So the service was prepared, and the priests stood in their places, and the Levites in their divisions, according to the king's command. 11 And they slaughtered the Passover *offerings;* and the priests sprinkled *the blood* with their hands, while the Levites skinned *the animals.* 12 Then they removed the burnt offerings that *they* might give them to the divisions of the fathers' houses of the *lay* people, to offer to the LORD, as *it is* written in the Book of Moses. And so *they did* with the cattle.

13 Also they roasted the Passover *offerings* with fire according to the
ordinance; but the *other* holy *offerings* they boiled in pots, in caldrons, and in
pans, and divided *them* quickly among all the *lay* people. 14 Then afterward
they prepared portions for themselves and for the priests, because the priests,
the sons of Aaron, *were busy* in offering burnt offerings and fat until night;
therefore the Levites prepared portions for themselves and for the priests, the
sons of Aaron. 15 And the singers, the sons of Asaph, *were* in their places,
according to the command of David, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun the king's
seer. Also the gatekeepers were at each gate; they did not have to leave their
position, because their brethren the Levites prepared portions for them.

16 So all the service of the LORD was prepared the same day, to keep the
Passover and to offer burnt offerings on the altar of the LORD, according to
the command of King Josiah. 17 And the children of Israel who were present
kept the Passover at that time, and the Feast of Unleavened Bread for seven
days. 18 There had been no Passover kept in Israel like that since the days of
Samuel the prophet; and none of the kings of Israel had kept such a Passover
as Josiah kept, with the priests and the Levites, all Judah and Israel who were
present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 19 In the eighteenth year of the reign
of Josiah this Passover was kept.

**JOSIAH DIES IN BATTLE**

20 After all this, when Josiah had prepared the temple, Necho king of Egypt
came up to fight against Carchemish by the Euphrates; and Josiah went out
against him. 21 But he sent messengers to him, saying, "What have I to do
with you, king of Judah? *I have* not *come* against you this day, but against the
house with which I have war; for God commanded me to make haste. Refrain
*from meddling with* God, who *is* with me, lest He destroy you."
22 Nevertheless Josiah would not turn his face from him, but disguised himself
so that he might fight with him, and did not heed the words of Necho from
the mouth of God. So he came to fight in the Valley of Megiddo.

23 And the archers shot King Josiah; and the king said to his servants,
"Take me away, for I am severely wounded." 24 His servants therefore took
him out of that chariot and put him in the second chariot that he had, and they
brought him to Jerusalem. So he died, and was buried in *one of* the tombs of

his fathers. And all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah.

25 Jeremiah also lamented for Josiah. And to this day all the singing men
and the singing women speak of Josiah in their lamentations. They made it a
custom in Israel; and indeed they *are* written in the Laments.

26 Now the rest of the acts of Josiah and his goodness, according to *what*
*was* written in the Law of the LORD, 27 and his deeds from first to last, indeed
they *are* written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah.

## THE REIGN AND CAPTIVITY OF JEHOAHAZ

**36** Then the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah, and made
him king in his father's place in Jerusalem. [2]Jehoahaz[a] *was* twenty-three
years old when he became king, and he reigned three months in Jerusalem.
[3]Now the king of Egypt deposed him at Jerusalem; and he imposed on the
land a tribute of one hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold. [4]Then the
king of Egypt made *Jehoahaz's*[a] brother Eliakim king over Judah and
Jerusalem, and changed his name to Jehoiakim. And Necho took Jehoahaz[b]
his brother and carried him off to Egypt.

## THE REIGN AND CAPTIVITY OF JEHOIAKIM

[5]Jehoiakim *was* twenty-five years old when he became king, and he
reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. And he did evil in the sight of the LORD
his God. [6]Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against him, and bound
him in bronze *fetters* to carry him off to Babylon. [7]Nebuchadnezzar also
carried off *some* of the articles from the house of the LORD to Babylon, and
put them in his temple at Babylon. [8]Now the rest of the acts of Jehoiakim, the
abominations which he did, and what was found against him, indeed they *are*
written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah. Then Jehoiachin his son
reigned in his place.

## THE REIGN AND CAPTIVITY OF JEHOIACHIN

[9]Jehoiachin *was* eight[a] years old when he became king, and he reigned in
Jerusalem three months and ten days. And he did evil in the sight of the
LORD. [10]At the turn of the year King Nebuchadnezzar summoned *him* and
took him to Babylon, with the costly articles from the house of the LORD, and
made Zedekiah, *Jehoiakim's*[a] brother, king over Judah and Jerusalem.

## ZEDEKIAH REIGNS IN JUDAH

[11]Zedekiah *was* twenty-one years old when he became king, and he
reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. [12]He did evil in the sight of the LORD his
God, *and* did not humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet, *who spoke*

from the mouth of the LORD. [13]And he also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear *an oath* by God; but he stiffened his neck and hardened his heart against turning to the LORD God of Israel. [14]Moreover all the leaders of the priests and the people transgressed more and more, *according* to all the abominations of the nations, and defiled the house of the LORD which He had consecrated in Jerusalem.

**THE FALL OF JERUSALEM**

[15]And the LORD God of their fathers sent *warnings* to them by His messengers, rising up early and sending *them*, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place. [16]But they mocked the messengers of God, despised His words, and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against His people, till *there was* no remedy.

[17]Therefore He brought against them the king of the Chaldeans, who killed their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion on young man or virgin, on the aged or the weak; He gave *them* all into his hand. [18]And all the articles from the house of God, great and small, the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king and of his leaders, all *these* he took to Babylon. [19]Then they burned the house of God, broke down the wall of Jerusalem, burned all its palaces with fire, and destroyed all its precious possessions. [20]And those who escaped from the sword he carried away to Babylon, where they became servants to him and his sons until the rule of the kingdom of Persia, [21]to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her Sabbaths. As long as she lay desolate she kept Sabbath, to fulfill seventy years.

**THE PROCLAMATION OF CYRUS**

[22]Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also *put it* in writing, saying,

[23] Thus says Cyrus king of Persia:

All the kingdoms of the earth the LORD God of heaven has given me. And

He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah. Who *is* among you of all His people? May the LORD his God *be* with him, and let him go up!

**SOUL NOTE**

**No Remedy** *(36:5-8)* Jehoiakim got the dubious honor of being the king when Nebuchadnezzar overcame the nation and took them into captivity. He had failed his nation, but the final collapse of Judah was the result of the kings' and people's long series of wrong choices. Despite temporary reprieves during the reigns of a few good kings, Judah was at a final point of spiritual and moral decay. Judah had set a course of disobedience against God until "there was no remedy" (36:16). The nation's failure came as a result of its disobedience to God. **Topic: Failure**

**GOD'S VIEW OF FAILURE**

# GARY J. OLIVER

## (2 Chronicles 36)

**T**he marriage that was supposed to be forever turns into a short-lived disaster. The presentation at work that should have earned a promotion completely bombs. Everyone has setbacks; everyone fails.

From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible talks about the failure of people and the faithfulness of God. A careful study of Scripture reveals key principles for understanding the role of failure in spiritual growth.

## THE VALUE OF FAILURE

God "is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy" (Jude 24). Jude makes it clear that God is able to keep His people from slipping, tripping, and stumbling. However, He also knows that every failure has seeds of growth. He knows that apart from failure, people would have no need for His forgiveness, His communion, or His help. In His hands, failure can be one of life's greatest teachers.

Since most people tend to avoid pain, it takes the Holy Spirit working through their circumstances to lead them into a deeper identification with the Lord. God knows that the kinds of growth experiences that are the most painful are the ones people are most likely to avoid-failure and defeat.

In God's hands, failure can refine and teach in ways that success cannot. God can use failure to draw people closer to Him. Failure reaches down into the depths of people's souls and exposes deep-seated pockets of selfishness and pride. It makes them aware of their limitations. It increases their sensitivity to others. It humbles them. It helps them understand the high calling of being a servant. It reminds people how important it is to set their minds on things above (Col. 3:2). It increases their confidence that God will complete the work He began in their lives (Phil. 1:6).

## FORGIVENESS OF FAILURE

Since He understands the effects of sin, God is not surprised by failure. He knows that people are frail. He also understands that we are in a battle. "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but

against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6:12).

When life is going well, it is easy for people to proclaim belief in a merciful, gracious, forgiving, and loving God. But when mistakes and failures dump them in the trenches of spiritual warfare, they find a new perspective of God as powerful, almighty, and in control. "The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD, and He delights in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the LORD upholds him with His hand. I have been young, and now am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendents begging bread" (Ps. 37:23-25).

Consider some of the better known biblical people who were broken by failure. God did not abandon them, however. They faced the consequences of their sin (sometimes severe consequences), but God forgave and continued to use them in His service:

- Adam and Eve sinned and were cast out of the Garden of Eden.
- Moses murdered an Egyptian and it cost him forty years in the wilderness.
- Moses struck the rock and it cost him entrance into the Promised Land.
- Abraham started strong, but got caught in a series of lies.
- David's sin of adultery and murder cost him his integrity and the life of his son.
- Elijah allowed his depression to get so far out of control that he begged God to take his life.
- Jonah initially rejected God's plan for him.
- Peter proclaimed loyalty to Jesus and then denied ever knowing Him.

Sin and failure are a part of being human. First John 2:1 says, "My

little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin." God's will for people is that they don't sin. We should do all that we can to avoid sin. If the text stopped there, however, it would be rather discouraging. However, John continues, "And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world" (1 John 2:1, 2). God abhors sin, but He can use what He hates to drive us to the Cross where we find forgiveness, renewed perspective, and grace to move forward.

**IN GOD'S HANDS, FAILURE ISN'T FINAL**

Our first response to failure is often to focus on the failure and to panic. "My ministry is over." "God will never be able to use me again." "My kids will be damaged for life." Although we must be concerned with the present, it is dangerous to develop myopic blinders for the here and now. We need to think and pray about how to cope for today, but we must also ask God to help us put the failure in the proper perspective and to help us learn what we need to from it.

Our failures can be used as steppingstones to a deeper relationship with God. Having failed, we can still be successful in God's sight because of the incredible generosity of God's forgiveness and acceptance-for His grace not only covers our failures, it is actually able to transform them.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of failure include:

- Deuteronomy 31:6
- Psalms 56; 69:5; 73:26
- Isaiah 43:16-19
- Luke 22:32
- 2 Corinthians 12:9

- Hebrews 12:1, 2
- 1 Peter 1:6-9

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on failure at Proverbs 24:16. See also the personality profile of Peter: Failure Is Not Forever.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Ray of Hope** *(36:23)* The people of Judah were taken captive and deported into Babylon for the next 70 years. They suffered the consequences of their own spiritual neglect. Even in this desperate moment, however, the chronicler ends his record by pointing ahead to the coming of Cyrus, the king of Persia, who would eventually allow the people of Judah to return to Jerusalem. Even in their darkest hour, there was a ray of hope for the future. God would take care of His faithful people. **Topic: Hope**

# Ezra



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# Ezra

*Faithful* has to be one of the greatest words in the English language. It means trustworthy or reliable. A faithful person is utterly dependable. To say that God is faithful means that He always keeps His promises. The Old Testament book of Ezra (likely written by Ezra) is about God's faithfulness. It picks up the history of the Jewish people at the end of their 70-year exile. When the Babylonians were overthrown by the Persians in 539 B.C., King Cyrus issued a decree allowing the Jews to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple and to renew their hope in the future. This return occurred in phases. The first, involving almost 50,000 Jews, was led by Zerubbabel (chapters 1-6). The second occurred some 60 years later under Ezra the priest. Documented in chapters 7-10, the goal of this smaller return was to rebuild the spiritual condition of the people.

Despite the difficulties and discouragement faced by the returning exiles, this book is filled with hope. The people of God had been brought back to the Promised Land. Despite a long history of failure, the Hebrew people had not been abandoned by God. The Lord's ancient promises for their future benefit would be kept.

Read of God's faithfulness to His Old Testament people. As you do, keep in mind this New Testament promise: "If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself" (2 Tim. 2:13).

**SOUL CONCERN IN**

## EZRA

GUILT/SHAME (9:5-8)

## END OF THE BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY

**1** Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by
the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of
Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his
kingdom, and also *put it* in writing, saying,

2 Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the LORD
God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a
house at Jerusalem which *is* in Judah. 3Who *is* among you of all His people?
May his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem which *is* in Judah,
and build the house of the LORD God of Israel (He *is* God), which *is* in
Jerusalem. 4And whoever is left in any place where he dwells, let the men of
his place help him with silver and gold, with goods and livestock, besides the
freewill offerings for the house of God which *is* in Jerusalem.

5Then the heads of the fathers' *houses* of Judah and Benjamin, and the
priests and the Levites, with all whose spirits God had moved, arose to go up
and build the house of the LORD which *is* in Jerusalem. 6And all those who
*were* around them encouraged them with articles of silver and gold, with
goods and livestock, and with precious things, besides all *that* was willingly
offered.

7King Cyrus also brought out the articles of the house of the LORD, which
Nebuchadnezzar had taken from Jerusalem and put in the temple of his gods;
8and Cyrus king of Persia brought them out by the hand of Mithredath the
treasurer, and counted them out to Sheshbazzar the prince of Judah. 9This *is*
the number of them: thirty gold platters, one thousand silver platters, twenty-
nine knives, 10thirty gold basins, four hundred and ten silver basins of a
similar *kind, and* one thousand other articles. 11All the articles of gold and
silver *were* five thousand four hundred. All *these* Sheshbazzar took with the
captives who were brought from Babylon to Jerusalem.

## THE CAPTIVES WHO RETURNED TO JERUSALEM

**2** Now[a] these *are* the people of the province who came back from the captivity, of those who had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away to Babylon, and who returned to Jerusalem and Judah, everyone to his *own* city.

[2]*Those* who came with Zerubbabel *were* Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar,[a] Bigvai, Rehum,[b] *and* Baanah. The number of the men of the people of Israel: [3]the people of Parosh, two thousand one hundred and seventy-two; [4]the people of Shephatiah, three hundred and seventy-two; [5]the people of Arah, seven hundred and seventy-five; [6]the people of PahathMoab, of the people of Jeshua *and* Joab, two thousand eight hundred and twelve; [7]the people of Elam, one thousand two hundred and fifty-four; [8]the people of Zattu, nine hundred and forty-five; [9]the people of Zaccai, seven hundred and sixty; [10]the people of Bani,[a] six hundred and forty-two; [11]the people of Bebai, six hundred and twenty-three; [12]the people of Azgad, one thousand two hundred and twenty-two; [13]the people of Adonikam, six hundred and sixty-six; [14]the people of Bigvai, two thousand and fifty-six; [15]the people of Adin, four hundred and fifty-four; [16]the people of Ater of Hezekiah, ninety-eight; [17]the people of Bezai, three hundred and twenty-three; [18]the people of Jorah,[a] one hundred and twelve; [19]the people of Hashum, two hundred and twenty-three; [20]the people of Gibbar,[a] ninety-five; [21]the people of Bethlehem, one hundred and twenty-three; [22]the men of Netophah, fifty-six; [23]the men of Anathoth, one hundred and twenty-eight; [24]the people of Azmaveth,[a] forty-two; [25]the people of Kirjath Arim,[a] Chephirah, and Beeroth, seven hundred and forty-three; [26]the people of Ramah and Geba, six hundred and twenty-one; [27]the men of Michmas, one hundred and twenty-two; [28]the men of Bethel and Ai, two hundred and twenty-three; [29]the people of Nebo, fifty-two; [30]the people of Magbish, one hundred and fifty-six; [31]the people of the other Elam, one thousand two hundred and fifty-four; [32]the people of Harim, three hundred and twenty; [33]the people of Lod, Ha-did, and Ono, seven hundred and twenty-five; [34]the people of Jericho, three hundred and forty-five; [35]the people of Senaah, three

thousand six hundred and thirty.

36 The priests: the sons of Jedaiah, of the house of Jeshua, nine hundred and
seventy-three; 37 the sons of Immer, one thousand and fifty-two; 38 the sons of
Pashhur, one thousand two hundred and forty-seven; 39 the sons of Harim, one
thousand and seventeen.

40 The Levites: the sons of Jeshua and Kadmiel, of the sons of Hodaviah,[a]
seventy-four.

41 The singers: the sons of Asaph, one hundred and twenty-eight.

42 The sons of the gatekeepers: the sons of Shallum, the sons of Ater, the
sons of Talmon, the sons of Akkub, the sons of Hatita, and the sons of
Shobai, one hundred and thirty-nine *in* all.

43 The Nethinim: the sons of Ziha, the sons of Hasupha, the sons of
Tabbaoth, 44 the sons of Keros, the sons of Siaha,[a] the sons of Pa-don, 45 the
sons of Lebanah, the sons of Haga-bah, the sons of Akkub, 46 the sons of
Hagab, the sons of Shalmai, the sons of Hanan, 47 the sons of Giddel, the sons
of Gahar, the sons of Reaiah, 48 the sons of Rezin, the sons of Nekoda, the
sons of Gazzam, 49 the sons of Uzza, the sons of Paseah, the sons of Besai,
50 the sons of Asnah, the sons of Meunim, the sons of Nephusim,[a] 51 the sons
of Bakbuk, the sons of Hakupha, the sons of Harhur, 52 the sons of Bazluth,[a]
the sons of Mehida, the sons of Har-sha, 53 the sons of Barkos, the sons of
Sisera, the sons of Tamah, 54 the sons of Neziah, and the sons of Hatipha.

55 The sons of Solomon's servants: the sons of Sotai, the sons of Sophereth,
the sons of Peruda,[a] 56 the sons of Jaala, the sons of Darkon, the sons of
Giddel, 57 the sons of Shephatiah, the sons of Hattil, the sons of Pochereth of
Zebaim, and the sons of Ami.[a] 58 All the Nethinim and the children of
Solomon's servants were three hundred and ninety-two.

59 And these *were* the ones who came up from Tel Melah, Tel Harsha,
Cherub, Addan,[a] and Immer; but they could not identify their father's house
or their genealogy,[b] whether they *were* of Israel: 60 the sons of Delaiah, the
sons of Tobiah, and the sons of Nekoda, six hundred and fifty-two; 61 and of
the sons of the priests: the sons of Habaiah, the sons of Koz,[a] and the sons of

Barzillai, who took a wife of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite, and was called by their name. 62These sought their listing *among* those who were registered by genealogy, but they were not found; therefore they *were excluded* from the priesthood as defiled. 63And the governor[a] said to them that they should not eat of the most holy things till a priest could consult with the Urim and Thummim.

64The whole assembly together *was* forty-two thousand three hundred *and* sixty, 65besides their male and female servants, of whom *there were* seven thousand three hundred and thirty-seven; and they had two hundred men and women singers. 66Their horses *were* seven hundred and thirty-six, their mules two hundred and forty-five, 67their camels four hundred and thirty-five, and *their* donkeys six thousand seven hundred and twenty.

68*Some* of the heads of the fathers' *houses*, when they came to the house of the LORD which *is* in Jerusalem, offered freely for the house of God, to erect it in its place: 69According to their ability, they gave to the treasury for the work sixty-one thousand gold drachmas, five thousandminas of silver, and one hundred priestly garments.

70So the priests and the Levites, *some* of the people, the singers, the gatekeepers, and the Nethinim, dwelt in their cities, and all Israel in their cities.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Joyful Giving** *(2:68, 69)* The Jews had been living in captivity for over 70 years, but they had become financially prosperous. Ezra recorded that each person willingly contributed, according to his or her ability, into the treasury of the temple so that the worship of God could be reestablished in their homeland. God never calls us to do a job without providing the resources to get it done. In response, we

should gladly give back to God a portion of those resources to further His work.**Topic: Money**

## WORSHIP RESTORED AT JERUSALEM

**3** And when the seventh month had come, and the children of Israel *were* in
the cities, the people gathered together as one man to Jerusalem. [2]Then
Jeshua the son of Jozadak[a] and his brethren the priests, and Zerubbabel the
son of Shealtiel and his brethren, arose and built the altar of the God of Israel,
to offer burnt offerings on it, as *it is* written in the Law of Moses the man of
God. [3]Though fear *had come* upon them because of the people of those
countries, they set the altar on its bases; and they offered burnt offerings on it
to the LORD, *both* the morning and evening burnt offerings. [4]They also kept
the Feast of Tabernacles, as *it is* written, and *offered* the daily burnt offerings
in the number required by ordinance for each day. [5]Afterwards *they offered*
the regular burnt offering, and *those* for New Moons and for all the appointed
feasts of the LORD that were consecrated, and *those* of everyone who
willingly offered a freewill offering to the LORD. [6]From the first day of the
seventh month they began to offer burnt offerings to the LORD, although the
foundation of the temple of the LORD had not been laid. [7]They also gave
money to the masons and the carpenters, and food, drink, and oil to the
people of Sidon and Tyre to bring cedar logs from Lebanon to the sea, to
Joppa, according to the permission which they had from Cyrus king of Persia.

## RESTORATION OF THE TEMPLE BEGINS

[8]Now in the second month of the second year of their coming to the house
of God at Jerusalem, Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, Jeshua the son of
Jozadak,[a] and the rest of their brethren the priests and the Levites, and all
those who had come out of the captivity to Jerusalem, began *work* and
appointed the Levites from twenty years old and above to oversee the work of
the house of the LORD. [9]Then Jeshua *with* his sons and brothers, Kadmiel *with*
his sons, and the sons of Judah,[a] arose as one to oversee those working on the
house of God: the sons of Henadad *with* their sons and their brethren the
Levites.

[10]When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, the
priests stood[a] in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of
Asaph, with cymbals, to praise the LORD, according to the ordinance of David

king of Israel. [11]And they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the LORD:

"For *He is* good,
For His mercy *endures* forever toward
Israel."[a]

Then all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid.

[12]But many of the priests and Levites and heads of the fathers' *houses,* old men who had seen the first temple, wept with a loud voice when the foundation of this temple was laid before their eyes. Yet many shouted aloud for joy, [13]so that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people, for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the sound was heard afar off.

**SOUL NOTE**

**When Change Comes** *(3:12, 13)* In grieving, it is sometimes difficult to see what good can come out of loss. When the foundation of the temple was laid by the returning exiles, the people both wept and rejoiced. They wept because the previous glorious temple built by King Solomon had been destroyed, and the new temple would not be as huge or as beautiful. Yet others rejoiced that the process of rebuilding their temple had begun. Sorrow and joy can be appropriate as God's people grieve for the past but face the future with hope.
**Topic: Grief/Loss**

## RESISTANCE TO REBUILDING THE TEMPLE

**4** Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the
descendants of the captivity were building the temple of the LORD God of
Israel, 2they came to Zerubbabel and the heads of the fathers' *houses*, and
said to them, "Let us build with you, for we seek your God as you *do;* and we
have sacrificed to Him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who
brought us here." 3But Zerubbabel and Jeshua and the rest of the heads of the
fathers' *houses* of Israel said to them, "You may do nothing with us to build a
house for our God; but we alone will build to the LORD God of Israel, as King
Cyrus the king of Persia has commanded us." 4Then the people of the land
tried to discourage the people of Judah. They troubled them in building, 5and
hired counselors against them to frustrate their purpose all the days of Cyrus
king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia.

## REBUILDING OF JERUSALEM OPPOSED

6In the reign of Ahasuerus, in the beginning of his reign, they wrote an
accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem.

7In the days of Artaxerxes also, Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabel, and the rest of
their companions wrote to Artaxerxes king of Persia; and the letter *was*
written in Aramaic script, and translated into the Aramaic language. 8Rehum[a]
the commander and Shimshai the scribe wrote a letter against Jerusalem to
King Artaxerxes in this fashion:

9 From[a] Rehum the commander, Shimshai the scribe, and the rest of their
companions-*representatives* of the Dinaites, the Apharsathchites, the
Tarpelites, the people of Persia and Erech and Babylon and Shushan,[b]
the Dehavites, the Elamites, 10and the rest of the nations whom the great
and noble Osnapper took captive and settled in the cities of Samaria and
the remainder beyond the River[a] -and so forth.[b]

11(This *is* a copy of the letter that they sent him)

To King Artaxerxes from your servants, the men *of the region* beyond the
River, and so forth:[a]

12 Let it be known to the king that the Jews who came up from you have

come to us at Jerusalem, and are building the rebellious and evil city,
and are finishing *its* walls and repairing the foundations. [13]Let it now be
known to the king that, if this city is built and the walls completed, they
will not pay tax, tribute, or custom, and the king's treasury will be
diminished. [14]Now because we receive support from the palace, it was
not proper for us to see the king's dishonor; therefore we have sent and
informed the king, [15]that search may be made in the book of the records
of your fathers. And you will find in the book of the records and know
that this city *is* a rebellious city, harmful to kings and provinces, and that
they have incited sedition within the city in former times, for which
cause this city was destroyed.
[16] We inform the king that if this city is rebuilt and its walls are completed,
the result will be that you will have no dominion beyond the River.
[17]The king sent an answer:
To Rehum the commander, *to* Shimshai the scribe, *to* the rest of their
companions who dwell in Samaria, and *to* the remainder beyond the
River:
Peace, and so forth.[a]
[18] The letter which you sent to us has been clearly read before me. [19]And I
gave the command, and a search has been made, and it was found that
this city in former times has revolted against kings, and rebellion and
sedition have been fostered in it. [20]There have also been mighty kings
over Jerusalem, who have ruled over all *the region* beyond the River;
and tax, tribute, and custom were paid to them. [21]Now give the
command to make these men cease, that this city may not be built until
the command is given by me.
[22] Take heed now that you do not fail to do this. Why should damage
increase to the hurt of the kings?
[23]Now when the copy of King Artaxerxes' letter *was* read before Rehum,
Shimshai the scribe, and their companions, they went up in haste to
Jerusalem against the Jews, and by force of arms made them cease. [24]Thus
the work of the house of God which *is* at Jerusalem ceased, and it was
discontinued until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.

## SOUL NOTE

**Overcomers** *(4:4, 5)* Believers can expect opposition when doing the work of God. In this case, the people of Judah simply wanted to rebuild their house of worship. Their neighbors were opposed to this and responded by discouraging and intimidating them. Rather than allow this opposition to paralyze them, God's people asserted their legal rights to allow the building process to continue. Believers have faced opposition in every age. With God's help and the support of other believers, we can overcome fear and discouragement and complete the work to which God has called us. **Topic: Discouragement**

## RESTORATION OF THE TEMPLE RESUMED

**5** Then the prophet Haggai and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophets,
prophesied to the Jews who *were* in Judah and Jerusalem, in the name of
the God of Israel, *who was* over them. 2So Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel
and Jeshua the son of Jozadak[a] rose up and began to build the house of God
which *is* in Jerusalem; and the prophets of God *were* with them, helping
them.

3At the same time Tattenai the governor of *the region* beyond the River[a]
and ShetharBoznai and their companions came to them and spoke thus to
them: "Who has commanded you to build this temple and finish this wall?"
4Then, accordingly, we told them the names of the men who were
constructing this building. 5But the eye of their God was upon the elders of
the Jews, so that they could not make them cease till a report could go to
Darius. Then a written answer was returned concerning this *matter*. 6This is a
copy of the letter that Tattenai sent:

> The governor of *the region* beyond the River, and ShetharBoznai, and his companions, the Persians who *were in the region* beyond the River, to Darius the king.

7(They sent a letter to him, in which was written thus)

To Darius the king:

All peace.

8 Let it be known to the king that we went into the province of Judea, to the
temple of the great God, which is being built with heavy stones, and
timber is being laid in the walls; and this work goes on diligently and
prospers in their hands.

9 Then we asked those elders, *and* spoke thus to them: "Who commanded
you to build this temple and to finish these walls?" 10We also asked
them their names to inform you, that we might write the names of the
men who *were* chief among them.

11 And thus they returned us an answer, saying: "We are the servants of the
God of heaven and earth, and we are rebuilding the temple that was built
many years ago, which a great king of Israel built and completed. 12But
because our fathers provoked the God of heaven to wrath, He gave them

into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, the Chaldean, *who* destroyed this temple and carried the people away to Babylon.
13 However, in the first year of Cyrus king of Babylon, King Cyrus
issued a decree to build this house of God. 14 Also, the gold and silver
articles of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the
temple that *was* in Jerusalem and carried into the temple of Babylon-
those King Cyrus took from the temple of Babylon, and they were given
to one named Sheshbazzar, whom he had made governor. 15 And he said
to him, 'Take these articles; go, carry them to the temple *site* that *is* in
Jerusalem, and let the house of God be rebuilt on its former site.' 16 Then
the same Sheshbazzar came *and* laid the foundation of the house of God
which *is* in Jerusalem; but from that time even until now it has been
under construction, and it is not finished."
17 Now therefore, if *it seems* good to the king, let a search be made in the
king's treasure house, which *is* there in Babylon, whether it is *so* that a
decree was issued by King Cyrus to build this house of God at
Jerusalem, and let the king send us his pleasure concerning this *matter*.

## SOUL NOTE

**Never Give Up** *(5:1, 2)* The prophets Haggai and Zechariah not only encouraged the people of Jerusalem to rebuild the temple, but they also got involved in the labor themselves. Even before they rebuilt the city's walls, the Jews rebuilt the temple as an act of devotion to God. Living so many years without a temple and experiencing the temporary setbacks during the reconstruction only served to strengthen God's people in their resolve to complete the task at hand. Setbacks aren't always detrimental-they give time to reflect and revise plans if the need arises, allowing us to press on toward our goals. **Topic: Work**

## THE DECREE OF DARIUS

**6** Then King Darius issued a decree, and a search was made in the archives,[a]
where the treasures were stored in Babylon. 2And at Achmetha,[a] in the
palace that *is* in the province of Media, a scroll was found, and in it a record
*was* written thus:

3 In the first year of King Cyrus, King Cyrus issued a decree *concerning*
the house of God at Jerusalem: "Let the house be rebuilt, the place
where they offered sacrifices; and let the foundations of it be firmly laid,
its height sixty cubits *and* its width sixty cubits, 4*with* three rows of
heavy stones and one row of new timber. Let the expenses be paid from
the king's treasury. 5Also let the gold and silver articles of the house of
God, which Nebuchadnezzar took from the temple which *is* in Jerusalem
and brought to Babylon, be restored and taken back to the temple which
*is* in Jerusalem, *each* to its place; and deposit *them* in the house of God"-
6 Now *therefore,* Tattenai, governor of *the region* beyond the River, and
ShetharBoznai, and your companions the Persians who *are* beyond the
River, keep yourselves far from there. 7Let the work of this house of
God alone; let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews build
this house of God on its site.
8 Moreover I issue a decree *as to* what you shall do for the elders of these
Jews, for the building of this house of God: Let the cost be paid at the
king's expense from taxes *on the region* beyond the River; this is to be
given immediately to these men, so that they are not hindered. 9And
whatever they need-young bulls, rams, and lambs for the burnt offerings
of the God of heaven, wheat, salt, wine, and oil, according to the request
of the priests who *are* in Jerusalem-let it be given them day by day
without fail, 10that they may offer sacrifices of sweet aroma to the God
of heaven, and pray for the life of the king and his sons.
11 Also I issue a decree that whoever alters this edict, let a timber be pulled
from his house and erected, and let him be hanged on it; and let his
house be made a refuse heap because of this. 12And may the God who
causes His name to dwell there destroy any king or people who put their
hand to alter it, or to destroy this house of God which is in Jerusalem. I

Darius issue a decree; let it be done diligently.

## THE TEMPLE COMPLETED AND DEDICATED

13 Then Tattenai, governor of *the region* beyond the River, ShetharBoznai,
and their companions diligently did according to what King Darius had sent.
14 So the elders of the Jews built, and they prospered through the prophesying
of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they built and
finished *it,* according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and
according to the command of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia.
15 Now the temple was finished on the third day of the month of Adar, which
was in the sixth year of the reign of King Darius. 16 Then the children of
Israel, the priests and the Levites and the rest of the descendants of the
captivity, celebrated the dedication of this house of God with joy. 17 And they
offered sacrifices at the dedication of this house of God, one hundred bulls,
two hundred rams, four hundred lambs, and as a sin offering for all Israel
twelve male goats, according to the number of the tribes of Israel. 18 They
assigned the priests to their divisions and the Levites to their divisions, over
the service of God in Jerusalem, as it is written in the Book of Moses.

## THE PASSOVER CELEBRATED

19 And the descendants of the captivity kept the Passover on the fourteenth
*day* of the first month. 20 For the priests and the Levites had purified
themselves; all of them *were ritually* clean. And they slaughtered the
Passover *lambs* for all the descendants of the captivity, for their brethren the
priests, and for themselves. 21 Then the children of Israel who had returned
from the captivity ate together with all who had separated themselves from
the filth of the nations of the land in order to seek the LORD God of Israel.
22 And they kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days with joy; for the
LORD made them joyful, and turned the heart of the king of Assyria toward
them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of
Israel.

## SOUL NOTE

**God's Will, God's Way** *(6:22)* God used many different people at different levels of society in different lands to accomplish the work of restoring His people to their land and of rebuilding the temple. He even "turned the heart of the king of Assyria toward them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God." God brought together kings, governors, elders, prophets, and people to do His will His way. God will always accomplish His purpose, often in ways and through people we do not expect. **Topic: Knowing God**

## THE ARRIVAL OF EZRA

**7** Now after these things, in the reign of Ar-taxerxes king of Persia, Ezra the
son of Seraiah, the son of Azariah, the son of Hilkiah, 2the son of Shallum,
the son of Zadok, the son of Ahitub, 3the son of Amariah, the son of Azariah,
the son of Meraioth, 4the son of Zerahiah, the son of Uzzi, the son of Bukki,
5the son of Abishua, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron
the chief priest-6this Ezra came up from Babylon; and he *was* a skilled scribe
in the Law of Moses, which the LORD God of Israel had given. The king
granted him all his request, according to the hand of the LORD his God upon
him. 7*Some* of the children of Israel, the priests, the Levites, the singers, the
gatekeepers, and the Nethinim came up to Jerusalem in the seventh year of
King Artaxerxes. 8And Ezra came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which *was*
in the seventh year of the king. 9On the first *day* of the first month he began
*his* journey from Babylon, and on the first *day* of the fifth month he came to
Jerusalem, according to the good hand of his God upon him. 10For Ezra had
prepared his heart to seek the Law of the LORD, and to do *it*, and to teach
statutes and ordinances in Israel.

> For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel.
> EZRA 7:10

## THE LETTER OF ARTAXERXES TO EZRA

11 This *is* a copy of the letter that King Artaxerxes gave Ezra the priest, the
scribe, expert in the words of the commandments of the LORD, and of His
statutes to Israel:

12 Artaxerxes,[a] king of kings,
To Ezra the priest, a scribe of the Law of the God of heaven:
Perfect *peace*, and so forth.[b]

13 I issue a decree that all those of the people of Israel and the priests and
Levites in my realm, who volunteer to go up to Jerusalem, may go with
you. 14And whereas you are being sent by the king and his seven

counselors to inquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, with regard to the
Law of your God which *is* in your hand; [15]and *whereas you are* to carry
the silver and gold which the king and his counselors have freely offered
to the God of Israel, whose dwelling *is* in Jerusalem; [16]and *whereas* all
the silver and gold that you may find in all the province of Babylon,
along with the freewill offering of the people and the priests, *are to be*
freely offered for the house of their God in Jerusalem-[17]now therefore,
be careful to buy with this money bulls, rams, and lambs, with their
grain offerings and their drink offerings, and offer them on the altar of
the house of your God in Jerusalem.
[18] And whatever seems good to you and your brethren to do with the rest
of the silver and the gold, do it according to the will of your God. [19]Also
the articles that are given to you for the service of the house of your
God, deliver in full before the God of Jerusalem. [20]And whatever more
may be needed for the house of your God, which you may have occasion
to provide, pay *for it* from the king's treasury.
[21] And I, *even* I, Artaxerxes the king, issue a decree to all the treasurers
who *are in the region* beyond the River, that whatever Ezra the priest,
the scribe of the Law of the God of heaven, may require of you, let it be
done diligently, [22]up to one hundred talents of silver, one hundredkors
of wheat, one hundred baths of wine, one hundred baths of oil, and salt
without prescribed limit. [23]Whatever is commanded by the God of
heaven, let it diligently be done for the house of the God of heaven. For
why should there be wrath against the realm of the king and his sons?
[24] Also we inform you that it shall not be lawful to impose tax, tribute, or
custom *on* any of the priests, Levites, singers, gatekeepers, Nethinim, or
servants of this house of God. [25]And you, Ezra, according to your God-
given wisdom, set magistrates and judges who may judge all the people
who *are in the region* beyond the River, all such as know the laws of
your God; and teach those who do not know *them.* [26]Whoever will not
observe the law of your God and the law of the king, let judgment be
executed speedily on him, whether *it be* death, or banishment, or
confiscation of goods, or imprisonment.
[27]Blessed *be* the LORD God of our fathers, who has put *such a thing* as this

in the king’s heart, to beautify the house of the LORD which *is* in Jerusalem,
[28]and has extended mercy to me before the king and his counselors, and before all the king’s mighty princes.

So I was encouraged, as the hand of the LORD my God *was* upon me; and I gathered leading men of Israel to go up with me.

## HEADS OF FAMILIES WHO RETURNED WITH EZRA

**8** These *are* the heads of their fathers' *houses,* and *this is* the genealogy of those who went up with me from Babylon, in the reign of King Artaxerxes: 2of the sons of Phinehas, Gershom; of the sons of Ithamar, Daniel; of the sons of David, Hattush; 3of the sons of Shecaniah, of the sons of Parosh, Zechariah; and registered with him *were* one hundred and fifty males; 4of the sons of Pahath-Moab, Eliehoenai the son of Zerahiah, and with him two hundred males; 5of the sons of Shechaniah,*a* Ben-Jahaziel, and with him three hundred males; 6of the sons of Adin, Ebed the son of Jonathan, and with him fifty males; 7of the sons of Elam, Jeshaiah the son of Athaliah, and with him seventy males; 8of the sons of Shephatiah, Zebadiah the son of Michael, and with him eighty males; 9of the sons of Joab, Obadiah the son of Jehiel, and with him two hundred and eighteen males; 10of the sons of Shelomith,*a* Ben-Josiphiah, and with him one hundred and sixty males; 11of the sons of Bebai, Zechariah the son of Bebai, and with him twenty-eight males; 12of the sons of Azgad, Johanan the son of Hakkatan, and with him one hundred and ten males; 13of the last sons of Adonikam, whose names *are* these-Eliphelet, Jeiel, and Shemaiah-and with them sixty males; 14also of the sons of Bigvai, Uthai and Zabbud, and with them seventy males.

> "The hand of our God is upon all those for good who seek Him, but His power and His wrath are against all those who forsake Him."
> EZRA 8:22

## SERVANTS FOR THE TEMPLE

15Now I gathered them by the river that flows to Ahava, and we camped there three days. And I looked among the people and the priests, and found none of the sons of Levi there. 16Then I sent for Eliezer, Ariel, Shemaiah, Elnathan, Jarib, Elnathan, Nathan, Zechariah, and Meshullam, leaders; also for Joiarib and Elnathan, men of understanding. 17And I gave them a command for Iddo the chief man at the place Casiphia, and I told them what they should say to Iddo *and* his brethren*a* the Nethinim at the place Casiphia-

that they should bring us servants for the house of our God. [18]Then, by the good hand of our God upon us, they brought us a man of understanding, of the sons of Mahli the son of Levi, the son of Israel, namely Sherebiah, with his sons and brothers, eighteen men; [19]and Hashabiah, and with him Jeshaiah of the sons of Merari, his brothers and their sons, twenty men; [20]also of the Nethinim, whom David and the leaders had appointed for the service of the Levites, two hundred and twenty Nethinim. All of them were designated by name.

**FASTING AND PRAYER FOR PROTECTION**

[21]Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from Him the right way for us and our little ones and all our possessions. [22]For I was ashamed to request of the king an escort of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy on the road, because we had spoken to the king, saying, "The hand of our God *is* upon all those for good who seek Him, but His power and His wrath *are* against all those who forsake Him." [23]So we fasted and entreated our God for this, and He answered our prayer.

**GIFTS FOR THE TEMPLE**

[24]And I separated twelve of the leaders of the priests-Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and ten of their brethren with them- [25]and weighed out to them the silver, the gold, and the articles, the offering for the house of our God which the king and his counselors and his princes, and all Israel *who were* present, had offered. [26]I weighed into their hand six hundred and fifty talents of silver, silver articles *weighing* one hundred talents, one hundred talents of gold, [27]twenty gold basins *worth* a thousand drachmas, and two vessels of fine polished bronze, precious as gold. [28]And I said to them, "You *are* holy to the LORD; the articles *are* holy also; and the silver and the gold *are* a freewill offering to the LORD God of your fathers. [29]Watch and keep *them* until you weigh *them* before the leaders of the priests and the Levites and heads of the fathers' *houses* of Israel in Jerusalem, *in* the chambers of the house of the LORD." [30]So the priests and the Levites received the silver and the gold and the articles by weight, to bring *them* to Jerusalem to the house of our God.

**THE RETURN TO JERUSALEM**

[31]Then we departed from the river of Ahava on the twelfth *day* of the first month, to go to Jerusalem. And the hand of our God was upon us, and He delivered us from the hand of the enemy and from ambush along the road. [32]So we came to Jerusalem, and stayed there three days.

[33]Now on the fourth day the silver and the gold and the articles were weighed in the house of our God by the hand of Meremoth the son of Uriah the priest, and with him *was* Eleazar the son of Phinehas; with them *were* the Levites, Jozabad the son of Jeshua and Noadiah the son of Binnui, [34]with the number *and* weight of everything. All the weight was written down at that time.

[35]The children of those who had been carried away captive, who had come from the captivity, offered burnt offerings to the God of Israel: twelve bulls for all Israel, ninety-six rams, seventy-seven lambs, and twelve male goats *as* a sin offering. All *this was* a burnt offering to the LORD.

[36]And they delivered the king's orders to the king's satraps and the governors *in the region* beyond the River. So they gave support to the people and the house of God.

**INTERMARRIAGE WITH PAGANS**

**9** When these things were done, the leaders came to me, saying, “The people
of Israel and the priests and the Levites have not separated themselves
from the peoples of the lands, with respect to the abominations of the
Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the
Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. 2For they have taken some of
their daughters *as wives* for themselves and their sons, so that the holy seed is
mixed with the peoples of *those* lands. Indeed, the hand of the leaders and
rulers has been foremost in this trespass.” 3So when I heard this thing, I tore
my garment and my robe, and plucked out some of the hair of my head and
beard, and sat down astonished. 4Then everyone who trembled at the words
of the God of Israel assembled to me, because of the transgression of those
who had been carried away captive, and I sat astonished until the evening
sacrifice.

5At the evening sacrifice I arose from my fasting; and having torn my
garment and my robe, I fell on my knees and spread out my hands to the
LORD my God. 6And I said: “O my God, I am too ashamed and humiliated to
lift up my face to You, my God; for our iniquities have risen higher than *our*
heads, and our guilt has grown up to the heavens. 7Since the days of our
fathers to this day we *have been* very guilty, and for our iniquities we, our
kings, *and* our priests have been delivered into the hand of the kings of the
lands, to the sword, to captivity, to plunder, and to humiliation, as *it is* this
day. 8And now for a little while grace has been *shown* from the LORD our
God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a peg in His holy place,
that our God may enlighten our eyes and give us a measure of revival in our
bondage. 9For we *were* slaves. Yet our God did not forsake us in our
bondage; but He extended mercy to us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to
revive us, to repair the house of our God, to rebuild its ruins, and to give us a
wall in Judah and Jerusalem. 10And now, O our God, what shall we say after
this? For we have forsaken Your commandments, 11which You commanded
by Your servants the prophets, saying, ‘The land which you are entering to
possess is an unclean land, with the uncleanness of the peoples of the lands,
with their abominations which have filled it from one end to another with

their impurity. [12]Now therefore, do not give your daughters as wives for their sons, nor take their daughters to your sons; and never seek their peace or prosperity, that you may be strong and eat the good of the land, and leave *it* as an inheritance to your children forever.' [13]And after all that has come upon us for our evil deeds and for our great guilt, since You our God have punished us less than our iniquities *deserve*, and have given us *such* deliverance as this, [14]should we again break Your commandments, and join in marriage with the people *committing* these abominations? Would You not be angry with us until You had consumed *us*, so that *there would be* no remnant or survivor? [15]O LORD God of Israel, You *are* righteous, for we are left as a remnant, as *it is* this day. Here we *are* before You, in our guilt, though no one can stand before You because of this!"

**SOUL NOTE**

**Owning Up** *(9:2-8)* Ezra's prayer confessed the sins of the nation of Israel. He was so upset over their defiance of God's law that he fell on his face before the Lord, acknowledging the people's sin as well as God's grace toward them. Despite our mistakes and failures, God is always willing to meet us at our point of need. Sometimes we can make amends by specific actions; at other times we must suffer the consequences of our sin. But through repentance, we can experience God's grace and love. **Topic: Guilt/Shame**

**DEALING WITH GUILT**

# LES PARROTT

## (Ezra 9:5-8)

**A**letter addressed to “Uncle Sam” said, “My conscience has been working on me, so to quiet it, I’m sending you this money order for $200.” It was signed, “One of your conscience-stricken nephews.” A postscript was added, saying, “P. S. If I still feel guilty, I’ll send in the other $200.”

It all began in the 1800’s when someone sent a few cents to the United States Treasury Department. The enclosed note read: “This is payment for a reused postage stamp. It wasn’t canceled so I peeled it off and used it again. The money is to ease my conscience.” The government, not knowing what to do with those few pennies, created the Conscience Fund. To date, that fund has received over five million dollars.

Everyone experiences guilt now and then. And nearly everyone reacts to guilt in a predictable manner. If people fall short of a goal (such as raising the “perfect” child), they are filled with shame. “If only I had been a better parent, my child wouldn’t have turned out this way.” If students don’t make a desired grade, they berate themselves: “No wonder I didn’t pass. I’m so dumb.” The merciless mental tape player replays its destructive messages, creating waves of guilt and shame. How should a person cope with these guilt-ridden feelings?

### FEELING GUILTY VS. BEING GUILTY

There is a difference between *feeling* guilty and actually *being* guilty. For example, if someone were to steal a loaf of bread from the local grocer, that person would be guilty of the crime. The laws of society and the words of the Bible make this clear: Stealing is against the law and is morally wrong. This type of guilt is the result of a violation of

a moral law. The person *is* guilty regardless of whether or not the person actually *feels* guilty.

On the other hand, just *feeling* guilty doesn't mean that someone has violated a moral law. Many times, failing to meet a person's expectations imposes guilt feelings that are not associated with a moral wrong. Because of the strength of their emotions, many people carry guilt they have neither earned nor deserve. They feel guilty and they don't know why.

It is possible to be guilty of an offense without necessarily feeling the emotion of guilt. For example, a person may hurt a friend's feelings without even realizing it. Unfortunately, many people also become desensitized to a sense of conviction by repeated offenses.

On the other hand, the fact that the believer is unconditionally loved by God seems to indicate that guilt feelings which are not based on the fact of guilt have absolutely no place in the sanctified life. The Bible says: "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1).

Satan, not the Holy Spirit, is "the accuser" (Rev. 12:10). Satan's work is to create feelings of condemnation for the believer, resulting in overwhelming hopelessness or unnecessary guilt. The work of the Holy Spirit, however, results in conviction, forgiveness, and restoration.

## DEALING WITH GUILTY FEELINGS

Most people do not have trouble knowing when they are guilty. The following tips will help those who struggle with nagging feelings of guilt:

1. Pay attention to uncomfortable feelings. Guilt, like physical pain, is a signal that something is wrong.

2. Determine whether the guilt feelings are realistic or the result of unreasonable expectations. Ask: “Why do I feel guilty?” and “Should I feel guilty?” Once a person has determined the nature and cause of feelings, it is easier to be more objective in handling them.

3. Remember that everyone is human. Punishing oneself for human errors is useless. If you forget a friend’s birthday, for example, you can make it up to that person as soon as possible. However, don’t follow the tendency to “replay” the mistake over and over again. Correct mistakes and move on.

4. If guilt feelings are a result of sin, ask God for forgiveness, accept His cleansing love, correct the misdeed if appropriate, and forget it. This is not a way of getting God off your back. It serves as a springboard to help jump over a guilty past into the present love of God.

5. Recognize that “telling all” can be a way of inflicting more punishment on oneself. This only eases the sense of guilt for the moment and may put unfair stress on those who are listening. Permanent relief from moral guilt comes from God’s forgiveness, not public confession. In most cases, the scope of our confession should not exceed the scope of our sin.

6. If guilt feelings are unrealistic, turn off the mental tape player. Ask God for strength to do this. Ask a minister or other professional for help if necessary.

## CHRIST SETS US FREE

We can deal with guilt and be sorry without self-condemnation. The apostle Paul says, “For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death” (2 Cor. 7:10).

Christ did not come to condemn us and make us feel guilty. While

donations to the government's Conscience Fund may ease our minds temporarily, Christ offers to remove the guilt entirely and for eternity. He came to set us free from sin and the uncomfortable emotion of guilt.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of guilt/shame include:

- 2 Chronicles 30:9
- Psalms 19; 32; 38; 51; 89
- Isaiah 43:25; 54:4, 9; 55:7
- Jeremiah 33:8
- Romans 3:23
- Hebrews 10:2, 22
- 1 John 1:7-9

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on guilt/shame at Romans 8:1. See also the personality profile of Adam's Guilt; Adam's Shame.

## CONFESSION OF IMPROPER MARRIAGES

**10** Now while Ezra was praying, and while he was confessing, weeping,
and bowing down before the house of God, a very large assembly of
men, women, and children gathered to him from Israel; for the people wept
very bitterly. 2And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, *one* of the sons of Elam,
spoke up and said to Ezra, "We have trespassed against our God, and have
taken pagan wives from the peoples of the land; yet now there is hope in
Israel in spite of this. 3Now therefore, let us make a covenant with our God to
put away all these wives and those who have been born to them, according to
the advice of my master and of those who tremble at the commandment of
our God; and let it be done according to the law. 4Arise, for *this* matter *is*
your *responsibility*. We also are with you. Be of good courage, and do it."

> "Arise, for this matter is your responsibility. We also are with you. Be of good courage, and do it."
> EZRA 10:4

5Then Ezra arose, and made the leaders of the priests, the Levites, and all
Israel swear an oath that they would do according to this word. So they swore
an oath. 6Then Ezra rose up from before the house of God, and went into the
chamber of Jehohanan the son of Eliashib; and *when* he came there, he ate no
bread and drank no water, for he mourned because of the guilt of those from
the captivity.

7And they issued a proclamation throughout Judah and Jerusalem to all the
descendants of the captivity, that they must gather at Jerusalem, 8and that
whoever would not come within three days, according to the instructions of
the leaders and elders, all his property would be confiscated, and he himself
would be separated from the assembly of those from the captivity.

9So all the men of Judah and Benjamin gathered at Jerusalem within three
days. It *was* the ninth month, on the twentieth of the month; and all the
people sat in the open square of the house of God, trembling because of *this*
matter and because of heavy rain. 10Then Ezra the priest stood up and said to
them, "You have transgressed and have taken pagan wives, adding to the

guilt of Israel. [11]Now therefore, make confession to the LORD God of your fathers, and do His will; separate yourselves from the peoples of the land, and from the pagan wives."

[12]Then all the assembly answered and said with a loud voice, "Yes! As you have said, so we must do. [13]But *there are* many people; *it is* the season for heavy rain, and we are not able to stand outside. Nor *is this* the work of one or two days, for *there are* many of us who have transgressed in this matter. [14]Please, let the leaders of our entire assembly stand; and let all those in our cities who have taken pagan wives come at appointed times, together with the elders and judges of their cities, until the fierce wrath of our God is turned away from us in this matter." [15]Only Jonathan the son of Asahel and Jahaziah the son of Tikvah opposed this, and Meshullam and Shabbethai the Levite gave them support.

[16]Then the descendants of the captivity did so. And Ezra the priest, *with* certain heads of the fathers' *households,* were set apart by the fathers' *households,* each of them by name; and they sat down on the first day of the tenth month to examine the matter. [17]By the first day of the first month they finished *questioning* all the men who had taken pagan wives.

**PAGAN WIVES PUT AWAY**

[18]And among the sons of the priests who had taken pagan wives *the following* were found of the sons of Jeshua the son of Jozadak, [a] and his brothers: Maaseiah, Eliezer, Jarib, and Gedaliah. [19]And they gave their promise that they would put away their wives; and *being* guilty, *they presented* a ram of the flock as their trespass offering.

[20]Also of the sons of Immer: Hanani and Zebadiah; [21]of the sons of Harim: Maaseiah, Elijah, Shemaiah, Jehiel, and Uzziah; [22]of the sons of Pashhur: Elioenai, Maaseiah, Ishmael, Nethanel, Jozabad, and Elasah.

[23]Also of the Levites: Jozabad, Shimei, Kelaiah (the same *is* Kelita), Pethahiah, Judah, and Eliezer.

[24]Also of the singers: Eliashib; and of the gatekeepers: Shallum, Telem, and Uri.

[25]And others of Israel: of the sons of Parosh: Ramiah, Jeziah, Malchiah, Mijamin, Eleazar, Malchijah, and Benaiah; [26]of the sons of Elam: Mattaniah, Zechariah, Jehiel, Abdi, Jeremoth, and Eliah; [27]of the sons of Zattu: Elioenai, Eliashib, Mattaniah, Jeremoth, Zabad, and Aziza; [28]of the sons of Bebai: Jehohanan, Han-aniah, Zabbai, *and* Athlai; [29]of the sons of Bani: Meshullam, Malluch, Adaiah, Jashub, Sheal, *and* Ramoth;[a] [30]of the sons of PahathMoab: Adna, Chelal, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattaniah, Bezalel, Binnui, and Manasseh; [31]*of* the sons of Harim: Eliezer, Ishijah, Malchijah, Shemaiah, Shimeon, [32]Benjamin, Malluch, *and* Shemariah; [33]of the sons of Hashum: Mattenai, Mattattah, Zabad, Eliphelet, Jeremai, Manasseh, *and* Shimei; [34]of the sons of Bani: Maadai, Amram, Uel, [35]Benaiah, Bedeiah, Cheluh,[a] [36]Vaniah, Meremoth, Eliashib, [37]Mattaniah, Mattenai, Jaasai,[a] [38]Bani, Binnui, Shimei, [39]Shelemiah, Nathan, Adaiah, [40]Machnadebai, Shashai, Sharai, [41]Azarel, Shelemiah, Shemariah, [42]Shallum, Amariah, *and* Joseph; [43]of the sons of Nebo: Jeiel, Mattithiah, Zabad, Zebina, Jaddai,[a] Joel, *and* Benaiah.

[44]All these had taken pagan wives, and *some* of them had wives *by whom* they had children.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Tough Decisions** *(10:10, 11)* Ezra told the men of Judah to separate from their pagan wives. Ezra's concern was to protect the spiritual integrity of the nation. He knew that if they did not put God first in every area of their lives, eventually they would repeat the errors of their forefathers. While God would not call for divorce today (1 Cor. 7:10-16), the principle is clear that at times we must separate ourselves from things that draw us away from God. **Topic: Divorce/Separation**

# Nehemiah



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# Nehemiah

There are many books and tapes that discuss leadership principles, and a variety of seminars that offer training in leadership techniques. Unfortunately, it seems that there are few truly great leaders.

Nehemiah was one such leader-a man who demonstrated moral courage in the face of tremendous opposition. Ezra and Nehemiah comprise one book in the Hebrew Bible, so Nehemiah was probably written by Ezra, perhaps using Nehemiah's memoirs. The Book of Nehemiah tells the remarkable story of how Nehemiah motivated a disorganized, disillusioned people to complete the difficult task of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem-in only 52 days! Beyond mere walls, Nehemiah-together with his contemporary Ezra-also played a major role in leading the nation into spiritual renewal.

A trusted advisor to the Persian potentate, Nehemiah was heartbroken to learn of Jerusalem's broken-down walls. Armed with a compelling vision and the blessing of Artaxerxes, he led a third group of exiles home.

Nehemiah's task was not without obstacles. He had to deal with continual threats from without-at one point putting half of his workforce on military alert. He also confronted the internal problem of the wealthy taking advantage of their less fortunate brethren. In each and every situation, Nehemiah demonstrated remarkable wisdom, courage, and godliness.

No matter who or what you're trying to lead-a marriage, a family, a business, a classroom-the Book of Nehemiah offers valuable insight. Study Nehemiah's life, emulate his practices, and watch what God does in and through you!

**SOUL CONCERN IN**

## NEHEMIAH

JOY (8:10)

## NEHEMIAH PRAYS FOR HIS PEOPLE

**1** The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah.

It came to pass in the month of Chislev, *in* the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan[a] the citadel, 2that Hanani one of my brethren came with men from Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews who had escaped, who had survived the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem. 3And they said to me, "The survivors who are left from the captivity in the province *are* there in great distress and reproach. The wall of Jerusalem *is* also broken down, and its gates *are* burned with fire."

4So it was, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned *for many* days; I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven.

5And I said: "I pray, LORD God of heaven, O great and awesome God, *You* who keep *Your* covenant and mercy with those who love You[a] and observe Your[b] commandments, 6please let Your ear be attentive and Your eyes open, that You may hear the prayer of Your servant which I pray before You now, day and night, for the children of Israel Your servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel which we have sinned against You. Both my father's house and I have sinned. 7We have acted very corruptly against You, and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, nor the ordinances which You commanded Your servant Moses. 8Remember, I pray, the word that You commanded Your servant Moses, saying, '*If* you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations;[a] 9but *if* you return to Me, and keep My commandments and do them, though some of you were cast out to the farthest part of the heavens, *yet* I will gather them from there, and bring them to the place which I have chosen as a dwelling for My name.'[a] 10Now these *are* Your servants and Your people, whom You have redeemed by Your great power, and by Your strong hand. 11O Lord, I pray, please let Your ear be attentive to the prayer of Your servant, and to the prayer of Your servants who desire to fear Your name; and let Your servant prosper this day, I pray, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man."

For I was the king's cupbearer.

## NEHEMIAH SENT TO JUDAH

**2** And it came to pass in the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of King
Artaxerxes, *when* wine *was* before him, that I took the wine and gave it to
the king. Now I had never been sad in his presence before. [2]Therefore the
king said to me, “Why *is* your face sad, since you *are* not sick? This *is*
nothing but sorrow of heart.”

So I became dreadfully afraid, [3]and said to the king, “May the king live
forever! Why should my face not be sad, when the city, the place of my
fathers’ tombs, *lies* waste, and its gates are burned with fire?”

[4]Then the king said to me, “What do you request?”

So I prayed to the God of heaven. [5]And I said to the king, “If it pleases the
king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, I ask that you send me
to Judah, to the city of my fathers’ tombs, that I may rebuild it.”

[6]Then the king said to me (the queen also sitting beside him), “How long
will your journey be? And when will you return?” So it pleased the king to
send me; and I set him a time.

[7]Furthermore I said to the king, “If it pleases the king, let letters be given
to me for the governors *of the region* beyond the River,[a] that they must
permit me to pass through till I come to Judah, [8]and a letter to Asaph the
keeper of the king’s forest, that he must give me timber to make beams for
the gates of the citadel which *pertains* to the temple,[a] for the city wall, and
for the house that I will occupy.” And the king granted *them* to me according
to the good hand of my God upon me.

[9]Then I went to the governors *in the region* beyond the River, and gave
them the king’s letters. Now the king had sent captains of the army and
horsemen with me. [10]When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite
official[a] heard *of it*, they were deeply disturbed that a man had come to seek
the well-being of the children of Israel.

## NEHEMIAH VIEWS THE WALL OF JERUSALEM

[11]So I came to Jerusalem and was there three days. [12]Then I arose in the

night, I and a few men with me; I told no one what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem; nor was there any animal with me, except the one on which I rode. [13]And I went out by night through the Valley Gate to the Serpent Well and the Refuse Gate, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem which were broken down and its gates which were burned with fire. [14]Then I went on to the Fountain Gate and to the King's Pool, but *there was* no room for the animal under me to pass. [15]So I went up in the night by the valley, and viewed the wall; then I turned back and entered by the Valley Gate, and so returned. [16]And the officials did not know where I had gone or what I had done; I had not yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials, or the others who did the work.

[17]Then I said to them, "You see the distress that we *are* in, how Jerusalem *lies* waste, and its gates are burned with fire. Come and let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer be a reproach." [18]And I told them of the hand of my God which had been good upon me, and also of the king's words that he had spoken to me.

So they said, "Let us rise up and build." Then they set their hands to *this* good *work.*

[19]But when Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab heard *of it,* they laughed at us and despised us, and said, "What *is* this thing that you are doing? Will you rebel against the king?"

[20]So I answered them, and said to them, "The God of heaven Himself will prosper us; therefore we His servants will arise and build, but you have no heritage or right or memorial in Jerusalem."

"The God of heaven Himself will prosper us; therefore we His servants will arise and build."
NEHEMIAH 2:20

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# NEHEMIAH-RISING ABOVE DISCOURAGEMENT

## (NEHEMIAH 2)

What happens when people are discouraged? Some decide to give up. Others look to place blame. Still others use their discouragement as a slingshot to propel them to new heights. Nehemiah was a member of the last-named group.

Nehemiah was a Jewish exile living in Persia and serving as the cupbearer to King Artaxerxes. A cupbearer was a trusted servant with constant access to the king-tasting all food and drink before giving it to the king. Jewish exiles had already been allowed to return and rebuild, so many had gone with Ezra back to Jerusalem. Nehemiah longed for news from his homeland. Eventually he learned that, although those who had returned had rebuilt the temple, they had not yet completed the city wall. Nehemiah was heartbroken when he learned that the wall of Jerusalem was still in disrepair years after the Jewish people had returned to the city.

His discouragement was understandable. In ancient times, a city without walls was vulnerable to attack-it was a weak city. Jerusalem would not be able to stand proud or even begin to reach its former stature without a wall. Instead of allowing his discouragement to lead to despair, Nehemiah set about on a course of action to correct the problem.

After praying and planning, Nehemiah took advantage of his trusted position with the king. When the king asked why Nehemiah seemed disturbed, Nehemiah explained the situation, said a quick prayer, and boldly asked for everything he would need to take a trip

to Jerusalem. Obviously, Nehemiah was ready with his request so that, when the opportunity arose, he knew exactly what to ask. The king granted the request of his trusted servant, and Nehemiah was on his way.

Discouragement can cause depression and inability to act. It can also motivate a person, giving renewed determination. Like Nehemiah, we can let discouragement cause us to find a way to solve the problem. We can pray, plan, and then move ahead, knowing that God goes with us.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Overcoming Discouragement. See also the key passage note at 1 Peter 5:7.

**REBUILDING THE WALL**

**3** Then Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brethren the priests and built the Sheep Gate; they consecrated it and hung its doors. They built as far as the Tower of the [a] *and* consecrated it, then as far as Hundred, the Tower of Hananel. 2 Next to *Eliashib*[a] the men of Jericho built. And next to them Zaccur the son of Imri built.

3 Also the sons of Has-senaah built the Fish Gate; they laid its beams and hung its doors with its bolts and bars. 4 And next to them Meremoth the son of Urijah, the son of Koz,[a] made repairs. Next to them Meshullam the son of Berechiah, the son of Meshezabel, made repairs. Next to them Zadok the son of Baana made repairs. 5 Next to them the Tekoites made repairs; but their nobles did not put their shoulders[a] to the work of their Lord.

6 Moreover Jehoiada the son of Paseah and Meshullam the son of Besodeiah repaired the Old Gate; they laid its beams and hung its doors, with its bolts and bars. 7 And next to them Melatiah the Gibeonite, Jadon the Meronothite, the men of Gibeon and Mizpah, repaired the residence[a] of the governor *of the region* beyond the River. 8 Next to him Uzziel the son of Harhaiah, one of the goldsmiths, made repairs. Also next to him Hananiah, one[a] of the perfumers, made repairs; and they fortified Jerusalem as far as the Broad Wall. 9 And next to them Rephaiah the son of Hur, leader of half the district of Jerusalem, made repairs. 10 Next to them Jedaiah the son of Harumaph made repairs in front of his house. And next to him Hattush the son of Hashabniah made repairs.

11 Malchijah the son of Harim and Hashub the son of Pahath-Moab repaired another section, as well as the Tower of the Ovens. 12 And next to him was Shallum the son of Hallohesh, leader of half the district of Jerusalem; he and his daughters made repairs.

13 Hanun and the inhabitants of Zanoah repaired the Valley Gate. They built it, hung its doors with its bolts and bars, and *repaired* a thousand cubits of the wall as far as the Refuse Gate.

14 Malchijah the son of Rechab, leader of the district of Beth Haccerem,

repaired the Refuse Gate; he built it and hung its doors with its bolts and bars.

15 Shallun the son of Col-Hozeh, leader of the district of Mizpah, repaired
the Fountain Gate; he built it, covered it, hung its doors with its bolts and
bars, and repaired the wall of the Pool of Shelah by the King's Garden, as far
as the stairs that go down from the City of David. 16 After him Nehemiah the
son of Azbuk, leader of half the district of Beth Zur, made repairs as far as
*the place* in front of the tombs[a] of David, to the man-made pool, and as far as
the House of the Mighty.

17 After him the Levites, *under* Rehum the son of Bani, made repairs. Next
to him Hashabiah, leader of half the district of Keilah, made repairs for his
district. 18 After him their brethren, *under* Bavai[a] the son of Henadad, leader
of the *other* half of the district of Keilah, made repairs. 19 And next to him
Ezer the son of Jeshua, the leader of Mizpah, repaired another section in front
of the Ascent to the Armory at the buttress. 20 After him Baruch the son of
Zabbai[a] carefully repaired the other section, from the buttress to the door of
the house of Eliashib the high priest. 21 After him Meremoth the son of
Urijah, the son of Koz,[a] repaired another section, from the door of the house
of Eliashib to the end of the house of Eliashib.

22 And after him the priests, the men of the plain, made repairs. 23 After him
Benjamin and Hasshub made repairs opposite their house. After them
Azariah the son of Maaseiah, the son of Ananiah, made repairs by his house.
24 After him Binnui the son of Henadad repaired another section, from the
house of Azariah to the buttress, even as far as the corner. 25 Palal the son of
Uzai *made repairs* opposite the buttress, and on the tower which projects
from the king's upper house that *was* by the court of the prison. After him
Pedaiah the son of Parosh *made repairs.*

26 Moreover the Nethinim who dwelt in Ophel *made repairs* as far as *the*
*place* in front of the Water Gate toward the east, and on the projecting tower.
27 After them the Tekoites repaired another section, next to the great
projecting tower, and as far as the wall of Ophel.

28 Beyond the Horse Gate the priests made repairs, each in front of his *own*
house. 29 After them Zadok the son of Immer made repairs in front of his *own*
house. After him Shemaiah the son of Shechaniah, the keeper of the East

Gate, made repairs. [30]After him Hananiah the son of Shelemiah, and Hanun, the sixth son of Zalaph, repaired another section. After him Meshullam the son of Berechiah made repairs in front of his dwelling. [31]After him Malchijah, one of the goldsmiths, made repairs as far as the house of the Nethinim and of the merchants, in front of the Miphkad[a] Gate, and as far as the upper room at the corner. [32]And between the upper room at the corner, as far as the Sheep Gate, the goldsmiths and the merchants made repairs.

**THE WALL DEFENDED AGAINST ENEMIES**

**4** But it so happened, when Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall,
that he was furious and very indignant, and mocked the Jews. [2]And he
spoke before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, “What are these
feeble Jews doing? Will they fortify themselves? Will they offer sacrifices?
Will they complete it in a day? Will they revive the stones from the heaps of
rubbish-*stones* that are burned?”

[3]Now Tobiah the Ammonite *was* beside him, and he said, “Whatever they
build, if even a fox goes up *on it*, he will break down their stone wall.”

[4]Hear, O our God, for we are despised; turn their reproach on their own
heads, and give them as plunder to a land of captivity! [5]Do not cover their
iniquity, and do not let their sin be blotted out from before You; for they have
provoked *You* to anger before the builders.

[6]So we built the wall, and the entire wall was joined together up to half its
*height,* for the people had a mind to work.

[7]Now it happened, when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites, and
the Ashdodites heard that the walls of Jerusalem were being restored and the
gaps were beginning to be closed, that they became very angry, [8]and all of
them conspired together to come *and* attack Jerusalem and create confusion.
[9]Nevertheless we made our prayer to our God, and because of them we set a
watch against them day and night.

[10]Then Judah said, “The strength of the laborers is failing, and *there is* so
much rubbish that we are not able to build the wall.”

[11]And our adversaries said, “They will neither know nor see anything, till
we come into their midst and kill them and cause the work to cease.”

[12]So it was, when the Jews who dwelt near them came, that they told us ten
times, “From whatever place you turn, *they will be* upon us.”

[13]Therefore I positioned *men* behind the lower parts of the wall, at the
openings; and I set the people according to their families, with their swords,
their spears, and their bows. [14]And I looked, and arose and said to the nobles,
to the leaders, and to the rest of the people, “Do not be afraid of them.

Remember the Lord, great and awesome, and fight for your brethren, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your houses."

> "Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, great and awesome, and fight for your brethren, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your houses."
> NEHEMIAH 4:14

15 And it happened, when our enemies heard that it was known to us, and *that* God had brought their plot to nothing, that all of us returned to the wall, everyone to his work. 16 So it was, from that time on, *that* half of my servants worked at construction, while the other half held the spears, the shields, the bows, and *wore* armor; and the leaders *were* behind all the house of Judah. 17 Those who built on the wall, and those who carried burdens, loaded themselves so that with one hand they worked at construction, and with the other held a weapon. 18 Every one of the builders had his sword girded at his side as he built. And the one who sounded the trumpet *was* beside me.

19 Then I said to the nobles, the rulers, and the rest of the people, "The work *is* great and extensive, and we are separated far from one another on the wall. 20 Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us."

21 So we labored in the work, and half of *the men*[a] held the spears from daybreak until the stars appeared. 22 At the same time I also said to the people, "Let each man and his servant stay at night in Jerusalem, that they may be our guard by night and a working party by day." 23 So neither I, my brethren, my servants, nor the men of the guard who followed me took off our clothes, *except* that everyone took them off for washing.

## NEHEMIAH DEALS WITH OPPRESSION

**5** And there was a great outcry of the people and their wives against their
Jewish brethren. 2For there were those who said, “We, our sons, and our
daughters *are* many; therefore let us get grain, that we may eat and live.”

3There were also *some* who said, “We have mortgaged our lands and
vineyards and houses, that we might buy grain because of the famine.”

4There were also those who said, “We have borrowed money for the king’s
tax *on* our lands and vineyards. 5Yet now our flesh *is* as the flesh of our
brethren, our children as their children; and indeed we are forcing our sons
and our daughters to be slaves, and *some* of our daughters have been brought
into slavery. *It is* not in our power *to redeem them*, for other men have our
lands and vineyards.”

6And I became very angry when I heard their outcry and these words.
7After serious thought, I rebuked the nobles and rulers, and said to them,
“Each of you is exacting usury from his brother.” So I called a great assembly
against them. 8And I said to them, “According to our ability we have
redeemed our Jewish brethren who were sold to the nations. Now indeed, will
you even sell your brethren? Or should they be sold to us?”

Then they were silenced and found nothing *to say*. 9Then I said, “What you
are doing *is* not good. Should you not walk in the fear of our God because of
the reproach of the nations, our enemies? 10I also, *with* my brethren and my
servants, am lending them money and grain. Please, let us stop this usury!
11Restore now to them, even this day, their lands, their vineyards, their olive
groves, and their houses, also a hundredth of the money and the grain, the
new wine and the oil, that you have charged them.”

12So they said, “We will restore *it*, and will require nothing from them; we
will do as you say.”

Then I called the priests, and required an oath from them that they would
do according to this promise. 13Then I shook out the fold of my garment[a] and
said, “So may God shake out each man from his house, and from his
property, who does not perform this promise. Even thus may he be shaken
out and emptied.”

And all the assembly said, “Amen!” and praised the LORD. Then the people did according to this promise.

**THE GENEROSITY OF NEHEMIAH**

14 Moreover, from the time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year until the thirty-second year of King Artaxerxes, twelve years, neither I nor my brothers ate the governor’s provisions. 15 But the former governors who *were* before me laid burdens on the people, and took from them bread and wine, besides forty shekels of silver. Yes, even their servants bore rule over the people, but I did not do so, because of the fear of God. 16 Indeed, I also continued the work on this wall, and we[a] did not buy any land. All my servants *were* gathered there for the work.

17 And at my table *were* one hundred and fifty Jews and rulers, besides those who came to us from the nations around us. 18 Now *that* which was prepared daily *was* one ox *and* six choice sheep. Also fowl were prepared for me, and once every ten days an abundance of all kinds of wine. Yet in spite of this I did not demand the governor’s provisions, because the bondage was heavy on this people.

19 Remember me, my God, for good, *according to* all that I have done for this people.

> Remember me, my God, for good, according to all that I have done for this people.
> NEHEMIAH 5:19

**SOUL NOTE**

**A Positive Solution** *(5:6)* Nehemiah’s anger was righteous indignation. Many of the Jews were suffering-not at the hands of

enemies, but at the hands of their rich countrymen who had lent them money. When a payment was missed, the lender would seize the debtor's land. Nehemiah was determined not to allow this to continue. He put his anger to work by calling a meeting of the moneylenders and condemning their methods. They then agreed to return the seized lands (5:12). When you feel anger burning beneath the surface, ask God to guide you toward a productive way to resolve the conflict. **Topic: Anger**

## CONSPIRACY AGAINST NEHEMIAH

**6** Now it happened when Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem the Arab, and the rest
of our enemies heard that I had rebuilt the wall, and *that* there were no
breaks left in it (though at that time I had not hung the doors in the gates),
2 that Sanballat and Geshem sent to me, saying, "Come, let us meet together
among the villages in the plain of Ono." But they thought to do me harm.

3 So I sent messengers to them, saying, "I *am* doing a great work, so that I
cannot come down. Why should the work cease while I leave it and go down
to you?"

4 But they sent me this message four times, and I answered them in the
same manner.

5 Then Sanballat sent his servant to me as before, the fifth time, with an
open letter in his hand. 6 In it *was* written:

> It is reported among the nations, and Geshem[a] says, *that* you and the Jews plan to rebel;
> therefore, according to these rumors, you are rebuilding the wall, that you may be their king.
> 7 And you have also appointed prophets to proclaim concerning you at Jerusalem, saying,
> "*There is* a king in Judah!" Now these matters will be reported to the king. So come,
> therefore, and let us consult together.

8 Then I sent to him, saying, "No such things as you say are being done, but
you invent them in your own heart."

9 For they all *were trying to* make us afraid, saying, "Their hands will be
weakened in the work, and it will not be done."

Now therefore, *O God*, strengthen my hands.

10 Afterward I came to the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah, the son of
Mehetabel, who *was* a secret informer; and he said, "Let us meet together in
the house of God, within the temple, and let us close the doors of the temple,
for they are coming to kill you; indeed, at night they will come to kill you."

11 And I said, "Should such a man as I flee? And who *is there* such as I who
would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in!" 12 Then I
perceived that God had not sent him at all, but that he pronounced *this*
prophecy against me because Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. 13 For this

reason he *was* hired, that I should be afraid and act that way and sin, so *that* they might have *cause* for an evil report, that they might reproach me.

14My God, remember Tobiah and Sanballat, according to these their works, and the prophetess Noadiah and the rest of the prophets who would have made me afraid.

**THE WALL COMPLETED**

15So the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth *day* of Elul, in fifty-two days. 16And it happened, when all our enemies heard *of it,* and all the nations around us saw *these things,* that they were very disheartened in their own eyes; for they perceived that this work was done by our God.

17Also in those days the nobles of Judah sent many letters to Tobiah, and *the letters of* Tobiah came to them. 18For many in Judah were pledged to him, because he was the son-in-law of Shechaniah the son of Arah, and his son Jehohanan had married the daughter of Meshullam the son of Berechiah. 19Also they reported his good deeds before me, and reported my words to him. Tobiah sent letters to frighten me.

> For they all were trying to make us afraid, saying, "Their hands will be weakened in the work, and it will not be done." Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands.
> NEHEMIAH 6:9

7 Then it was, when the wall was built and I had hung the doors, when the
gatekeepers, the singers, and the Levites had been appointed, 2that I gave
the charge of Jerusalem to my brother Hanani, and Hananiah the leader of the
citadel, for he *was* a faithful man and feared God more than many.

3And I said to them, “Do not let the gates of Jerusalem be opened until the
sun is hot; and while they stand *guard*, let them shut and bar the doors; and
appoint guards from among the inhabitants of Jerusalem, one at his watch
station and another in front of his own house.”

## THE CAPTIVES WHO RETURNED TO JERUSALEM

4Now the city *was* large and spacious, but the people in it *were* few, and
the houses *were* not rebuilt. 5Then my God put it into my heart to gather the
nobles, the rulers, and the people, that they might be registered by genealogy.
And I found a register of the genealogy of those who had come up in the first
*return*, and found written in it:

6 These[a] *are* the people of the province who came back from the captivity,
of those who had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of
Babylon had carried away, and who returned to Jerusalem and Judah,
everyone to his city.

7 Those who came with Zerubbabel *were* Jeshua, Nehemiah, Azariah,
Raamiah, Nahamani, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispereth,[a] Bigvai, Nehum,
and Baanah.

The number of the men of the people of Israel: 8the sons of Parosh, two
thousand one hundred and seventy-two;

9the sons of Shephatiah, three hundred and seventy-two;

10the sons of Arah, six hundred and fifty-two;

11the sons of Pahath-Moab, of the sons of Jeshua and Joab, two thousand
eight hundred and eighteen;

12the sons of Elam, one thousand two hundred and fifty-four;

13the sons of Zattu, eight hundred and forty-five;

14the sons of Zaccai, seven hundred and sixty;

15 the sons of Binnui,[a] six hundred and forty-eight;
16 the sons of Bebai, six hundred and twenty-eight;
17 the sons of Azgad, two thousand three hundred and twenty-two;
18 the sons of Adonikam, six hundred and sixty-seven;
19 the sons of Bigvai, two thousand and sixty-seven;
20 the sons of Adin, six hundred and fifty-five;
21 the sons of Ater of Hezekiah, ninety-eight;
22 the sons of Hashum, three hundred and twenty-eight;
23 the sons of Bezai, three hundred and twenty-four;
24 the sons of Hariph,[a] one hundred and twelve;
25 the sons of Gibeon,[a] ninety-five;
26 the men of Bethlehem and Netophah, one hundred and eighty-eight;
27 the men of Anathoth, one hundred and twenty-eight;
28 the men of Beth Azmaveth,[a] forty-two;
29 the men of Kirjath Jearim, Chephirah, and Beeroth, seven hundred and forty-three;
30 the men of Ramah and Geba, six hundred and twenty-one;
31 the men of Michmas, one hundred and twenty-two;
32 the men of Bethel and Ai, one hundred and twenty-three;
33 the men of the other Nebo, fifty-two;
34 the sons of the other Elam, one thousand two hundred and fifty-four;
35 the sons of Harim, three hundred and twenty;
36 the sons of Jericho, three hundred and forty-five;
37 the sons of Lod, Hadid, and Ono, seven hundred and twenty-one;
38 the sons of Senaah, three thousand nine hundred and thirty.

39 The priests: the sons of Jedaiah, of the house of Jeshua, nine hundred

and seventy-three;

40 the sons of Immer, one thousand and fifty-two;
41 the sons of Pashhur, one thousand two hundred and forty-seven;
42 the sons of Harim, one thousand and seventeen.

43 The Levites: the sons of Jeshua, of Kadmiel, *and* of the sons of Hodevah,[a] seventy-four.

44 The singers: the sons of Asaph, one hundred and forty-eight.

45 The gatekeepers:
the sons of Shallum,
the sons of Ater,
the sons of Talmon,
the sons of Akkub,
the sons of Hatita,
the sons of Shobai, one hundred and thirty-eight.

46 The Nethinim: the sons of Ziha,
the sons of Hasupha,
the sons of Tabbaoth,
47 the sons of Keros,
the sons of Sia,[a]
the sons of Padon,
48 the sons of Lebana,[a]
the sons of Hagaba,[b]
the sons of Salmai,[c]
49 the sons of Hanan,
the sons of Giddel,
the sons of Gahar,
50 the sons of Reaiah,
the sons of Rezin,
the sons of Nekoda,

51 the sons of Gazzam,
the sons of Uzza,
the sons of Paseah,
52 the sons of Besai,
the sons of Meunim,
the sons of Nephishesim,[a]
53 the sons of Bakbuk,
the sons of Hakupha,
the sons of Harhur,
54 the sons of Bazlith,[a]
the sons of Mehida,
the sons of Harsha,
55 the sons of Barkos,
the sons of Sisera,
the sons of Tamah,
56 the sons of Neziah,
and the sons of Hatipha.

57 The sons of Solomon's servants:
the sons of Sotai, the sons of Sophereth,
the sons of Perida,[a]
58 the sons of Jaala,
the sons of Darkon,
the sons of Giddel,
59 the sons of Shephatiah,
the sons of Hattil,
the sons of Pochereth of Zebaim,
and the children of Amon.[a]
60 All the Nethinim, and the sons of Solomon's servants, *were* three hundred and ninety-two.

61 And these *were* the ones who came up from Tel Melah, Tel Harsha, Cherub, Addon,[a] and Immer, but they could not identify their father's house nor their lineage, whether they *were* of Israel:
62 the sons of Delaiah, the sons of Tobiah, the sons of Nekoda, six

hundred and forty-two;
63 and of the priests: the sons of Habaiah, the sons of Koz,[a] the sons of
Barzillai, who took a wife of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite, and
was called by their name.
64 These sought their listing *among* those who were registered by
genealogy, but it was not found; therefore they were excluded from the
priesthood as defiled.
65 And the governor[a] said to them that they should not eat of the most
holy things till a priest could consult with the Urim and Thummim.

66 Altogether the whole assembly *was* forty-two thousand three hundred
and sixty, 67 besides their male and female servants, of whom *there were*
seven thousand three hundred and thirty-seven; and they had two
hundred and forty-five men and women singers.
68 Their horses were seven hundred and thirty-six, their mules two
hundred and forty-five, 69 *their* camels four hundred and thirty-five, *and*
donkeys six thousand seven hundred and twenty.

70 And some of the heads of the fathers' houses gave to the work. The
governor[a] gave to the treasury one thousand gold drachmas, fifty basins,
and five hundred and thirty priestly garments. 71 Some of the heads of
the fathers' *houses* gave to the treasury of the work twenty thousand
gold drachmas, and two thousand two hundred silver minas. 72 And that
which the rest of the people gave *was* twenty thousand gold drachmas,
two thousand silver minas, and sixty-seven priestly garments.

73 So the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, *some* of the
people, the Nethinim, and all Israel dwelt in their cities.

## EZRA READS THE LAW

When the seventh month came, the children of Israel *were* in their cities.

**8** Now all the people gathered together as one man in the open square that
*was* in front of the Water Gate; and they told Ezra the scribe to bring the
Book of the Law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded Israel. 2So Ezra
the priest brought the Law before the assembly of men and women and all
who *could* hear with understanding on the first day of the seventh month.
3Then he read from it in the open square that *was* in front of the Water Gate
from morning until midday, before the men and women and those who could
understand; and the ears of all the people *were attentive* to the Book of the
Law.

4So Ezra the scribe stood on a platform of wood which they had made for
the purpose; and beside him, at his right hand, stood Matti-thiah, Shema,
Anaiah, Urijah, Hilkiah, and Maaseiah; and at his left hand Pedaiah, Mishael,
Malchijah, Hashum, Hashbadana, Zechariah, *and* Meshullam. 5And Ezra
opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was *standing* above all
the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up. 6And Ezra blessed
the LORD, the great God.

Then all the people answered, “Amen, Amen!” while lifting up their hands.
And they bowed their heads and worshiped the LORD with *their* faces to the
ground.

7Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Ak-kub, Shabbethai, Hodijah,
Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, and the Levites, helped
the people to understand the Law; and the people *stood* in their place. 8So
they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the
sense, and helped *them* to understand the reading.

9And Nehemiah, who *was* the governor,[a] Ezra the priest *and* scribe, and
the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, “This day *is* holy to
the LORD your God; do not mourn nor weep.” For all the people wept, when
they heard the words of the Law.

10Then he said to them, “Go your way, eat the fat, drink the sweet, and
send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared; for *this* day *is* holy to
our Lord. Do not sorrow, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.”

11So the Levites quieted all the people, saying, “Be still, for the day *is*
holy; do not be grieved.” 12And all the people went their way to eat and

drink, to send portions and rejoice greatly, because they understood the words that were declared to them.

**THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES**

13 Now on the second day the heads of the fathers' *houses* of all the people, with the priests and Levites, were gathered to Ezra the scribe, in order to understand the words of the Law. 14 And they found written in the Law, which the LORD had commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths during the feast of the seventh month, 15 and that they should announce and proclaim in all their cities and in Jerusalem, saying, "Go out to the mountain, and bring olive branches, branches of oil trees, myrtle branches, palm branches, and branches of leafy trees, to make booths, as *it is* written."

16 Then the people went out and brought *them* and made themselves booths, each one on the roof of his house, or in their courtyards or the courts of the house of God, and in the open square of the Water Gate and in the open square of the Gate of Ephraim. 17 So the whole assembly of those who had returned from the captivity made booths and sat under the booths; for since the days of Joshua the son of Nun until that day the children of Israel had not done so. And there was very great gladness. 18 Also day by day, from the first day until the last day, he read from the Book of the Law of God. And they kept the feast seven days; and on the eighth day *there was* a sacred assembly, according to the *prescribed* manner.

**LAUGHING WITH JOY**

**LIZ CURTIS HIGGS**

# (Nehemiah 8:10)

**W**hat makes God laugh? We do, of course! Has it ever occurred to you that He does laugh? Or does God seem much too serious and stern to ever join us in laughter? As much as we laugh at our children, knowing so well their personalities, strengths, and weaknesses, why would God not be amused at our antics, even knowing in advance what we are going to say and do? I think that God thoroughly enjoys good humor, enjoys a good laugh, and loves to see us enjoying it as well.

Joy and laughter are part of God's plan for us. Consider these verses from God's Word:

- "You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore" (Ps. 16:11).
- "Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, you righteous; and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!" (Ps. 32:11).
- "His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. . . . Enter into the joy of your lord'" (Matt. 25:23).
- "Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents" (Luke 15:10).
- "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full" (John 15:11).

## LAUGHING WITH GOD

How one laughs with the Lord is as individual and private a decision as how one prays. Laughing is an expression of joy that comes from the heart of God Himself. Humor is encouraging and edifying to the body of Christ. The Bible says, "Whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men" (Col. 3:23). Laughter comes under the category of *whatever!* Humor exhibits the joy, the passion, and the adventure of the Christian life.

The key is that the humor of one who knows God is decidedly different from the humor of this world:

*Worldly Humor:*

- Glorifies sin
- Puts down others
- Ridicules righteousness
- Hurts the spirit

*Godly Humor:*

- Avoids offense
- Builds up others
- Honors the Lord
- Heals the spirit

Laughter and music are two of God's finest gifts. They give us the ability to express our inner feelings about God with a sense of joy, anticipation, and participation. The Bible reminds us, "The joy of the LORD is your strength" (Neh. 8:10).

The best source of humor is right at the end of your nose. Especially if you're looking in the mirror. The ability to laugh at ourselves is a sign of maturity, of healthy self-esteem, and of having our priorities straight. Remember, God is on the throne, we are on the ground. *Humble*, *humus*, and *human* are words well-suited to our earthly imperfection compared to God's heavenly perfection. Our richest resource for laughter can be found in our merry hearts and lives.

## EMOTIONAL HEALING

Even more emotionally healing than laughing at ourselves the moment something happens is to be able to continue to laugh about it

as the story is repeated. A few years ago, a woman told me just such a story. Someone had given her a plant as a gift. She watered it, fed it plant food, and even set it outdoors in good weather-only to discover two years later that she had been watering a silk plant! Her family still gets a laugh out of that story today.

Laughter can be very healing. People in the medical field tell us what the Bible has declared all along: “A merry heart does good, like medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones” (Prov. 17:22). We can make a choice to be upset, or talk about sour grapes, or be embarrassed to the point of being downright angry about a situation-or we can choose to laugh at ourselves. When we laugh, we heal.

## PHYSICAL HEALING

Laughter puts the body in a state of relaxation. In a physically relaxed state, we take our foot off the pain accelerator and put on the brakes. I think our bodies were made for laughter. Our bodies were created by an amazing God who knew that we would get broken and bruised and would need all the natural painkillers we could get. Consider these key facts about laughter:

1. Laughter is a natural pain reducer.

2. Laughter increases our ability to cope with life.

3. Laughter massages our internal organs.

4. Laughter exercises our facial muscles.

5. Laughter increases the heart rate and improves circulation.

6. Laughter oxygenates the body.

7. Laughter stimulates the immune system.

We’ve all been in high-stress, low-strength situations where we turn

to the next person and sigh, “Someday we’ll laugh about this.” I say, why wait? If we can see the humor potential, let’s dive right in! The time and distance between the difficulty and our ability to laugh about it is what I call the “stress zone.” We can’t hurry the time, but we can decrease the distance between the first and the last moment we spend in the zone.

Sometimes we have to stand back to see the big picture. We have to put things in perspective. The one who knows God can even laugh in the face of death because to die with Christ in our heart is to live-and laugh-with Him, forever.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of joy include:

- Psalms 30:5; 126:5
- Ecclesiastes 3:4
- Luke 2:10
- John 16:24

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on joy at Proverbs 15:13-15. See also the personality profile of Isaac: Unexpected Laughter.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Joyous Revival** *(8:10)* When the Book of the Law was read to the people of Israel, they were convicted of their sins. A great revival took place as the nation recommitted itself to God. Nehemiah told them to move from sorrow over their sins to joy in hearing God’s Word. “Do not sorrow, for the joy of the LORD is your strength,” he said. When we face up to the seriousness of our sin, our hearts will

naturally be broken. When we realize the wonderful grace of the forgiveness of sins, however, the joy of the Lord will be our strength as well. **Topic: Joy**

**THE PEOPLE CONFESS THEIR SINS**

**9** Now on the twenty-fourth day of this month the children of Israel were assembled with fasting, in sackcloth, and with dust on their heads.[a] 2 Then those of Israelite lineage separated themselves from all foreigners; and they stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers. 3 And they stood up in their place and read from the Book of the Law of the LORD their God *for one*-fourth of the day; and *for another* fourth they confessed and worshiped the LORD their God.

4 Then Jeshua, Bani, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, Bani, *and* Chenani stood on the stairs of the Levites and cried out with a loud voice to the LORD their God. 5 And the Le-vites, Jeshua, Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabniah, Sher-ebiah, Hodijah, Sheba-niah, *and* Pethahiah, said:

> "Stand up and bless the LORD your God forever and ever!
> Blessed be Your glorious name, which is exalted above
> all blessing and praise!"
> NEHEMIAH 9:5

"Stand up *and* bless the LORD your God Forever and ever!

"Blessed be Your glorious name, Which is exalted above all blessing and praise!

6 You alone *are* the LORD;
You have made heaven, The heaven of heavens, with all their host,
The earth and everything on it, The seas and all that is in them,
And You preserve them all.
The host of heaven worships You.
7 "You *are* the LORD God,
Who chose Abram,
And brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans,
And gave him the name Abraham;
8 You found his heart faithful before You,
And made a covenant with him
To give the land of the Canaanites,

The Hittites, the Amorites,
The Perizzites, the Jebusites,
And the Girgashites-
To give *it* to his descendants.
You have performed Your words,
For You *are* righteous.
9 "You saw the affliction of our fathers in Egypt,
And heard their cry by the Red Sea.
10 You showed signs and wonders against Pharaoh,
Against all his servants, And against all the people of his land.
For You knew that they acted proudly against them.
So You made a name for Yourself, as *it is* this day.
11 And You divided the sea before them,
So that they went through the midst of the sea on the dry land;
And their persecutors You threw into the deep,
As a stone into the mighty waters.
12 Moreover You led them by day with a cloudy pillar,
And by night with a pillar of fire,
To give them light on the road
Which they should travel.
13 "You came down also on Mount Sinai,
And spoke with them from heaven,
And gave them just ordinances and true laws,
Good statutes and commandments.
14 You made known to them Your holy Sabbath,
And commanded them precepts, statutes and laws,
By the hand of Moses Your servant.
15 You gave them bread from heaven for their hunger,
And brought them water out of the rock for their thirst,
And told them to go in to possess the land
Which You had sworn to give them.
16 "But they and our fathers acted proudly,
Hardened their necks,
And did not heed Your commandments.
17 They refused to obey,

And they were not mindful of Your wonders
That You did among them.
But they hardened their necks, And in their rebellion[a]
They appointed a leader To return to their bondage.
But You *are* God,
Ready to pardon, Gracious and merciful,
Slow to anger,
Abundant in kindness,
And did not forsake them.
18 “Even when they made a molded calf for themselves,
And said, ‘This *is* your god That brought you up out of Egypt,’ And worked great provocations,
And worked great provocations,
19 Yet in Your manifold mercies
You did not forsake them in the wilderness.
The pillar of the cloud did not depart from them by day,
To lead them on the road;
Nor the pillar of fire by night, To show them light,
And the way they should go.
20 You also gave Your good Spirit to instruct them, And did not withhold
Your manna from their mouth, And gave them water for their thirst.
21 Forty years You sustained them in the wilderness; They lacked nothing;
Their clothes did not wear out[a] And their feet did not swell.
22 “Moreover You gave them kingdoms and nations,
And divided them into districts.[a] So they took possession of the land of Sihon,
The land of [b] the king of Heshbon,
And the land of Og king of Bashan.
23 You also multiplied their children as the stars of heaven,
And brought them into the land
Which You had told their fathers
To go in and possess.
24 So the people went in
And possessed the land;
You subdued before them the inhabitants of the land,

The Canaanites,
And gave them into their hands,
With their kings
And the people of the land,
That they might do with them as they wished.
25 And they took strong cities and a rich land,
And possessed houses full of all goods,
Cisterns *already* dug, vineyards, olive groves,
And fruit trees in abundance.
So they ate and were filled and grew fat,
And delighted themselves in Your great goodness.
26 “Nevertheless they were disobedient
And rebelled against You,
Cast Your law behind their backs
And killed Your prophets, who testified against them
To turn them to Yourself;
And they worked great provocations.
27 Therefore You delivered them into the hand of their enemies,
Who oppressed them;
And in the time of their trouble,
When they cried to You,
You heard from heaven;
And according to Your abundant mercies
You gave them deliverers who saved them
From the hand of their enemies.
28 “But after they had rest,
They again did evil before You.
Therefore You left them in the hand of their enemies,
So that they had dominion over them;
Yet when they returned and cried out to You,
You heard from heaven;
And many times You delivered them according to Your mercies,
29 And testified against them,
That You might bring them back to Your law.
Yet they acted proudly,

And did not heed Your commandments,
But sinned against Your judgments,
'Which if a man does, he shall live by them.'[a]
And they shrugged their shoulders,
Stiffened their necks,
And would not hear.
30 Yet for many years You had patience with them,
And testified against them by Your Spirit in Your prophets.
Yet they would not listen;
Therefore You gave them into the hand of the peoples of the lands.
31 Nevertheless in Your great mercy
You did not utterly consume them nor forsake them;
For You *are* God, gracious and merciful.
32 "Now therefore, our God,
The great, the mighty, and awesome God,
Who keeps covenant and mercy:
Do not let all the trouble seem small before You
That has come upon us,
Our kings and our princes,
Our priests and our prophets,
Our fathers and on all Your people,
From the days of the kings of Assyria until this day.
33 However You *are* just in all that has befallen us;
For You have dealt faithfully, But we have done wickedly.
But we have done wickedly.
34 Neither our kings nor our princes,
Our priests nor our fathers,
Have kept Your law,
Nor heeded Your commandments and Your testimonies,
With which You testified against them.
35 For they have not served You in their kingdom,
Or in the many good *things* that You gave them,
Or in the large and rich land which You set before them;
Nor did they turn from their wicked works.
36 "Here we *are*, servants today!

And the land that You gave to our fathers,
To eat its fruit and its bounty,
Here we *are,* servants in it!
37 And it yields much increase to the kings
You have set over us,
Because of our sins;
Also they have dominion over our bodies and our cattle
At their pleasure;
And we *are* in great distress.
38 "And because of all this,
We make a sure *covenant* and write *it;*
Our leaders, our Levites, *and* our priests seal *it.* "

## SOUL NOTE

**Goodness Gracious** *(9:26)* God's mercy is beyond measure. His people had turned away from Him many times. "They were disobedient and rebelled . . . cast Your law behind their backs and killed Your prophets, who testified against them." During the reigns of the kings, the Jews had constantly returned to idols. Finally, God punished them by sending them into captivity. Yet God "did not utterly consume them nor forsake them," because He is "gracious and merciful" (9:31). God never changes; He always shows grace and mercy to those who seek Him (Heb. 4:16). **Topic: Knowing God**

**THE PEOPLE WHO SEALED THE COVENANT**

**10** Now those who placed *their* seal on *the document were:*

Nehemiah the governor, the son of Hacaliah, and Zedekiah, [2]Seraiah, Azariah, Jeremiah, [3]Pashhur, Amariah, Malchijah, [4]Hattush, Shebaniah, Malluch, [5]Harim, Meremoth, Obadiah, [6]Daniel, Ginnethon, Baruch, [7]Meshullam, Abijah, Mijamin, [8]Maaziah, Bilgai, *and* Shemaiah. These *were* the priests.

[9]The Levites: Jeshua the son of Azaniah, Binnui of the sons of Henadad, *and* Kadmiel.

[10]Their brethren: Shebaniah, Hodijah, Kelita, Pelaiah, Hanan, [11]Micha, Rehob, Hashabiah, [12]Zaccur, Sherebiah, Shebaniah, [13]Hodijah, Bani, *and* Beninu.

[14]The leaders of the people: Parosh, Pahath-Moab, Elam, Zattu, Bani, [15]Bunni, Azgad, Bebai, [16]Adonijah, Bigvai, Adin, [17]Ater, Hezekiah, Azzur, [18]Hodijah, Hashum, Bezai, [19]Hariph, Anathoth, Nebai, [20]Magpiash, Meshullam, Hezir, [21]Meshezabel, Zadok, Jaddua, [22]Pelatiah, Hanan, Anaiah, [23]Hoshea, Hananiah, Hasshub, [24]Hallohesh, Pilha, Shobek, [25]Rehum, Hashabnah, Maaseiah, [26]Ahijah, Hanan, Anan, [27]Malluch, Harim, *and* Baanah.

THE COVENANT THAT WAS SEALED

[28]Now the rest of the people-the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, the Nethinim, and all those who had separated themselves from the peoples of the lands to the Law of God, their wives, their sons, and their daughters, everyone who had knowledge and understanding-[29]these joined with their brethren, their nobles, and entered into a curse and an oath to walk in God’s Law, which was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the LORD our Lord, and His ordinances and His statutes: [30]We would not give our daughters as wives to the peoples of the land, nor take their daughters for our sons; [31]*if* the peoples of the land brought wares or any grain to sell on the Sabbath day, we would not buy it

from them on the Sabbath, or on a holy day; and we would forego the seventh year's *produce* and the exacting of every debt.

[32]Also we made ordinances for ourselves, to exact from ourselves yearly one-third of a shekel for the service of the house of our God: [33]for the showbread, for the regular grain offering, for the regular burnt offering of the Sabbaths, the New Moons, and the set feasts; for the holy things, for the sin offerings to make atonement for Israel, and all the work of the house of our God. [34]We cast lots among the priests, the Levites, and the people, for *bringing* the wood offering into the house of our God, according to our fathers' houses, at the appointed times year by year, to burn on the altar of the LORD our God as *it is* written in the Law.

[35]And *we made ordinances* to bring the firstfruits of our ground and the firstfruits of all fruit of all trees, year by year, to the house of the LORD; [36]to bring the firstborn of our sons and our cattle, as *it is* written in the Law, and the firstborn of our herds and our flocks, to the house of our God, to the priests who minister in the house of our God; [37]to bring the firstfruits of our dough, our offerings, the fruit from all kinds of trees, *the* new wine and oil, to the priests, to the storerooms of the house of our God; and to bring the tithes of our land to the Levites, for the Levites should receive the tithes in all our farming communities. [38]And the priest, the descendant of Aaron, shall be with the Levites when the Levites receive tithes; and the Levites shall bring up a tenth of the tithes to the house of our God, to the rooms of the storehouse.

[39]For the children of Israel and the children of Levi shall bring the offering of the grain, of the new wine and the oil, to the storerooms where the articles of the sanctuary *are, where* the priests who minister and the gatekeepers and the singers *are;* and we will not neglect the house of our God.

## THE PEOPLE DWELLING IN JERUSALEM

**11** Now the leaders of the people dwelt at Jerusalem; the rest of the people
cast lots to bring one out of ten to dwell in Jerusalem, the holy city, and
nine-tenths *were to dwell* in *other* cities. 2And the people blessed all the men
who willingly offered themselves to dwell at Jerusalem.

3These *are* the heads of the province who dwelt in Jerusalem. (But in the
cities of Judah everyone dwelt in his own possession in their cities-Israelites,
priests, Levites, Nethinim, and descendants of Solomon's servants.) 4Also in
Jerusalem dwelt *some* of the children of Judah and of the children of
Benjamin.

The children of Judah: Athaiah the son of Uzziah, the son of Zechariah, the
son of Ama-riah, the son of Shephatiah, the son of Mahalalel, of the children
of Perez; 5and Maaseiah the son of Baruch, the son of Col-Hozeh, the son of
Hazaiah, the son of Adaiah, the son of Joiarib, the son of Zechariah, the son
of Shiloni. 6All the sons of Perez who dwelt at Jerusalem *were* four hundred
and sixty-eight valiant men.

7And these are the sons of Benjamin: Sallu the son of Meshullam, the son
of Joed, the son of Pedaiah, the son of Kolaiah, the son of Maaseiah, the son
of Ithiel, the son of Jeshaiah;

8and after him Gabbai *and* Sallai, nine hundred and twenty-eight. 9Joel the
son of Zichri *was* their overseer, and Judah the son of Senuah[a] *was* second
over the city.

10Of the priests: Jedaiah the son of Joiarib, and Jachin; 11Seraiah the son of
Hilkiah, the son of Meshullam, the son of Zadok, the son of Meraioth, the son
of Ahitub, *was* the leader of the house of God. 12Their brethren who did the
work of the house *were* eight hundred and twenty-two; and Adaiah the son of
Jeroham, the son of Pelaliah, the son of Amzi, the son of Zechariah, the son
of Pashhur, the son of Malchijah, 13and his brethren, heads of the fathers'
*houses*, *were* two hundred and forty-two; and Amashai the son of Azarel, the
son of Ahzai, the son of Meshillemoth, the son of Immer, 14and their
brethren, mighty men of valor, *were* one hundred and twenty-eight.

Their overseer *was* Zabdiel the son of *one of* the great men.[a]

[15]Also of the Levites: Shemaiah the son of Hasshub, the son of Azrikam, the son of Hash-abiah, the son of Bunni; [16]Shabbethai and Joz-abad, of the heads of the Levites, *had* the oversight of the business outside of the house of God; [17]Mattaniah the son of Micha,[a] the son of Zabdi, the son of Asaph, the leader *who* began the thanksgiving with prayer; Bakbukiah, the second among his brethren; and Abda the son of Shammua, the son of Galal, the son of Jeduthun. [18]All the Levites in the holy city *were* two hundred and eighty-four.

[19]Moreover the gatekeepers, Akkub, Tal-mon, and their brethren who kept the gates, *were* one hundred and seventy-two.

[20]And the rest of Israel, of the priests *and* Levites, *were* in all the cities of Judah, everyone in his inheritance. [21]But the Nethinim dwelt in Ophel. And Ziha and Gishpa *were* over the Nethinim.

[22]Also the overseer of the Levites at Jerusalem *was* Uzzi the son of Bani, the son of Hash-abiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Micha, of the sons of Asaph, the singers in charge of the service of the house of God. [23]For *it was* the king's command concerning them that a certain portion should be for the singers, a quota day by day. [24]Pethahiah the son of Meshezabel, of the children of Zerah the son of

Judah, *was* the king's deputy[a] in all matters concerning the people.

## THE PEOPLE DWELLING OUTSIDE JERUSALEM

[25]And as for the villages with their fields, *some* of the children of Judah dwelt in Kirjath Arba and its villages, Dibon and its villages, Jekabzeel and its villages; [26]in Jeshua, Mola-dah, Beth Pelet, [27]Hazar Shual, and Beersheba and its villages; [28]in Ziklag and Meconah and its villages; [29]in En Rimmon, Zorah, Jarmuth, [30]Zanoah, Adullam, and their villages; in La-chish and its fields; in Azekah and its villages.

They dwelt from Beersheba to the Valley of Hinnom.

[31]Also the children of Benjamin from Geba *dwelt* in Michmash, Aija, and Bethel, and their villages; [32]in Anathoth, Nob, Ananiah; [33]in Hazor, Ramah,

Gittaim; [34]in Hadid, Zeboim, Neballat; [35]in Lod, Ono, *and* the Valley of Craftsmen. [36]Some of the Judean divisions of Levites *were* in Benjamin.

**THE PRIESTS AND LEVITES**

**12** Now these *are* the priests and the Levites who came up with Zerubbabel
the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua: Seraiah, Jeremiah, Ezra, [2]Amariah,
Malluch, Hattush, [3]Shechaniah, Rehum, Meremoth, [4]Iddo, Ginnethoi,[a]
Abijah, [5]Mijamin, Maadiah, Bilgah, [6]Shemaiah, Joiarib, Jedaiah, [7]Sallu,
Amok, Hilkiah, *and* Jedaiah.

These *were* the heads of the priests and their brethren in the days of Jeshua.

[8]Moreover the Levites *were* Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel, Sherebiah, Judah,
*and* Mattaniah *who led* the thanksgiving *psalms,* he and his brethren. [9]Also
Bakbukiah and Unni, their brethren, *stood* across from them in *their* duties.

[10]Jeshua begot Joiakim, Joiakim begot Eliashib, Eliashib begot Joiada,
[11]Joiada begot Jonathan, and Jonathan begot Jaddua.

[12]Now in the days of Joiakim, the priests, the heads of the fathers' *houses*
*were:* of Seraiah, Meraiah; of Jeremiah, Hananiah; [13]of Ezra, Meshullam; of
Amariah, Jehohanan; [14]of Melichu,[a] Jonathan; of Shebaniah,[b] Joseph; [15]of
Harim,[a] Adna; of Meraioth,[b] Helkai; [16]of Iddo, Zechariah; of Ginnethon,
Meshullam; [17]of Abijah, Zichri; *the son* of Minjamin;[a] of Moadiah,[b] Piltai;
[18]of Bilgah, Shammua; of Shemaiah, Jehonathan; [19]of Joiarib, Mattenai; of
Jedaiah, Uzzi; [20]of Sallai,[a] Kallai; of Amok, Eber; [21]of Hilkiah, Hashabiah;
*and* of Jedaiah, Nethanel.

[22]During the reign of Darius the Persian, a record *was also kept* of the
Levites and priests *who had been* heads of their fathers' *houses* in the days of
Eliashib, Joiada, Johanan, and Jaddua. [23]The sons of Levi, the heads of the
fathers' *houses* until the days of Johanan the son of Eliashib, *were* written in
the book of the chronicles.

[24]And the heads of the Levites *were* Hashabiah, Sherebiah, and Jeshua the
son of Kadmiel, with their brothers across from them, to praise *and* give
thanks, group alternating with group, according to the command of David the
man of God. [25]Mattaniah, Bakbukiah, Obadiah, Meshullam, Talmon, and
Akkub *were* gatekeepers keeping the watch at the storerooms of the gates.
[26]These *lived* in the days of Joiakim the son of Jeshua, the son of Jozadak, [a]

and in the days of Nehemiah the governor, and of Ezra the priest, the scribe.

**NEHEMIAH DEDICATES THE WALL**

27 Now at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought out the
Levites in all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem to celebrate the
dedication with gladness, both with thanksgivings and singing, *with* cymbals
and stringed instruments and harps. 28 And the sons of the singers gathered
together from the countryside around Jerusalem, from the villages of the
Netophathites, 29 from the house of Gilgal, and from the fields of Geba and
Azmaveth; for the singers had built themselves villages all around Jerusalem.
30 Then the priests and Levites purified themselves, and purified the people,
the gates, and the wall.

31 So I brought the leaders of Judah up on the wall, and appointed two large
thanksgiving choirs. *One* went to the right hand on the wall toward the
Refuse Gate. 32 After them went Hoshaiah and half of the leaders of Judah,
33 and Azariah, Ezra, Meshullam, 34 Judah, Benjamin, Shemaiah, Jeremiah,
35 and some of the priests' sons with trumpets- Zechariah the son of Jonathan,
the son of Shemaiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Michaiah, the son of
Zaccur, the son of Asaph, 36 and his brethren, Shemaiah, Azarel, Milalai,
Gilalai, Maai, Nethanel, Judah, *and* Hanani, with the musical instruments of
David the man of God. And Ezra the scribe *went* before them. 37 By the
Fountain Gate, in front of them, they went up the stairs of the City of David,
on the stairway of the wall, beyond the house of David, as far as the Water
Gate eastward.

38 The other thanksgiving choir went the opposite *way,* and I *was* behind
them with half of the people on the wall, going past the Tower of the Ovens
as far as the Broad Wall, 39 and above the Gate of Ephraim, above the Old
Gate, above the Fish Gate, the Tower of Hananel, the Tower of the Hundred,
as far as the Sheep Gate; and they stopped by the Gate of the Prison.

40 So the two thanksgiving choirs stood in the house of God, likewise I and
the half of the rulers with me; 41 and the priests, Eliakim, Maaseiah,
Minjamin,[a] Michaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah, *and* Hananiah, with trumpets;
42 also Maaseiah, Shemaiah, Eleazar, Uzzi, Jehohanan, Malchijah, Elam, and

Ezer. The singers sang loudly with Jezrahiah the director.

43 Also that day they offered great sacrifices, and rejoiced, for God had made them rejoice with great joy; the women and the children also rejoiced, so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard afar off.

**TEMPLE RESPONSIBILITIES**

44 And at the same time some were appointed over the rooms of the storehouse for the offerings, the firstfruits, and the tithes, to gather into them from the fields of the cities the portions specified by the Law for the priests and Levites; for Judah rejoiced over the priests and Levites who ministered. 45 Both the singers and the gatekeepers kept the charge of their God and the charge of the purification, according to the command of David *and* Solomon his son. 46 For in the days of David and Asaph of old *there were* chiefs of the singers, and songs of praise and thanksgiving to God. 47 In the days of Zerubbabel and in the days of Nehemiah all Israel gave the portions for the singers and the gatekeepers, a portion for each day. They also consecrated *holy things* for the Levites, and the Levites consecrated *them* for the children of Aaron.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Celebrate!** *(12:43)* The people of Israel experienced a radical spiritual revival and national transformation as a result of the ministries of Ezra and Nehemiah. Against impossible odds, the wall of Jerusalem had been rebuilt, the temple put back into business, and the sacrifices and celebrations reinstituted. The people rejoiced with such fervor that their joy was heard in surrounding towns. When we give our lives to God to let Him work through us, we may be astounded at what He will do. God's work in and through us will be a cause for celebration, a time to "rejoice with great joy." **Topic: Joy**

## PRINCIPLES OF SEPARATION

**13** On that day they read from the Book of Moses in the hearing of the people, and in it was found written that no Ammonite or Moabite should ever come into the assembly of God, 2because they had not met the children of Israel with bread and water, but hired Balaam against them to curse them. However, our God turned the curse into a blessing. 3So it was, when they had heard the Law, that they separated all the mixed multitude from Israel.

## THE REFORMS OF NEHEMIAH

4Now before this, Eliashib the priest, having authority over the storerooms of the house of our God, *was* allied with Tobiah. 5And he had prepared for him a large room, where previously they had stored the grain offerings, the frankincense, the articles, the tithes of grain, the new wine and oil, which were commanded *to be given* to the Levites and singers and gatekeepers, and the offerings for the priests. 6But during all this I was not in Jerusalem, for in the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon I had returned to the king. Then after certain days I obtained leave from the king, 7and I came to Jerusalem and discovered the evil that Eliashib had done for Tobiah, in preparing a room for him in the courts of the house of God. 8And it grieved me bitterly; therefore I threw all the household goods of Tobiah out of the room. 9Then I commanded them to cleanse the rooms; and I brought back into them the articles of the house of God, with the grain offering and the frankincense.

10I also realized that the portions for the Levites had not been given *them;* for each of the Levites and the singers who did the work had gone back to his field. 11So I contended with the rulers, and said, “Why is the house of God forsaken?” And I gathered them together and set them in their place. 12Then all Judah brought the tithe of the grain and the new wine and the oil to the storehouse. 13And I appointed as treasurers over the storehouse Shelemiah the priest and Zadok the scribe, and of the Levites, Pedaiah; and next to them *was* Hanan the son of Zaccur, the son of Mattaniah; for they were considered faithful, and their task *was* to distribute to their brethren.

[14]Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and do not wipe out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God, and for its services!

[15]In those days I saw *people* in Judah treading wine presses on the Sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and loading donkeys with wine, grapes, figs, and all *kinds of* burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. And I warned *them* about the day on which they were selling provisions. [16]Men of Tyre dwelt there also, who brought in fish and all kinds of goods, and sold *them* on the Sabbath to the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem.

Remember me, O my God, for good!
NEHEMIAH 13:31

[17]Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said to them, "What evil thing *is* this that you do, by which you profane the Sabbath day? [18]Did not your fathers do thus, and did not our God bring all this disaster on us and on this city? Yet you bring added wrath on Israel by profaning the Sabbath."

[19]So it was, at the gates of Jerusalem, as it began to be dark before the Sabbath, that I commanded the gates to be shut, and charged that they must not be opened till after the Sabbath. Then I posted *some* of my servants at the gates, *so that* no burdens would be brought in on the Sabbath day. [20]Now the merchants and sellers of all kinds of wares lodged outside Jerusalem once or twice.

[21]Then I warned them, and said to them, "Why do you spend the night around the wall? If you do *so* again, I will lay hands on you!" From that time on they came no *more* on the Sabbath. [22]And I commanded the Levites that they should cleanse themselves, and that they should go and guard the gates, to sanctify the Sabbath day.

Remember me, O my God, *concerning* this also, and spare me according to the greatness of Your mercy!

[23]In those days I also saw Jews *who* had married women of Ashdod, Ammon, *and* Moab. [24]And half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod, and could not speak the language of Judah, but spoke according to

the language of one or the other people.

25 So I contended with them and cursed them, struck some of them and pulled out their hair, and made them swear by God, *saying*, “You shall not give your daughters as wives to their sons, nor take their daughters for your sons or yourselves. 26 Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? Yet among many nations there was no king like him, who was beloved of his God; and God made him king over all Israel. Nevertheless pagan women caused even him to sin. 27 Should we then hear of your doing all this great evil, transgressing against our God by marrying pagan women?”

28 And *one* of the sons of Joiada, the son of Eliashib the high priest, *was* a son-in-law of Sanballat the Horonite; therefore I drove him from me.

29 Remember them, O my God, because they have defiled the priesthood and the covenant of the priesthood and the Levites.

30 Thus I cleansed them of everything pagan. I also assigned duties to the priests and the Levites, each to his service, 31 and *to bringing* the wood offering and the firstfruits at appointed times.

Remember me, O my God, for good!

# Esther



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# Esther

A nation at war . . . a beautiful orphan girl with a secret past who unexpectedly becomes the wife of a powerful and impulsive king . . . an aggressive villain with a secret plot for exterminating an entire race. Is all this (a) the latest Hollywood blockbuster? (b) a new action/ adventure TV miniseries? or (c) a best-selling romance novel?

The correct answer is (d) none of the above. Rather, this is the plot of the Old Testament book of Esther!

The story of Esther is a classic struggle between good and evil. It's a book about God's sovereignty and His deliverance. And it's a book about using whatever one has to do all that one can.

Written by an unknown author, Esther is unique in the Scriptures in that it never mentions God by name. Nevertheless, His presence is unmistakable. The providence and rule of God shine through for a people under bondage, exiled in a foreign land. God remembers His covenant promises to Israel and orchestrates events to protect His people. Haman, the madman who conspires to kill the Jews, serves as a sobering reminder of God's promise to Abraham that anyone who curses Israel will himself be cursed. We also learn here in Esther how and why the Feast of Purim became for the Jews an annual reminder of God's great faithfulness.

If you like mystery, suspense, romance, and intrigue, you'll love Esther Enjoy reading this nail-biter of a book . . . and look for God's fingerprints at every turn!

**SOUL CONCERN IN**

## ESTHER

HONOR (6:6)

## THE KING DETHRONES QUEEN VASHTI

**1** Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus[a] (this *was* the Ahasuerus
who reigned over one hundred and twenty-seven provinces, from India to
Ethiopia), [2]in those days when King Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his
kingdom, which *was* in Shushan[a] the citadel, [3]*that* in the third year of his
reign he made a feast for all his officials and servants-the powers of Persia
and Media, the nobles, and the princes of the provinces *being* before him-
[4]when he showed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the splendor of his
excellent majesty for many days, one hundred and eighty days *in all.*

[5]And when these days were completed, the king made a feast lasting seven
days for all the people who were present in Shushan the citadel, from great to
small, in the court of the garden of the king's palace. [6]*There were* white and
blue linen *curtains* fastened with cords of fine linen and purple on silver rods
and marble pillars; *and the* couches *were* of gold and silver on a *mosaic*
pavement of alabaster, turquoise, and white and black marble. [7]And they
served drinks in golden vessels, each vessel being different from the other,
with royal wine in abundance, according to the generosity of the king. [8]In
accordance with the law, the drinking was not compulsory; for so the king
had ordered all the officers of his household, that they should do according to
each man's pleasure.

[9]Queen Vashti also made a feast for the women *in* the royal palace which
*belonged* to King Ahasuerus.

[10]On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he
commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar, and
Carcas, seven eunuchs who served in the presence of King Ahasuerus, [11]to
bring Queen Vashti before the king, *wearing* her royal crown, in order to
show her beauty to the people and the officials, for she *was* beautiful to
behold. [12]But Queen Vashti refused to come at the king's command *brought*
by *his* eunuchs; therefore the king was furious, and his anger burned within
him.

[13]Then the king said to the wise men who understood the times (for this
*was* the king's manner toward all who knew law and justice, [14]those closest

to him *being* Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan, the seven princes of Persia and Media, who had access to the king's presence, *and* who ranked highest in the kingdom): [15]"What *shall we* do to Queen Vashti, according to law, because she did not obey the command of King Ahasuerus *brought to her* by the eunuchs?"

[16]And Memucan answered before the king and the princes: "Queen Vashti has not only wronged the king, but also all the princes, and all the people who *are* in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus. [17]For the queen's behavior will become known to all women, so that they will despise their husbands in their eyes, when they report, 'King Ahasuerus commanded Queen Vashti to be brought in before him, but she did not come.' [18]This very day the *noble* ladies of Persia and Media will say to all the king's officials that they have heard of the behavior of the queen. Thus *there will be* excessive contempt and wrath. [19]If it pleases the king, let a royal decree go out from him, and let it be recorded in the laws of the Persians and the Medes, so that it will not be altered, that Vashti shall come no more before King Ahasuerus; and let the king give her royal position to another who is better than she. [20]When the king's decree which he will make is proclaimed throughout all his empire (for it is great), all wives will honor their husbands, both great and small."

[21]And the reply pleased the king and the princes, and the king did according to the word of Memucan. [22]Then he sent letters to all the king's provinces, to each province in its own script, and to every people in their own language, that each man should be master in his own house, and speak in the language of his own people.

## ESTHER BECOMES QUEEN

**2** After these things, when the wrath of King Ahasuerus subsided, he remembered Vashti, what she had done, and what had been decreed against her. 2Then the king's servants who attended him said: "Let beautiful young virgins be sought for the king; 3and let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom, that they may gather all the beautiful young virgins to Shushan the citadel, into the women's quarters, under the custody of Hegai[a] the king's eunuch, custodian of the women. And let beauty preparations be given *them.* 4Then let the young woman who pleases the king be queen instead of Vashti."

This thing pleased the king, and he did so.

5In Shushan the citadel there was a certain Jew whose name *was* Mordecai the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite. 6*Kish*[a] had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captives who had been captured with Jeconiah[b] king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away. 7And *Mordecai* had brought up Hadassah, that *is,* Esther, his uncle's daughter, for she had neither father nor mother. The young woman *was* lovely and beautiful. When her father and mother died, Mordecai took her as his own daughter.

8So it was, when the king's command and decree were heard, and when many young women were gathered at Shushan the citadel, *under* the custody of Hegai, that Esther also was taken to the king's palace, into the care of Hegai the custodian of the women. 9Now the young woman pleased him, and she obtained his favor; so he readily gave beauty preparations to her, besides her allowance. Then seven choice maidservants were provided for her from the king's palace, and he moved her and her maidservants to the best *place* in the house of the women.

10Esther had not revealed her people or family, for Mordecai had charged her not to reveal *it.* 11And every day Mordecai paced in front of the court of the women's quarters, to learn of Esther's welfare and what was happening to her.

12Each young woman's turn came to go in to King Ahasuerus after she had

completed twelve months' preparation, according to the regulations for the women, for thus were the days of their preparation apportioned: six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with perfumes and preparations for beautifying women. [13]Thus *prepared, each* young woman went to the king, and she was given whatever she desired to take with her from the women's quarters to the king's palace. [14]In the evening she went, and in the morning she returned to the second house of the women, to the custody of Shaashgaz, the king's eunuch who kept the concubines. She would not go in to the king again unless the king delighted in her and called for her by name.

[15]Now when the turn came for Esther the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her as his daughter, to go in to the king, she requested nothing but what Hegai the king's eunuch, the custodian of the women, advised. And Esther obtained favor in the sight of all who saw her. [16]So Esther was taken to King Ahasuerus, into his royal palace, in the tenth month, which *is* the month of Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign. [17]The king loved Esther more than all the *other* women, and she obtained grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins; so he set the royal crown upon her head and made her queen instead of Vashti. [18]Then the king made a great feast, the Feast of Esther, for all his officials and servants; and he proclaimed a holiday in the provinces and gave gifts according to the generosity of a king.

## MORDECAI DISCOVERS A PLOT

[19]When virgins were gathered together a second time, Mordecai sat within the king's gate. [20]*Now* Esther had not revealed her family and her people, just as Mordecai had charged her, for Esther obeyed the command of Mordecai as when she was brought up by him.

[21]In those days, while Mordecai sat within the king's gate, two of the king's eunuchs, Bigthan and Teresh, doorkeepers, became furious and sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus. [22]So the matter became known to Mordecai, who told Queen Esther, and Esther informed the king in Mordecai's name. [23]And when an inquiry was made into the matter, it was confirmed, and both were hanged on a gallows; and it was written in the book of the chronicles in the presence of the king.

## HAMAN'S CONSPIRACY AGAINST THE JEWS

**3** After these things King Ahasuerus promoted Haman, the son of
Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him and set his seat above all the
princes who *were* with him. 2And all the king's servants who *were* within the
king's gate bowed and paid homage to Haman, for so the king had
commanded concerning him. But Mordecai would not bow or pay homage.
3Then the king's servants who *were* within the king's gate said to Mordecai,
"Why do you transgress the king's command?" 4Now it happened, when they
spoke to him daily and he would not listen to them, that they told *it* to
Haman, to see whether Mordecai's words would stand; for *Mordecai* had told
them that he *was* a Jew. 5When Ha-man saw that Mordecai did not bow or
pay him homage, Haman was filled with wrath. 6But he disdained to lay
hands on Mordecai alone, for they had told him of the people of Mordecai.
Instead, Haman sought to destroy all the Jews who *were* throughout the
whole kingdom of Ahasuerus-the people of Mordecai.

7In the first month, which is the month of Nisan, in the twelfth year of
King Ahasuerus, they cast Pur (that *is*, the lot), before Haman to determine
the day and the month,[a] until *it fell on the* twelfth *month*,[b] which *is* the month
of Adar.

8Then Haman said to King Ahasuerus, "There is a certain people scattered
and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of your kingdom; their
laws *are* different from all *other* people's, and they do not keep the king's
laws. Therefore it *is* not fitting for the king to let them remain. 9If it pleases
the king, let *a decree* be written that they be destroyed, and I will pay ten
thousand talents of silver into the hands of those who do the work, to bring *it*
into the king's treasuries."

10So the king took his signet ring from his hand and gave it to Haman, the
son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews. 11And the king said
to Haman, "The money and the people *are* given to you, to do with them as
seems good to you."

12Then the king's scribes were called on the thirteenth day of the first
month, and *a decree* was written according to all that Haman commanded-to

the king's satraps, to the governors who *were* over each province, to the officials of all people, to every province according to its script, and to every people in their language. In the name of King Ahasuerus it was written, and sealed with the king's signet ring. [13]And the letters were sent by couriers into all the king's provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate all the Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, on the thirteenth *day* of the twelfth *month*, which *is* the month of Adar, and to plunder their possessions.[a] [14]A copy of the document was to be issued as law in every province, being published for all people, that they should be ready for that day. [15]The couriers went out, hastened by the king's command; and the decree was proclaimed in Shushan the citadel. So the king and Haman sat down to drink, but the city of Shushan was perplexed.

**KEY PASSAGE**

## CREATED IN GOD'S IMAGE

## (3:6)

Haman hated Mordecai so intensely that he was determined to destroy all the Jews in the Persian Empire. His prejudice was focused against one Jewish man and then was extended to the Jewish race and religion. Then Haman used his powerful position with the king to try to exterminate all Jews.

Prejudice is a powerful tool of Satan. Varying degrees of prejudice can focus on physical characteristics, mental capabilities, or intellectual or religious beliefs. Prejudice always puts one person in a superior position to another. That should never be the attitude of the

followers of Christ. Instead, believers ought to see all people as created in the image of God and should accept all other believers as part of God's family. In love, they should also readily share Christ with lost people of all races and nations.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about A Christian Response to Prejudice. See also the personality profile of Haman's Prejudice: Playing with Fire.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# HAMAN'S PREJUDICE: PLAYING WITH FIRE

## (ESTHER 3)

Satan's ultimate goal is to destroy people's hearts. He especially delights in the destruction of people by other people. One of Satan's most effective means is through prejudice. How many crimes of hatred have been perpetrated by racism? How many battles have been fought between groups because of prejudice? Satan has been able to use the differences between people-from skin color to race and religious practices-as fuel for hatred's fires.

Haman was arrogant and angry. He hated the Jews in general, but he hated one Jew in particular, Mordecai, because Mordecai had refused to bow to him. Haman knew that Mordecai's resistance came from his religious convictions, so Haman hated Mordecai, his faith in God, and, therefore, all Jews. His anger at one man ignited a fire that was fueled by his pride and ambition. The harm he intended for

others eventually returned to him, however, when he was hanged on the gallows he had built for Mordecai.

Prejudice continues because Satan knows it is an effective tool in his hands. Christians, however, should have no room for prejudice. If Christians are to spread God's message of salvation and "make disciples of all the nations" (Matt. 28:19), then they cannot allow a spark of prejudice to glow anywhere in their attitudes toward others.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about A Christian Response to Prejudice. See also the key passage note at Esther 3:6.

## ESTHER AGREES TO HELP THE JEWS

**4** When Mordecai learned all that had happened, he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the midst of the city. He cried out with a loud and bitter cry. [2]He went as far as the front of the king's gate, for no one *might* enter the king's gate clothed with sackcloth. [3]And in every province where the king's command and decree arrived, *there was* great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes.

[4]So Esther's maids and eunuchs came and told her, and the queen was deeply distressed. Then she sent garments to clothe Mordecai and take his sackcloth away from him, but he would not accept *them.* [5]Then Esther called Hathach, *one* of the king's eunuchs whom he had appointed to attend her, and she gave him a command concerning Mordecai, to learn what and why this *was.* [6]So Hathach went out to Mordecai in the city square that *was* in front of the king's gate. [7]And Mordecai told him all that had happened to him, and the sum of money that Haman had promised to pay into the king's treasuries to destroy the Jews. [8]He also gave him a copy of the written decree for their destruction, which was given at Shushan, that he might show it to Esther and explain it to her, and that he might command her to go in to the king to make supplication to him and plead before him for her people. [9]So Hathach returned and told Esther the words of Mordecai.

[10]Then Esther spoke to Hathach, and gave him a command for Mordecai: [11]"All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that any man or woman who goes into the inner court to the king, who has not been called, *he has* but one law: put *all* to death, except the one to whom the king holds out the golden scepter, that he may live. Yet I myself have not been called to go in to the king these thirty days." [12]So they told Mordecai Esther's words.

[13]And Mordecai told *them* to answer Esther: "Do not think in your heart that you will escape in the king's palace any more than all the other Jews. [14]For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will

perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for *such* a time as this?”

15 Then Esther told *them* to reply to Mordecai: 16 “Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise. And so I will go to the king, which *is* against the law; and if I perish, I perish!”

17 So Mordecai went his way and did according to all that Esther commanded him.[a]

**SOUL NOTE**

**Seek His Face** *(4:16)* Esther fasted and prayed, and asked her people to do the same as she prepared to risk her life by approaching King Ahasuerus. In a communal act of faith, the Jewish people fasted and petitioned God. Esther knew that her strength would come from God and that He alone could turn the heart of the king. She wisely prepared herself, however, through the disciplines of prayer and fasting. God is honored when we seek His face before we embark on service for Him. **Topic:** **Spiritual Disciplines**

## ESTHER’S BANQUET

**5** Now it happened on the third day that Esther put on *her* royal *robes* and
stood in the inner court of the king’s palace, across from the king’s house,
while the king sat on his royal throne in the royal house, facing the entrance
of the house.[a] 2So it was, when the king saw Queen Esther standing in the
court, *that* she found favor in his sight, and the king held out to Esther the
golden scepter that *was* in his hand. Then Esther went near and touched the
top of the scepter.

3And the king said to her, “What do you wish, Queen Esther? What *is* your
request? It shall be given to you-up to half the kingdom!”

4So Esther answered, “If it pleases the king, let the king and Haman come
today to the banquet that I have prepared for him.”

5Then the king said, “Bring Haman quickly, that he may do as Esther has
said.” So the king and Haman went to the banquet that Esther had prepared.

6At the banquet of wine the king said to Esther, “What *is* your petition? It
shall be granted you. What *is* your request, up to half the kingdom? It shall be
done!”

7Then Esther answered and said, “My petition and request *is this:* 8If I
have found favor in the sight of the king, and if it pleases the king to grant
my petition and fulfill my request, then let the king and Haman come to the
banquet which I will prepare for them, and tomorrow I will do as the king has
said.”

## HAMAN’S PLOT AGAINST MORDECAI

9So Haman went out that day joyful and with a glad heart; but when
Haman saw Mordecai in the king’s gate, and that he did not stand or tremble
before him, he was filled with indignation against Mordecai. 10Nevertheless
Haman restrained himself and went home, and he sent and called for his
friends and his wife Zeresh. 11Then Haman told them of his great riches, the
multitude of his children, everything in which the king had promoted him,
and how he had advanced him above the officials and servants of the king.

12 Moreover Haman said, “Besides, Queen Esther invited no one but me to
come in with the king to the banquet that she prepared; and tomorrow I am
again invited by her, along with the king. 13 Yet all this avails me nothing, so
long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king’s gate.”

14 Then his wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him, “Let a gallows be
made, fifty cubits high, and in the morning suggest to the king that Mordecai
be hanged on it; then go merrily with the king to the banquet.”

And the thing pleased Haman; so he had the gallows made.

## THE KING HONORS MORDECAI

**6** That night the king could not sleep. So one was commanded to bring the
book of the records of the chronicles; and they were read before the king.
2 And it was found written that Mordecai had told of Bigthana and Teresh,
two of the king's eunuchs, the doorkeepers who had sought to lay hands on
King Ahasuerus. 3 Then the king said, "What honor or dignity has been
bestowed on Mordecai for this?"

And the king's servants who attended him said, "Nothing has been done for him."

4 So the king said, "Who *is* in the court?" Now Haman had *just* entered the outer court of the king's palace to suggest that the king hang Mordecai on the gallows that he had prepared for him.

5 The king's servants said to him, "Haman is there, standing in the court."

And the king said, "Let him come in."

6 So Haman came in, and the king asked him, "What shall be done for the man whom the king delights to honor?"

Now Haman thought in his heart, "Whom would the king delight to honor more than me?" 7 And Haman answered the king, "*For* the man whom the king delights to honor, 8 let a royal robe be brought which the king has worn, and a horse on which the king has ridden, which has a royal crest placed on its head. 9 Then let this robe and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that he may array the man whom the king delights to honor. Then parade him on horseback through the city square, and proclaim before him: 'Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor!' "

10 Then the king said to Haman, "Hurry, take the robe and the horse, as you have suggested, and do so for Mordecai the Jew who sits within the king's gate! Leave nothing undone of all that you have spoken."

11 So Haman took the robe and the horse, arrayed Mordecai and led him on horseback through the city square, and proclaimed before him, "Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor!"

12 Afterward Mordecai went back to the king’s gate. But Haman hurried to
his house, mourning and with his head covered. 13 When Haman told his wife
Zeresh and all his friends everything that had happened to him, his wise men
and his wife Zeresh said to him, “If Mordecai, before whom you have begun
to fall, is of Jewish descent, you will not prevail against him but will surely
fall before him.”

14 While they *were* still talking with him, the king’s eunuchs came, and
hastened to bring Haman to the banquet which Esther had prepared.

**LIGHTHOUSE OF HONOR**

## GARY SMALLEY AND GREG SMALLEY

## (Esther 6:6)

**I**magine you are on a small boat caught in a fierce ocean storm. As the towering waves crash all around you, your boat is barely able to stay afloat. With each passing second, you are driven closer to the deadly rocks standing guard offshore. Suddenly, you catch sight of a tiny, blinking light. Searching through the dark surf, you realize the light is your lifeline-a lighthouse.

Very few images reflect such security and hope as a lighthouse. In the same way that a lighthouse provides safety to a wayward vessel, honor builds safety in a relationship. To “honor” simply means to place high value, worth, and importance on other people by viewing them as priceless gifts-granting them a position in our lives worthy of great respect. Honor is a gift we give to others. It isn’t purchased by others’ actions or contingent on our emotions. We give others

distinction whether or not they like it, want it, or deserve it. In marriage, honoring our mates gives legs to the words, “I love you.” It puts that statement into action.

Honor is not only the first step of love, it’s also the single most important principle for building an intimate relationship. Our favorite illustration of the unlimited power of treating someone as a priceless treasure is a story called *Johnny Lingo’s Eight-Cow Wife,* written by Patricia McGerr. The story tells of a young islander named Johnny Lingo who paid the unheard-of price of eight cows for a wife. Most wives cost two or three cows; four or five buys a highly satisfactory wife. What made this most unusual was that the woman Johnny was buying, Sarita, was unattractive-plain, skinny, and very shy. When the teller of this story met Johnny and Sarita, she was amazed, for Sarita had become a truly beautiful woman.

Because Johnny Lingo had considered Sarita to be worth eight cows, she began to feel and present herself as an eight-cow woman. Before Johnny entered her life, Sarita was a plain island girl. After he placed incredible value upon her, she was transformed into a confident, attractive woman with a lift to her shoulders, a tilt to her chin, and a sparkle in her eyes that no one could take away.

How many “cows” do our loved ones feel they are worth? The answer will give us an idea of how much we honor them.

## HONORING THOSE WE LOVE

The apostle Paul encouraged the early Christians to honor each other when he wrote, “Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another” (Rom. 12:10). A good literal definition of honor is, “To give preference to someone by attaching high value to them.” Honor isn’t just important to relationships-it is absolutely critical. Without honor, people cannot even create a functional relationship, to say nothing of attaining intimacy.

*Take the Pledge*

Honor has to be the center of the marriage relationship, and it is not a difficult strength to master and practice. First, take the pledge. Spouses must consciously pledge themselves to put honor at the heart of their relationship. They must commit themselves to consider each other worthy of reverence, praise, and honor without restriction. They must treat each other as treasures, and that attitude should govern all their actions and words. Why is it so important to look at our loved ones as special treasures? Because "where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matt. 6:21). Whatever we highly treasure, that's where our affections, desires, and enthusiasm lie.

When people learn to treasure their mates, their positive feelings for them increase as well. This is called "confirmation bias." Confirmation bias means that whatever people believe about others, positive or negative, they will find evidence to support the belief. This can have a major impact on relationships with loved ones.

If we do not see our loved ones as priceless treasures, then we will tend to focus on their negative actions. On the other hand, if we see them as wonderful treasures, then we will focus more on their positive behavior.

*Take Action*

Second, take action. One mate must not only pledge to honor the other, but they must also be able to convey that honor through their words, actions, and deeds. One way for a mate to take action is to list all the things they admire about the other mate. They should post the list in a highly visible place where they and, more importantly, their mate, can see it every day. They should consider their mate's personality, appearance, thinking patterns, faith patterns, shared values, parenting skills, concerns, opinions, and life goals. The longer the list, the bigger the lighthouse and the brighter the light.

Another way to take action is to keep track of the mate's positive

behavior. In other words, one mate should try to notice methodically what the other mate already does that pleases them. In order to do this, the couple must really look at each other and break through the barriers that obstruct their vision of each other's good deeds.

Whether it's marriage or friendship or whatever else, we can commit ourselves to building lighthouses of honor in our relationships that will protect us from the storms that will come. The higher the honor, the safer will be the relationship. Once we build a lighthouse, we will begin to come closer to the other person in very positive ways.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of honor include:

- Exodus 20:12
- 1 Samuel 2:30
- Proverbs 15:33; 20:3
- John 5:19-23; 8:54
- Romans 13:7

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on honor at 1 Peter 2:17. See also the personality profile of The Wise Men: Honoring the King.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Let Others See God** *(6:6)* When King Ahasuerus couldn't sleep, he

read a history book. That’s when he discovered that Mordecai had at one time saved the king’s life. The king wanted to show due honor to Mordecai. Like King Ahasuerus, we ought to honor those who have been a blessing in our lives, no matter how small the deed or the sacrifice. Like Mordecai, we ought to help others, not out of selfish motivation or from seeking praise. Rather, we need to remember that our motive is that others may see God working in our lives. **Topic: Attitudes**

## HAMAN HANGED INSTEAD OF MORDECAI

7 So the king and Haman went to dine with Queen Esther. 2And on the second day, at the banquet of wine, the king again said to Esther, “What *is* your petition, Queen Esther? It shall be granted you. And what *is* your request, up to half the kingdom? It shall be done!”

3Then Queen Esther answered and said, “If I have found favor in your sight, O king, and if it pleases the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request. 4For we have been sold, my people and I, to be destroyed, to be killed, and to be annihilated. Had we been sold as male and female slaves, I would have held my tongue, although the enemy could never compensate for the king’s loss.”

5So King Ahasuerus answered and said to Queen Esther, “Who is he, and where is he, who would dare presume in his heart to do such a thing?”

6And Esther said, “The adversary and enemy *is* this wicked Haman!”

So Haman was terrified before the king and queen.

7Then the king arose in his wrath from the banquet of wine *and went* into the palace garden; but Haman stood before Queen Esther, pleading for his life, for he saw that evil was determined against him by the king. 8When the king returned from the palace garden to the place of the banquet of wine, Haman had fallen across the couch where Esther *was*. Then the king said, “Will he also assault the queen while I *am* in the house?”

As the word left the king’s mouth, they covered Haman’s face. 9Now Harbonah, one of the eunuchs, said to the king, “Look! The gallows, fifty cubits high, which Haman made for Mordecai, who spoke good on the king’s behalf, is standing at the house of Haman.”

Then the king said, “Hang him on it!”

10So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then the king’s wrath subsided.

**ESTHER SAVES THE JEWS**

**8** On that day King Ahasuerus gave Queen Esther the house of Haman, the
enemy of the Jews. And Mordecai came before the king, for Esther had
told how he *was related* to her. 2So the king took off his signet ring, which he
had taken from Haman, and gave it to Mordecai; and Esther appointed
Mordecai over the house of Haman.

3Now Esther spoke again to the king, fell down at his feet, and implored
him with tears to counteract the evil of Haman the Agagite, and the scheme
which he had devised against the Jews. 4And the king held out the golden
scepter toward Esther. So Esther arose and stood before the king, 5and said,
"If it pleases the king, and if I have found favor in his sight and the thing
*seems* right to the king and I am pleasing in his eyes, let it be written to
revoke the letters devised by Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite,
which he wrote to annihilate the Jews who *are* in all the king's provinces.
6For how can I endure to see the evil that will come to my people? Or how
can I endure to see the destruction of my countrymen?"

7Then King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther and Mordecai the Jew,
"Indeed, I have given Esther the house of Haman, and they have hanged him
on the gallows because he *tried to* lay his hand on the Jews. 8You yourselves
write *a decree* concerning the Jews, as you please, in the king's name, and
seal *it* with the king's signet ring; for whatever is written in the king's name
and sealed with the king's signet ring no one can revoke."

9So the king's scribes were called at that time, in the third month, which *is*
the month of Sivan, on the twenty-third *day;* and it was written, according to
all that Mordecai commanded, to the Jews, the satraps, the governors, and the
princes of the provinces from India to Ethiopia, one hundred and twenty-
seven provinces *in all,* to every province in its own script, to every people in
their own language, and to the Jews in their own script and language. 10And
he wrote in the name of King Ahasuerus, sealed *it* with the king's signet ring,
and sent letters by couriers on horseback, riding on royal horses bred from
swift steeds.[a]

11By these letters the king permitted the Jews who *were* in every city to

gather together and protect their lives-to destroy, kill, and annihilate all the forces of any people or province that would assault them, *both* little children and women, and to plunder their possessions, [12]on one day in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, on the thirteenth *day* of the twelfth month, which *is* the month of Adar.[a] [13]A copy of the document was to be issued as a decree in every province and published for all people, so that the Jews would be ready on that day to avenge themselves on their enemies. [14]The couriers who rode on royal horses went out, hastened and pressed on by the king's command. And the decree was issued in Shushan the citadel.

[15]So Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white, with a great crown of gold and a garment of fine linen and purple; and the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad. [16]The Jews had light and gladness, joy and honor. [17]And in every province and city, wherever the king's command and decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a holiday. Then many of the people of the land became Jews, because fear of the Jews fell upon them.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# ESTHER: THE BUCK STOPS HERE

## (ESTHER 8:1-3)

Responsibility is a weighty word. To take responsibility for something involves work, commitment, problem solving, and taking the heat if something goes wrong. The phrase, "The buck stops here," means that a person must bear the weight of decisions made and take responsibility for them. The responsible person must not "pass the

buck" to someone else.

Esther found herself in a position to handle a great responsibility. Her people, the Jews, were to be exterminated at the command of the king-her husband. The king did not know that Esther was a Jew, nor did he know the intrigue behind Haman's suggestion to kill all the Jews. Queen Esther knew that she was the one who should take on the responsibility of saving her people. Her cousin Mordecai perceived that God had chosen this brave young woman and placed her in that position "for such a time as this" (Esth. 4:14). And Esther rose to the occasion.

Some people run from responsibility, not wanting to take the risks or the blame. They don't want to have the buck stop with them. But when believers are doing God's work and trusting Him with the process and the outcome, they can bear that responsibility, knowing that God will see them through.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Responsibility: Equipped And Willing. See also the key passage note at Matthew 25:14-30.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Communication Is Key** *(8:3-8)* Esther pled with her husband, the king, on behalf of the Jewish people, all the while knowing she had very little status even though she was the king's wife. Their marriage was very different from marriages today, but Esther's attitude provides an excellent example of marital communication.

She never presumed upon the king; she approached him with respect and courtesy. We can show the same courtesy toward a spouse by listening intently and speaking with respect and courtesy. Respectful,

honest communication is important to a happy marriage. **Topic: Marital Communication**

**SOUL NOTE**

**Crisis Intervention** *(8:11)* At times we must take responsibility for our own protection and the protection of others. Esther prayed for God's guidance, and then risked her life on behalf of her people. The king's agreement still needed to have a new law to put it into practice. So Ahasuerus granted Mordecai the use of his signet ring to issue a new edict. Crisis was averted through the intervention of individuals who cared enough to get involved. We must trust in God's guidance and protection, but then we may have to work and take risks in order to intervene in a difficult situation. **Topic: Crises**

## THE JEWS DESTROY THEIR TORMENTORS

**9** Now in the twelfth month, that *is*, the month of Adar, on the thirteenth day, *the time* came for the king's command and his decree to be executed. On the day that the enemies of the Jews had hoped to overpower them, the opposite occurred, in that the Jews themselves overpowered those who hated them. 2 The Jews gathered together in their cities throughout all the provinces of King Ahasuerus to lay hands on those who sought their harm. And no one could withstand them, because fear of them fell upon all people. 3 And all the officials of the provinces, the satraps, the governors, and all those doing the king's work, helped the Jews, because the fear of Mordecai fell upon them. 4 For Mordecai *was* great in the king's palace, and his fame spread throughout all the provinces; for this man Mordecai became increasingly prominent. 5 Thus the Jews defeated all their enemies with the stroke of the sword, with slaughter and destruction, and did what they pleased with those who hated them.

6 And in Shushan the citadel the Jews killed and destroyed five hundred men. 7 Also Par-shandatha, Dalphon, Aspatha, 8 Poratha, Adalia, Aridatha, 9 Parmashta, Arisai, Aridai, and Vajezatha- 10 the ten sons of Haman the son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews-they killed; but they did not lay a hand on the plunder.

11 On that day the number of those who were killed in Shushan the citadel was brought to the king. 12 And the king said to Queen Esther, "The Jews have killed and destroyed five hundred men in Shushan the citadel, and the ten sons of Haman. What have they done in the rest of the king's provinces? Now what *is* your petition? It shall be granted to you. Or what *is* your further request? It shall be done."

13 Then Esther said, "If it pleases the king, let it be granted to the Jews who *are* in Shushan to do again tomorrow according to today's decree, and let Haman's ten sons be hanged on the gallows."

14 So the king commanded this to be done; the decree was issued in Shushan, and they hanged Haman's ten sons.

15 And the Jews who *were* in Shushan gathered together again on the

fourteenth day of the month of Adar and killed three hundred men at Shushan; but they did not lay a hand on the plunder.

16 The remainder of the Jews in the king's provinces gathered together and protected their lives, had rest from their enemies, and killed seventy-five thousand of their enemies; but they did not lay a hand on the plunder. 17 *This was* on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar. And on the fourteenth of *the month*[a] they rested and made it a day of feasting and gladness.

**THE FEAST OF PURIM**

18 But the Jews who *were* at Shushan assembled together on the thirteenth *day*, as well as on the fourteenth; and on the fifteenth of *the month*[a] they rested, and made it a day of feasting and gladness. 19 Therefore the Jews of the villages who dwelt in the unwalled towns celebrated the fourteenth day of the month of Adar *with* gladness and feasting, as a holiday, and for sending presents to one another.

20 And Mordecai wrote these things and sent letters to all the Jews, near and far, who *were* in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, 21 to establish among them that they should celebrate yearly the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month of Adar, 22 as the days on which the Jews had rest from their enemies, as the month which was turned from sorrow to joy for them, and from mourning to a holiday; that they should make them days of feasting and joy, of sending presents to one another and gifts to the poor. 23 So the Jews accepted the custom which they had begun, as Mordecai had written to them, 24 because Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had plotted against the Jews to annihilate them, and had cast Pur (that *is,* the lot), to consume them and destroy them; 25 but when *Esther*[a] came before the king, he commanded by letter that this[b] wicked plot which *Haman* had devised against the Jews should return on his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows.

26 So they called these days Purim, after the name Pur. Therefore, because of all the words of this letter, what they had seen concerning this matter, and what had happened to them, 27 the Jews established and imposed it upon themselves and their descendants and all who would join them, that without

fail they should celebrate these two days every year, according to the written *instructions* and according to the *prescribed* time, [28]*that* these days *should be* remembered and kept throughout every generation, every family, every province, and every city, that these days of Purim should not fail *to be observed* among the Jews, and *that* the memory of them should not perish among their descendants.

[29]Then Queen Esther, the daughter of Abihail, with Mordecai the Jew, wrote with full authority to confirm this second letter about Purim. [30]And *Mordecai* sent letters to all the Jews, to the one hundred and twenty-seven provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus, *with* words of peace and truth, [31]to confirm these days of Purim at their *appointed* time, as Mordecai the Jew and Queen Esther had prescribed for them, and as they had decreed for themselves and their descendants concerning matters of their fasting and lamenting. [32]So the decree of Esther confirmed these matters of Purim, and it was written in the book.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Keep a Record** *(9:26-28)* The Jews assembled to celebrate their victory on the very day on which Haman had decreed their destruction (9:1). Haman had chosen that date by casting *purim* (lots). In an ironic twist, the Jews declared that their celebration would be called *Purim*. Mordecai recorded these events so the Jewish people could celebrate their deliverance for generations to come. When exciting, happy events occur in our lives, we should keep a record, reviewing it every now and then, and thank God for giving us reasons to celebrate. **Topic: Joy**

**MORDECAI'S ADVANCEMENT**

**10** And King Ahasuerus imposed tribute on the land and *on* the islands of
the sea. [2]Now all the acts of his power and his might, and the account of
the greatness of Mordecai, to which the king advanced him, *are* they not
written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia? [3]For
Mordecai the Jew *was* second to King Ahasuerus, and was great among the
Jews and well received by the multitude of his brethren, seeking the good of
his people and speaking peace to all his countrymen.[a]

# Job



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# Job

Why?" we cry to God as we struggle with overwhelming grief. "How could You do this to me?" If God is good and possesses all power, how do we account for human suffering? This is one of the great dilemmas in life, and it is the focus of the Book of Job. Although the author of this book is unknown, its profound lessons touch everyone.

At the height of a happy life, Job lost just about everything, including his children and his health. Soon thereafter, a handful of friends arrived. After mourning quietly with him for a week or so, they began to offer possible explanations for his calamity-primarily the idea that bad things happen to people only as punishment for their sins.

Such simple notions, however, are neither correct nor helpful. The Book (and experience) of Job reveals the uncomfortable truth that many times there are no satisfactory answers to the "why" of suffering. Rational explanations may make intellectual sense, but they seldom provide emotional relief. Finite human beings will never fully understand life's misfortunes. We don't have all the facts, nor can we clearly see God's higher purposes.

All people face suffering. In such hard times we don't need answers as much as we need God and the faithful presence of good friends. A primary lesson of Job is that God is always there for us-even when life doesn't make sense.

**SOUL CONCERNS IN**

## JOB

SUFFERING (9:28)

BITTERNESS (21:22-26)

## JOB AND HIS FAMILY IN UZ

**1** There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name *was* Job; and that man
was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil.
2 And seven sons and three daughters were born to him. 3 Also, his possessions
were seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of
oxen, five hundred female donkeys, and a very large household, so that this
man was the greatest of all the people of the East.

4 And his sons would go and feast *in their* houses, each on his *appointed*
day, and would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them.
5 So it was, when the days of feasting had run their course, that Job would
send and sanctify them, and he would rise early in the morning and offer
burnt offerings *according to* the number of them all. For Job said, "It may be
that my sons have sinned and cursed[a] God in their hearts." Thus Job did
regularly.

## SATAN ATTACKS JOB'S CHARACTER

6 Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves
before the LORD, and Satan[a] also came among them. 7 And the LORD said to
Satan, "From where do you come?"

So Satan answered the LORD and said, "From going to and fro on the earth,
and from walking back and forth on it."

8 Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job, that
*there is* none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who
fears God and shuns evil?"

9 So Satan answered the LORD and said, "Does Job fear God for nothing?
10 Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around
all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his
possessions have increased in the land. 11 But now, stretch out Your hand and
touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!"

12 And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has *is* in your power;
only do not lay a hand on his *person.* "

So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.

## JOB LOSES HIS PROPERTY AND CHILDREN

13 Now there was a day when his sons and daughters *were* eating and
drinking wine in their oldest brother's house; 14 and a messenger came to Job
and said, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them,
15 when the Sabeans[a] raided *them* and took them away-indeed they have killed
the servants with the edge of the sword; and I alone have escaped to tell
you!"

16 While he *was* still speaking, another also came and said, "The fire of
God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants, and
consumed them; and I alone have escaped to tell you!"

17 While he *was* still speaking, another also came and said, "The Chaldeans
formed three bands, raided the camels and took them away, yes, and killed
the servants with the edge of the sword; and I alone have escaped to tell
you!"

18 While he *was* still speaking, another also came and said, "Your sons and
daughters *were* eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, 19 and
suddenly a great wind came from across[a] the wilderness and struck the four
corners of the house, and it fell on the young people, and they are dead; and I
alone have escaped to tell you!"

20 Then Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and he fell to the
ground and worshiped. 21 And he said:

"Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked shall I return there.
The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away;
Blessed be the name of the LORD."

22 In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# JOB'S SUFFERING

## (JOB 1)

Suffering is unavoidable and inescapable. Everyone suffers-it's part of being human. The story of Job reveals a source of suffering, people's powerlessness in it, and, ultimately, God's power through it.

Job was a godly man. The beginning of the book reveals a conversation between Satan and God. Satan was convinced that Job loved God because God had blessed him. Take away his wealth, Satan argued, and Job would curse God. When that didn't work, however, Satan asked for permission to inflict more suffering-taking Job's family and then his health. Job was shattered, broken, and diseased. But through it all, Job "did not sin with his lips" ( Job 2:10).

Eventually, God entered the discussion. He did not explain Job's suffering or help him make sense of his loss. Instead, God underlined the reality of His sovereignty, and the fact that He acts on His own without human advice or explanation. He expects people to trust Him and His goodness regardless of what happens.

Although Job's health and wealth were eventually restored, that is not the central message of the story. The Book of Job shows us that our love for God must not be conditioned upon how we think He is treating us. Great suffering well borne is an indication of unshakable trust in God. Faith in God must be maintained through times of trial as well as times of blessing. Such faith reflects God's nature in us, His redeeming power in Christ, and His unconditional love toward us. No matter what we face in life, we can trust that God is in control. We must rely on Him and His goodness.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Suffering and Glory. See also the

key passage note at 1 Peter 4:12-16.

## SATAN ATTACKS JOB'S HEALTH

**2** Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the LORD. 2 And the LORD said to Satan, "From where do you come?"

Satan answered the LORD and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it."

3 Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job, that *there is* none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil? And still he holds fast to his integrity, although you incited Me against him, to destroy him without cause."

4 So Satan answered the LORD and said, "Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life. 5 But stretch out Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will surely curse You to Your face!"

6 And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, he *is* in your hand, but spare his life."

7 So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD, and struck Job with painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head.

8 And he took for himself a potsherd with which to scrape himself while he sat in the midst of the ashes.

9 Then his wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!"

10 But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

## JOB'S HREE FRIENDS

11 Now when Job's three friends heard of all this adversity that had come upon him, each one came from his own place-Eliphaz the Te-manite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. For they had made an appointment together to come and mourn with him, and to comfort him. 12 And when they raised their eyes from afar, and did not recognize him, they lifted their voices

and wept; and each one tore his robe and sprinkled dust on his head toward heaven. [13]So they sat down with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that *his* grief was very great.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# JOB'S WIFE: LEARNING OF GOD AND GRIEF

## (JOB 2)

Shattered by the loss of her children and her wealth, Job's wife was overwhelmed with grief and anger. As her husband agonized with the additional pain of boils all over his body, she lashed out at Job and his God. In essence, she said, "Still hanging on to that God of yours? Lots of good that is doing! Ending your life would be better than living in this misery." The Bible records her words, "Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!" ( Job 2:9).

Such is the common reaction to suffering of those with no faith or awareness of God's higher purposes. While intense suffering can blind even the strongest believer to God's love and faithfulness, that blindness should only be temporary. Anger directed at God over the long term displays an unwillingness to trust His higher purposes. Anger denies both the sovereignty and the mercy of God.

Satan, the author of suffering, pain, grief, and loss, hopes to use

these weapons to turn people away from God. With Job, Satan's plan didn't work. With Job's wife, however, it did. With people who understand that their lives are in God's hands, the suffering is no less intense, but the outcome is different. Instead of saying, "Curse God," they can say, "The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD" ( Job 1:21). In the midst of brokenness, God is there, joins in our pain and sorrow, and shows that His heart is for each one of us.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Dealing With Loss And Grief. See also the key passage note at John 11:35-44.

## JOB DEPLORES HIS BIRTH

**3** After this Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his *birth.* [2]And Job spoke, and said:

[3] “May the day perish on which I was born,
And the night *in which* it was said,
‘A male child is conceived.’
[4] May that day be darkness;
May God above not seek it,
Nor the light shine upon it.
[5] May darkness and the shadow of death
claim it;
May a cloud settle on it;
May the blackness of the day terrify it.
[6] *As for* that night, may darkness seize it;
May it not rejoice[a] among the days of
the year,
May it not come into the number of the
months.
[7] Oh, may that night be barren!
May no joyful shout come into it!
[8] May those curse it who curse the day,
Those who are ready to arouse Leviathan.
[9] May the stars of its morning be dark;
May it look for light, but *have* none,
And not see the dawning of the day;
[10] Because it did not shut up the doors of
my *mother’s* womb,
Nor hide sorrow from my eyes.
[11] “Why did I not die at birth?
*Why* did I *not* perish when I came from
the womb?
[12] Why did the knees receive me?
Or why the breasts, that I should nurse?

13 For now I would have lain still and been quiet,
I would have been asleep;
Then I would have been at rest
14 With kings and counselors of the earth,
Who built ruins for themselves,
15 Or with princes who had gold,
Who filled their houses *with* silver;
16 Or *why* was I not hidden like a stillborn
child,
Like infants who never saw light?
17 There the wicked cease *from* troubling,
And there the weary are at rest.
18 *There* the prisoners rest together;
They do not hear the voice of the oppressor.
19 The small and great are there,
And the servant *is* free from his master.
20 "Why is light given to him who is in misery,
And life to the bitter of soul,
21 Who long for death, but it does not
*come*,
And search for it more than hidden
treasures;
22 Who rejoice exceedingly,
*And* are glad when they can find the
grave?
23 *Why is light given* to a man whose way
is hidden,
And whom God has hedged in?
24 For my sighing comes before I eat,[a]
And my groanings pour out like water.
25 For the thing I greatly feared has come upon me,
And what I dreaded has happened to
me.
26 I am not at ease, nor am I quiet;

I have no rest, for trouble comes.”

## ELIPHAZ: JOB HAS SINNED

**4** Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said:

2 "*If* one attempts a word with you,
will you become weary?
But who can withhold himself from speaking?
3 Surely you have instructed many,
And you have strengthened weak hands.
4 Your words have upheld him who was
stumbling,
And you have strengthened the feeble
knees;
5 But now it comes upon you, and you are
weary;
It touches you, and you are troubled.
6 *Is* not your reverence your confidence?
And the integrity of your ways your hope?
7 "Remember now, who *ever* perished
being innocent?
Or where were the upright *ever* cut off?
8 Even as I have seen,
Those who plow iniquity
And sow trouble reap the same.
9 By the blast of God they perish,
And by the breath of His anger they are
consumed.
10 The roaring of the lion,
The voice of the fierce lion,
And the teeth of the young lions are
broken.
11 The old lion perishes for lack of prey,
And the cubs of the lioness are
scattered.
12 "Now a word was secretly brought to me,

And my ear received a whisper of it.
13 In disquieting thoughts from the visions
of the night,
When deep sleep falls on men,
14 Fear came upon me, and trembling,
Which made all my bones shake.
15 Then a spirit passed before my face;
The hair on my body stood up.
16 It stood still,
But I could not discern its appearance.
A form *was* before my eyes;
*There was* silence;
Then I heard a voice *saying:*
17 ‘Can a mortal be more righteous than
God?
Can a man be more pure than his
Maker?
18 If He puts no trust in His servants,
*If* He charges His angels with error,
19 How much more those who dwell in
houses of clay,
Whose foundation is in the dust,
*Who* are crushed before a moth?
20 They are broken in pieces from morning
till evening;
They perish forever, with no one
regarding.
21 Does not their own excellence go away?
They die, even without wisdom.’

**ELIPHAZ: JOB IS CHASTENED BY GOD**

**5** “Call out now;

Is there anyone who will answer you?
And to which of the holy ones will you turn?

2 For wrath kills a foolish man,
And envy slays a simple one.
3 I have seen the foolish taking root,
But suddenly I cursed his dwelling place.
4 His sons are far from safety,
They are crushed in the gate,
And *there is* no deliverer.
5 Because the hungry eat up his harvest,
Taking it even from the thorns,[a]
And a snare snatches their substance.[b]
6 For affliction does not come from the dust,
Nor does trouble spring from the ground;
7 Yet man is born to trouble,
As the sparks fly upward.
8 “But as for me, I would seek God,
And to God I would commit my cause-
9 Who does great things,
and unsearchable,
Marvelous things without number.
10 He gives rain on the earth,
And sends waters on the fields.
11 He sets on high those who are lowly,
And those who mourn are lifted to safety.
12 He frustrates the devices of the crafty,
So that their hands cannot carry out

their plans.
13 He catches the wise in their own craftiness,
And the counsel of the cunning comes quickly upon them.
14 They meet with darkness in the daytime,
And grope at noontime as in the night.
15 But He saves the needy from the sword,
From the mouth of the mighty,
And from their hand.
16 So the poor have hope,
And injustice shuts her mouth.
17 “Behold, happy *is* the man whom God corrects;
Therefore do not despise the chastening of the Almighty.
18 For He bruises, but He binds up;
He wounds, but His hands make whole.
19 He shall deliver you in six troubles,
Yes, in seven no evil shall touch you.
20 In famine He shall redeem you from death,
And in war from the power of the sword.
21 You shall be hidden from the scourge of the tongue,
And you shall not be afraid of destruction when it comes.
22 You shall laugh at destruction and famine,
And you shall not be afraid of the beasts of the earth.
23 For you shall have a covenant with the stones of the field,
And the beasts of the field shall be at

peace with you.
24 You shall know that your tent *is* in peace;
You shall visit your dwelling and find nothing amiss.
25 You shall also know that your descendants *shall be* many,
And your offspring like the grass of the earth.
26 You shall come to the grave at a full age,
As a sheaf of grain ripens in its season.
27 Behold, this we have searched out;
It *is* true.
Hear it, and know for yourself.”

## SOUL NOTE

**Give It Up** *(5:8)* In times of trouble, we should turn to God. Job had more than his share of trouble, and none of it was his fault. Eliphaz had the right idea when he said that, in trouble such as Job’s, he would seek God. Sometimes we think we can handle everything by ourselves. Or we may be too self-centered to give our problems to God. A crisis may be just what we need to drive us back to Him. When we trust God in our crises, He proves Himself faithful and able to see us through. **Topic: Crises**

## JOB: MY COMPLAINT IS JUST

**6** Then Job answered and said:

2 “Oh, that my grief were fully weighed,
And my calamity laid with it on the scales!
3 For then it would be heavier than the sand of the sea-
Therefore my words have been rash.
4 For the arrows of the Almighty *are* within me;
My spirit drinks in their poison;
The terrors of God are arrayed against me.
5 Does the wild donkey bray when it has grass,
Or does the ox low over its fodder?
6 Can flavorless food be eaten without salt?
Or is there *any* taste in the white of an egg?
7 My soul refuses to touch them;
They *are* as loathsome food to me.
8 “Oh, that I might have my request,
That God would grant *me* the thing that I long for!
9 That it would please God to crush me,
That He would loose His hand and cut me off!

> “Oh, that I might have my request, that God would grant me the thing that I long for!”
> JOB 6:8

10 Then I would still

have comfort;
Though in anguish
I would exult,
He will not spare;
For I have not
concealed the
words of the Holy One.
11 “What strength do I have, that I should
hope?
And what *is* my end, that I should
prolong my life?
12 *Is* my strength the strength of stones?
Or is my flesh bronze?
13 *Is* my help not within me?
And is success driven from me?
14 “To him who is afflicted, kindness *should*
*be shown* by his friend,
Even though he forsakes the fear of the
Almighty.
15 My brothers have dealt deceitfully like a
brook,
Like the streams of the brooks that pass
away,
16 Which are dark because of the ice,
*And* into which the snow vanishes.
17 When it is warm, they cease to flow;
When it is hot, they vanish from their place.
18 The paths of their way turn aside,
They go nowhere and perish.
19 The caravans of Tema look,
The travelers of Sheba hope for them.
20 They are disappointed because they
were confident;
They come there and are confused.
21 For now you are nothing,

You see terror and are afraid.
22 Did I ever say, ‘Bring *something* to me’?
Or, ‘Offer a bribe for me from your
wealth’?
23 Or, ‘Deliver me from the enemy’s hand’?
Or, ‘Redeem me from the hand of
oppressors’?
24 “Teach me, and I will hold my tongue;
Cause me to understand wherein I have
erred.
25 How forceful are right words!
But what does your arguing prove?
26 Do you intend to rebuke *my* words,
And the speeches of a desperate one,
*which are* as
wind?
27 Yes, you overwhelm
the fatherless,
And you undermine your friend.
28 Now therefore, be pleased to look at me;
For I would never lie to your face.
29 Yield now, let there be no injustice!
Yes, concede, my righteousness still stands!
30 Is there injustice on my tongue?
Cannot my taste discern the unsavory?

## JOB: MY SUFFERING IS COMFORTLESS

7 “*Is there* not a time of hard service for
man on earth?
*Are not* his days also like the days of a
hired man?

2 Like a servant who earnestly desires the
shade,
And like a hired man who eagerly looks
for his wages,
3 So I have been allotted months of
futility, And wearisome nights have been
appointed to me.
4 When I lie down, I say, ‘When shall I
arise,
And the night be ended?’
For I have had my fill of tossing till dawn.
5 My flesh is caked with worms and dust,
My skin is cracked and breaks out
afresh.
6 “My days are swifter than a weaver’s
shuttle,
And are spent without hope.
7 Oh, remember that my life *is* a breath!
My eye will never again see good.
8 The eye of him who sees me will see me
no *more;*
*While* your *eyes* are upon me, I shall no
longer *be.*
9 *As* the cloud disappears and vanishes
away,
So he who goes down to the grave does
not come up.
10 He shall never return to his house,

Nor shall his place know him anymore.
11 “Therefore I will not restrain my mouth;
I will speak in the anguish of my spirit;
I will complain in the bitterness of my soul.
12 *Am* I a sea, or a sea serpent,
That You set a guard over me?
13 When I say, ‘My bed will comfort me,
My couch will ease my complaint,’
14 Then You scare me with dreams
And terrify me with visions,
15 So that my soul chooses strangling
*And* death rather than my body.[a]
16 I loathe *my life;*
I would not live forever.
Let me alone,
For my days *are but* a breath.
17 “What *is* man,
that You should exalt him,
*That* You should set Your heart on him,
18 That You should visit him every morning,
*And* test him every
moment?
19 How long?
Will You not look away from me,
And let me alone till I swallow my
saliva?
20 Have I sinned?
What have I done to You, O watcher of
men?
Why have You set me as Your target,
So that I am a burden to myself?[a]
21 Why then do You not pardon my
transgression,
And take away my iniquity?

For now I will lie down in the dust,
And You will seek me diligently,
But I *will* no longer *be.* ”

**BILDAD: JOB SHOULD REPENT**

**8** Then Bildad the Shuhite answered and said:

2 “How long will you speak these *things*,
And the words of your mouth *be like*
a strong wind?
3 Does God subvert judgment?
Or does the Almighty pervert justice?
4 If your sons have sinned against Him,
He has cast them away for their
transgression.
5 If you would earnestly seek God
And make your supplication to the
Almighty,
6 If you *were* pure and upright,
Surely now He would awake for you,
And prosper your rightful dwelling
place.
7 Though your beginning was small,
Yet your latter end would increase
abundantly.
8 “For inquire, please, of the former age,
And consider the things discovered by
their fathers;
9 For we *were born* yesterday, and know
nothing,
Because our days on earth *are* a shadow.
10 Will they not teach you and tell you,
And utter words from their heart?
11 “Can the papyrus grow up without a
marsh?
Can the reeds flourish without water?
12 While it *is* yet green *and* not cut down,
It withers before any *other* plant.

13 So *are* the paths of all who forget God;
And the hope of the hypocrite shall
perish,
14 Whose confidence shall be cut off,
And whose trust *is* a spider's web.
15 He leans on his house, but it does not
stand.
He holds it fast, but it does not endure.
16 He grows green in the sun,
And his branches spread out in his
garden.
17 His roots wrap around the rock heap,
*And* look for a place in the stones.
18 If he is destroyed from his place,
Then *it* will deny him, *saying,* 'I have
not seen you.'
19 "Behold, this is the joy of His way,
And out of the earth others will grow.
20 Behold, God will not cast away the
blameless,
Nor will He uphold the evildoers.
21 He will yet fill your mouth with laughing,
And your lips with rejoicing.
22 Those who hate you will be clothed with
shame,
And the dwelling place of the wicked
will come to nothing."[a]

**JOB: THERE IS NO MEDIATOR**

**9** Then Job answered and said:

2 “Truly I know *it is* so,
But how can a man be righteous before
God?
3 If one wished to contend with Him,
He could not answer Him one time out
of a thousand.
4 *God is* wise in heart and mighty in strength.
Who has hardened *himself* against Him
and prospered?
5 He removes the mountains, and they
do not know
When He overturns them in His anger;
6 He shakes the earth out of its place,
And its pillars tremble;
7 He commands the sun, and it does not
rise;
He seals off the stars;
8 He alone spreads out the heavens,
And treads on the waves of the sea;
9 He made the Bear, Orion, and the
Pleiades,
And the chambers of the south;
10 He does great things past finding out,
Yes, wonders without number.
11 If He goes by me, I do not see *Him;*
If He moves past, I do not perceive Him;
12 If He takes away, who can hinder Him?
Who can say to Him, ‘What are You doing?’
13 God will not withdraw His anger,
The allies of the proud[a] lie prostrate
beneath Him.

14 “How then can I answer Him,
*And* choose my words *to reason* with Him?
15 For though I were righteous,
I could not answer Him;
I would beg mercy of my Judge.
16 If I called and He answered me,
I would not believe that He was listening to my voice.
17 For He crushes me with a tempest,
And multiplies my wounds without cause.
18 He will not allow me to catch my breath,
But fills me with bitterness.
19 If *it is a matter* of strength, indeed *He is*
strong;
And if of justice, who will appoint my
day *in court?*
20 Though I were righteous, my own mouth
would condemn me;
Though I *were* blameless, it would prove
me perverse.
21 “I am blameless, yet I do not know myself;
I despise my life.
22 It *is* all one *thing;*
Therefore I say, ‘He destroys the
blameless and the wicked.’
23 If the scourge slays suddenly,
He laughs at the plight of the innocent.
24 The earth is given into the hand of the
wicked.
He covers the faces of its judges.
If it is not *He,* who else could it be?
25 “Now my days are swifter than a runner;
They flee away, they see no good.
26 They pass by like swift ships,
Like an eagle swooping on its prey.

27 If I say, ‘I will forget my complaint,
I will put off my sad face and wear a
smile,’
28 I am afraid of all my sufferings;
I know that You will not hold me innocent.
29 *If* I am condemned,
Why then do I labor in vain?
30 If I wash myself with snow water,
And cleanse my hands with soap,
31 Yet You will plunge me into the pit,
And my own clothes will abhor me.
32 “For *He is* not a man, as I *am*,
*That* I may answer Him,
*And that* we should go to court
together.
33 Nor is there any mediator between us,
*Who* may lay his hand on us both.
34 Let Him take His rod away from me,
And do not let dread of Him terrify me.
35 *Then* I would speak and not fear Him,
But it is not so with me.

**SUFFERING AND GLORY**

DAN ALLENDER

( Job 9:28)

**T**he Bible does not hesitate to describe the human condition and the reality of living in a sinful world. Suffering is an inescapable part of that reality. The Book of Ecclesiastes teaches, “For in much wisdom is much grief, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow” (Eccl. 1:18).

No one is immune to suffering. Suffering may come as a result of personal sin and failure. For example, some people may suffer financially by not carefully budgeting their money or being wasteful. Some people may suffer the loss of friendship through their hurtful words or gossip. However, suffering may also arise due to other people’s sin and failure, or other forces outside of our control. For example, a drunk driver who causes an accident creates suffering for others. A tornado or hurricane can create great suffering for many people.

But suffering doesn’t happen just to people. The Bible teaches that creation itself is suffering until a day when it will be redeemed. God Himself suffers, and looks forward to the day when He will bring His people to be with Him.

## THE GROANING OF THE EARTH

The earth itself is suffering: “For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God” (Rom. 8:20, 21). The whole earth, inanimate and animate, suffers because of the inevitability of death and decay. Animals grow old and sick; crops and trees suffer disease, die, and decay. Suffering is not merely human; it is also earthly. Creation waits in eager anticipation of its day of redemption.

## THE GROANING OF HUMANITY

We already know that people suffer-we see it or experience it every

day. “We also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body” (Rom. 8:23). Suffering is common to all people and is not removed by the presence of the Spirit. Being a Christian is not a “get out of suffering free” card.

Christians experience suffering like everyone else. No better illustration of this principle can be found in the Bible than the Book of Job.

Satan complained to God that Job, a righteous man, served God only because his life was relatively free of suffering. A wager was made and the course of Job’s suffering increased. With the increased suffering came Job’s increased questions and struggles with God. His demand for a hearing concerning his questions grew to such a tempo that God deepened Job’s suffering by bringing his soul low with humility. In that suffering, Job found that his deepest desire was not for relief, restitution of his losses, or a return of his reputation. He found what he wanted more than anything in the midst of his suffering was the presence of God. Suffering awakened him to a deeper desire for God.

## THE GROANING OF GOD

Suffering is not merely earthly and human; it is also divine. God groans. Paul described it this way: “The Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered” (Rom. 8:26). Other religions cannot fathom the concept of an all-powerful God suffering on behalf of His people-suffering when they suffer, feeling their pain. God came to earth in the person of Christ in order to understand humanity and, ultimately, to die an agonizing death for us.

God’s suffering reveals the path to glory. Jesus bore the full and complete penalty of sin and suffered judgment so God’s children

would never be separated from His love. Jesus' suffering became the blood offering for sin that cleanses and heals. It is the redemptive power of suffering that allows us to glimpse an incredibly small taste of what Jesus suffered on the Cross while bearing our sin. It also strips us of the illusion of autonomy and the deceit of self-righteousness. "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs-heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together" (Rom. 8:16, 17).

**SUFFERING AND GLORY**

Despite its painfulness, suffering can be very valuable. Suffering clarifies what the heart truly worships, especially when the pain is unexplained and unabated. Do we worship the idea of deliverance, or the Deliverer? Suffering also purifies the heart by deepening the desire for the day when all tears will be wiped away. Our growing discontent with the sin and evil in this world increases our hopefulness for heaven. Suffering not only clarifies and purifies, but it also motivates the heart to action. If we see a child cry, we offer tenderness. If we see the wounds of a victim, we offer solace. Human suffering arouses anger, invigorates action and, as a result, enables us to push back some of the darkness of the Fall. Suffering humanizes the heart and increases our hunger for God.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of suffering include:

- Psalm 119:67, 71, 75
- Lamentations 3:20-25
- Acts 5:41
- Romans 8:18, 28, 29
- 1 Corinthians 12:26

- 2 Corinthians 1:3-5; 4:7-10; 12:7-10
- Philippians 1:29; 4:19
- 2 Timothy 2:8-13; 3:10-12
- Hebrews 4:15, 16
- James 1:2-4; 5:13
- 1 Peter 1:6-9; 2:19-25; 3:14, 17, 18; 4:16; 5:10

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on suffering at 1 Peter 4:12-16. See also the personality profile of Job's Suffering.

**JOB: I WOULD PLEAD WITH GOD**

**10** “My soul loathes my life;

I will give free course to my
complaint,
I will speak in the bitterness of my soul.

2 I will say to God, ‘Do not condemn me;
Show me why You contend with me.
3 *Does it* seem good to You that You
should oppress,
That You should despise the work of
Your hands,
And smile on the counsel of the wicked?
4 Do You have eyes of flesh?
Or do You see as man sees?
5 *Are* Your days like the days of a mortal
man?
*Are* Your years like the days of a mighty
man,
6 That You should seek for my iniquity
And search out my sin,
7 Although You know that I am not
wicked,
And *there is* no one who can deliver
from Your hand?
8 ‘Your hands have made me and
fashioned me,
An intricate unity;
Yet You would destroy me.
9 Remember, I pray, that You have made
me like clay.
And will You turn me into dust again?
10 Did You not pour me out like milk,

And curdle me like cheese,
11 Clothe me with skin and flesh,
And knit me together with bones and
sinews?
12 You have granted me life and favor,
And Your care has preserved my spirit.
13 ‘And these *things* You have hidden in
Your heart;
I know that this *was* with You:
14 If I sin, then You mark me,
And will not acquit me of my iniquity.
15 If I am wicked, woe to me;
Even *if* I am righteous, I cannot lift up
my head.
*I am* full of disgrace;
See my misery!
16 If *my head* is exalted,
You hunt me like a fierce lion,
And again You show Yourself awesome
against me.
17 You renew Your witnesses against me,
And increase Your indignation toward me;
Changes and war are *ever* with me.
18 ‘Why then have You brought me out of
the womb?
Oh, that I had perished and no eye had
seen me!
19 I would have been as though I had not been.
I would have been carried from the
womb to the grave.
20 Are not my days few?
Cease! Leave me alone, that I may take a
little comfort,
21 Before I go *to the place from which*
I shall not return,

To the land of darkness and the shadow
of death,
22 A land as dark as darkness *itself*,
As the shadow of death, without any
order,
*Where* even the light *is* like darkness.’ ”

## ZOPHAR URGES JOB TO REPENT

**11** Then Zophar the Naamathite answered and said:

2 “Should not the multitude of words be answered?
And should a man full of talk be vindicated?
3 Should your empty talk make men hold their peace?
And when you mock, should no one rebuke you?
4 For you have said, ‘My doctrine *is* pure,
And I am clean in your eyes.’
5 But oh, that God would speak,
And open His lips against you,
6 That He would show you the secrets of wisdom!
For *they would* double *your* prudence.
Know therefore that God exacts from you
*Less* than your iniquity *deserves.*
7 “Can you search out the deep things of God?
Can you find out the limits of the Almighty?
8 *They are* higher than heaven- what can you do?
Deeper than Sheol- what can you know?
9 Their measure *is* longer than the earth
And broader than the sea.
10 “If He passes by, imprisons, and gathers *to judgment,*

Then who can hinder Him?
11 For He knows deceitful men;
He sees wickedness also.
Will He not then consider *it?*
12 For an empty-headed man will be wise,
When a wild donkey's colt is born a man.
13 "If you would prepare your heart,
And stretch out your hands toward Him;
14 If iniquity *were* in your hand, *and you*
put it far away,
And would not let wickedness dwell in
your tents;
15 Then surely you could lift up your face
without spot;
Yes, you could be steadfast, and not
fear;
16 Because you would forget *your* misery,
And remember *it* as waters *that have*
passed away,
17 And *your* life would be brighter than
noonday.
*Though* you were dark, you would be
like the morning.
18 And you would be secure, because there
is hope;
Yes, you would dig *around you, and* take
your rest in safety.
19 You would also lie down, and no one
would make *you* afraid;
*Yes,* many would court your favor.
20 But the eyes of the wicked will fail,
And they shall not escape,
And their hope-loss of life!"

## JOB ANSWERS HIS CRITICS

**12** Then Job answered and said:

2 “No doubt you *are* the people,
And wisdom will die with you!
3 But I have understanding as well as you;
I *am* not inferior to you.
Indeed, who does not *know* such things
as these?
4 “I am one mocked by his friends,
Who called on God, and He answered
him,
The just and blameless *who is* ridiculed.
5 A lamp[a] is despised in the thought of
one who is at ease;
*It is* made ready for those whose feet
slip.
6 The tents of robbers prosper,
And those who provoke God are
secure-
In what God provides by His hand.
7 “But now ask the beasts, and they will
teach you;
And the birds of the air, and they will tell you;
8 Or speak to the earth, and it will teach
you;
And the fish of the sea will explain to you.
9 Who among all these does not know
That the hand of the LORD has done this,
10 In whose hand *is* the life of every living
thing,
And the breath of all mankind?
11 Does not the ear test words
And the mouth taste its food?

12 Wisdom *is* with aged men,
And with length of days, understanding.
13 “With Him *are* wisdom and strength,
He has counsel and understanding.
14 If He breaks *a thing* down, it cannot be
rebuilt;
*If* He imprisons a man, there can be no
release.
15 If He withholds the waters, they dry up;
*If* He sends them out, they overwhelm
the earth.
16 With Him *are* strength and prudence.
The deceived and the deceiver *are* His.
17 He leads counselors away plundered,
And makes fools of the judges.
18 He loosens the bonds of kings,
And binds their waist with a belt.
19 He leads princes[a] away plundered,
And overthrows the mighty.
20 He deprives the trusted ones of speech,
And takes away the discernment of the
elders.
21 He pours contempt on princes,
And disarms the mighty.
22 He uncovers deep things out of
darkness,
And brings the shadow of death to light.
23 He makes nations great, and destroys them;
He enlarges nations, and guides
them.
24 He takes away the understanding[a] of the
chiefs of the people of the earth,
And makes them wander in a pathless wilderness.
25 They grope in the dark without light,

And He makes them stagger like a drunken *man.*

**13** “Behold, my eye has seen all *this,*
My ear has heard and understood it.
2 What you know, I also know;
I *am* not inferior to you.
3 But I would speak to the Almighty,
And I desire to reason with God.
4 But you forgers of lies,
You *are* all worthless physicians.
5 Oh, that you would be silent,
And it would be your wisdom!
6 Now hear my reasoning,
And heed the pleadings of my lips.
7 Will you speak wickedly for God,
And talk deceitfully for Him?
8 Will you show partiality for Him?
Will you contend for God?
9 Will it be well when He searches you out?
Or can you mock Him as one mocks a man?
10 He will surely rebuke you
If you secretly show partiality.
11 Will not His excellence make you afraid,
And the dread of Him fall upon you?
12 Your platitudes *are* proverbs of ashes,
Your defenses are defenses of clay.
13 “Hold your peace with me, and let me speak,
Then let come on me what *may!*
14 Why do I take my flesh in my teeth,
And put my life in my hands?
15 Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him.
Even so, I will defend my own ways before Him.

16 He also *shall* be my salvation,
For a hypocrite could not come before
Him.
17 Listen carefully to my speech,
And to my declaration with your ears.
18 See now, I have prepared *my* case,
I know that I shall be vindicated.
19 Who *is* he *who* will contend with me?
If now I hold my tongue, I perish.

## JOB'S DESPONDENT PRAYER

20 "Only two *things* do not do to me,
Then I will not hide myself from You:
21 Withdraw Your hand far from me,
And let not the dread of You make me
afraid.
22 Then call, and I will answer;
Or let me speak, then You respond to
me.
23 How many *are* my iniquities and sins?
Make me know my transgression and my
sin.
24 Why do You hide Your face,
And regard me as Your enemy?
25 Will You frighten a leaf driven to and
fro?
And will You pursue dry stubble?
26 For You write bitter things against me,
And make me inherit the iniquities of
my youth.
27 You put my feet in the stocks,
And watch closely all my paths.
You set a limit[a] for the soles of my feet.
28 "*Man*[a] decays like a rotten thing,

Like a garment that is moth-eaten.

**14** “Man *who is* born of woman Is of few days and full of trouble.
2 He comes forth like a flower and fades
away;
He flees like a shadow and does not
continue.
3 And do You open Your eyes on such a
one,
And bring me[a] to judgment with
Yourself?
4 Who can bring a clean *thing* out of an
unclean?
No one!
5 Since his days *are* determined,
The number of his months *is* with You;
You have appointed his limits, so that he
cannot pass.
6 Look away from him that he may rest,
Till like a hired man he finishes his day.
7 “For there is hope for a tree,
If it is cut down, that it will sprout
again,
And that its tender shoots will not cease.
8 Though its root may grow old in the earth,
And its stump may die in the ground,
9 *Yet* at the scent of water it will bud
And bring forth branches like a plant.
10 But man dies and is laid away;
Indeed he breathes his last
And where *is* he?
11 *As* water disappears from the sea,
And a river becomes parched and dries
up,
12 So man lies down and does not rise.
Till the heavens *are* no more,

They will not awake
Nor be roused from their sleep.
13 “Oh, that You would hide me in the
grave,
That You would conceal me until Your
wrath is past,
That You would appoint me a set time,
and remember me!
14 If a man dies, shall he live *again?*
All the days of my hard service
I will wait,
Till my change comes.
15 You shall call, and I will answer You;
You shall desire the work of Your hands.
16 For now You number my steps,
But do not watch over my sin.
17 My transgression *is* sealed up in a bag,
And You cover[a] my iniquity.
18 “But *as* a mountain falls *and* crumbles
away,
And *as* a rock is moved from its place;
19 *As* water wears away stones,
*And as* torrents wash away the soil of
the earth;
So You destroy the hope of man.
20 You prevail forever against him, and he
passes on;
You change his countenance and send
him away.
21 His sons come to honor, and he does not
know *it;*
They are brought low, and he does not
perceive *it.*
22 But his flesh will be in pain over it,
And his soul will mourn over it.”

## ELIPHAZ ACCUSES JOB OF FOLLY

**15** Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered
and said:

2 “Should a wise man answer with empty
knowledge,
And fill himself with the east wind?
3 Should he reason with unprofitable talk,
Or by speeches with which he can do no
good?
4 Yes, you cast off fear,
And restrain prayer before God.
5 For your iniquity teaches your mouth,
And you choose the tongue of the crafty.
6 Your own mouth condemns you, and
not I;
Yes, your own lips testify against you.
7 “*Are* you the first man *who* was born?
Or were you made before the hills?
8 Have you heard the counsel of God?
Do you limit wisdom to yourself?
9 What do you know that we do
not know?
*What* do you understand that *is* not in us?
10 Both the gray-haired and the aged *are*
among us, Much older than your father.
11 *Are* the consolations of God too small for
you,
And the word *spoken* gently[a] with you?
12 Why does your heart carry you away,
And what do your eyes wink at,
13 That you turn your spirit against God,
And let *such* words go out of your
mouth?

14 “What *is* man, that he could be pure?
And *he who is* born of a woman, that he could be righteous?
15 If *God* puts no trust in His saints,
And the heavens are not pure in His sight,
16 How much less man, *who is* abominable and filthy,
Who drinks iniquity like water!
17 “I will tell you, hear me;
What I have seen I will declare,
18 What wise men have told,
Not hiding *anything received* from their fathers,
19 To whom alone the land was given,
And no alien passed among them:
20 The wicked man writhes with pain all *his* days,
And the number of years is hidden from the oppressor.
21 Dreadful sounds *are* in his ears;
In prosperity the destroyer comes upon him.
22 He does not believe that he will return from darkness,
For a sword is waiting for him.
23 He wanders about for bread, *saying,* ‘
Where *is it?*
’ He knows that a day of darkness is ready at his hand.
24 Trouble and anguish make him afraid;
They overpower him, like a king ready for battle.
25 For he stretches out his hand against God,
And acts defiantly against the Almighty,

26 Running stubbornly against Him
With his strong, embossed shield.
27 “Though he has covered his face with his fatness,
And made *his* waist heavy with fat,
28 He dwells in desolate cities,
In houses which no one inhabits,
Which are destined to become ruins.
29 He will not be rich,
Nor will his wealth continue,
Nor will his possessions overspread the earth.
30 He will not depart from darkness;
The flame will dry out his branches,
And by the breath of His mouth he will go away.
31 Let him not trust in futile *things,*
deceiving himself,
For futility will be his reward.
32 It will be accomplished before his time,
And his branch will not be green.
33 He will shake off his unripe grape like a vine,
And cast off his blossom like an olive tree.
34 For the company of hypocrites *will be* barren,
And fire will consume the tents of bribery.
35 They conceive trouble and bring forth futility;
Their womb prepares deceit.”

## SOUL NOTE

**Sincerely Wrong** *(15:17-26)* Job's friends attempted to help him with their advice. Had they listened more and talked less, however, they would have been more helpful. Eliphaz was convinced that Job was being disciplined by God for his sins. He thought Job was wicked because "the wicked man writhes with pain all his days" (15:20). Eliphaz was sincere, but he was wrong. People must be very careful about making assumptions regarding others' circumstances. Things are not always what they seem. It is often more helpful to empathize with a suffering friend than to try and rush in to explain his or her suffering. **Topic: Suffering**

## JOB REPROACHES HIS PITILESS FRIENDS

**16** Then Job answered and said:

2 “I have heard many such things;
Miserable comforters *are* you all!
3 Shall words of wind have an end?
Or what provokes you that you answer?
4 I also could speak as you *do,*
If your soul were in my soul’s place.
I could heap up words against you,
And shake my head at you;
5 *But* I would strengthen you with my
mouth,
And the comfort of my lips would relieve
*your grief.*
6 “Though I speak, my grief is not relieved;
And *if* I remain silent, how am I eased?
7 But now He has worn me out;
You have made desolate all my
company.
8 You have shriveled me up,
And it is a witness *against me;*
My leanness rises up against me
*And* bears witness to my face.
9 He tears *me* in His wrath, and hates me;
He gnashes at me with His teeth;
My adversary sharpens His gaze on me.
10 They gape at me with their mouth,
They strike me reproachfully on the
cheek,
They gather together against me.
11 God has delivered me to the ungodly,
And turned me over to the hands of the
wicked.

12 I was at ease, but He has shattered me;
He also has taken *me* by my neck, and
shaken me to pieces;
He has set me up for His target,
13 His archers surround me.
He pierces my heart[a] and does not pity;
He pours out my gall on the ground.
14 He breaks me with wound upon
wound;
He runs at me like a warrior.[a]
15 “I have sewn sackcloth over my skin,
And laid my head[a] in the dust.
16 My face is flushed from weeping,
And on my eyelids *is* the shadow of
death;
17 Although no violence *is* in my hands,
And my prayer *is* pure.
18 “O earth, do not cover my blood,
And let my cry have no *resting* place!
19 Surely even now my witness *is* in
heaven,
And my evidence *is* on high.
20 My friends scorn me;
My eyes pour out *tears* to God.
21 Oh, that one might plead for a man with God,
As a man *pleads* for his neighbor!
22 For when a few years are finished,
I shall go the way of no return.

**JOB PRAYS FOR RELIEF**

**17** “My spirit is broken,
My days are extinguished,
The grave *is ready* for me.

2 *Are* not mockers with me?
And does not my eye dwell on their provocation?
3 “Now put down a pledge for me with Yourself.
Who *is* he *who* will shake hands with me?
4 For You have hidden their heart from understanding;
Therefore You will not exalt *them.*
5 He who speaks flattery to *his* friends,
Even the eyes of his children will fail.
6 “But He has made me a byword of the people,
And I have become one in whose face men spit.
7 My eye has also grown dim because of sorrow,
And all my members *are* like shadows.
8 Upright *men* are astonished at this,
And the innocent stirs himself up against the hypocrite.
9 Yet the righteous will hold to his way,
And he who has clean hands will be stronger and stronger.
10 “But please, come back again, all of you,[a]
For I shall not find *one* wise *man* among you.

11 My days are past, My purposes are broken off,
*Even* the thoughts of my heart.
12 They change the night into day;
‘ The light *is* near,’ *they say,* in the face of
darkness.
13 If I wait *for* the grave *as* my house,
If I make my bed in the darkness,
14 If I say to corruption, ‘You *are* my
father,’
And to the worm, ‘You *are* my mother
and my sister,’
15 Where then *is* my hope?
As for my hope, who can see it?
16 *Will* they go down to the gates of Sheol?
Shall *we have* rest together in the dust?”

## BILDAD: THE WICKED ARE PUNISHED

**18** Then Bildad the Shuhite answered and said:

2 “How long *till* you put an end to words?
Gain understanding, and afterward we
will speak.
3 Why are we counted as beasts,
*And* regarded as stupid in your sight?
4 You who tear yourself in anger,
Shall the earth be forsaken for you?
Or shall the rock be removed from its
place?
5 “The light of the wicked indeed goes out,
And the flame of his fire does not shine.
6 The light is dark in his tent,
And his lamp beside him is put out.
7 The steps of his strength are shortened,
And his own counsel casts him down.
8 For he is cast into a net by his own feet,
And he walks into a snare.
9 The net takes *him* by the heel,
*And* a snare lays hold of him.
10 A noose *is* hidden for him on the ground,
And a trap for him in the road.
11 Terrors frighten him on every side,
And drive him to his feet.
12 His strength is starved,
And destruction *is* ready at his side.
13 It devours patches of his skin;
The firstborn of death devours his limbs.
14 He is uprooted from the shelter of his
tent,
And they parade him before the king of
terrors.

15 They dwell in his tent *who are* none of his;
Brimstone is scattered on his dwelling.
16 His roots are dried out below,
And his branch withers above.
17 The memory of him perishes from the earth,
And he has no name among the renowned.[a]
18 He is driven from light into darkness,
And chased out of the world.
19 He has neither son nor posterity among his people,
Nor any remaining in his dwellings.
20 Those in the west are astonished at his day,
As those in the east are frightened.
21 Surely such *are* the dwellings of the wicked,
And this *is* the place *of him who* does not know God.”

## JOB TRUSTS IN HIS REDEEMER

**19** Then Job answered and said:

2 “How long will you torment my soul,
And break me in pieces with words?
3 These ten times you have reproached me;
You are not ashamed *that* you have wronged me.[a]
4 And if indeed I have erred,
My error remains with me.
5 If indeed you exalt *yourselves* against me,
And plead my disgrace against me,
6 Know then that God has wronged me,
And has surrounded me with His net.
7 “If I cry out concerning wrong, I am not heard.
If I cry aloud, *there is* no justice.
8 He has fenced up my way, so that I cannot pass;
And He has set darkness in my paths.
9 He has stripped me of my glory,
And taken the crown *from* my head.
10 He breaks me down on every side,
And I am gone;
My hope He has uprooted like a tree.
11 He has also kindled His wrath against me,
And He counts me as *one of* His enemies.
12 His troops come together
And build up their road against me;
They encamp all around my tent.

13 “He has removed my brothers far from
me,
And my acquaintances are completely
estranged from me.
14 My relatives have failed,
And my close friends have forgotten me.
15 Those who dwell in my house, and my
maidservants,
Count me as a stranger;
I am an alien in their sight.
16 I call my servant, but he gives no
answer;
I beg him with my mouth.
17 My breath is offensive to my wife,
And I am repulsive to the children of my
own body.
18 Even young children despise me;
I arise, and they speak against me.
19 All my close friends abhor me,
And those whom I love have turned
against me.
20 My bone clings to my skin and to my
flesh,
And I have escaped by the skin of my
teeth.
21 “Have pity on me, have pity on me, O you
my friends,
For the hand of God has struck me!
22 Why do you persecute me as God *does*,
And are not satisfied with my flesh?
23 “Oh, that my words were written!
Oh, that they were inscribed in a book!
24 That they were engraved on a rock
With an iron pen and lead, forever!

25 For I know *that* my Redeemer lives,
And He shall stand at last on the earth;
26 And after my skin is destroyed, this
*I know*,
That in my flesh I shall see God,
27 Whom I shall see for myself,
And my eyes shall behold, and not
another.
*How* my heart yearns within me!
28 If you should say, ‘How shall we
persecute him?’-
Since the root of the matter is found in
me,
29 Be afraid of the sword for yourselves;
For wrath *brings* the punishment of the
sword,
That you may know *there is* a
judgment.”

## ZOPHAR'S SERMON ON THE WICKED MAN

**20** Then Zophar the Naamathite answered
and said:

2 "Therefore my anxious thoughts make me
answer,
Because of the turmoil within me.
3 I have heard the rebuke that reproaches
me,
And the spirit of my understanding
causes me to answer.
4 "Do you *not* know this of old,
Since man was placed on earth,
5 That the triumphing of the wicked is
short,
And the joy of the hypocrite is *but* for a
moment?
6 Though his haughtiness mounts up to
the heavens,
And his head reaches to the clouds,
7 *Yet* he will perish forever like his own
refuse;
Those who have seen him will say,
'Where is he?'
8 He will fly away like a dream, and not
be found;
Yes, he will be chased away like a vision
of the night.
9 The eye *that* saw him will *see him* no
more,
Nor will his place behold him anymore.
10 His children will seek the favor of the
poor,
And his hands will restore his wealth.

11 His bones are full of his youthful vigor,
But it will lie down with him in the
dust.
12 “Though evil is sweet in his mouth,
*And* he hides it under his tongue,
13 *Though* he spares it and does not forsake
it,
But still keeps it in his mouth,
14 *Yet* his food in his stomach turns sour;
It becomes cobra venom within him.
15 He swallows down riches
And vomits them up again;
God casts them out of his belly.
16 He will suck the poison of cobras;
The viper’s tongue will slay him.
17 He will not see the streams,
The rivers flowing with honey and
cream.
18 He will restore that for which he
labored,
And will not swallow *it* down;
From the proceeds of business
He will get no enjoyment.
19 For he has oppressed *and* forsaken the
poor,
He has violently seized a house which
he did not build.
20 “Because he knows no quietness in his
heart,[a]
He will not save anything he desires.
21 Nothing is left for him to eat;
Therefore his well-being will not last.
22 In his self-sufficiency he will be in
distress;

Every hand of misery will come against
him.
23 *When* he is about to fill his stomach,
*God* will cast on him the fury of His
wrath, And will rain *it* on him while he is
eating.
24 He will flee from the iron weapon;
A bronze bow will pierce him through.
25 It is drawn, and comes out of the
body;
Yes, the glittering *point comes* out of his
gall.
Terrors *come* upon him;
26 Total darkness *is* reserved for his
treasures.
An unfanned fire will consume him;
It shall go ill with him who is left in his
tent.
27 The heavens will reveal his iniquity,
And the earth will rise up against him.
28 The increase of his house will depart,
*And his goods* will flow away in the day
of His wrath.
29 This *is* the portion from God for a
wicked man,
The heritage appointed to him by God.”

## JOB'S ISCOURSE ON THE WICKED

**21** Then Job answered and said:

2 "Listen carefully to my speech,
And let this be your consolation.
3 Bear with me that I may speak,
And after I have spoken, keep mocking.
4 "As for me, *is* my complaint against man?
And if *it were,* why should I not be
impatient?
5 Look at me and be astonished;
Put *your* hand over *your* mouth.
6 Even when I remember I am terrified,
And trembling takes hold of my flesh.
7 Why do the wicked live *and* become old,
Yes, become mighty in power?
8 Their descendants are established with
them in their sight,
And their offspring before their eyes.
9 Their houses *are* safe from fear,
Neither *is* the rod of God upon them.
10 Their bull breeds without failure;
Their cow calves without miscarriage.
11 They send forth their little ones like a
flock,
And their children dance.
12 They sing to the tambourine and harp,
And rejoice to the sound of the flute.
13 They spend their days in wealth,
And in a moment go down to the grave.[a]
14 Yet they say to God, 'Depart from us,
For we do not desire the knowledge of
Your ways.
15 Who *is* the Almighty, that we should

serve Him?
And what profit do we have if we pray
to Him?’
16 Indeed their prosperity *is* not in
their hand;
The counsel of the wicked is far from me.
17 “How often is the lamp of the wicked put
out?
*How often* does their destruction come
upon them,
The sorrows *God* distributes in His
anger?
18 They are like straw before the wind,
And like chaff that a storm carries away.
19 *They say*, ‘God lays up one’s[a] iniquity for
his children’;
Let Him recompense him, that he may
know *it*.
20 Let his eyes see his destruction,
And let him drink of the wrath of the
Almighty.
21 For what does he care about his
household after him,
When the number of his months is cut
in half?
22 “Can *anyone* teach God knowledge,
Since He judges those on high?
23 One dies in his full strength,
Being wholly at ease and secure;
24 His pails[a] are full of milk,
And the marrow of his bones is moist.
25 Another man dies in the bitterness of his
soul,
Never having eaten with pleasure.
26 They lie down alike in the dust,

And worms cover them.
27 “Look, I know your thoughts,
And the schemes *with which* you would
wrong me.
28 For you say,
‘Where *is* the house of the prince?
And where *is* the tent,[a]
The dwelling place of the wicked?’
29 Have you not asked those who travel the
road?
And do you not know their signs?
30 For the wicked are reserved for the day
of doom;
They shall be brought out on the day of
wrath.
31 Who condemns his way to his face?
And who repays him *for what* he has
done?
32 Yet he shall be brought to the grave,
And a vigil kept over the tomb.
33 The clods of the valley shall be sweet to
him;
Everyone shall follow him,
As countless *have gone* before
him.
34 How then can you comfort me with
empty words,
Since falsehood remains in your
answers?”

**SOUL NOTE**

**Difficult Times** *(21:22-26)* Job did not understand why he was suffering so terribly. He had been "blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil" (1:1). His words here reveal the depth of his pain and the bitterness rising in his heart. Fortunately, Job maintained his trust in God. How we respond to struggles defines our attitude toward God. We can become bitter, or we can press on in faith, knowing that God will not subject us to more than we can handle. We should continue to trust God, no matter what. He is faithful and will see us through any crisis. **Topic: Bitterness**

# BITTERNESS

## JONI EARECKSON TADA

## (Job 21:22-26)

**H**ardships press us up against God. It is a universal truth we all learned in the old Sunday school song, "Jesus loves me, this I know. . . . Little ones to Him belong. They are weak, but He is strong." God always seems bigger to those who need Him the most; God always seems stronger to those who feel weakest; God is always most needed by those most in need. And suffering is the tool God often uses to help us need Him more.

Read Job's story. The story of his suffering, recorded in the Old Testament book of Job, is not a story about the suffering caused by torn ligaments on a football field. It is not a story of the suffering caused by a polite refusal letter for financial aid to Princeton. It is not even about the suffering of the heartache over a returned engagement

ring. Instead, Job's is a story of suffering stalking a person, tearing him down, and ripping into his sanity. This is affliction spinning out of control. "Suffering like Job's would never draw me to God," we think. "It would only push me away from Him." God Himself suffered too, however.

The Son of God Himself crossed the chasm between divinity and humanity and walked onto earth. His goal was to endure the thrashing due His creatures for their rebellion against His Father, Jehovah. To this day, He requires suffering of all His followers, some of it intense- but only for their good, and never equaling what He Himself passed through.

## CALLED TO SUFFER

Despite Christ's compassionate death for our sins, God's plan calls for all Christians to suffer. To encourage us, He may write some light moments into the script of our lives, but without fail, some scenes are going to break our hearts. Some of our favorite characters will die. And the movie may end earlier than we wish.

God screens the trials that come into our lives, allowing only those that accomplish His good plan. He takes no joy in human agony. These trials are not evenly distributed from person to person. This can discourage us, for we are not privy to His reasons. But in God's wisdom and love, every trial in a Christian's life is ordained from eternity past, custom-made for that believer's eternal good- even when it does not seem like it.

The core of His plan is to rescue us from our sin. Our pain, poverty, and broken hearts are not His ultimate focus. He cares about them, but they are merely symptoms of the real problem. God cares most, not about making us comfortable, but about teaching us to hate our sins, grow up spiritually, and love Him. To do this, He gives us salvation's benefits only gradually and sometimes painfully (Acts 9:16; 2 Cor. 1:5; Phil. 1:29).

## FINDING CONTENTMENT

Overcoming bitterness happens when we gain contentment. This does not mean losing sorrow or saying good-bye to discomfort. Contentment means sacrificing itchy cravings to gain a settled soul. We give up one thing for another. It is hard. Hard, but sweet. We are "sorrowful, yet always rejoicing" (2 Cor. 6:10).

When it comes to contentment, God must be our aim. Whether it is wayward thought, bad-mouthing our circumstances, or comparing ourselves with others whose lives are easier, the battle involves more than eschewing evil; it involves pursuing God. Overcoming bitterness only happens when we are overcome with God.

I was driving at night recently in my handicap-equipped van when everything went dead: the engine, the lights, the brakes, and the steering. It was a very close call! My vulnerability shook me for a moment. I've always leaned hard on God's protection for the "helpless," but in my most helpless moment, my confidence was shaken.

I learned that fear and disappointment are real. They turn our focus away from God and onto ourselves. We question His love and concern for us and quickly plunge into bitterness and despair. The beginning of our Christian life may have been exhilarating. Spiritual adrenaline was pumped up. But now, we feel bitter, confused, and even angry. God has not failed us, however. We have just missed the lesson He has for us. Our life is a straight line to heaven. We need not be sidetracked by a few bumps in the road.

## WHEN GOD SAYS "NO"

I remember those first terrible nights-paralyzed on a Stryker frame in the geriatric ward of a state institution. Scared, bitter, confused. A friend read the story of Jesus healing the lame man at the pool of Bethesda in John 5. "Oh, God, will you please heal me?" I whispered,

crying in the night.

It was more than thirty years later when I visited the Pool of Bethesda for the first time. I looked at the ruins of the five colonnades and the steps leading down to the water. I look around in my mind's eye and see hundreds of paralyzed people. Tears well up in my eyes. Jesus answered my prayer-He said, "No."

And I'm glad. A "no" answer has driven a lot of sin from my life, strengthened my commitment to Christ, and forced me to depend on His grace. It has stretched my hope, increased my faith, and strengthened my character. Now, I can thank Him-for the wiser choice, the better answer, the richer path. That's how we overcome bitterness. We focus on Him and let healing happen on the inside.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of bitterness include:

- Genesis 27:41
- Esther 5:9
- Proverbs 14:10
- Ecclesiastes 7:9
- Matthew 6:14, 15
- Acts 8:23
- Ephesians 4:26, 31, 32
- James 3:14

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note about bitterness at Hebrews 12:12-29. See also the personality profile of Saul and the Poison of Bitter Fruit.

## ELIPHAZ ACCUSES JOB OF WICKEDNESS

**22** Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said:

2 “Can a man be profitable to God,
Though he who is wise may be
profitable to himself?
3 *Is it* any pleasure to the Almighty that
you are righteous?
Or *is it* gain *to Him* that you make your
ways blameless?
4 “Is it because of your fear of Him that He
corrects you,
And enters into judgment with you?
5 *Is* not your wickedness great,
And your iniquity without end?
6 For you have taken pledges from your
brother for no reason,
And stripped the naked of their clothing.
7 You have not given the weary water to
drink, And you have withheld bread from the
hungry.
8 But the mighty man possessed the land,
And the honorable man dwelt in it.
9 You have sent widows away empty,
And the strength of the fatherless was
crushed.
10 Therefore snares *are* all around you,
And sudden fear troubles you,
11 Or darkness *so that* you cannot see;
And an abundance of water covers you.
12 “Is not God in the height of heaven?
And see the highest stars, how lofty they
are!
13 And you say, ‘What does God know?

Can He judge through the deep
darkness?
14 Thick clouds cover Him, so that He
cannot see,
And He walks above the circle of
heaven.’
15 Will you keep to the old way
Which wicked men have trod,
16 Who were cut down before their time,
Whose foundations were swept away by
a flood?
17 They said to God, ‘Depart from us!
What can the Almighty do to them?’[a]
18 Yet He filled their houses with good
*things;*
But the counsel of the wicked is far from
me.
19 “The righteous see *it* and are glad,
And the innocent
laugh at them:
20 ‘Surely our adversaries[a] are cut down,
And the fire consumes their remnant.’

> “Now acquaint yourself with Him, and be at peace;
> thereby good will come to you.”
> JOB 22:21

21 “Now acquaint yourself with Him, and be
at peace;
Thereby good will come to you.
22 Receive, please, instruction from His
mouth,
And lay up His words in your heart.
23 If you return to the Almighty, you will
be built up;

You will remove iniquity far from your
tents.
24 Then you will lay your gold in the
dust,
And the *gold* of Ophir among the stones
of the brooks.
25 Yes, the Almighty will be your gold[a]
And your precious silver;
26 For then you will have your delight in
the Almighty,
And lift up your face to God.
27 You will make your prayer to Him,
He will hear you,
And you will pay your vows.
28 You will also declare a thing,
And it will be established for you;
So light will shine on your ways.
29 When they cast *you* down, and you say,
‘Exaltation *will come!*
’
Then He will save the humble *person.*
30 He will *even* deliver one who is not
innocent;
Yes, he will be delivered by the purity of
your hands.”

## JOB PROCLAIMS GOD'S RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENTS

**23** Then Job answered and said:

2 "Even today my complaint is bitter;
My[a] hand is listless because of my
groaning.
3 Oh, that I knew where I might find Him,
*That* I might come to His seat!
4 I would present *my* case before Him,
And fill my mouth with arguments.
5 I would know the words *which*
He would answer me,
And understand what He would say to me.
6 Would He contend with me in His great power?
No! But He would take *note* of me.
7 There the upright could reason with
Him,
And I would be delivered forever from
my Judge.
8 "Look, I go forward, but He is not *there*,
And backward, but I cannot perceive
Him;
9 When He works on the left hand,
I cannot behold *Him;*
When He turns to the right hand,
I cannot see *Him.*
10 But He knows the way that I take;
*When* He has tested me,
I shall come forth as gold.
11 My foot has held fast to His steps;
I have kept His way and not turned aside.
12 I have not departed from the
commandment of His lips;
I have treasured the words of His mouth

More than my necessary *food.*
13 “But He *is* unique, and who can make
Him change?
And *whatever* His soul desires, *that* He
does.
14 For He performs *what is* appointed for
me,
And many such *things are* with Him.
15 Therefore I am terrified at His presence;
When I consider *this,*
I am afraid of Him.
16 For God made my heart weak,
And the Almighty terrifies me;
17 Because I was not cut off from the
presence of darkness,
And He did *not* hide deep darkness from
my face.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Gaining Understanding** *(23:13-17)* Job admitted that he was afraid of God because God had allowed such darkness into his life (23:16). God is not the author of evil, but He may, at times, allow the press of evil into our lives. God is sovereign, so nothing happens without His consent. In times of suffering, our emotions roll and we struggle with God. But that’s when we can begin to understand God’s power, sovereignty, and love. Faith forged in the crucible of suffering comes through refined and strengthened. **Topic: Emotional Life**

## JOB COMPLAINS OF VIOLENCE ON THE EARTH

**24** “*Since* times are not hidden from the Almighty,
Why do those who know Him see not
His days?

2 “*Some* remove landmarks;
They seize flocks violently and feed *on them;*
3 They drive away the donkey of the fatherless;
They take the widow’s ox as a pledge.
4 They push the needy off the road;
All the poor of the land are forced to hide.
5 Indeed, *like* wild donkeys in the desert,
They go out to their work, searching for food.
The wilderness *yields* food for them *and* for *their* children.
6 They gather their fodder in the field
And glean in the vineyard of the wicked.
7 They spend the night naked, without clothing,
And have no covering in the cold.
8 They are wet with the showers of the mountains,
And huddle around the rock for want of shelter.
9 “*Some* snatch the fatherless from the breast, And take a pledge from the poor.
10 They cause *the poor* to go naked, without clothing;
And they take away the sheaves from

the hungry.
11 They press out oil within their walls,
And tread winepresses, yet suffer thirst.
12 The dying groan in the city,
And the souls of the wounded cry out;
Yet God does not charge *them* with
wrong.
13 “There are those who rebel against the
light;
They do not know its ways
Nor abide in its paths.
14 The murderer rises with the light;
He kills the poor and needy;
And in the night he is like a thief.
15 The eye of the adulterer waits for the
twilight,
Saying, ‘No eye will see me’;
And he disguises *his* face.
16 In the dark they break into houses
Which they marked for themselves in
the daytime;
They do not know the light.
17 For the morning is the same to them as the
shadow of death;
If *someone* recognizes *them,*
*They are in* the terrors of the shadow of
death.
18 “They *should be* swift on the face of the
waters,
Their portion *should be* cursed in the
earth,
*So that* no *one would* turn into the way
of their vineyards.
19 As drought and heat consume the snow
waters,

*So* the grave[a] *consumes those who* have
sinned.
20 The womb *should* forget him,
The worm *should* feed sweetly on him;
He *should* be remembered no more,
And wickedness *should* be broken like a
tree.
21 For he preys on the barren *who* do not bear,
And does no good for the widow.
22 “But *God* draws the mighty away with His
power;
He rises up, but no *man* is sure of life.
23 He gives them security, and they rely *on
it;*
Yet His eyes *are* on their ways.
24 They are exalted for a little while,
Then they are gone.
They are brought low;
They are taken out of the way like all
*others;*
They dry out like the heads of grain.
25 “Now if *it is* not *so,* who will prove me a
liar,
And make my speech worth nothing?”

**BILDAD: HOW CAN MAN BE RIGHTEOUS?**

**25** Then Bildad the Shuhite answered and said:

2 “Dominion and fear *belong* to Him;
He makes peace in His high places.
3 Is there any number to His armies?
Upon whom does His light not rise?
4 How then can man be righteous before God?
Or how can he be pure *who is* born of a woman?
5 If even the moon does not shine,
And the stars are not pure in His sight,
6 How much less man, *who is* a maggot,
And a son of man, *who is* a worm?”

## JOB: MAN'S FRAILTY AND GOD'S MAJESTY

**26** But Job answered and said:

2 "How have you helped *him who is*
without power?
*How* have you saved the arm *that has*
no strength?
3 How have you counseled *one who has*
no wisdom?
And *how* have you declared sound
advice to many?
4 To whom have you uttered words?
And whose spirit came from you?
5 "The dead tremble,
Those under the waters and those
inhabiting them.
6 Sheol *is* naked before Him,
And Destruction has no covering.
7 He stretches out the north over empty
space;
*He* hangs the earth on nothing.
8 He binds up the water in His thick
clouds,
Yet the clouds are not broken under it.
9 He covers the face of *His* throne,
*And* spreads His cloud over it.
10 He drew a circular horizon on the face
of the waters,
At the boundary of light and darkness.
11 The pillars of heaven tremble,
And are astonished at His rebuke.
12 He stirs up the sea with His power,
And by His understanding He breaks up
the storm.

13 By His Spirit He adorned the heavens;
His hand pierced the fleeing serpent.
14 Indeed these *are* the mere edges of His ways,
And how small a whisper we hear of Him!
But the thunder of His power who can understand?”

**JOB MAINTAINS HIS INTEGRITY**

**27** Moreover Job continued his discourse, and said:

2 "*As* God lives, *who* has taken away my
justice,
And the Almighty, *who* has made my
soul bitter,
3 As long as my breath *is* in me,
And the breath of God in my nostrils,
4 My lips will not speak wickedness,
Nor my tongue utter deceit.
5 Far be it from me
That I should say you are right;
Till I die I will not put away my integrity
from me.
6 My righteousness I hold fast,
and will not let it go;
My heart shall not reproach *me* as long
as I live.
7 "May my enemy be like the wicked,
And he who rises up against me like the
unrighteous.
8 For what is the hope of the hypocrite,
Though he may gain *much,*
If God takes away his life?
9 Will God hear his cry
When trouble comes upon him?
10 Will he delight himself in the Almighty?
Will he always call on God?
11 "I will teach you about the hand of God;
What *is* with the Almighty I will not
conceal.
12 Surely all of you have seen *it;*
Why then do you behave with complete

nonsense?
13 “This is the portion of a wicked man with God,
And the heritage of oppressors, received from the Almighty:
14 If his children are multiplied, *it is* for the sword;
And his offspring shall not be satisfied with bread.
15 Those who survive him shall be buried in death,
And their[a] widows shall not weep,
16 Though he heaps up silver like dust,
And piles up clothing like clay-
17 He may pile *it* up, but the just will wear *it,*
And the innocent will divide the silver.
18 He builds his house like a moth,[a]
Like a booth *which* a watchman makes.
19 The rich man will lie down,
But not be gathered *up;*[a]
He opens his eyes,
And he *is* no more.
20 Terrors overtake him like a flood;
A tempest steals him away in the night.
21 The east wind carries him away, and he is gone;
It sweeps him out of his place.
22 It hurls against him and does not spare;
He flees desperately from its power.
23 *Men* shall clap their hands at him,
And shall hiss him out of his place.

## JOB'S DISCOURSE ON WISDOM

**28** "Surely there is a mine for silver,
And a place *where* gold is refined.
2 Iron is taken from the earth,
And copper *is* smelted *from* ore.
3 *Man* puts an end to darkness,
And searches every recess
For ore in the darkness and the shadow
of death.
4 He breaks open a shaft away from
people;
*In places* forgotten by feet
They hang far away from men;
They swing to and fro.
5 *As for* the earth, from it comes bread,
But underneath it is turned up as by fire;
6 Its stones *are* the source of sapphires,
And it contains gold dust.
7 *That* path no bird knows,
Nor has the falcon's eye seen it.
8 The proud lions[a] have not trodden it,
Nor has the fierce lion passed over it.
9 He puts his hand on the flint;
He overturns the mountains at the roots.
10 He cuts out channels in the rocks,
And his eye sees every precious thing.
11 He dams up the streams from trickling;
*What is* hidden he brings forth to light.
12 "But where can wisdom be found?
And where *is* the place of
understanding?
13 Man does not know its value,
Nor is it found in the land of the living.

14 The deep says, ‘*It is* not in me’;
And the sea says, ‘*It is* not with me.’
15 It cannot be purchased for gold,
Nor can silver be weighed *for* its price.
16 It cannot be valued in the gold of
Ophir,
In precious onyx or sapphire.
17 Neither gold nor crystal can equal it,
Nor can it be exchanged for jewelry of
fine gold.
18 No mention shall be made of coral or
quartz,
For the price of wisdom *is* above rubies.
19 The topaz of Ethiopia cannot equal it,
Nor can it be valued in pure gold.
20 “From where then does wisdom come?
And where *is* the place of understanding?
21 It is hidden from the eyes of all living,
And concealed from the birds of the air.
22 Destruction and Death say, ‘
We have heard a report about it with our
ears.’
23 God understands its way,
And He knows its place.
24 For He looks to the ends of the earth,
*And* sees under the whole heavens,
25 To establish a weight for the wind,
And apportion the waters by measure.
26 When He made a law for the rain,
And a path for the thunderbolt,
27 Then He saw *wisdom*[a] and declared it;
He prepared it, indeed, He searched it
out.
28 And to man He said,

‘Behold, the fear of the Lord,
that *is*
wisdom,
And to depart from evil *is*
understanding.’ ”

## JOB'S SUMMARY DEFENSE

**29** Job further continued his discourse, and said:

2 "Oh, that I were as *in* months past,
As *in* the days *when* God watched over me;
3 When His lamp shone upon my head,
*And when* by His light I walked *through* darkness;
4 Just as I was in the days of my prime,
When the friendly counsel of God *was* over my tent;
5 When the Almighty *was* yet with me,
*When* my children *were* around me;
6 When my steps were bathed with cream,[a]
And the rock poured out rivers of oil for me!
7 "When I went out to the gate by the city,
*When* I took my seat in the open square,
8 The young men saw me and hid,
And the aged arose *and* stood;
9 The princes refrained from talking,
And put *their* hand on their mouth;
10 The voice of nobles was hushed,
And their tongue stuck to the roof of their mouth.
11 When the ear heard, then it blessed me,
And when the eye saw, then it approved me;
12 Because I delivered the poor who cried out,
The fatherless and *the one who* had no helper.

13 The blessing of a perishing *man* came
upon me,
And I caused the widow's heart to sing
for joy.
14 I put on righteousness, and it clothed
me;
My justice *was* like a robe and a turban.
15 I *was* eyes to the blind,
And I *was* feet to the lame.
16 I *was* a father to the poor,
And I searched out the case *that* I did
not know.
17 I broke the fangs of the wicked,
And plucked the victim from his teeth.
18 "Then I said, 'I shall die in my nest,
And multiply *my* days as the sand.
19 My root *is* spread out to the waters,
And the dew lies all night on my branch.
20 My glory *is* fresh within me,
And my bow is renewed in my hand.'
21 "*Men* listened to me and waited,
And kept silence for my counsel.
22 After my words they did not speak again,
And my speech settled on them *as dew*.
23 They waited for me *as* for the rain,
And they opened their mouth wide *as*
for the spring rain.
24 *If* I mocked at them, they did not believe
*it*,
And the light of my countenance they
did not cast down.
25 I chose the way for them, and sat as
chief;
So I dwelt as a king in the army,

As one *who* comforts mourners.

**30** “But now they mock at me, *men*
younger than I,
Whose fathers I disdained to put with
the dogs of my flock.

2 Indeed, what *profit* is the strength of
their hands to me?
Their vigor has perished.
3 *They are* gaunt from want and famine,
Fleeing late to the wilderness, desolate
and waste,
4 Who pluck mallow by the bushes,
And broom tree roots *for* their food.
5 They were driven out from among *men*,
They shouted at them as *at* a thief.
6 *They had* to live in the clefts of the
valleys,
*In* caves of the earth and the rocks.
7 Among the bushes they brayed,
Under the nettles they nestled.
8 *They were* sons of fools,
Yes, sons of vile men;
They were scourged from the land.
9 “And now I am their taunting song;
Yes, I am their byword.
10 They abhor me, they keep far from me;
They do not hesitate to spit in my face.
11 Because He has loosed my[a] bowstring
and afflicted me,
They have cast off restraint before me.
12 At *my* right *hand* the rabble arises;
They push away my feet,
And they raise against me their ways of
destruction.
13 They break up my path,

They promote my calamity;
They have no helper.
14 They come as broad breakers;
Under the ruinous storm they roll along.
15 Terrors are turned upon me;
They pursue my honor as the wind,
And my prosperity has passed like a cloud.
16 “And now my soul is poured out because of my *plight;*
The days of affliction take hold of me.
17 My bones are pierced in me at night,
And my gnawing pains take no rest.
18 By great force my garment is disfigured;
It binds me about as the collar of my coat.
19 He has cast me into the mire,
And I have become like dust and ashes.
20 “I cry out to You, but You do not answer me;
I stand up, and You regard me.
21 *But* You have become cruel to me;
With the strength of Your hand You oppose me.
22 You lift me up to the wind and cause me to ride *on it;*
You spoil my success.
23 For I know *that* You will bring me *to* death,
And *to* the house appointed for all living.
24 “Surely He would not stretch out *His* hand against a heap of ruins,
If they cry out when He destroys *it.*
25 Have I not wept for him who was in

trouble?
Has *not* my soul grieved for the poor?
26 But when I looked for good, evil came *to me;*
And when I waited for light, then came darkness.
27 My heart is in turmoil and cannot rest;
Days of affliction confront me.
28 I go about mourning, but not in the sun;
I stand up in the assembly *and* cry out for help.
29 I am a brother of jackals,
And a companion of ostriches.
30 My skin grows black and falls from me;
My bones burn with fever.
31 My harp is *turned* to mourning,
And my flute to the voice of those who weep.

**31** “I have made a covenant with my
eyes;
Why then should I look upon a young
woman?

2 For what *is* the allotment of God from
above,
And the inheritance of the Almighty
from on high?
3 *Is* it not destruction for the wicked,
And disaster for the workers of
iniquity?
4 Does He not see my ways,
And count all my steps?
5 “If I have walked with falsehood,
Or if my foot has hastened to deceit,
6 Let me be weighed on honest scales,
That God may know my integrity.
7 If my step has turned from the way,
Or my heart walked after my eyes,
Or if any spot adheres to my hands,
8 *Then* let me sow, and another eat;
Yes, let my harvest be rooted out.
9 “If my heart has been enticed by a
woman,
Or *if* I have lurked at my neighbor’s
door,
10 *Then* let my wife grind for another,
And let others bow down over her.
11 For that *would be* wickedness;
Yes, it *would be* iniquity *deserving of*
judgment.
12 For that *would be* a fire *that* consumes to
destruction,
And would root out all my increase.

13 “If I have despised the cause of my male
or female servant
When they complained against me,
14 What then shall I do when God rises up?
When He punishes, how shall I answer
Him?
15 Did not He who made me in the womb
make them?
Did not the same One fashion us in the
womb?
16 “If I have kept the poor from *their* desire,
Or caused the eyes of the widow to fail,
17 Or eaten my morsel by myself,
So that the fatherless could not eat of it
18 (But from my youth I reared him as a father,
And from my mother’s womb I guided
*the widow*[a] );
19 If I have seen anyone perish for lack of
clothing,
Or any poor *man* without covering;
20 If his heart[a] has not blessed me,
And *if* he was *not* warmed with the
fleece of my sheep;
21 If I have raised my hand against the
fatherless,
When I saw I had help in the gate;
22 *Then* let my arm fall from my shoulder,
Let my arm be torn from the socket.
23 For destruction *from* God *is* a terror to
me,
And because of His magnificence I
cannot endure.
24 “If I have made gold my hope,
Or said to fine gold, ‘*You are*

my confidence’;
25 If I have rejoiced because my wealth *was* great,
And because my hand had gained much;
26 If I have observed the sun[a] when it shines,
Or the moon moving *in* brightness,
27 So that my heart has been secretly enticed,
And my mouth has kissed my hand;
28 This also *would be* an iniquity *deserving of* judgment,
For I would have denied God *who is* above.
29 “If I have rejoiced at the destruction of him who hated me,
Or lifted myself up when evil found him
30 (Indeed I have not allowed my mouth to sin
By asking for a curse on his soul);
31 If the men of my tent have not said, ‘
Who is there that has not been satisfied with his meat?’
32 (*But* no sojourner had to lodge in the street,
*For* I have opened my doors to the traveler[a] );
33 If I have covered my transgressions as Adam,
By hiding my iniquity in my bosom,
34 Because I feared the great multitude,
And dreaded the contempt of families,
So that I kept silence
*And* did not go out of the door-

35 Oh, that I had one to hear me!
Here is my mark.
*Oh*, that the Almighty would answer me,
*That* my Prosecutor had written a
book!
36 Surely I would carry it on my shoulder,
*And* bind it on me *like* a crown;
37 I would declare to Him the number of my
steps;
Like a prince I would approach Him.
38 “If my land cries out against me,
And its furrows weep together;
39 If I have eaten its fruit[a] without money,
Or caused its owners to lose their lives;
40 *Then* let thistles grow instead of wheat,
And weeds instead of barley.”
The words of Job are ended.

**ELIHU CONTRADICTS JOB'S FRIENDS**

**32** So these three men ceased answering Job, because he *was* righteous in
his own eyes. 2Then the wrath of Elihu, the son of Barachel the Buzite,
of the family of Ram, was aroused against Job; his wrath was aroused
because he justified himself rather than God. 3Also against his three friends
his wrath was aroused, because they had found no answer, and *yet* had
condemned Job.

4Now because they *were* years older than he, Elihu had waited to speak to
Job.[a] 5When Elihu saw that *there was* no answer in the mouth of these three
men, his wrath was aroused.

6So Elihu, the son of Barachel the Buzite, answered and said:

"I *am* young in years, and you *are* very
old;
Therefore I was afraid,
And dared not declare my opinion to
you.

7 I said, 'Age[a] should speak,
And multitude of years should teach
wisdom.'
8 But *there is* a spirit in man,
And the breath of the Almighty gives
him understanding.
9 Great men[a] are not *always* wise,
Nor do the aged *always* understand
justice.
10 "Therefore I say, 'Listen to me,
I also will declare my opinion.'
11 Indeed I waited for your words,
I listened to your reasonings, while you
searched out what to say.
12 I paid close attention to you;

And surely not one of you convinced
Job, *Or* answered his words-
13 Lest you say,
'We have found wisdom';
God will vanquish him, not man.
14 Now he has not directed *his* words
against me;
So I will not answer him with your
words.
15 "They are dismayed and answer no more;
Words escape them.
16 And I have waited, because they did not
speak,
Because they stood still *and* answered
no more.
17 I also will answer my part,
I too will declare my opinion.
18 For I am full of words;
The spirit within me compels me.
19 Indeed my belly *is* like wine *that* has no
vent;
It is ready to burst like new wineskins.
20 I will speak, that I may find relief;
I must open my lips and answer.
21 Let me not, I pray, show partiality to
anyone;
Nor let me flatter any man.
22 For I do not know how to flatter,
*Else* my Maker would soon take me
away.

**ELIHU CONTRADICTS JOB**

**33** “But please, Job, hear my speech, And listen to all my words.
2 Now, I open my mouth;
My tongue speaks in my mouth.
3 My words *come* from my upright heart;
My lips utter pure knowledge.
4 The Spirit of God has made me,
And the breath of the Almighty gives
me life.

> “The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life.”
> JOB 33:4

5 If you can answer me,
Set *your words* in order before me;
Take your stand.
6 Truly I *am* as your spokesman[a] before
God;
I also have been formed out of clay.
7 Surely no fear of me will terrify you,
Nor will my hand be heavy on you.
8 “Surely you have spoken in my
hearing,
And I have heard the sound of *your*
words, *saying,*
9 ‘ I *am* pure, without transgression;
I *am* innocent, and *there is* no iniquity in
me.
10 Yet He finds occasions against me,
He counts me as His enemy;
11 He puts my feet in the stocks,
He watches all my paths.’

12 “Look, *in* this you are not righteous.
I will answer you,
For God is greater than man.
13 Why do you contend with Him?
For He does not give an accounting of
any of His words.
14 For God may speak in one way, or in
another,
*Yet man* does not perceive it.
15 In a dream, in a vision of the night,
When deep sleep falls upon men,
While slumbering on their beds,
16 Then He opens the ears of men,
And seals their instruction.
17 In order to turn man *from his* deed,
And conceal pride from man,
18 He keeps back his soul from the Pit,
And his life from perishing by the
sword.
19 “*Man* is also chastened with pain on his
bed,
And with strong *pain* in many of his
bones,
20 So that his life abhors bread,
And his soul succulent food.
21 His flesh wastes away from sight,
And his bones stick out *which*
*once* were not seen.
22 Yes, his soul draws near the Pit,
And his life to the executioners.
23 “If there is a messenger for him,
A mediator, one among a thousand,
To show man His uprightness,
24 Then He is gracious to him, and says,

‘Deliver him from going down to the Pit;
I have found a ransom’;
25 His flesh shall be young like a child’s,
He shall return to the days of his youth.
26 He shall pray to God, and He will delight
in him,
He shall see His face with joy,
For He restores to man His
righteousness.
27 Then he looks at men and says, ‘
I have sinned, and perverted *what was*
right,
And it did not profit me.’
28 He will redeem his[a] soul from going
down to the Pit,
And his[b] life shall see the light.
29 “Behold, God works all these *things*,
Twice, *in fact*, three *times* with a man,
30 To bring back his soul from the Pit,
That he may be enlightened with the
light of life.
31 “Give ear, Job, listen to me;
Hold your peace, and I will speak.
32 If you have anything to say, answer me;
Speak, for I desire to justify you.
33 If not, listen to me;
Hold your peace, and I will teach you
wisdom.”

## ELIHU PROCLAIMS GOD'S JUSTICE

**34** Elihu further answered and said:

2 "Hear my words, you wise *men;*
Give ear to me, you who have
knowledge.
3 For the ear tests words
As the palate tastes food.
4 Let us choose justice for ourselves;
Let us know among ourselves what *is*
good.
5 "For Job has said, 'I am righteous,
But God has taken away my justice;
6 Should I lie concerning my right?
My wound *is* incurable, *though I am*
without transgression.'
7 What man *is* like Job,
*Who* drinks scorn like water,
8 Who goes in company with the workers
of iniquity,
And walks with wicked men?
9 For he has said, 'It profits a man nothing
That he should delight in God.'
10 "Therefore listen to me, you men of
understanding:
Far be it from God *to do* wickedness,
And *from* the Almighty to *commit*
iniquity.
11 For He repays man *according to* his work,
And makes man to find a reward according to
*his* way.

> "For He repays man according to his work, and makes man to find a reward according to his way."

JOB 34:11

12 Surely God will never do wickedly,
Nor will the Almighty pervert justice.
13 Who gave Him charge over the earth?
Or who appointed *Him over* the whole
world?
14 If He should set His heart on it,
*If* He should gather to Himself His Spirit
and His breath,
15 All flesh would perish together,
And man would return to dust.
16 "If *you have* understanding, hear this;
Listen to the sound of my words:
17 Should one who hates justice govern?
Will you condemn *Him who is* most
just?
18 *Is it fitting* to say to a king, '*You are*
worthless,'
*And* to nobles, '*You are* wicked'?
19 Yet He is not partial to princes,
Nor does He regard the rich more than
the poor;
For they *are* all the work of His hands.
20 In a moment they die, in the middle of
the night;
The people are shaken and pass away;
The mighty are taken away without a
hand.
21 "For His eyes *are* on the ways of man,
And He sees all his steps.
22 There is no darkness nor shadow of
death
Where the workers of iniquity may hide
themselves.

23 For He need not further consider a man,
That he should go before God in
judgment.
24 He breaks in pieces mighty men without
inquiry,
And sets others in their place.
25 Therefore He knows their works;
He overthrows *them* in the night,
And they are crushed.
26 He strikes them as wicked *men*
In the open sight of others,
27 Because they turned back from Him,
And would not consider any of
His ways,
28 So that they caused the cry of the poor
to come to Him;
For He hears the cry of the afflicted.
29 When He gives quietness, who then can
make trouble?
And when He hides *His* face, who then
can see Him,
Whether *it is* against a nation or a man
alone?-
30 That the hypocrite should not reign,
Lest the people be ensnared.
31 “For has *anyone* said to God, ‘
I have borne *chastening;*
I will offend no more;
32 Teach me *what* I do not see;
If I have done iniquity, I will do no
more’?
33 Should He repay *it* according to your
*terms*,
*Just* because you disavow it?
You must choose, and not I;

Therefore speak what you know.
34 “Men of understanding say to me,
Wise men who listen to me:
35 ‘Job speaks without knowledge,
His words *are* without wisdom.’
36 Oh, that Job were tried to the utmost,
Because *his* answers *are like* those of
wicked men!
37 For he adds rebellion to his sin;
He claps *his hands* among us,
And multiplies his words against God.”

**ELIHU CONDEMNS SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS**

**35** Moreover Elihu answered and said:

2 "Do you think this is right?
Do you say,
'My righteousness is more than God's'?
3 For you say,
'What advantage will it be to You?
What profit shall I have, more than *if* I had sinned?'
4 "I will answer you,
And your companions with you.
5 Look to the heavens and see;
And behold the clouds-
They are higher than you.
6 If you sin, what do you accomplish against Him?
Or, *if* your transgressions are multiplied, what do you do to Him?
7 If you are righteous, what do you give Him?
Or what does He receive from your hand?
8 Your wickedness affects a man such as you,
And your righteousness a son of man.
9 "Because of the multitude of oppressions they cry out;
They cry out for help because of the arm of the mighty.
10 But no one says, 'Where *is* God my Maker,
Who gives songs in the night,
11 Who teaches us more than the beasts of

the earth,
And makes us wiser than the birds of heaven?’
12 There they cry out, but He does not answer,
Because of the pride of evil men.
13 Surely God will not listen to empty *talk*,
Nor will the Almighty regard it.
14 Although you say you do not see Him,
*Yet* justice *is* before Him, and you must wait for Him.
15 And now, because He has not punished in His anger,
Nor taken much notice of folly,
16 Therefore Job opens his mouth in vain;
He multiplies words without knowledge.”

**ELIHU PROCLAIMS GOD'S GOODNESS**

**36** Elihu also proceeded and said:

2 "Bear with me a little, and I will show you
That *there are* yet words to speak on God's behalf.
3 I will fetch my knowledge from afar;
I will ascribe righteousness to my Maker.
4 For truly my words *are* not false;
One who is perfect in knowledge *is* with you.
5 "Behold, God *is* mighty, but despises *no one;*
*He is* mighty in strength of understanding.
6 He does not preserve the life of the wicked,
But gives justice to the oppressed.
7 He does not withdraw His eyes from the righteous;
But *they are* on the throne with kings,
For He has seated them forever,
And they are exalted.
8 And if *they are* bound in fetters,
Held in the cords of affliction,
9 Then He tells them their work and their transgressions-
That they have acted defiantly.
10 He also opens their ear to instruction,
And commands that they turn from iniquity.
11 If they obey and serve *Him,*
They shall spend their days in prosperity,

And their years in pleasures.
12 But if they do not obey,
They shall perish by the sword,
And they shall die without knowledge.[a]
13 “But the hypocrites in heart store up
wrath;
They do not cry for help when He binds
them.
14 They die in youth,
And their life *ends* among the perverted persons.[a]
15 He delivers the poor in their affliction,
And opens their ears in oppression.

> “Behold, God is great, and we do not know Him; nor can the number of His years be discovered.”
> JOB 36:26

16 “Indeed He would have brought you out
of dire distress,
*Into* a broad place where *there is* no restraint;
And what is set on your table *would be*
full of richness.
17 But you are filled with the judgment due
the wicked;
Judgment and justice take hold *of*
*you*.
18 Because *there is* wrath, *beware* lest He
take you away with *one* blow;
For a large ransom would not help you
avoid *it*.
19 Will your riches,
Or all the mighty forces,
Keep you from distress?
20 Do not desire the night,
When people are cut off in their place.

21 Take heed, do not turn to iniquity,
For you have chosen this rather than
affliction.
22 “Behold, God is exalted by His power;
Who teaches like Him?
23 Who has assigned Him His way,
Or who has said, ‘You have done
wrong’?

## ELIHU PROCLAIMS GOD’S MAJESTY

24 “Remember to magnify His work,
Of which men have sung.
25 Everyone has seen it;
Man looks on *it* from afar.
26 “Behold, God *is* great, and we do not
know *Him;*
Nor can the number of His years *be*
discovered.
27 For He draws up drops of water,
Which distill as rain from the mist,
28 Which the clouds drop down
*And* pour abundantly on man.
29 Indeed, can *anyone* understand the
spreading of clouds,
The thunder from His canopy?
30 Look, He scatters His light upon it,
And covers the depths of the sea.
31 For by these He judges the peoples;
He gives food in abundance.
32 He covers *His* hands with lightning,
And commands it to strike.
33 His thunder declares it,
The cattle also, concerning the rising
*storm.*

**37** “At this also my heart trembles,
And leaps from its place.

2 Hear attentively the thunder of His
voice,
And the rumbling *that* comes from His
mouth.
3 He sends it forth under the whole
heaven,
His lightning to the ends of the earth.
4 After it a voice roars;
He thunders with His majestic voice,
And He does not restrain them when His
voice is heard.
5 God thunders marvelously with His
voice;
He does great things which we cannot
comprehend.
6 For He says to the snow,
‘Fall *on* the earth’;
Likewise to the gentle rain and the
heavy rain of His strength.
7 He seals the hand of every man,
That all men may know His work.
8 The beasts go into dens,
And remain in their lairs.
9 From the chamber *of the south* comes
the whirlwind,
And cold from the scattering winds
*of the north.*
10 By the breath of God ice is given,
And the broad waters are frozen.
11 Also with moisture He saturates the
thick clouds;
He scatters His bright clouds.

12 And they swirl about, being turned by
His guidance,
That they may do whatever He
commands them
On the face of the whole earth.[a]
13 He causes it to come,
Whether for correction,
Or for His land,
Or for mercy.
14 “Listen to this, O Job;
Stand still and consider the wondrous
works of God.

> “Listen to this, O Job; stand still and consider the wondrous works of God.”
> JOB 37:14

15 Do you know when God dispatches
them,
And causes the light of His cloud
to shine?
16 Do you know how the clouds are
balanced,
Those wondrous works of Him who is
perfect in knowledge?
17 Why *are* your garments hot,
When He quiets the earth by the south
*wind?*
18 With Him, have you spread out the
skies,
Strong as a cast metal mirror?
19 “Teach us what we should say to Him,
*For* we can prepare nothing because of
the darkness.
20 Should He be told that I *wish to* speak?

If a man were to speak, surely he would
be swallowed up.
21 Even now *men* cannot look at the light
*when it is* bright in the skies,
When the wind has passed and cleared
them.
22 He comes from the north *as* golden
*splendor;*
With God *is* awesome majesty.
23 *As for* the Almighty, we cannot find
Him;
*He is* excellent in power,
*In* judgment and abundant justice;
He does not oppress.
24 Therefore men fear Him;
He shows no partiality to any *who are*
wise of heart."

## THE LORD REVEALS HIS OMNIPOTENCE TO JOB

**38** Then the LORD answered Job out of
the whirlwind, and said:

2 "Who *is* this who darkens counsel
By words without knowledge?
3 Now prepare yourself like a man;
I will question you, and you shall
answer Me.
4 "Where were you when I laid the
foundations of the earth?
Tell *Me*, if you have understanding.
5 Who determined its measurements?
Surely you know!
Or who stretched the line upon it?
6 To what were its foundations fastened?
Or who laid its cornerstone,
7 When the morning stars sang together,
And all the sons of God shouted for joy?
8 "Or *who* shut in the sea with doors,
When it burst forth *and* issued from the
womb;
9 When I made the clouds its garment,
And thick darkness its swaddling band;
10 When I fixed My limit for it,
And set bars and doors;
11 When I said,
'This far you may come, but no farther,
And here your proud waves must stop!'
12 "Have you commanded the morning
since your days *began*,
*And* caused the dawn to know its place,
13 That it might take hold of the ends of
the earth,

And the wicked be shaken out of it?
14 It takes on form like clay *under* a seal,
And stands out like a garment.
15 From the wicked their light is withheld,
And the upraised arm is broken.
16 “Have you entered the springs of the sea?
Or have you walked in search of the
depths?
17 Have the gates of death been revealed to
you?
Or have you seen the doors of the
shadow of death?
18 Have you comprehended the breadth of
the earth?
Tell *Me*, if you know all this.
19 “Where *is* the way *to* the dwelling of
light?
And darkness, where *is* its place,
20 That you may take it to its territory,
That you may know the paths *to*
its home?
21 Do you know *it*, because you were born
then,
Or *because* the number of your days *is*
great?
22 “Have you entered the treasury of snow,
Or have you seen the treasury of hail,
23 Which I have reserved for the time of
trouble,
For the day of battle and war?
24 By what way is light diffused,
*Or* the east wind scattered over the earth?
25 “Who has divided a channel for the
overflowing *water*,
Or a path for the thunderbolt,

26 To cause it to rain on a land *where there*
*is* no one,
A wilderness in which *there is* no man;
27 To satisfy the desolate waste,
And cause to spring forth the growth of
tender grass?
28 Has the rain a father?
Or who has begotten the drops of
dew?
29 From whose womb comes the ice?
And the frost of heaven, who gives it birth?
30 The waters harden like stone,
And the surface of the deep is frozen.
31 “Can you bind the cluster of the Pleiades,
Or loose the belt of Orion?
32 Can you bring out Mazzaroth[a] in its
season?
Or can you guide the Great Bear with its
cubs?
33 Do you know the ordinances of the
heavens?
Can you set their dominion over the
earth?
34 “Can you lift up your voice to the clouds,
That an abundance of water may cover
you?
35 Can you send out lightnings, that they
may go,
And say to you, ‘Here we *are!* ’?
36 Who has put wisdom in the mind?[a]
Or who has given understanding to the
heart?
37 Who can number the clouds by
wisdom?
Or who can pour out the bottles of

heaven,
38 When the dust hardens in clumps,
And the clods cling together?
39 “Can you hunt the prey for the lion,
Or satisfy the appetite of the young
lions,
40 When they crouch in *their* dens,
*Or* lurk in their lairs to lie in wait?
41 Who provides food for the raven,
When its young ones cry to God,
And wander about for lack of food?

**39** “Do you know the time when the
wild mountain goats bear young?
*Or* can you mark when the deer gives
birth?

2 Can you number the months *that* they
fulfill?
Or do you know the time when they
bear young?
3 They bow down,
They bring forth their young,
They deliver their offspring.[a]
4 Their young ones are healthy,
They grow strong with grain;
They depart and do not return to them.
5 “Who set the wild donkey free?
Who loosed the bonds of the onager,
6 Whose home I have made the
wilderness,
And the barren land his dwelling?
7 He scorns the tumult of the city;
He does not heed the shouts of the driver.
8 The range of the mountains *is* his
pasture,
And he searches after every green thing.
9 “Will the wild ox be willing to serve you?
Will he bed by your manger?
10 Can you bind the wild ox in the furrow
with ropes?
Or will he plow the valleys behind you?
11 Will you trust him because his strength
*is* great?
Or will you leave your labor to him?
12 Will you trust him to bring home your
grain,

And gather it to your threshing floor?
13 “The wings of the ostrich wave proudly,
But are her wings and pinions *like the*
kindly stork’s?
14 For she leaves her eggs on the ground,
And warms them in the dust;
15 She forgets that a foot may crush them,
Or that a wild beast may break them.
16 She treats her young harshly, as though
*they were* not hers;
Her labor is in vain, without concern,
17 Because God deprived her of wisdom,
And did not endow her with
understanding.
18 When she lifts herself on high,
She scorns the horse and its rider.
19 “Have you given the horse strength?
Have you clothed his neck with
thunder?[a]
20 Can you frighten him like a locust?
His majestic snorting strikes terror.
21 He paws in the valley, and rejoices in *his*
strength;
He gallops into the clash of arms.
22 He mocks at fear, and is not frightened;
Nor does he turn back from the sword.
23 The quiver rattles against him,
The glittering spear and javelin.
24 He devours the distance with fierceness
and rage;
Nor does he come to a halt because the
trumpet *has* sounded.
25 At *the blast of* the trumpet he says,
‘Aha!’

He smells the battle from afar,
The thunder of captains and shouting.
26 “Does the hawk fly by your wisdom,
*And* spread its wings toward the south?
27 Does the eagle mount up at your
command,
And make its nest on high?
28 On the rock it dwells and resides,
On the crag of the rock and the
stronghold.
29 From there it spies out the prey;
Its eyes observe from afar.
30 Its young ones suck up blood;
And where the slain *are*, there it *is.* ”

**40** Moreover the LORD answered Job, and said:

2 “Shall the one who contends with the Almighty correct *Him?*
He who rebukes God, let him answer it.”

## JOB’S ESPONSE TO GOD

3 Then Job answered the LORD and said:

4 “Behold, I am vile;
What shall I answer You?
I lay my hand over my mouth.

5 Once I have spoken, but I will not
answer;
Yes, twice, but I will proceed no
further.”

## GOD’S CHALLENGE TO JOB

6 Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said:

7 “Now prepare yourself like a man;
I will question you, and you shall
answer Me:

8 “Would you indeed annul My judgment?
Would you condemn Me that you may
be justified?

9 Have you an arm like God?
Or can you thunder with a voice like
His?

10 Then adorn yourself *with* majesty and
splendor,
And array yourself with glory and
beauty.

11 Disperse the rage of your wrath;
Look on everyone *who is* proud, and
humble him.

12 Look on everyone *who is* proud, *and*
bring him low;

Tread down the wicked in their place.
13 Hide them in the dust together,
Bind their faces in hidden *darkness.*
14 Then I will also confess to you
That your own right hand can save you.
15 “Look now at the behemoth,[a] which I
made *along* with you;
He eats grass like an ox.
16 See now, his strength *is* in his hips,
And his power *is* in his stomach muscles.
17 He moves his tail like a cedar;
The sinews of his thighs are tightly knit.
18 His bones *are like* beams of bronze,
His ribs like bars of iron.
19 He *is* the first of the ways of God;
Only He who made him can bring near
His sword.
20 Surely the mountains yield food for him,
And all the beasts of the field play
there.
21 He lies under the lotus trees,
In a covert of reeds and marsh.
22 The lotus trees cover him *with* their
shade;
The willows by the brook surround him.
23 Indeed the river may rage,
*Yet* he is not disturbed;
He is confident, though the Jordan
gushes into his mouth,
24 *Though* he takes it in his eyes,
*Or* one pierces *his* nose with a snare.

## SOUL NOTE

**The Answer** *(40:1-5)* During suffering, a natural response is to question God. In distress, people either cry out *to* God, or *at* Him. Fortunately, God is not put off by questions, weak faith, or anger. Job had cried out, but God did not answer Job's questions. Instead, God revealed His sovereignty over all creation, including Job's life. God did not explain Job's suffering, nor will He necessarily explain ours. Very simply, God *is* the answer. When we have nothing else but Him, we have all that we will ever need, now and forever. His presence is enough. **Topic: Weakness**

**41** “Can you draw out Leviathan[a] with a
hook,
Or *snare* his tongue with a line *which*
you lower?

2 Can you put a reed through his nose,
Or pierce his jaw with a hook?
3 Will he make many supplications to
you?
Will he speak softly to you?
4 Will he make a covenant with you?
Will you take him as a servant forever?
5 Will you play with him as *with* a bird,
Or will you leash him for your maidens?
6 Will *your* companions make a banquet[a]
of him?
Will they apportion him among the
merchants?
7 Can you fill his skin with harpoons,
Or his head with fishing spears?
8 Lay your hand on him;
Remember the battle-
Never do it again!
9 Indeed, *any* hope of *overcoming* him is
false;
Shall *one not* be overwhelmed at the
sight of him?
10 No one *is so* fierce that he would dare
stir him up.
Who then is able to stand against Me?
11 Who has preceded Me, that I should pay
*him?*
Everything under heaven is Mine.
12 “I will not conceal[a] his limbs,
His mighty power, or his graceful

proportions.
13 Who can remove his outer coat?
Who can approach *him* with a double bridle?
14 Who can open the doors of his face,
*With* his terrible teeth all around?
15 *His* rows of scales are *his* pride,
Shut up tightly *as with* a seal;
16 One is so near another
That no air can come between them;
17 They are joined one to another,
They stick together and cannot be
parted.
18 His sneezings flash forth light,
And his eyes *are* like the eyelids
of the morning.
19 Out of his mouth go burning lights;
Sparks of fire shoot out.
20 Smoke goes out of his nostrils,
As *from* a boiling pot and burning
rushes.
21 His breath kindles coals,
And a flame goes out of his mouth.
22 Strength dwells in his neck,
And sorrow dances before him.
23 The folds of his flesh are joined
together;
They are firm on him and cannot be
moved.
24 His heart is as hard as stone,
Even as hard as the lower *millstone*.
25 When he raises himself up, the mighty
are afraid;
Because of his crashings they are beside[a]
themselves.

26 *Though* the sword reaches him, it cannot
avail;
Nor does spear, dart, or javelin.
27 He regards iron as straw,
*And* bronze as rotten wood.
28 The arrow cannot make him flee;
Slingstones become like stubble to him.
29 Darts are regarded as straw;
He laughs at the threat of javelins.
30 His undersides *are* like sharp potsherds;
He spreads pointed *marks* in the mire.
31 He makes the deep boil like a pot;
He makes the sea like a pot of
ointment.
32 He leaves a shining wake behind him;
*One* would think the deep had white
hair.
33 On earth there is nothing like him,
Which is made without fear.
34 He beholds every high *thing;*
He *is* king over all the children of pride.”

## JOB'S REPENTANCE AND RESTORATION

**42** Then Job answered the LORD and said:

2 "I know that You can do everything,
And that no purpose *of Yours* can be
withheld from You.

> "I know that You can do everything, and that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You."
> JOB 42:2

3 *You asked,*
'Who *is* this who hides counsel without
knowledge?'
Therefore I have uttered what
I did not understand,
Things too wonderful for me, which I did
not know.

4 Listen, please, and let me speak;
*You said,* 'I will question you, and you
shall answer Me.'

5 "I have heard of You by the hearing of the
ear,
But now my eye sees You.

6 Therefore I abhor *myself,*
And repent in dust and ashes."

7 And so it was, after the LORD had spoken these words to Job, that the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, "My wrath is aroused against you and your two friends, for you have not spoken of Me *what is* right, as My servant Job *has.* 8 Now therefore, take for yourselves seven bulls and seven rams, go to My servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and My servant Job shall pray for you. For I will accept him, lest I deal with you *according to your* folly; because you have not spoken of Me *what is* right, as My servant Job *has.* "

9 So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite *and* Zophar the
Naamathite went and did as the LORD commanded them; for the LORD had
accepted Job. 10 And the LORD restored Job's losses[a] when he prayed for his
friends. Indeed the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before. 11 Then all
his brothers, all his sisters, and all those who had been his acquaintances
before, came to him and ate food with him in his house; and they consoled
him and comforted him for all the adversity that the LORD had brought upon
him. Each one gave him a piece of silver and each a ring of gold.

12 Now the LORD blessed the latter *days* of Job more than his beginning; for
he had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, one thousand yoke of
oxen, and one thousand female donkeys. 13 He also had seven sons and three
daughters. 14 And he called the name of the first Jemimah, the name of the
second Keziah, and the name of the third Keren-Happuch. 15 In all the land
were found no women *so* beautiful as the daughters of Job; and their father
gave them an inheritance among their brothers.

16 After this Job lived one hundred and forty years, and saw his children
and grandchildren *for* four generations. 17 So Job died, old and full of days.

**SOUL NOTE**

**A Refuge** *(42:12)* At the end of the book, God reverses the circumstances of Job's life, doubling his possessions and granting him more children. This did not erase the pain of Job's previous losses-these were never forgotten. God chose to liberally apply the salve of restoration to Job's grief. During his great pain, Job could have cursed God (2:9); instead, he chose to trust in God's faithfulness and justice. We can see our trials as opportunities to experience God's faithfulness, trusting Him completely. Complete restoration may not occur in this life, but God is faithful and will give us more than we can imagine. **Topic: Restoration**

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# Psalms

Fear, anger, wonder, hatred, anxiety, love, doubt, joy-the full range of emotions is experienced by everyone. However, Christians who feel depressed or angry or hateful often deny those feelings because of the mistaken conviction that believers should never feel that way, and that God wouldn't understand if they did. A reading of Psalms will quickly disprove that. The psalmists felt many emotions and freely expressed them to God. Often set to music, the Book of Psalms is the songbook of the soul.

Comprised of 150 distinct pieces (half of which were written by David), these psalms were originally set to music and used for individual and corporate worship in Israel. The great reformer John Calvin said that the Book of Psalms is "an anatomy of all parts of the soul; for there is not an emotion of which anyone can be conscious that is not here represented as in a mirror." There are lament psalms, thanksgiving psalms, pilgrimage songs, wisdom psalms, imprecatory (or judgment) psalms, praise psalms, and royal psalms.

Regardless of how they are classified, the Psalms have ministered to countless generations of God's people. They invite us to draw near to God by expressing the deepest thoughts and emotions of the human spirit-from dark depression to fearful anxiety to exuberant joy.

The psalm writers provide a model for genuine worship and real communication with God. Let these songs help you love God with all your heart and soul by teaching you to open yourself to Him.

**SOUL CONCERNS IN**

## PSALMS

TRAUMA (18:2-6, 25-30)
ANGER (19:14)

TRIALS (34:18)
REPENTANCE (ch. 51)
LONELINESS (69:1-8)
DEPRESSION (CH. 130)
ABORTION (139:16)
PRAISE AND WORSHIP (CH. 149)

## BOOK ONE: PSALMS 1-41

## PSALM 1

### THE WAY OF THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE END OF THE UNGODLY

1 Blessed *is* the man
Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly,
Nor stands in the path of sinners,
Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;
2 But his delight *is* in the law of the LORD,
And in His law he meditates day and night.
3 He shall be like a tree
Planted by the rivers of water,
That brings forth its fruit in its season,
Whose leaf also shall not wither;
And whatever he does shall prosper.
4 The ungodly *are* not so,
But *are* like the chaff which the wind drives away.
5 Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment,
Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.
6 For the LORD knows the way of the righteous,
But the way of the ungodly shall perish.

**KEY PASSAGE**

# STRONG, FRUITFUL TREES

## (CH. 1)

This psalm contrasts the ways of the righteous and of the ungodly. An ungodly person is “like the chaff which the wind drives away” (1:4). That person has no substance and no roots. On the other hand, the one who is righteous is “like a tree planted by the rivers of water” (1:3). Believers are to be deeply rooted; they should continue to grow strong and bring forth good fruit. Such lives express their joy in God. These believers have grown strong in the Lord and can be used by Him to make a difference in the world.

Believers who want to grow spiritually and be rooted in their faith like strong oaks can follow the advice of this psalm:

- Steer clear of advice from the ungodly.
- Do not follow the paths of sinners.
- Delight in God’s law.
- Meditate on God’s law day and night.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Spiritual Growth. See also the personality profile of Matthew: A Changed Life.

## PSALM 2

### THE MESSIAH'S TRIUMPH AND KINGDOM

1 Why do the nations rage,
And the people plot a vain thing?
2 The kings of the earth set themselves,
And the rulers take counsel together,
Against the LORD and against His Anointed, *saying,*
3 "Let us break Their bonds in pieces
And cast away Their cords from us."
4 He who sits in the heavens shall laugh;
The LORD shall hold them in derision.
5 Then He shall speak to them in His wrath,
And distress them in His deep displeasure:
6 "Yet I have set My King
On My holy hill of Zion."
7 "I will declare the decree:
The LORD has said to Me,
'You *are* My Son,
Today I have begotten You.
8 Ask of Me, and I will give *You*
The nations *for* Your inheritance,
And the ends of the earth *for* Your possession.
9 You shall break[a] them with a rod of iron;
You shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel.' "
10 Now therefore, be wise, O kings;
Be instructed, you judges of the earth.
11 Serve the LORD with fear, And rejoice with trembling.
12 Kiss the Son,[a] lest He[b] be angry,
And you perish *in* the way,
When His wrath is kindled but a little.
Blessed *are* all those who put their trust in Him.

# PSALM 3

## THE LORD HELPS HIS TROUBLED PEOPLE

*A Psalm of David when he fled*
*from Absalom his son.*

1 LORD, how they have increased who trouble me!
Many *are* they who rise up against me.
2 Many *are* they who say of me,
"*There is* no help for him in God." Selah
3 But You, O LORD, *are* a shield for me,
My glory and the One who lifts up my head.
4 I cried to the LORD with my voice,
And He heard me from His holy hill. Selah
5 I lay down and slept;
I awoke, for the LORD sustained me.
6 I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people
Who have set *themselves* against me all around.
7 Arise, O LORD ; Save me, O my God!
For You have struck all my enemies on the cheekbone;
You have broken the teeth of the ungodly.
8 Salvation *belongs* to the LORD.
Your blessing *is* upon Your people. Selah

# PSALM 4

## THE SAFETY OF THE FAITHFUL

*To the Chief Musician. With stringed instruments. A Psalm of David.*

1 Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness! You have relieved me in *my* distress; Have mercy on me, and hear my prayer.
2 How long, O you sons of men, *Will you turn* my glory to shame? *How long* will you love worthlessness *And* seek falsehood? Selah
3 But know that the LORD has set apart[a] for Himself him who is godly; The LORD will hear when I call to Him.
4 Be angry, and do not sin. Meditate within your heart on your bed, and be still. Selah
5 Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, And put your trust in the LORD.
6 *There are* many who say, "Who will show us *any* good?" LORD, lift up the light of Your countenance upon us.
7 You have put gladness in my heart, More than in the season that their grain and wine increased.
8 I will both lie down in peace, and sleep; For You alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.

I will both lie down in peace,
and sleep; for You alone, O LORD,
make me dwell in safety.
PSALM 4:8

## PSALM 5

### A PRAYER FOR GUIDANCE

*To the Chief Musician. With flutes.*[a]
*A Psalm of David.*

1 Give ear to my words, O LORD,
Consider my meditation.
2 Give heed to the voice of my cry,
My King and my God,
For to You I will pray.
3 My voice You shall hear in the morning, O LORD ;
In the morning I will direct *it* to You,
And I will look up.
4 For You *are* not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness,
Nor shall evil dwell with You.
5 The boastful shall not stand in Your sight;
You hate all workers of iniquity.
6 You shall destroy those who speak falsehood;
The LORD abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man.
7 But as for me, I will come into Your house in the multitude of Your mercy;
In fear of You I will worship toward Your holy temple.
8 Lead me, O LORD, in Your righteousness because of my enemies;
Make Your way straight before my face.
9 For *there is* no faithfulness in their mouth;
Their inward part *is* destruction;
Their throat *is* an open tomb;
They flatter with their tongue.
10 Pronounce them guilty, O God!
Let them fall by their own counsels;
Cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions,
For they have rebelled against You.

11 But let all those rejoice who put their trust in You;
Let them ever shout for joy, because You defend them;
Let those also who love
Your name Be joyful in You.
12 For You, O LORD, will bless the righteous;
With favor You will surround him as *with* a shield.

## PSALM 6

### A PRAYER OF FAITH IN TIME OF DISTRESS

*To the Chief Musician. With stringed instruments. On an eight-stringed harp.[a] A Psalm of David.*

1 O LORD, do not rebuke me in Your anger,
Nor chasten me in Your hot displeasure.
2 Have mercy on me, O LORD, for I *am* weak;
O LORD, heal me, for my bones are troubled.
3 My soul also is greatly troubled;
But You, O LORD -how long?
4 Return, O LORD, deliver me!
Oh, save me for Your mercies' sake!
5 For in death *there is* no remembrance of You;
In the grave who will give You thanks?
6 I am weary with my groaning;
All night I make my bed swim;
I drench my couch with my tears.
7 My eye wastes away because of grief;
It grows old because of all my enemies.
8 Depart from me, all you workers of iniquity;
For the LORD has heard the voice of my weeping.
9 The LORD has heard my supplication;
The LORD will receive my prayer.
10 Let all my enemies be ashamed and greatly troubled;
Let them turn back *and* be ashamed suddenly.

# PSALM 7

## PRAYER AND PRAISE FOR DELIVERANCE FROM ENEMIES

*A Meditation[a] of David, which he sang*
*to the LORD concerning the words*
*of Cush, a Benjamite.*

1 O LORD my God, in You I put my trust;
Save me from all those who persecute me;
And deliver me,
2 Lest they tear me like a lion,
Rending *me* in pieces, while *there is* none to deliver.
3 O LORD my God, if I have done this:
If there is iniquity in my hands,
4 If I have repaid evil to him who was at peace with me,
Or have plundered my enemy without cause,
5 Let the enemy pursue me and overtake *me;*
Yes, let him trample my life to the earth,
And lay my honor in the dust. Selah
6 Arise, O LORD, in Your anger;
Lift Yourself up because of the rage of my enemies;
Rise up for me[a] *to* the judgment You have commanded!
7 So the congregation of the peoples shall surround You;
For their sakes, therefore, return on high.
8 The LORD shall judge the peoples;
Judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness,
And according to my integrity within me.
9 Oh, let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end,
But establish the just;
For the righteous God tests the hearts and minds.
10 My defense *is* of God,
Who saves the upright in heart.
11 God *is* a just judge,

And God is angry *with the wicked* every day.
12 If he does not turn back,
He will sharpen His sword;
He bends His bow and makes it ready.
13 He also prepares for Himself instruments of death;
He makes His arrows into fiery shafts.
14 Behold, *the wicked* brings forth iniquity;
Yes, he conceives trouble and brings forth falsehood.
15 He made a pit and dug it out,
And has fallen into the ditch *which* he made.
16 His trouble shall return upon his own head,
And his violent dealing shall come down on his own crown.
17 I will praise the LORD according to His righteousness,
And will sing praise to the name of the LORD Most High.

# PSALM 8

## THE GLORY OF THE LORD IN CREATION

*To the Chief Musician. On the instrument of Gath.[a] A Psalm of David.*

**1** O LORD, our Lord,
How excellent *is* Your name in all the earth,
Who have set Your glory above the heavens!
2 Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants
You have ordained strength,
Because of Your enemies,
That You may silence the enemy and the avenger.
3 When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers,
The moon and the stars, which You have ordained,
4 What is man that You are mindful of him,
And the son of man that You visit him?
5 For You have made him a little lower than the angels,[a]
And You have crowned him with glory and honor.
6 You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands;
You have put all *things* under his feet,
7 All sheep and oxen-
Even the beasts of the field,
8 The birds of the air,
And the fish of the sea
That pass through the paths of the seas.
9 O LORD, our Lord,
How excellent *is* Your name in all the earth!

## SOUL NOTE

**Special and Important** *(8:3-5)* Human beings often feel small compared to the rest of creation. The psalmist asked God, “What is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him?” (8:4). Insignificant, sinful human beings don’t seem worthy of God’s care. Yet God does care, for He created people “a little lower than the angels” and crowned them “with glory and honor” (8:5). He loves us so much that He sent His Son to die for us so that we could one day have the glory and honor for which He created us. We are important to God. **Topic: Self-Esteem**

# PSALM 9

## PRAYER AND THANKSGIVING FOR THE LORD 'S RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENTS

*To the Chief Musician. To the tune of "Death of the Son."*[a] *A Psalm of David.*

1 I will praise *You,* O LORD, with my whole heart;
I will tell of all Your marvelous works.
2 I will be glad and rejoice in You;
I will sing praise to Your name,
O Most High.
3 When my enemies turn back,
They shall fall and perish at Your presence.
4 For You have maintained my right and my cause;
You sat on the throne judging in righteousness.
5 You have rebuked the nations,
You have destroyed the wicked;
You have blotted out their name forever and ever.
6 O enemy, destructions are finished forever!
And you have destroyed cities;
Even their memory has perished.
7 But the LORD shall endure forever;
He has prepared His throne for judgment.
8 He shall judge the world in righteousness,
And He shall administer judgment for the peoples in uprightness.
9 The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed,
A refuge in times of trouble.
10 And those who know Your name will put their trust in You;
For You, LORD, have not forsaken those who seek You.

And those who know Your name
will put their trust in You;

for You, LORD, have not forsaken
those who seek You.
PSALM 9:10

11 Sing praises to the LORD, who dwells in Zion!
Declare His deeds among the people.
12 When He avenges blood, He remembers them;
He does not forget the cry of the humble.
13 Have mercy on me, O LORD !
Consider my trouble from those who hate me,
You who lift me up from the gates of death,
14 That I may tell of all Your praise
In the gates of the daughter of Zion.
I will rejoice in Your salvation.
15 The nations have sunk down in the pit *which* they made;
In the net which they hid, their own foot is caught.
16 The LORD is known *by* the judgment He executes;
The wicked is snared in the work of his own hands.
Meditation.[a] Selah
17 The wicked shall be turned into hell,
*And* all the nations that forget God.
18 For the needy shall not always be forgotten;
The expectation of the poor shall *not* perish forever.
19 Arise, O LORD,
Do not let man prevail;
Let the nations be judged in Your sight.
20 Put them in fear, O LORD,
*That* the nations may know themselves *to be but* men. Selah

## PSALM 10

### A SONG OF CONFIDENCE IN GOD'S TRIUMPH OVER EVIL

1 Why do You stand afar off, O LORD ?
*Why* do You hide in times of trouble?
2 The wicked in *his* pride persecutes the poor;
Let them be caught in the plots which they have devised.
3 For the wicked boasts of his heart's desire;
He blesses the greedy *and* renounces the LORD.
4 The wicked in his proud countenance does not seek *God;*
God *is* in none of his thoughts.
5 His ways are always prospering;
Your judgments *are* far above, out of his sight;
*As for* all his enemies, he sneers at them.
6 He has said in his heart, "I shall not be moved;
I shall never be in adversity."
7 His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and oppression;
Under his tongue *is* trouble and iniquity.
8 He sits in the lurking places of the villages;
In the secret places he murders the innocent;
His eyes are secretly fixed on the helpless.
9 He lies in wait secretly, as a lion in his den;
He lies in wait to catch the poor;
He catches the poor when he draws him into his net.
10 So he crouches, he lies low,
That the helpless may fall by his strength.
11 He has said in his heart,
"God has forgotten;
He hides His face;
He will never see."
12 Arise, O LORD !
O God, lift up Your hand!

Do not forget the humble.
13 Why do the wicked renounce God?
He has said in his heart,
"You will not require *an account.*"
14 But You have seen, for You observe trouble and grief,
To repay *it* by Your hand.
The helpless commits himself to You;
You are the helper of the fatherless.
15 Break the arm of the wicked and the evil *man;*
Seek out his wickedness *until* You find none.
16 The LORD *is* King forever and ever;
The nations have perished out of His land.
17 LORD, You have heard the desire of the humble;
You will prepare their heart;
You will cause Your ear to hear,
18 To do justice to the fatherless and the oppressed,
That the man of the earth may oppress no more.

# PSALM 11

## FAITH IN THE LORD 'S RIGHTEOUSNESS

*To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.*

1 In the LORD I put my trust;
How can you say to my soul,
"Flee *as* a bird to your mountain"?
2 For look! The wicked bend *their* bow,
They make ready their arrow on the string,
That they may shoot secretly at the upright in heart.
3 If the foundations are destroyed,
What can the righteous do?
4 The LORD *is* in His holy temple,
The LORD 's throne *is* in heaven;
His eyes behold,
His eyelids test the sons of men.
5 The LORD tests the righteous,
But the wicked and the one who loves violence His soul hates.
6 Upon the wicked He will rain coals;
Fire and brimstone and a burning wind
*Shall be* the portion of their cup.
7 For the LORD *is* righteous,
He loves righteousness;
His countenance beholds the upright.[a]

**KEY PASSAGE**

# A VIOLENT END

## (11:5)

Violence seems to be everywhere in society. From the time Cain committed the first murder (Gen. 4:8), humanity has been subject to violence. Indeed, God flooded the earth because it was filled with violence (Gen. 6:11-13). Violent people will often come to a violent end-as predicted in many proverbs (Prov. 4:16-19; 21:7) and by Jesus (Matt. 26:51). Murder, the ultimate form of violence, is forbidden in the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:13). Jesus said that murder begins in the heart with angry and vengeful thoughts (Matt. 5:21, 22).

God's people are warned against allowing the natural emotion of anger to erupt into violence, for that harms others. Believers must also be discerning regarding television, movies, and video games, for these can desensitize a person to violence and sometimes even glorify it. With the filling of the Spirit, the believer will instead produce the fruit of love, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22, 23).

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Violence. See also the personality profile of Naboth and Ahab Naboth: In the Path of an Evil King.

## PSALM 12

### MAN'S TREACHERY AND GOD'S CONSTANCY

*To the Chief Musician. On an eight-stringed harp.[a] A Psalm of David.*

1 Help, LORD, for the godly man ceases!
For the faithful disappear from among the sons of men.
2 They speak idly everyone with his neighbor;
*With* flattering lips *and* a double heart they speak.
3 May the LORD cut off all flattering lips,
*And* the tongue that speaks proud things,
4 Who have said,
"With our tongue we will prevail;
Our lips *are* our own;
Who *is* lord over us?"
5 "For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy,
Now I will arise," says the LORD ;
"I will set *him* in the safety for which he yearns."
6 The words of the LORD *are* pure words,
*Like* silver tried in a furnace of earth,
Purified seven times.
7 You shall keep them, O LORD,
You shall preserve them from this generation forever.
8 The wicked prowl on every side,
When vileness is exalted among the sons of men.

## PSALM 13

### TRUST IN THE SALVATION OF THE LORD

*To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.*

1 How long, O LORD ? Will You forget me forever?
How long will You hide Your face from me?
2 How long shall I take counsel in my soul,
*Having* sorrow in my heart daily?
How long will my enemy be exalted over me?
3 Consider *and* hear me, O LORD my God; Enlighten my eyes,
Lest I sleep the *sleep of* death;
4 Lest my enemy say,
"I have prevailed against him";
*Lest* those who trouble me rejoice when I am moved.
5 But I have trusted in Your mercy;
My heart shall rejoice in Your salvation.
6 I will sing to the LORD,
Because He has dealt bountifully with me.

## PSALM 14

### FOLLY OF THE GODLESS, AND GOD'S FINAL TRIUMPH

*To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.*

1 The fool has said in his heart,
"*There is* no God."
They are corrupt,
They have done abominable works,
There is none who does good.
2 The LORD looks down from heaven upon the children of men,
To see if there are any who understand, who seek God.
3 They have all turned aside,
They have together become corrupt;
*There is* none who does good,
No, not one.
4 Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge,
Who eat up my people *as* they eat bread,
And do not call on the LORD ?
5 There they are in great fear,
For God *is* with the generation of the righteous.
6 You shame the counsel of the poor,
But the LORD *is* his refuge.
7 Oh, that the salvation of Israel *would come* out of Zion!
When the LORD brings back the captivity of His people,
Let Jacob rejoice *and* Israel be glad.

## PSALM 15

### THE CHARACTER OF THOSE WHO MAY DWELL WITH THE LORD

*A Psalm of David.*

1 LORD, who may abide in Your tabernacle?
Who may dwell in Your holy hill?
2 He who walks uprightly,
And works righteousness,
And speaks the truth in his heart;
3 He *who* does not backbite with his tongue,
Nor does evil to his neighbor,
Nor does he take up a reproach against his friend;
4 In whose eyes a vile person is despised,
But he honors those who fear the LORD ;
He *who* swears to his own hurt and does not change;
5 He *who* does not put out his money at usury,
Nor does he take a bribe against the innocent.
He who does these *things* shall never be moved.

## PSALM 16

### THE HOPE OF THE FAITHFUL, AND THE MESSIAH'S VICTORY

*A Michtam of David.*

1 Preserve me, O God, for in You I put my trust.
2 *O my soul*, you have said to the LORD,
"You *are* my Lord,
My goodness is nothing apart from You."
3 As for the saints who *are* on the earth,
"They are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight."
4 Their sorrows shall be multiplied who hasten *after* another *god;*
Their drink offerings of blood I will not offer,
Nor take up their names on my lips.
5 O LORD, *You are* the portion of my inheritance and my cup;
You maintain my lot.
6 The lines have fallen to me in pleasant *places;*
Yes, I have a good inheritance.
7 I will bless the LORD who has given me counsel;
My heart also instructs me in the night seasons.
8 I have set the LORD always before me;
Because *He is* at my right hand I shall not be moved.
9 Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices;
My flesh also will rest in hope.
10 For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.
11 You will show me the path of life;
In Your presence *is* fullness of joy;
At Your right hand *are* pleasures forevermore.

You will show me the path of life;
in Your presence is fullness of joy;

at Your right hand
are pleasures forevermore.
PSALM 16:11

## SOUL NOTE

**The Path of Life** *(16:11)* David trusted in God and sought Him in times of need and fear. David often faced murderous enemies, yet God always preserved his life. In this psalm, David praised God for caring for, protecting, and guiding him. He foresaw a coming Holy One whom God would raise from the dead (16:9, 10), and he understood that he would have eternal life too, through that Savior. One day all believers will be in God's presence and at His right hand where there are "fullness of joy" and "pleasures forevermore." That is something worth waiting for! **Topic: Eternal Life**

## PSALM 17

### PRAYER WITH CONFIDENCE IN FINAL SALVATION

*A Prayer of David.*

1 Hear a just cause, O LORD,
Attend to my cry;
Give ear to my prayer *which is* not from deceitful lips.
2 Let my vindication come from Your presence;
Let Your eyes look on the things that are upright.
3 You have tested my heart;
You have visited *me* in the night;
You have tried me and have found nothing;
I have purposed that my mouth shall not transgress.
4 Concerning the works of men,
By the word of Your lips,
I have kept away from the paths of the destroyer.
5 Uphold my steps in Your paths,
*That* my footsteps may not slip.
6 I have called upon You, for You will hear me, O God;
Incline Your ear to me, *and* hear my speech.
7 Show Your marvelous lovingkindness by Your right hand,
O You who save those who trust *in You*
From those who rise up *against them.*
8 Keep me as the apple of Your eye;
Hide me under the shadow of Your wings,
9 From the wicked who oppress me,
*From* my deadly enemies who surround me.
10 They have closed up their fat *hearts;*
With their mouths they speak proudly.
11 They have now surrounded us in our steps;
They have set their eyes, crouching down to the earth,
12 As a lion is eager to tear his prey,

And like a young lion lurking in secret places.
13 Arise, O LORD,
Confront him, cast him down;
Deliver my life from the wicked with Your sword,
14 With Your hand from men, O LORD,
From men of the world *who have* their portion in *this* life,
And whose belly You fill with Your hidden treasure.
They are satisfied with children,
And leave the rest of their *possession* for their babes.
15 As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness;
I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness.

# PSALM 18

## GOD THE SOVEREIGN SAVIOR

*To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David the servant of the LORD, who spoke to the LORD the words of this song on the day that the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul. And he said:*

1 I will love You, O LORD, my strength.
2 The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer;
My God, my strength, in whom I will trust;
My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.
3 I will call upon the LORD, *who is worthy* to be praised;
So shall I be saved from my enemies.
4 The pangs of death surrounded me,
And the floods of ungodliness made me afraid.
5 The sorrows of Sheol surrounded me;
The snares of death confronted me.
6 In my distress I called upon the LORD,
And cried out to my God;
He heard my voice from His temple,
And my cry came before Him, *even* to His ears.
7 Then the earth shook and trembled;
The foundations of the hills also quaked and were shaken,
Because He was angry.
8 Smoke went up from His nostrils,
And devouring fire from His mouth;
Coals were kindled by it.
9 He bowed the heavens also, and came down
With darkness under His feet.
10 And He rode upon a cherub, and flew;
He flew upon the wings of the wind.
11 He made darkness His secret place;

His canopy around Him *was* dark waters
*And* thick clouds of the skies.
12 From the brightness before Him,
His thick clouds passed with hailstones and coals of fire.
13 The LORD thundered from heaven,
And the Most High uttered His voice,
Hailstones and coals of fire.[a]
14 He sent out His arrows and scattered the foe,
Lightnings in abundance, and He vanquished them.
15 Then the channels of the sea were seen,
The foundations of the world were uncovered
At Your rebuke, O LORD,
At the blast of the breath of Your nostrils.
16 He sent from above, He took me;
He drew me out of many waters.
17 He delivered me from my strong enemy,
From those who hated me,
For they were too strong for me.
18 They confronted me in the day of my calamity,
But the LORD was my support.
19 He also brought me out into a broad place;
He delivered me because He delighted in me.
20 The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness;
According to the cleanness of my hands
He has recompensed me.
21 For I have kept the ways of the LORD,
And have not wickedly departed from my God.
22 For all His judgments *were* before me,
And I did not put away His statutes from me.
23 I was also blameless before Him,
And I kept myself from my iniquity.
24 Therefore the LORD has recompensed me according to my righteousness,
According to the cleanness of my hands in His sight.
25 With the merciful You will show Yourself merciful;

With a blameless man You will show Yourself blameless;
26 With the pure You will show Yourself pure;
And with the devious You will show Yourself shrewd.
27 For You will save the humble people,
But will bring down haughty looks.
28 For You will light my lamp;
The LORD my God will enlighten my darkness.
29 For by You I can run against a troop,
By my God I can leap over a wall.
30 *As for* God, His way *is* perfect;
The word of the LORD is proven;
He *is* a shield to all who trust in Him.
31 For who *is* God, except the LORD ?
And who *is* a rock, except our God?
32 *It is* God who arms me with strength,
And makes my way perfect.
33 He makes my feet like the *feet of* deer,
And sets me on my high places.
34 He teaches my hands to make war,
So that my arms can bend a bow of bronze.
35 You have also given me the shield of Your salvation;
Your right hand has held me up,
Your gentleness has made me great.
36 You enlarged my path under me,
So my feet did not slip.
37 I have pursued my enemies and overtaken them;
Neither did I turn back again till they were destroyed.
38 I have wounded them,
So that they could not rise;
They have fallen under my feet.
39 For You have armed me with strength for the battle;
You have subdued under me those who rose up against me.
40 You have also given me the necks of my enemies,
So that I destroyed those who hated me.

41 They cried out, but *there was* none to save;
*Even* to the LORD, but He did not answer them.
42 Then I beat them as fine as the dust before the wind;
I cast them out like dirt in the streets.
43 You have delivered me from the strivings of the people;
You have made me the head of the nations;
A people I have not known shall serve me.
44 As soon as they hear of me they obey me;
The foreigners submit to me.
45 The foreigners fade away,
And come frightened from their hideouts.
46 The LORD lives!
Blessed *be* my Rock!
Let the God of my salvation be exalted.
47 *It is* God who avenges me,
And subdues the peoples under me;
48 He delivers me from my enemies.
You also lift me up above those who rise against me;
You have delivered me from the violent man.
49 Therefore I will give thanks to You,
O LORD, among the Gentiles,
And sing praises to Your name.
50 Great deliverance He gives to His king,
And shows mercy to His anointed,
To David and his descendants forevermore.

**HEALING THE WOUNDS**

## THAT BIND YOU

# MARK R. LAASER

## (Psalm 18:2-6, 25-30)

**S**ome events in life cause pain that goes deeper and lasts longer. We all have met people who have experienced a horrible loss or survived a great difficulty. Counselors call such an experience "trauma." As these people go through life, they may not be aware of or remember the original damage. But at times, trauma can influence their reactions in certain unhealthy ways or cause them to make unhealthy decisions. Those whose traumas don't get healed may grow up to damage others, even their own families.

### WHAT CAUSES TRAUMA?

Most experts divide trauma into two major categories. The first is *invasion* trauma. Something happens to a person that creates damage. The second is *abandonment* trauma. Something did *not* happen to a person (such as not feeling loved, protected, or nurtured) that creates damage. This second kind of trauma can be harder to recognize because the person doesn't know what they are missing, never having had it.

These two kinds of trauma affect the four aspects of people's lives: emotional, physical, sexual, spiritual.

### ASPECTS OF INVASION TRAUMA

*Emotional invasion* occurs when people feel criticized, shamed, or blamed, either verbally or nonverbally. For example, sighs that express anger or displeasure can be taken as criticism. It occurs when people are talked out of their feelings with statements such as "Big

girls don't cry," or "Christians don't feel that way." It also occurs when an adult or authority figure reverses roles and expects a child to be the caregiver-giving emotional care instead of receiving it.

*Physical invasion* occurs when a person is physically abused. This form of trauma may create permanent physical damage. The emotional effect of this can also be experienced if a person lives in a home in which someone else is being physically harmed.

*Sexual invasion* happens when a person is penetrated or touched in sexual areas outside the mutual relationship of marriage. This is a very broad definition because even consenting sexual relationships between people who are not married *can* have a traumatizing effect because it is outside of God's plan. This type of invasion can also happen when people are teased or criticized about their bodies.

*Spiritual invasion* takes place when people are led to believe that they are unworthy of God's love and grace. Often rigid, fear-based religious teaching, even if it is well intended, can have this effect. This results in shame that people can't seem to shake.

**ASPECTS OF ABANDONMENT TRAUMA**

*Emotional abandonment* occurs when love, attention, care, nurture, and affirmation are not given. This results in profound loneliness.

*Physical abandonment* happens when people's basic needs for food, shelter, and clothing aren't met. People who aren't touched enough-with hugs or cuddles-will experience a form of this called "touch deprivation." Another form occurs when people aren't getting enough information or modeling on physical self-care.

*Sexual abandonment* occurs when parents and other responsible adults don't educate children about and model healthy sexuality. Lack of correct information can have devastating results.

*Spiritual abandonment* happens when healthy spiritual teaching and modeling is not available.

The above categories can overlap. Damage in one aspect of a person's life can have an effect in another. For example, any form of trauma that happens at the hands of a religious authority figure can create profound spiritual damage.

## THE EFFECTS OF TRAUMA

Symptoms of unhealed trauma can include anxiety and panic disorders, depression, anger, loneliness, attachment disorders, and addictions of all kinds. Panic, anxiety, flashbacks, and anger sometimes are labeled under the diagnosis of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

Trauma survivors may cope with the remembered or not remembered trauma in a variety of ways. Some, almost unconsciously, may seek to repeat the trauma in their adult lives, hoping for a different result or trying to be in control by becoming the perpetrator of the trauma on someone else. This is called "trauma repetition." Trauma survivors may create relationships with people who treat them poorly, or they go the other direction entirely by avoiding any person or event that triggers memories of the trauma.

## HEALING TRAUMA

The path to recovery includes a number of steps. Trauma survivors need:

• to be educated about the nature of trauma. Any denial may need to be confronted. Sometimes it is helpful to do this in groups of other survivors.

• comforting, accepting, and nonjudgmental listeners who believe them and offer them hope.

• help in expressing their anger about their trauma. This includes anger at the perpetrators, but may not necessarily mean confronting them. There are symbolic ways, such as writing letters to perpetrators that won't necessarily be sent, which can be just as powerful. Opportunities to be angry with God may also be needed. Discussions about how a loving God would allow trauma to happen may be helpful.

• instruction in the process of grieving the losses that the trauma has caused in their lives.

• to know that they didn't deserve their hurts and didn't cause them.

• help in structuring boundaries so that they will not be harmed again by old, current, or new relationships.

• to see the positive strengths that can result from the healing of their trauma.

• to be able, eventually, to forgive. This is the ultimate spiritual victory.

Caregivers should be aware that working with trauma survivors can bring up one's own issues of trauma. If this interferes with working with them, it will be necessary to refer them to someone else. This possible dynamic points to the fact that we all need to be in the journey. Getting our own hurts healed can make us effective in healing.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of trauma include:

- Psalms 27:10; 34:18; 46:1-11; 107:20; 147:2, 3
- Proverbs 3:5-8
- Isaiah 53:1-12; 61:1-3

- 2 Corinthians 1:8-11

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on trauma at Lamentations 1:10-21. See also the personality profile of Jonah: Running from God.

## PSALM 19

### THE PERFECT REVELATION OF THE LORD

*To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.*

1 The heavens declare the glory of God;
And the firmament shows His handiwork.
2 Day unto day utters speech,
And night unto night reveals knowledge.
3 *There is* no speech nor language
*Where* their voice is not heard.
4 Their line[a] has gone out through all the earth,
And their words to the end of the world.
In them He has set a tabernacle for the sun,
5 Which *is* like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber,
*And* rejoices like a strong man to run its race.
6 Its rising *is* from one end of heaven,
And its circuit to the other end;
And there is nothing hidden from its heat.
7 The law of the LORD *is* perfect, converting the soul;
The testimony of the LORD *is* sure, making wise the simple;
8 The statutes of the LORD *are* right, rejoicing the heart;
The commandment of the LORD *is* pure, enlightening the eyes;
9 The fear of the LORD *is* clean, enduring forever;
The judgments of the LORD *are* true *and* righteous altogether.
10 More to be desired *are they* than gold,
Yea, than much fine gold;
Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.
11 Moreover by them Your servant is warned,
*And* in keeping them *there is* great reward.
12 Who can understand *his* errors?
Cleanse me from secret *faults.*
13 Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous *sins;*

Let them not have dominion over me.
Then I shall be blameless,
And I shall be innocent of great transgression.
14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
Be acceptable in Your sight,
O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer.

> Let the words of my mouth and
> the meditation of my heart be
> acceptable in Your sight, O LORD,
> my strength and my Redeemer.
> PSALM 19:14

## CULTIVATING HEALTHY ANGER

# GARY J. OLIVER

## (Psalm 19:14)

**S**ome call it: “blowing your stack,” “letting off steam,” “letting someone have it,” “being totally ticked.” Anger is often described with these negative phrases. But is all anger bad? Is it always a sin to be angry? Many Christians go through life stymied in their effort to grow and live effectively, because of their failure to acknowledge, accept, and understand the God-given emotion of anger. They are unaware of its dynamics and potential benefits.

## ANGER IS A FACT OF LIFE

What is anger? While “rage,” “fury,” “wrath,” “resentment,” and “hostility” are often used to describe the emotion, anger is simply a strong feeling of irritation or displeasure. Actually, anger is experienced much more frequently than most people would like to admit. When people begrudge or disdain others, when they are annoyed, repulsed, irritated, frustrated, offended, or cross, they are probably experiencing some form of anger. Studies show that most people experience this emotion at least eight to ten times a day.

Depression, anxiety, fear, and grief drain the human body of emotional and physical energy. Anger, on the other hand, releases energy into the nervous system and makes a person ready for action. It is a personal choice whether to use that burst of energy in constructive or abusive ways.

## HEALTHY VS. UNHEALTHY ANGER

When people allow anger to control them, it becomes unhealthy anger. Unhealthy anger expresses itself in a desire for revenge and can easily distort one’s perspective, block the ability to love, and limit one’s capacity to think clearly. At that point, people are more likely to spend their anger energy in destructive actions such as emotional, verbal, or physical abuse and violence.

The opposite of that unhealthy anger is healthy anger, which could also be called “quality anger.” The Bible says, “Be angry, and do not sin” (Eph. 4:26). This type of anger depends on the help and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Healthy anger allows people to invest their emotional energy in confronting evil, righting wrongs, and changing things for the good. The energy of anger, when wisely invested, can provide greater focus and intensity and can lead to greater productivity. Martin Luther said: “When I am angry, I can write, pray, and preach well, for then my whole temperament is quickened, my understanding is sharpened, and all mundane vexations and

temptations are gone."

## AN ANGER MANAGEMENT PLAN

In order to confront and control unhealthy anger, a person must decide a plan of counterattack in advance. When unhealthy anger is not under control, it blocks the ability to think clearly and be objective. However, taking the time to think and pray through the following issues prepares people for an objective, reasoned investment of their anger energy, so they can respond with healthy anger.

*Step 1-Be Aware of Anger*
One of the many myths regarding anger is that a person with an anger problem shows it through his or her appearance and actions. However, a battle may rage inside a seemingly calm demeanor. People need to identify what makes them vulnerable to anger, how their body responds to anger, and what physical manifestations of anger they adopt when enraged.

*Step 2-Accept Responsibility for Anger*
Many people blame others for their problems. When God confronted Eve in the garden, she blamed the serpent for her mistake. When God confronted Adam, he first blamed Eve and, eventually, blamed God. It is easy for an angry person to say, "So and so made me angry." Other people may speak or act to cause hurt or frustration, but blaming a personal reaction on someone else is not accurate. People don't "lose" their temper. They "choose" their own temper.

*Step 3-Identify the Source of Anger*
Anger is a secondary emotion that is experienced in response to a primary emotion such as hurt, frustration, or fear. People who are hurt feel vulnerable to more hurt. This is especially true of very sensitive people. For many, anger is a defense mechanism against being hurt.

Frustration occurs when expectations are not met or people cannot

meet their personal goals. The things that frustrate people the most usually have one characteristic in common-they really aren't very important. Identifying frustrating personalities or situations will prepare a person for handling similar encounters in the future.

*Step 4-Choose How to Invest Anger Energy*
This is a critical step. While we cannot always control when we will experience anger, we can choose how we will express it. With God's help, we can find creative and constructive ways to deal with anger. We can allow anger to dominate us, or we can harness anger's energy into healthy and quality responses. Quality anger involves open, honest, and direct communication. It involves speaking the truth in love. It involves declaring truth and righting wrongs. It involves being open to an apology or explanation and seeks to work toward an agreement.

For many Christians, both the experience and expression of anger have become a habit. Habits can take some time to change. The good news is that with God's help, we can change and grow. As we allow the Holy Spirit to fill us and we apply promises from God's Word, we can replace the old, unhealthy ways of responding with new, healthy and God-honoring emotional responses. As we learn creative ways to invest the God-given anger energy, and as we approach anger from a biblical perspective, we will find one of the most powerful sources of personal motivation available.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of anger include:

- Psalm 37:8
- Proverbs 14:16; 15:1, 18; 16:32; 19:19; 22:24; 29:11
- Ecclesiastes 7:9
- Mark 3:5
- Ephesians 4:26-32

- Colossians 3:8, 21

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on anger at Ephesians 4:26, 27. See also the personality profile of Angry as Cain?.

## PSALM 20

### THE ASSURANCE OF GOD'S SAVING WORK

*To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.*

1 May the LORD answer you in the day of trouble;
May the name of the God of Jacob defend you;
2 May He send you help from the sanctuary,
And strengthen you out of Zion;
3 May He remember all your offerings,
And accept your burnt sacrifice. Selah
4 May He grant you according to your heart's *desire,*
Targum reads *business* .
And fulfill all your purpose.
5 We will rejoice in your salvation,
And in the name of our God we will set up *our* banners!
May the LORD fulfill all your petitions.
6 Now I know that the LORD saves His anointed;
He will answer him from His holy heaven
With the saving strength of His right hand.
7 Some *trust* in chariots, and some in horses;
But we will remember the name of the LORD our God.
8 They have bowed down and fallen;
But we have risen and stand upright.
9 Save, LORD !
May the King answer us when we call.

## PSALM 21

### JOY IN THE SALVATION OF THE LORD

*To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.*

1 The king shall have joy in Your strength, O LORD ;
And in Your salvation how greatly shall he rejoice!
2 You have given him his heart's desire,
And have not withheld the request of his lips. Selah
3 For You meet him with the blessings of goodness;
You set a crown of pure gold upon his head.
4 He asked life from You, *and* You gave *it* to him-
Length of days forever and ever.
5 His glory *is* great in Your salvation;
Honor and majesty You have placed upon him.
6 For You have made him most blessed forever;
You have made him exceedingly glad with Your presence.
7 For the king trusts in the LORD,
And through the mercy of the Most High he shall not be moved.
8 Your hand will find all Your enemies;
Your right hand will find those who hate You.
9 You shall make them as a fiery oven in the time of Your anger;
The LORD shall swallow them up in His wrath,
And the fire shall devour them.
10 Their offspring You shall destroy from the earth,
And their descendants from among the sons of men.
11 For they intended evil against You;
They devised a plot *which* they are not able *to perform.*
12 Therefore You will make them turn their back;
You will make ready *Your arrows* on Your string toward their faces.
13 Be exalted, O LORD, in Your own strength!
We will sing and praise Your power.

## PSALM 22

### THE SUFFERING, PRAISE, AND POSTERITY OF THE MESSIAH

*To the Chief Musician. Set to "The Deer of the Dawn."[a] A Psalm of David.*

1 My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?
*Why are You so* far from helping Me,
*And from* the words of My groaning?
2 O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear;
And in the night season, and am not silent.
3 But You *are* holy,
Enthroned in the praises of Israel.
4 Our fathers trusted in You;
They trusted, and You delivered them.
5 They cried to You, and were delivered;
They trusted in You, and were not ashamed.
6 But I *am* a worm, and no man;
A reproach of men, and despised by the people.
7 All those who see Me ridicule Me;
They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, *saying,*
8 "He trusted[a] in the LORD, let Him rescue Him;
Let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him!"
9 But You *are* He who took Me out of the womb;
You made Me trust *while* on My mother's breasts.
10 I was cast upon You from birth.
From My mother's womb
You *have been* My God.
11 Be not far from Me,
For trouble *is* near;
For *there is* none to help.
12 Many bulls have surrounded Me;
Strong *bulls* of Bashan have encircled Me.

13 They gape at Me *with* their mouths,
*Like* a raging and roaring lion.
14 I am poured out like water,
And all My bones are out of joint;
My heart is like wax;
It has melted within Me.
15 My strength is dried up like a potsherd,
And My tongue clings to My jaws;
You have brought Me to the dust of death.
16 For dogs have surrounded Me;
The congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced[a] My hands and My feet;
17 I can count all My bones.
They look *and* stare at Me.
18 They divide My garments among them,
And for My clothing they cast lots.
19 But You, O LORD, do not be far from Me;
O My Strength, hasten to help Me!
20 Deliver Me from the sword,
My precious *life* from the power of the dog.
21 Save Me from the lion's mouth
And from the horns of the wild oxen!
You have answered Me.
22 I will declare Your name to My brethren;
In the midst of the assembly I will praise You.
23 You who fear the LORD, praise Him!
All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him, And fear Him, all you offspring of Israel!
24 For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted;
Nor has He hidden His face from Him;
But when He cried to Him, He heard.
25 My praise *shall be* of You in the great assembly;
I will pay My vows before those who fear Him.
26 The poor shall eat and be satisfied;

Those who seek Him will praise the LORD.
Let your heart live forever!
27 All the ends of the world
Shall remember and turn to the LORD,
And all the families of the nations
Shall worship before You.[a]
28 For the kingdom *is* the LORD 's,
And He rules over the nations.
29 All the prosperous of the earth
Shall eat and worship;
All those who go down to the dust
Shall bow before Him,
Even he who cannot keep himself alive.
30 A posterity shall serve Him.
It will be recounted of the Lord to the *next* generation,
31 They will come and declare His righteousness to a people who will be born,
That He has done *this*.

**SOUL NOTE**

**The Old Rugged Cross** *(ch. 22)* This psalm written by David prophesies the crucifixion of Jesus: the ridicule He faced (22:6-8), the gruesome death on the Cross (22:14-17), and the gambling for His garments (22:18). Jesus Christ experienced agony for all of humanity. His horrible death on the Cross became the final sacrifice for sin, providing for humanity's freedom from sin. We need only accept what Jesus did on the Cross on our behalf, thank Him, and resolve to follow Him. The benefits are eternal. **Topic: Knowing Jesus**

# PSALM 23

## THE LORD THE SHEPHERD OF HIS PEOPLE

*A Psalm of David.*

1 The LORD *is* my shepherd;
I shall not want.

> The LORD is my shepherd;
> I shall not want.
> PSALM 23:1

2 He makes me to lie down in green pastures;
He leads me beside the still waters.
3 He restores my soul;
He leads me in the paths of righteousness
For His name's sake.
4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil;
For You *are* with me;
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.
5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
You anoint my head with oil;
My cup runs over.
6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
All the days of my life;
And I will dwell[a] in the house of the LORD Forever.

## SOUL NOTE

**The Gateway** *(ch. 23)* This chapter expresses confidence in God in the face of death. Even death cannot separate believers from God, for in Him death is not the end, but a gateway to eternal life. Even though we may be walking through “the valley of the shadow of death” (23:4), we need not fear. God’s goodness and mercy embrace us every step of the way. The threshold of death brings sorrow, but sorrow transforms to hope. Believers can face death without fear because God is there to greet them. **Topic: Death**

## PSALM 24

### THE KING OF GLORY AND HIS KINGDOM

*A Psalm of David.*

1 The earth *is* the LORD ’s, and all its fullness,
The world and those who dwell therein.
2 For He has founded it upon the seas,
And established it upon the waters.
3 Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD ?
Or who may stand in His holy place?
4 He who has clean hands and a pure heart,
Who has not lifted up his soul to an idol,
Nor sworn deceitfully.
5 He shall receive blessing from the LORD,
And righteousness from the God of his salvation.
6 This *is* Jacob, the generation of those who seek Him,
Who seek Your face. Selah
7 Lift up your heads, O you gates!
And be lifted up, you everlasting doors!
And the King of glory shall come in.
8 Who *is* this King of glory?
The LORD strong and mighty,
The LORD mighty in battle.
9 Lift up your heads, O you gates!
Lift up, you everlasting doors!
And the King of glory shall come in.
10 Who is this King of glory?
The LORD of hosts,
He *is* the King of glory.
Selah

## PSALM 25

### A PLEA FOR DELIVERANCE AND FORGIVENESS

*A Psalm of David.*

1 To You, O LORD, I lift up my soul.
2 O my God, I trust in You;
Let me not be ashamed; Let not my enemies triumph over me.
3 Indeed, let no one who waits on You be ashamed;
Let those be ashamed who deal
treacherously without cause.
4 Show me Your ways, O LORD ;
Teach me Your paths.
5 Lead me in Your truth and teach me,
For You *are* the God of my salvation;
On You I wait all the day.
6 Remember, O LORD, Your tender mercies
and Your lovingkindnesses,
For they *are* from of old.
7 Do not remember the sins of my youth,
nor my transgressions;
According to Your mercy remember me,
For Your goodness' sake, O LORD.
8 Good and upright *is* the LORD ;
Therefore He teaches sinners in the way.
9 The humble He guides in justice,
And the humble He teaches His way.
10 All the paths of the LORD *are* mercy and truth,
To such as keep His covenant and His testimonies.
11 For Your name's sake, O LORD,
Pardon my iniquity, for it *is* great.
12 Who *is* the man that fears the LORD ?
Him shall He[a] teach in the way He[b] chooses.

13 He himself shall dwell in prosperity,
And his descendants shall inherit the earth.
14 The secret of the LORD *is* with those who fear Him,
And He will show them His covenant.
15 My eyes *are* ever toward the LORD,
For He shall pluck my feet out of the net.
16 Turn Yourself to me, and have mercy on me,
For I *am* desolate and afflicted.
17 The troubles of my heart have enlarged;
Bring me out of my distresses!
18 Look on my affliction and my pain,
And forgive all my sins.
19 Consider my enemies, for they are many;
And they hate me with cruel hatred.
20 Keep my soul, and deliver me;
Let me not be ashamed, for I put my trust in You.
21 Let integrity and uprightness preserve me,
For I wait for You.
22 Redeem Israel, O God,
Out of all their troubles!

## PSALM 26

### A PRAYER FOR DIVINE SCRUTINY AND REDEMPTION

*A Psalm of David.*

1 Vindicate me, O LORD,
For I have walked in my integrity.
I have also trusted in the LORD ;
I shall not slip.
2 Examine me, O LORD, and prove me;
Try my mind and my heart.
3 For Your lovingkindness *is* before my eyes,
And I have walked in Your truth.
4 I have not sat with idolatrous mortals,
Nor will I go in with hypocrites.
5 I have hated the assembly of evildoers,
And will not sit with the wicked.
6 I will wash my hands in innocence;
So I will go about Your altar, O LORD,
7 That I may proclaim with the voice of thanksgiving,
And tell of all Your wondrous works.
8 LORD, I have loved the habitation of Your house,
And the place where Your glory dwells.
9 Do not gather my soul with sinners,
Nor my life with bloodthirsty men,
10 In whose hands *is* a sinister scheme,
And whose right hand is full of bribes.
11 But as for me, I will walk in my integrity;
Redeem me and be merciful to me.
12 My foot stands in an even place;
In the congregations I will bless the LORD.

## PSALM 27

### AN EXUBERANT DECLARATION OF FAITH

*A Psalm of David.*

1 The LORD *is* my light and my salvation;
Whom shall I fear?
The LORD *is* the strength of my life;
Of whom shall I be afraid?
2 When the wicked came against me
To eat up my flesh,
My enemies and foes,
They stumbled and fell.
3 Though an army may encamp against me,
My heart shall not fear;
Though war may rise against me,
In this I *will be* confident.
4 One *thing* I have desired of the LORD,
That will I seek:
That I may dwell in the house of the LORD
All the days of my life,
To behold the beauty of the LORD,
And to inquire in His temple.
5 For in the time of trouble
He shall hide me in His pavilion;
In the secret place of His tabernacle
He shall hide me;
He shall set me high upon a rock.
6 And now my head shall be lifted up
above my enemies all around me;
Therefore I will offer sacrifices of joy in His tabernacle;
I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the LORD.
7 Hear, O LORD, *when* I cry with my voice!

Have mercy also upon me, and answer me.
[8]*When You said*, “Seek My face,”
My heart said to You, “Your face, LORD, I will seek.”
[9] Do not hide Your face from me;
Do not turn Your servant away in anger;
You have been my help;
Do not leave me nor forsake me,
O God of my salvation.
[10] When my father and my mother forsake me,
Then the LORD will take care of me.
[11] Teach me Your way, O LORD,
And lead me in a smooth path, because of my enemies.
[12] Do not deliver me to the will of my adversaries;
For false witnesses have risen against me,
And such as breathe out violence.
[13]*I would have lost heart*, unless I had believed
That I would see the goodness of the LORD
In the land of the living.
[14] Wait on the LORD ; Be of good courage,
And He shall strengthen your heart;
Wait, I say, on the LORD !

Wait on the LORD ;
be of good courage, and He shall
strengthen your heart; wait,
I say, on the LORD!
PSALM 27:14

## PSALM 28

### REJOICING IN ANSWERED PRAYER

*A Psalm of David.*

1 To You I will cry, O LORD my Rock:
Do not be silent to me,
Lest, if You *are* silent to me,
I become like those who go down to the pit.
2 Hear the voice of my supplications
When I cry to You,
When I lift up my hands toward Your holy sanctuary.
3 Do not take me away with the wicked
And with the workers of iniquity,
Who speak peace to their neighbors,
But evil *is* in their hearts.
4 Give them according to their deeds,
And according to the wickedness of their endeavors;
Give them according to the work of their hands;
Render to them what they deserve.
5 Because they do not regard the works of the LORD,
Nor the operation of His hands,
He shall destroy them
And not build them up.
6 Blessed *be* the LORD,
Because He has heard the voice of my supplications!
7 The LORD *is* my strength and my shield;
My heart trusted in Him, and I am helped;
Therefore my heart greatly rejoices,
And with my song I will praise Him.
8 The LORD *is* their strength,[a]
And He *is* the saving refuge of His anointed.
9 Save Your people,

And bless Your inheritance;
Shepherd them also,
And bear them up forever.

## PSALM 29

### PRAISE TO GOD IN HIS HOLINESS AND MAJESTY

*A Psalm of David.*

1 Give unto the LORD, O you mighty ones,
Give unto the LORD glory and strength.
2 Give unto the LORD the glory due to His name;
Worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.
3 The voice of the LORD *is* over the waters;
The God of glory thunders;
The LORD *is* over many waters.
4 The voice of the LORD *is* powerful;
The voice of the LORD *is* full of majesty.
5 The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars,
Yes, the LORD splinters the cedars of Lebanon.
6 He makes them also skip like a calf,
Lebanon and Sirion like a young wild ox.
7 The voice of the LORD divides the flames of fire.
8 The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness;
The LORD shakes the Wilderness of Kadesh.
9 The voice of the LORD makes the deer give birth,
And strips the forests bare;
And in His temple everyone says, “Glory!”
10 The LORD sat *enthroned* at the Flood,
And the LORD sits as King forever.
11 The LORD will give strength to His people;
The LORD will bless His people with peace.

## PSALM 30

### THE BLESSEDNESS OF ANSWERED PRAYER

*A Psalm. A Song at the dedication*
*of the house of David.*

1 I will extol You, O LORD, for You have lifted me up,
And have not let my foes rejoice over me.
2 O LORD my God, I cried out to You,
And You healed me.
3 O LORD, You brought my soul up from the grave;
You have kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit.[a]
4 Sing praise to the LORD, you saints of His,
And give thanks at the remembrance of His holy name.[a]
5 For His anger *is but for* a moment,
His favor *is for* life;
Weeping may endure for a night,
But joy *comes* in the morning.
6 Now in my prosperity I said,
"I shall never be moved."
7 LORD, by Your favor You have made my mountain stand strong;
You hid Your face, *and* I was troubled.
8 I cried out to You, O LORD ;
And to the LORD I made supplication:
9 "What profit *is there* in my blood,
When I go down to the pit?
Will the dust praise You?
Will it declare Your truth?
10 Hear, O LORD, and have mercy on me;
LORD, be my helper!"
11 You have turned for me my mourning into dancing;
You have put off my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness,
12 To the end that *my* glory may sing praise to You and not be silent.

O LORD my God, I will give thanks to You forever.

## PSALM 31

### THE LORD A FORTRESS IN ADVERSITY

*To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.*

1 In You, O LORD, I put my trust;
Let me never be ashamed;
Deliver me in Your righteousness.
2 Bow down Your ear to me,
Deliver me speedily;
Be my rock of refuge,
A fortress of defense to save me.
3 For You *are* my rock and my fortress;
Therefore, for Your name's sake,
Lead me and guide me.
4 Pull me out of the net which they have secretly laid for me,
For You *are* my strength.
5 Into Your hand I commit my spirit;
You have redeemed me, O LORD God of truth.
6 I have hated those who regard useless idols;
But I trust in the LORD.
7 I will be glad and rejoice in Your mercy,
For You have considered my trouble;
You have known my soul in adversities,
8 And have not shut me up into the hand of the enemy;
You have set my feet in a wide place.
9 Have mercy on me, O LORD, for I am in trouble;
My eye wastes away with grief,
*Yes*, my soul and my body!
10 For my life is spent with grief,
And my years with sighing;
My strength fails because of my iniquity,
And my bones waste away.

11 I am a reproach among all my enemies,
But especially among my neighbors,
And *am* repulsive to my acquaintances;
Those who see me outside flee from me.
12 I am forgotten like a dead man, out of mind;
I am like a broken vessel.
13 For I hear the slander of many;
Fear *is* on every side;
While they take counsel together against me,
They scheme to take away my life.
14 But as for me, I trust in You, O LORD ;
I say, “You *are* my God.”
15 My times *are* in Your hand;
Deliver me from the hand of my enemies,
And from those who persecute me.
16 Make Your face shine upon Your servant;
Save me for Your mercies’ sake.
17 Do not let me be ashamed, O LORD, for I
have called upon You;
Let the wicked be ashamed;
Let them be silent in the grave.
18 Let the lying lips be put to silence,
Which speak insolent things proudly and contemptuously against the
righteous.
19 Oh, how great *is* Your goodness,
Which You have laid up for those who fear You,
*Which* You have prepared for those who trust in You
In the presence of the sons of men!
20 You shall hide them in the secret place of Your presence
From the plots of man;
You shall keep them secretly in a pavilion
From the strife of tongues.
21 Blessed *be* the LORD,
For He has shown me His marvelous kindness in a strong city!
22 For I said in my haste,

“I am cut off from before Your eyes”;
Nevertheless You heard the voice of my supplications
When I cried out to You.
23 Oh, love the LORD, all you His saints
*For* the LORD preserves the faithful,
And fully repays the proud person.
24 Be of good courage,
And He shall strengthen your heart,
All you who hope in the LORD.

## PSALM 32

### THE JOY OF FORGIVENESS

*A Psalm of David. A Contemplation.*[a]

1 Blessed *is he whose* transgression *is* forgiven,
*Whose* sin *is* covered.
2 Blessed *is* the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity,
And in whose spirit *there is* no deceit.
3 When I kept silent, my bones grew old
Through my groaning all the day long.
4 For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me;
My vitality was turned into the drought of summer. Selah
5 I acknowledged my sin to You,
And my iniquity I have not hidden.
I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,"
And You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah
6 For this cause everyone who is godly shall pray to You
In a time when You may be found;
Surely in a flood of great waters
They shall not come near him.
7 You *are* my hiding place;
You shall preserve me from trouble;
You shall surround me with songs of deliverance. Selah
8 I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;
I will guide you with My eye.
9 Do not be like the horse *or* like the mule,
*Which* have no understanding,
Which must be harnessed with bit and bridle,
Else they will not come near you.
10 Many sorrows *shall be* to the wicked;
But he who trusts in the LORD, mercy shall surround him.
11 Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, you righteous;

And shout for joy, all *you* upright in heart!

## PSALM 33

### THE SOVEREIGNTY OF THE LORD IN CREATION AND HISTORY

1 Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous!
*For* praise from the upright is beautiful.
2 Praise the LORD with the harp;
Make melody to Him with an instrument of ten strings.
3 Sing to Him a new song;
Play skillfully with a shout of joy.
4 For the word of the LORD *is* right,
And all His work *is done* in truth.
5 He loves righteousness and justice;
The earth is full of the goodness of the LORD.
6 By the word of the LORD the heavens were made,
And all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.
7 He gathers the waters of the sea together as a heap;[a]
He lays up the deep in storehouses.
8 Let all the earth fear the LORD ;
Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him.
9 For He spoke, and it was *done;*
He commanded, and it stood fast.
10 The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing;
He makes the plans of the peoples of no effect.
11 The counsel of the LORD stands forever,
The plans of His heart to all generations.
12 Blessed *is* the nation whose God *is* the LORD,
The people He has chosen as His own inheritance.
13 The LORD looks from heaven;
He sees all the sons of men.
14 From the place of His dwelling He looks
On all the inhabitants of the earth;
15 He fashions their hearts individually;

He considers all their works.
16 No king *is* saved by the multitude of an army;
A mighty man is not delivered by great strength.
17 A horse *is* a vain hope for safety;
Neither shall it deliver *any* by its great strength.
18 Behold, the eye of the LORD *is* on those who fear Him,
On those who hope in His mercy,
19 To deliver their soul from death,
And to keep them alive in famine.
20 Our soul waits for the LORD ;
He *is* our help and our shield.
21 For our heart shall rejoice in Him,
Because we have trusted in His holy name.
22 Let Your mercy, O LORD, be upon us,
Just as we hope in You.

## PSALM 34

### THE HAPPINESS OF THOSE WHO TRUST IN GOD

*A Psalm of David when he pretended*
*madness before Abimelech, who*
*drove him away, and he departed.*

1 I will bless the LORD at all times;
His praise *shall* continually *be* in my mouth.
2 My soul shall make its boast in the LORD ;
The humble shall hear *of it* and be glad.
3 Oh, magnify the LORD with me,
And let us exalt His name together.
4 I sought the LORD, and He heard me,
And delivered me from all my fears.
5 They looked to Him and were radiant,
And their faces were not ashamed.
6 This poor man cried out, and the LORD heard *him,*
And saved him out of all his troubles.
7 The angel[a] of the LORD encamps all around those who fear Him,
And delivers them.
8 Oh, taste and see that the LORD *is* good;
Blessed *is* the man *who* trusts in Him!
9 Oh, fear the LORD, you His saints!
*There is* no want to those who fear Him.
10 The young lions lack and suffer hunger;
But those who seek the LORD shall not lack any good *thing.*
11 Come, you children, listen to me;
I will teach you the fear of the LORD.
12 Who *is* the man *who* desires life,
And loves *many* days, that he may see good?
13 Keep your tongue from evil,
And your lips from speaking deceit.

14 Depart from evil and do good;
Seek peace and pursue it.
15 The eyes of the LORD *are* on the righteous,
And His ears *are open* to their cry.
16 The face of the LORD *is* against those who do evil,
To cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.
17 *The righteous* cry out, and the LORD hears,
And delivers them out of all their troubles.
18 The LORD *is* near to those who have a broken heart,
And saves such as have a contrite spirit.
19 Many *are* the afflictions of the righteous,
But the LORD delivers him out of them all.
20 He guards all his bones;
Not one of them is broken.
21 Evil shall slay the wicked,
And those who hate the righteous shall be condemned.
22 The LORD redeems the soul of His servants,
And none of those who trust in Him shall be condemned.

**KEY PASSAGE**

# TESTED FAITH

## (34:18)

Trials are inevitable. Everyone experiences problems and pain. The

Bible figuratively describes it as rain falling "on the just and on the unjust" (Matt. 5:45). Believers can look at their trials in a different light, however. They know, as this psalm says, that "the LORD is near to those who have a broken heart." Even more, however, believers can rejoice in their trials:

- "Count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience" ( James 1:2, 3).
- "You have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1:6, 7).

Through trials, God can work in our lives to make us more like Christ.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about The Trial of Rejection. See also the personality profile of Tamar-a Legacy of Trials.

## THE TRIAL OF REJECTION

SANDRA D. WILSON

(Psalm 34:18)

**L**iving in a sin-broken world is painful. Not one person will get through life without facing trials of various types, in varying degrees.

Some people face trials in their physical lives; others face trials in their family relationships or friendships; others face financial difficulties. Still others face trials and persecutions simply for being Christians. The Bible offers God's great promises for us as we face trials. James wrote, "Count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience" (James 1:2, 3). Peter wrote that believers who are "grieved by various trials" can trust that God is working through those difficulties to perfect their faith (1 Pet. 1:3-9).

One of the most painful trials human beings can experience is the feeling of being rejected, forsaken, or abandoned. The pain associated with this feeling affects many other areas of life.

## RECOGNIZING THE TRIAL OF REJECTION

Some people attempt to protect themselves from rejection by adopting an under-dependent approach to relationships. They refuse to trust anyone or to invest themselves emotionally. Others become over-dependent. They cling tenaciously to relationships to avoid feeling rejected, yet they simultaneously live in fear of it. Most people use some combination of these extremes to cope with rejection.

Following are some traits identified in people who have been wounded by rejection:

- Difficulty trusting people.
- Hypersensitivity to rejection.
- Fear of criticism and anger.
- Habitually trying to rescue needy people because they doubt that "healthy" people would choose to relate to them.
- Toleration of disrespect and even abuse.

• Difficulty trusting God and His Word.

## HEALING THE HURT OF REJECTION

*Principle 1: Cultivate Increasing Intimacy with God*
Despite his obvious failures, David was called "a man after [God's] own heart" (1 Sam. 13:14). David expressed this longing in Psalm 27:4: "One thing I have desired of the LORD ... that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD." It's no coincidence that this verse comes before verse 10: "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take care of me."

When we intentionally cultivate a spiritual environment that fosters intimacy with God, we learn to really know God, not just to know about Him. God's loyal love and eternal presence become more than just theological certainties. They become *experienced realities* in a way that anchors us when trials assail us.

*Principle 2: Cultivate Increasingly Balanced Relationships with Others* God's Word contains many relational principles that promote balanced, mutually respectful relationships. Jesus exemplified guidelines for respectful interactions with people. He didn't let people tell Him what to do (Matt. 19:14). He modeled the truth that we don't have to hide our views or values to be congenial or kind. The thought of not doing that may sound terrifying-especially if stating a different opinion exposes us to the risk of rejection by people whose approval we value. Again, Jesus models the solution to that painful problem.

*Principle 3: Cultivate Increasingly Realistic Expectations of Ourselves, Others, and God*

Jesus clarifies this principle in John 16:32, "You... will leave Me alone. And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me." Jesus' words summarize two truths that guided His relationships and that hold the key to overcoming the hurt of rejection.

The first truth is that we can't trust people completely. Jesus never put unreserved trust in people because He knew what was in their sinful hearts (John 2:24). All people deserve respect because they bear the image of God, but that respect needs to be realistic enough to know that all people are sinners. People will always disappoint us. Jesus knew that the disciples, who had just declared that they believed He came from God, would soon abandon Him.

The second truth is that dependence on God helps us handle the hurt of rejection. Jesus' confidence in His Father's love created a sense of being "alone but not alone." It's true that Jesus knew God's faithfulness within a uniquely intimate relationship. But as we follow Jesus' God-dependent way of relating, we too will be able to better handle experiences of rejection.

If we've been deeply hurt by rejection, we may face a long process of relearning how to relate to people. We'll know that our relationships are becoming healthier and more God-dependent as we increasingly:

• reach out to others from a deepening sense of fullness in Christ,

• accept the truth that others can never meet all our needs,

• recognize that we can't do that for others either,

• choose to forgive others for their inevitable failings, and

• determine to acknowledge our inevitable failings and to request forgiveness.

There is but one Source of deep healing from rejection. Only when we find ultimate acceptance and security in God can we experience personal peace, relational rest, and healing from the pain of rejection.

**IN CONCLUSION**

No matter what trials we face, God cares deeply for His children, promising, "The LORD is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth" (Ps. 145:18). Whatever difficulties come into our lives, God is near to us. He is stronger than rejection, stronger than any other trial we can experience. He is able to meet our every need.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of trials include:

- Psalm 118:22
- Isaiah 53:3
- James 1:2
- 1 Peter 1:6-9; 2:4-7

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on trials at Psalm 34:18. See also the personality profile of Tamar-a Legacy of Trials.

## PSALM 35

### THE LORD THE AVENGER OF HIS PEOPLE

*A Psalm of David.*

1 Plead my cause, O LORD, with those who strive with me;
Fight against those who fight against me.
2 Take hold of shield and buckler,
And stand up for my help.
3 Also draw out the spear,
And stop those who pursue me. Say to my soul,
"I *am* your salvation."
4 Let those be put to shame and brought to dishonor
Who seek after my life;
Let those be turned back and brought to confusion
Who plot my hurt.
5 Let them be like chaff before the wind,
And let the angel[a] of the LORD chase *them.*
6 Let their way be dark and slippery,
And let the angel of the LORD pursue them.
7 For without cause they have hidden their net for me *in* a pit,
*Which* they have dug without cause for my life.
8 Let destruction come upon him unexpectedly,
And let his net that he has hidden catch himself;
Into that very destruction let him fall.
9 And my soul shall be joyful in the LORD ;
It shall rejoice in His salvation.
10 All my bones shall say,
"LORD, who *is* like You,
Delivering the poor from him who is too strong for him,
Yes, the poor and the needy from him who plunders him?"
11 Fierce witnesses rise up;
They ask me *things* that I do not know.

12 They reward me evil for good,
*To* the sorrow of my soul.
13 But as for me, when they were sick,
My clothing *was* sackcloth;
I humbled myself with fasting;
And my prayer would return to my own heart.
14 I paced about as though *he were* my friend *or* brother;
I bowed down heavily, as one who mourns *for his* mother.
15 But in my adversity they rejoiced
And gathered together;
Attackers gathered against me,
And I did not know *it;*
They tore *at me* and did not cease;
16 With ungodly mockers at feasts
They gnashed at me with their teeth.
17 Lord, how long will You look on?
Rescue me from their destructions,
My precious *life* from the lions.
18 I will give You thanks in the great assembly;
I will praise You among many people.
19 Let them not rejoice over me who are wrongfully my enemies;
Nor let them wink with the eye who hate me without a cause.
20 For they do not speak peace,
But they devise deceitful matters
Against *the* quiet ones in the land.
21 They also opened their mouth wide against me,
*And* said, “Aha, aha!
Our eyes have seen *it.*”
22 *This* You have seen, O LORD ;
Do not keep silence.
O Lord, do not be far from me.
23 Stir up Yourself, and awake to my vindication,
To my cause, my God and my Lord.
24 Vindicate me, O LORD my God, according to Your righteousness;

And let them not rejoice over me.
25 Let them not say in their hearts, “Ah, so we would have it!”
Let them not say, “We have swallowed him up.”
26 Let them be ashamed and brought to mutual confusion
Who rejoice at my hurt;
Let them be clothed with shame and dishonor
Who exalt themselves against me.
27 Let them shout for joy and be glad,
Who favor my righteous cause;
And let them say continually,
“Let the LORD be magnified,
Who has pleasure in the prosperity of His servant.”
28 And my tongue shall speak of Your righteousness
*And* of Your praise all the day long.

## PSALM 36

### MAN'S WICKEDNESS AND GOD'S PERFECTIONS

*To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David*
*the servant of the LORD.*

1 An oracle within my heart concerning the transgression of the wicked:
*There is* no fear of God before his eyes.
2 For he flatters himself in his own eyes,
When he finds out his iniquity *and* when he hates.
3 The words of his mouth *are* wickedness and deceit;
He has ceased to be wise *and* to do good.
4 He devises wickedness on his bed;
He sets himself in a way *that is* not good;
He does not abhor evil.
5 Your mercy, O LORD, *is* in the heavens;
Your faithfulness *reaches* to the clouds.
6 Your righteousness *is* like the great mountains;
Your judgments *are* a great deep;
O LORD, You preserve man and beast.
7 How precious *is* Your lovingkindness, O God!
Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Your wings.
8 They are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of Your house,
And You give them drink from the river of Your pleasures.
9 For with You *is* the fountain of life;
In Your light we see light.
10 Oh, continue Your lovingkindness to those who know You,
And Your righteousness to the upright in heart.
11 Let not the foot of pride come against me,
And let not the hand of the wicked drive me away.
12 There the workers of iniquity have fallen;
They have been cast down and are not able to rise.

## PSALM 37

### THE HERITAGE OF THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE CALAMITY OF THE WICKED

*A Psalm of David.*

1 Do not fret because of evildoers,
Nor be envious of the workers of iniquity.
2 For they shall soon be cut down like the grass,
And wither as the green herb.
3 Trust in the LORD, and do good;
Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness.
4 Delight yourself also in the LORD,
And He shall give you the desires of your heart.
5 Commit your way to the LORD,
Trust also in Him,
And He shall bring *it* to pass.
6 He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light,
And your justice as the noonday.
7 Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him;
Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way,
Because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass.
8 Cease from anger, and forsake wrath;
Do not fret-*it* only *causes* harm.
9 For evildoers shall be cut off;
But those who wait on the LORD,
They shall inherit the earth.
10 For yet a little while and the wicked *shall be* no *more;*
Indeed, you will look carefully for his place,
But it *shall be* no *more.*
11 But the meek shall inherit the earth,
And shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.
12 The wicked plots against the just,

And gnashes at him with his teeth.
13 The Lord laughs at him,
For He sees that his day is coming.
14 The wicked have drawn the sword
And have bent their bow,
To cast down the poor and needy,
To slay those who are of upright conduct.
15 Their sword shall enter their own heart,
And their bows shall be broken.
16 A little that a righteous man has
*Is* better than the riches of many wicked.
17 For the arms of the wicked shall be broken,
But the LORD upholds the righteous.
18 The LORD knows the days of the upright,
And their inheritance shall be forever.
19 They shall not be ashamed in the evil time,
And in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.
20 But the wicked shall perish;
And the enemies of the LORD,
Like the splendor of the meadows, shall vanish.
Into smoke they shall vanish away.
21 The wicked borrows and does not repay,
But the righteous shows mercy and gives.
22 For *those* blessed by Him shall inherit the earth,
But *those* cursed by Him shall be cut off.
23 The steps of a *good* man are ordered by the LORD,
And He delights in his way.
24 Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down;
For the LORD upholds *him with* His hand.
25 I have been young, and *now* am old;
Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken,
Nor his descendants begging bread.
26 *He is* ever merciful, and lends;
And his descendants *are* blessed.

27 Depart from evil, and do good;
And dwell forevermore.
28 For the LORD loves justice,
And does not forsake His saints;
They are preserved forever,
But the descendants of the wicked shall be cut off.
29 The righteous shall inherit the land,
And dwell in it forever.
30 The mouth of the righteous speaks wisdom,
And his tongue talks of justice.
31 The law of his God *is* in his heart;
None of his steps shall slide.
32 The wicked watches the righteous,
And seeks to slay him.
33 The LORD will not leave him in his hand,
Nor condemn him when he is judged.
34 Wait on the LORD,
And keep His way,
And He shall exalt you to inherit the land;
When the wicked are cut off, you shall see *it.*
35 I have seen the wicked in great power,
And spreading himself like a native green tree.
36 Yet he passed away,[a] and behold, he *was* no *more;*
Indeed I sought him, but he could not be found.
37 Mark the blameless *man,* and observe the upright;
For the future of *that* man *is* peace.
38 But the transgressors shall be destroyed together; The future of the
wicked shall be cut off.
39 But the salvation of the righteous *is* from the LORD ;
*He is* their strength in the time of trouble.
40 And the LORD shall help them and deliver them;
He shall deliver them from the wicked,
And save them,
Because they trust in Him.

## SOUL NOTE

**Willing to Trust** *(37:3-8)* God's people need not worry about evildoers, for God promises to punish them and redeem His people. David encouraged God's people to trust in the Lord (37:3), delight themselves in Him (37:4), commit their way to Him (37:5), and wait patiently for Him to act (37:7). Trusting focuses our faith and deepens our commitment. Delighting means to experience pleasure in His presence. Committing our way to God means entrusting everything in our lives to His guidance and control. Waiting patiently is sometimes difficult, but it often is the ultimate test of our trust in God. **Topic: Trust**

## SOUL NOTE

**Don't Give Up** *(37:23, 24)* Following God, having our steps "ordered by the LORD," does not guarantee success in every endeavor. In fact, some lessons that God wants to teach can only come through failure. When God's people fall, however, He does not allow them to be "utterly cast down." Instead, He helps them back up so that they can learn what He wants to teach them and move on toward success. The only real failures are those who give up on God and refuse to get up and go on. **Topic: Failure**

## PSALM 38

### PRAYER IN TIME OF CHASTENING

*A Psalm of David. To bring to remembrance.*

1 O LORD, do not rebuke me in Your wrath,
Nor chasten me in Your hot displeasure!
2 For Your arrows pierce me deeply,
And Your hand presses me down.
3 *There is* no soundness in my flesh
Because of Your anger,
Nor *any* health in my bones
Because of my sin.
4 For my iniquities have gone over my head;
Like a heavy burden they are too heavy for me.
5 My wounds are foul *and* festering
Because of my foolishness.
6 I am troubled, I am bowed down greatly;
I go mourning all the day long.
7 For my loins are full of inflammation,
And *there is* no soundness in my flesh.
8 I am feeble and severely broken;
I groan because of the turmoil of my heart.
9 Lord, all my desire *is* before You;
And my sighing is not hidden from You.
10 My heart pants, my strength fails me;
As for the light of my eyes, it also has gone from me.
11 My loved ones and my friends stand aloof from my plague,
And my relatives stand afar off.
12 Those also who seek my life lay snares *for me;*
Those who seek my hurt speak of destruction,
And plan deception all the day long.
13 But I, like a deaf *man,* do not hear;

And *I am* like a mute *who* does not open his mouth.
14 Thus I am like a man who does not hear,
And in whose mouth *is* no response.
15 For in You, O LORD, I hope;
You will hear, O Lord my God.
16 For I said, "*Hear me*, lest they rejoice over me,
Lest, when my foot slips, they exalt *themselves* against me."
17 For I *am* ready to fall,
And my sorrow *is* continually before me.
18 For I will declare my iniquity;
I will be in anguish over my sin.
19 But my enemies *are* vigorous, *and* they are strong;
And those who hate me wrongfully have multiplied.
20 Those also who render evil for good,
They are my adversaries, because I follow *what is* good.
21 Do not forsake me, O LORD ;
O my God, be not far from me!
22 Make haste to help me,
O Lord, my salvation!

## PSALM 39

### PRAYER FOR WISDOM AND FORGIVENESS

*To the Chief Musician. To Jeduthun.*
*A Psalm of David.*

1 I said, “I will guard my ways,
Lest I sin with my tongue;
I will restrain my mouth with a muzzle,
While the wicked are before me.”
2 I was mute with silence,
I held my peace *even* from good;
And my sorrow was stirred up.
3 My heart was hot within me;
While I was musing, the fire burned.
*Then* I spoke with my tongue:
4 “LORD, make me to know my end,
And what *is* the measure of my days,
*That* I may know how frail I *am.*
5 Indeed, You have made my days *as* handbreadths,
And my age *is* as nothing before You;
Certainly every man at his best state *is* but vapor. Selah
6 Surely every man walks about like a shadow;
Surely they busy themselves in vain;
He heaps up *riches,*
And does not know who will gather them.
7 “And now, Lord, what do I wait for?
My hope *is* in You.
8 Deliver me from all my transgressions;
Do not make me the reproach of the foolish.
9 I was mute, I did not open my mouth,
Because it was You who did *it.*
10 Remove Your plague from me;

I am consumed by the blow of Your hand.
11 When with rebukes You correct man for iniquity,
You make his beauty melt away like a moth;
Surely every man *is* vapor. Selah
12 “Hear my prayer, O LORD,
And give ear to my cry;
Do not be silent at my tears;
For I *am* a stranger with You,
A sojourner, as all my fathers *were*.
13 Remove Your gaze from me, that I may regain strength,
Before I go away and am no more.”

## SOUL NOTE

**A Raindrop in the Ocean** *(39:4, 5)* People’s lifetimes are but a small measure in the hand of God; it is “as nothing” to Him, like a raindrop in the ocean. Yet our life span is all the time that God has given us here. One of the great challenges of aging is to understand that, while time is passing, God is working through us to make a difference in the world. No matter what our age, we must use our time wisely, fully, actively, and selflessly, giving thanks for each new day and seeking how God would have us serve Him. **Topic: Aging/Elderly**

## PSALM 40

### FAITH PERSEVERING IN TRIAL

*To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.*

1 I waited patiently for the LORD ;
And He inclined to me,
And heard my cry.
2 He also brought me up out of a horrible pit,
Out of the miry clay,
And set my feet upon a rock,
*And* established my steps.
3 He has put a new song in my mouth-
Praise to our God;
Many will see *it* and fear,
And will trust in the LORD.
4 Blessed *is* that man who makes the LORD his trust,
And does not respect the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies.
5 Many, O LORD my God, *are* Your wonderful works
*Which* You have done;
And Your thoughts toward us
Cannot be recounted to You in order;
*If* I would declare and speak *of them*,
They are more than can be numbered.
6 Sacrifice and offering You did not desire;
My ears You have opened.
Burnt offering and sin offering You did not require.
7 Then I said, “Behold, I come;
In the scroll of the book *it is* written of me.
8 I delight to do Your will, O my God,
And Your law *is* within my heart.”
9 I have proclaimed the good news of righteousness
In the great assembly;

Indeed, I do not restrain my lips,
O LORD, You Yourself know.
10 I have not hidden Your righteousness within my heart;
I have declared Your faithfulness and Your salvation;
I have not concealed Your lovingkindness and Your truth
From the great assembly.
11 Do not withhold Your tender mercies from me, O LORD ;
Let Your lovingkindness and Your truth continually preserve me.
12 For innumerable evils have surrounded me;
My iniquities have overtaken me, so that I am not able to look up;
They are more than the hairs of my head;
Therefore my heart fails me.
13 Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me;
O LORD, make haste to help me!
14 Let them be ashamed and brought to mutual confusion
Who seek to destroy my life; Let them be driven backward and brought to dishonor
Who wish me evil.
15 Let them be confounded because of their shame,
Who say to me, “Aha, aha!”
16 Let all those who seek You rejoice and be glad in You;
Let such as love Your salvation say continually,
“The LORD be magnified!”
17 But I *am* poor and needy;
*Yet* the LORD thinks upon me.
You *are* my help and my deliverer; Do not delay, O my God.

## PSALM 41

### THE BLESSING AND SUFFERING OF THE GODLY

*To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.*

1 Blessed *is* he who considers the poor;
The LORD will deliver him in time of trouble.
2 The LORD will preserve him and keep him alive,
*And* he will be blessed on the earth;
You will not deliver him to the will of his enemies.
3 The LORD will strengthen him on his bed of illness;
You will sustain him on his sickbed.
4 I said, "LORD, be merciful to me;
Heal my soul, for I have sinned against You."
5 My enemies speak evil of me:
"When will he die, and his name perish?"
6 And if he comes to see *me,* he speaks lies;
His heart gathers iniquity to itself;
*When* he goes out, he tells *it.*
7 All who hate me whisper together against me;
Against me they devise my hurt.
8 "An evil disease," *they say,* "clings to him.
And *now* that he lies down, he will rise up no more."
9 Even my own familiar friend in whom I trusted,
Who ate my bread,
Has lifted up *his* heel against me.
10 But You, O LORD, be merciful to me, and raise me up,
That I may repay them.
11 By this I know that You are well pleased with me,
Because my enemy does not triumph over me.
12 As for me, You uphold me in my integrity,
And set me before Your face forever.
13 Blessed *be* the LORD God of Israel From everlasting to everlasting!

Amen and Amen.

## BOOK TWO: PSALMS 42-72

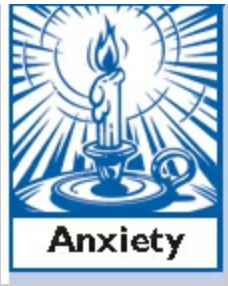
# PSALM 42

## YEARNING FOR GOD IN THE MIDST OF DISTRESSES

*To the Chief Musician. A Contemplation[a]*
*of the sons of Korah.*

1 As the deer pants for the water brooks, So pants my soul for You, O God.
2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
When shall I come and appear before God?[a]
3 My tears have been my food day and night,
While they continually say to me,
"Where *is* your God?"
4 When I remember these *things,*
I pour out my soul within me.
For I used to go with the multitude;
I went with them to the house of God,
With the voice of joy and praise,
With a multitude that kept a pilgrim feast.
5 Why are you cast down, O my soul?
And *why* are you disquieted within me?
Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him
*For* the help of His countenance.[a]
6 O my God,[a] my soul is cast down within me;
Therefore I will remember You from the land of the Jordan,
And from the heights of Hermon,
From the Hill Mizar.
7 Deep calls unto deep at the noise of Your waterfalls;
All Your waves and billows have gone over me.
8 The LORD will command His lovingkindness in the daytime,
And in the night His song *shall be* with me-

A prayer to the God of my life.
9 I will say to God my Rock,
"Why have You forgotten me?
Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?"
10 *As* with a breaking of my bones,
My enemies reproach me,
While they say to me all day long,
"Where *is* your God?"
11 Why are you cast down, O my soul?
And why are you disquieted within me?
Hope in God;
For I shall yet praise Him,
The help of my countenance and my God.




**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# DAVID: THE ANXIETIES OF A KING

# (PSALM 42)

"Tears." "Cast down." "Disquieted." David, the great king of Israel, conquering hero, and slayer of Goliath, uttered these unsettling words. Evidently this man, who as a boy equipped with just a sling and his faith had conquered a giant, also faced times of anxiety and fear. Possibly the years of running from Saul's murderous jealousy traumatized David and set him up for a lifelong struggle with anxiety. He seems obsessive in his focus on his enemies. Throughout the

psalms, he laments people's wickedness and violence and entreats God to deliver him and his nation from such evil. He wrote of feeling alone and forgotten by God: "I will say to God my Rock, 'Why have You forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?' " (Ps. 42:9). Anxiety responds, "No one can help me-not even God." There is no peace when the mind is filled with such toxic thinking.

One of David's great contributions is the record in the Psalms of his response to his fears and anxieties. Instead of turning away from God, he grabbed more tightly onto Him. Psalm 94:19 states, "In the multitude of my anxieties within me, Your comforts delight my soul." And Psalm 34:4 exclaims: "I sought the LORD, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears."

David described his fears-he didn't dismiss or deny them-and then he turned them over to God. He replaced those thoughts by recalling God's goodness, power, and faithful intervention in his life. This moved him to break out in praise and thankfulness, celebrating life and worshiping the God who had never forsaken him. Because of this faithful practice over many years, David was able to proclaim his victory over anxiety:

- "The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" (Ps. 27:1)
- "Hope in God; for I shall yet praise Him, the help of my countenance and my God" (Ps. 42:11).

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Understanding Anxiety. See also the key passage note at Philippians 4:6-13.

## SOUL NOTE

**Hope in God** *(42:5-11)* David was discouraged because he had been exiled by a jealous king and so was unable to worship in the tabernacle. His soul was “cast down” and “disquieted.” Such depressed feelings cause some people to turn away from God. Others like David, however, allow those disquieted, depressed feelings to make them “hope in God,” remembering His goodness. During such times, living by faith takes on new meaning. Depressed people must learn to trust what they cannot feel or see, knowing that “the LORD will command His lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night His song shall be with” them (42:8). **Topic: Depression**

## PSALM 43

### PRAYER TO GOD IN TIME OF TROUBLE

1 Vindicate me, O God,
And plead my cause against an ungodly nation;
Oh, deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man!
2 For You *are* the God of my strength;
Why do You cast me off?
Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?
3 Oh, send out Your light and Your truth!
Let them lead me;
Let them bring me to Your holy hill
And to Your tabernacle.
4 Then I will go to the altar of God,
To God my exceeding joy;
And on the harp I will praise You,
O God, my God.
5 Why are you cast down, O my soul?
And why are you disquieted within me?
Hope in God;
For I shall yet praise Him,
The help of my countenance and my God.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Antidepressant** *(43:5)* David repeated his words from Psalm 42:5 and 11, for this truth truly helped him during times of great difficulty.

In the final analysis, when life is difficult and trials are overwhelming, believers must “hope in God.” Such hope is the confident expectation that God will bring whatever is necessary to meet our needs. Such hope trusts that God will do what is best, no matter what we might feel. Such hope praises God for who He is and what He has done. **Topic: Hope**

# PSALM 44

## REDEMPTION REMEMBERED IN PRESENT DISHONOR

*To the Chief Musician. A Contemplation*[a]
*of the sons of Korah.*

1 We have heard with our ears, O God,
Our fathers have told us,
The deeds You did in their days,
In days of old:
2 You drove out the nations with Your hand,
But them You planted;
You afflicted the peoples, and cast them out.
3 For they did not gain possession of the land by their own sword,
Nor did their own arm save them;
But it was Your right hand, Your arm,
and the light of Your countenance,
Because You favored them.
4 You are my King, O God;[a]
Command[b] victories for Jacob.
5 Through You we will push down our enemies;
Through Your name we will trample those who rise up against us.
6 For I will not trust in my bow,
Nor shall my sword save me.
7 But You have saved us from our enemies,
And have put to shame those who hated us.
8 In God we boast all day long,
And praise Your name forever. Selah
9 But You have cast *us* off and put us to shame,
And You do not go out with our armies.
10 You make us turn back from the enemy,
And those who hate us have taken spoil for themselves.
11 You have given us up like sheep *intended* for food,

And have scattered us among the nations.
12 You sell Your people for *next to* nothing,
And are not enriched by selling them.
13 You make us a reproach to our neighbors,
A scorn and a derision to those all around us.
14 You make us a byword among the nations,
A shaking of the head among the peoples.
15 My dishonor *is* continually before me,
And the shame of my face has covered me,
16 Because of the voice of him who reproaches and reviles,
Because of the enemy and the avenger.
17 All this has come upon us;
But we have not forgotten You,
Nor have we dealt falsely with Your covenant.
18 Our heart has not turned back,
Nor have our steps departed from Your way;
19 But You have severely broken us in the place of jackals,
And covered us with the shadow of death.
20 If we had forgotten the name of our God,
Or stretched out our hands to a foreign god,
21 Would not God search this out?
For He knows the secrets of the heart.
22 Yet for Your sake we are killed all day long;
We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.
23 Awake! Why do You sleep, O Lord?
Arise! Do not cast *us* off forever.
24 Why do You hide Your face,
*And* forget our affliction and our oppression?
25 For our soul is bowed down to the dust;
Our body clings to the ground.
26 Arise for our help,
And redeem us for Your mercies' sake.

# PSALM 45

## THE GLORIES OF THE MESSIAH AND HIS BRIDE

*To the Chief Musician. Set to "The Lilies."* [a]
*A Contemplation*[b] *of the sons of Korah.*
*A Song of Love.*

1 My heart is overflowing with a good theme;
I recite my composition concerning the King;
My tongue *is* the pen of a ready writer.
2 You are fairer than the sons of men;
Grace is poured upon Your lips;
Therefore God has blessed You forever.
3 Gird Your sword upon *Your* thigh,
O Mighty One,
With Your glory and Your majesty.
4 And in Your majesty ride prosperously because of truth, humility, *and* righteousness;
And Your right hand shall teach You awesome things.
5 Your arrows *are* sharp in the heart of the King's enemies;
The peoples fall under You.
6 Your throne, O God, *is* forever and ever;
A scepter of righteousness *is* the scepter of Your kingdom.
7 You love righteousness and hate wickedness;
Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You
With the oil of gladness more than Your companions.
8 All Your garments are scented with myrrh and aloes *and* cassia,
Out of the ivory palaces, by which they have made You glad.
9 Kings' daughters *are* among Your honorable women;
At Your right hand stands the queen in gold from Ophir.
10 Listen, O daughter,
Consider and incline your ear;
Forget your own people also, and your father's house;

11 So the King will greatly desire your beauty;
Because He *is* your Lord, worship Him.
12 And the daughter of Tyre *will come* with a gift;
The rich among the people will seek your favor.
13 The royal daughter *is* all glorious within *the palace;*
Her clothing *is* woven with gold.
14 She shall be brought to the King in robes of many colors;
The virgins, her companions who follow her, shall be brought to You.
15 With gladness and rejoicing they shall be brought;
They shall enter the King’s palace.
16 Instead of Your fathers shall be Your sons,
Whom You shall make princes in all the earth.
17 I will make Your name to be remembered in all generations;
Therefore the people shall praise You forever and ever.

## PSALM 46

### GOD THE REFUGE OF HIS PEOPLE AND CONQUEROR OF THE NATIONS

*To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of the sons of Korah. A Song for Alamoth.*

1 God *is* our refuge and strength,
A very present help in trouble.
2 Therefore we will not fear,
Even though the earth be removed,
And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;
3 *Though* its waters roar *and* be troubled,
*Though* the mountains shake with its swelling.
Selah
4 *There is* a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God,
The holy *place* of the tabernacle of the Most High.
5 God *is* in the midst of her, she shall not be moved;
God shall help her, just at the break of dawn.
6 The nations raged, the kingdoms were moved;
He uttered His voice, the earth melted.
7 The LORD of hosts *is* with us;
The God of Jacob *is* our refuge.
Selah
8 Come, behold the works of the LORD,
Who has made desolations in the earth.
9 He makes wars cease to the end of the earth;
He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two;
He burns the chariot in the fire.
10 Be still, and know that I *am* God;
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth!
11 The LORD of hosts *is* with us;

The God of Jacob *is* our refuge.
Selah

**KEY PASSAGE**

# A Mighty Fortress

# (46:1)

In ancient Israel, God told the people to set aside six cities of refuge to whom a person could run for safety in a crisis (see Num. 35:9-15). This psalm pictures God as a "refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." During any crisis, God is our refuge. Even when it seems as though the world is coming apart like mountains crumbling (Ps. 46:3), God's people need not be afraid. Like the protective walls of a city, God is our refuge, surrounding and protecting us. David faced many crises, and he knew to run to God for safety. To "be still" and know that He is God (Ps. 46:10) means to rest in Him, even as the crisis swirls around us. Knowing who God is helps us to remember that He is ultimately in control.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Crises and Crisis Intervention. See also the personality profile of David and Absalom-a Crisis in the Making.

## PSALM 47

### PRAISE TO GOD, THE RULER OF THE EARTH

*To the Chief Musician. A Psalm*
*of the sons of Korah.*

1 Oh, clap your hands, all you peoples!
Shout to God with the voice of triumph!
2 For the LORD Most High *is* awesome;
*He is* a great King over all the earth.
3 He will subdue the peoples under us,
And the nations under our feet.
4 He will choose our inheritance for us,
The excellence of Jacob whom He loves.
Selah
5 God has gone up with a shout,
The LORD with the sound of a trumpet.
6 Sing praises to God, sing praises!
Sing praises to our King, sing praises!
7 For God *is* the King of all the earth;
Sing praises with understanding.
8 God reigns over the nations;
God sits on His holy throne.
9 The princes of the people have gathered together,
The people of the God of Abraham.
For the shields of the earth *belong* to God;
He is greatly exalted.

## PSALM 48

### THE GLORY OF GOD IN ZION

*A Song. A Psalm of the sons of Korah.*

1 Great *is* the LORD, and greatly to be praised
In the city of our God,
*In* His holy mountain.
2 Beautiful in elevation,
The joy of the whole earth,
*Is* Mount Zion *on* the sides of the north,
The city of the great King.
3 God *is* in her palaces;
He is known as her refuge.
4 For behold, the kings assembled,
They passed by together.
5 They saw *it, and* so they marveled;
They were troubled, they hastened away.
6 Fear took hold of them there,
*And* pain, as of a woman in birth pangs,
7 *As when* You break the ships of Tarshish With an east wind.
8 As we have heard,
So we have seen
In the city of the LORD of hosts,
In the city of our God:
God will establish it forever. Selah
9 We have thought, O God, on Your lovingkindness,
In the midst of Your temple.
10 According to Your name, O God,
So *is* Your praise to the ends of the earth;
Your right hand is full of righteousness.
11 Let Mount Zion rejoice,
Let the daughters of Judah be glad,

Because of Your judgments.
12 Walk about Zion,
And go all around her.
Count her towers;
13 Mark well her bulwarks;
Consider her palaces;
That you may tell *it* to the generation following.
14 For this *is* God,
Our God forever and ever;
He will be our guide
*Even* to death.[a]

## PSALM 49

### THE CONFIDENCE OF THE FOOLISH

*To the Chief Musician. A Psalm*
*of the sons of Korah.*

1 Hear this, all peoples;
Give ear, all inhabitants of the world,
2 Both low and high,
Rich and poor together.
3 My mouth shall speak wisdom,
And the meditation of my heart *shall give* understanding.
4 I will incline my ear to a proverb;
I will disclose my dark saying on the harp.
5 Why should I fear in the days of evil,
*When* the iniquity at my heels surrounds me?
6 Those who trust in their wealth
And boast in the multitude of their riches,
7 None *of them* can by any means redeem *his* brother,
Nor give to God a ransom for him-
8 For the redemption of their souls *is* costly,
And it shall cease forever-
9 That he should continue to live eternally,
*And* not see the Pit.
10 For he sees wise men die;
Likewise the fool and the senseless person perish,
And leave their wealth to others.
11 Their inner thought *is that* their houses *will last* forever,[a]
Their dwelling places to all generations;
They call *their* lands after their own names.
12 Nevertheless man, *though* in honor, does not remain;[a]
He is like the beasts *that* perish.
13 This is the way of those who *are* foolish,

And of their posterity who approve their sayings.
Selah
14 Like sheep they are laid in the grave;
Death shall feed on them;
The upright shall have dominion over them in the morning;
And their beauty shall be consumed in
the grave, far from their dwelling.
15 But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave,
For He shall receive me. Selah
16 Do not be afraid when one becomes rich,
When the glory of his house is increased;
17 For when he dies he shall carry nothing away;
His glory shall not descend after him.
18 Though while he lives he blesses himself
(For *men* will praise you when you do well for yourself),
19 He shall go to the generation of his fathers;
They shall never see light.
20 A man *who is* in honor, yet does not understand,
Is like the beasts *that* perish.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Secure** *(49:1-10)* People can become insecure when they focus on the differences between themselves and others. There will always be someone more wealthy, more good-looking, more intelligent. But eventually life in this world will be over, and those differences will be meaningless. The only difference that ultimately matters is whether people have trusted Christ for salvation. When we feel like we don't measure up, we must look at ourselves as God sees us. If we have

trusted Christ for salvation, we are eternally secure. **Topic: Insecurity**

## PSALM 50

### GOD THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGE

*A Psalm of Asaph.*

1 The Mighty One, God the LORD,
Has spoken and called the earth
From the rising of the sun to its going down.
2 Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty,
God will shine forth.
3 Our God shall come, and shall not keep silent;
A fire shall devour before Him,
And it shall be very tempestuous all around Him.
4 He shall call to the heavens from above,
And to the earth, that He may judge His people:
5 "Gather My saints together to Me,
Those who have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice."
6 Let the heavens declare His righteousness,
For God Himself *is* Judge.
Selah
7 "Hear, O My people, and I will speak,
O Israel, and I will testify against you;
I *am* God, your God!
8 I will not rebuke you for your sacrifices
Or your burnt offerings,
*Which are* continually before Me.
9 I will not take a bull from your house,
*Nor* goats out of your folds.
10 For every beast of the forest *is* Mine,
*And* the cattle on a thousand hills.
11 I know all the birds of the mountains,
And the wild beasts of the field *are* Mine.
12 "If I were hungry, I would not tell you;

For the world *is* Mine, and all its fullness.
13 Will I eat the flesh of bulls,
Or drink the blood of goats?

> “Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you,
> and you shall glorify Me.”
> PSALM 50:15

14 Offer to God thanksgiving,
And pay your vows to the Most High.
15 Call upon Me in the day of trouble;
I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me.”
16 But to the wicked God says:
“What *right* have you to declare My statutes,
Or take My covenant in your mouth,
17 Seeing you hate instruction
And cast My words behind you?
18 When you saw a thief, you consented[a]
with him, And have been a partaker with adulterers.
19 You give your mouth to evil,
And your tongue frames deceit.
20 You sit *and* speak against your brother;
You slander your own mother’s son.
21 These *things* you have done, and I kept silent;
You thought that I was altogether like you;
*But* I will rebuke you,
And set *them* in order before your eyes.
22 “Now consider this, you who forget God,
Lest I tear *you* in pieces,
And *there be* none to deliver:
23 Whoever offers praise glorifies Me;
And to him who orders *his* conduct *aright*
I will show the salvation of God.”

## PSALM 51

### A PRAYER OF REPENTANCE

*To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David*
*when Nathan the prophet went to him, after*
*he had gone in to Bathsheba.*

1 Have mercy upon me, O God,
According to Your lovingkindness;
According to the multitude of Your tender mercies,
Blot out my transgressions.
2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
And cleanse me from my sin.
3 For I acknowledge my transgressions,
And my sin *is* always before me.
4 Against You, You only, have I sinned,
And done *this* evil in Your sight-
That You may be found just when You speak,[a]
*And* blameless when You judge.
5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,
And in sin my mother conceived me.
6 Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts,
And in the hidden *part* You will make
me to know wisdom.
7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
8 Make me hear joy and gladness,
*That* the bones You have broken may rejoice.
9 Hide Your face from my sins,
And blot out all my iniquities.
10 Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.
11 Do not cast me away from Your presence,

And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.
12 Restore to me the joy of Your salvation,
And uphold me *by Your* generous Spirit.
13 *Then* I will teach transgressors Your ways,
And sinners shall be converted to You.
14 Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God,
The God of my salvation,
*And* my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness.
15 O Lord, open my lips,
And my mouth shall show forth Your praise.
16 For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give *it;*
You do not delight in burnt offering.
17 The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit,
A broken and a contrite heart-
These, O God, You will not despise.
18 Do good in Your good pleasure to Zion;
Build the walls of Jerusalem.
19 Then You shall be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness,
With burnt offering and whole burnt offering;
Then they shall offer bulls on Your altar.

## SOUL NOTE

**Cleansed** *(ch. 51)* David wrote this psalm after he had been confronted about his sin with Bathsheba. Though sins may differ in kind, they do not differ much in degree when we consider that any sin ruins a person's relationship with God and must be confessed. David confessed his sin and cried out to God to cleanse him. He had a "broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart" (51:17). Genuine

repentance begins with the broken spirit and results in changed behavior. Repentant people confess the sin, ask for God's forgiveness, and then remove the sin from their lives. **Topic: Repentance**

## THE BLESSING OF A REPENTANT HEART

E. GLENN WAGNER

(Psalm 51)

**F**rom naughty children to sneaky politicians, nobody likes to get caught. When people deny sin, hide it, or blame someone or something outside of themselves, their sin will eventually consume and drain them. David wrote, "When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long.... My vitality was turned into the drought of summer" (Ps. 32:3, 4).

### A STORY OF SIN AND REPENTANCE

After King David committed adultery with Bathsheba and she became pregnant, he tried to cover his mistake by summoning her husband, Uriah, from the battlefield. However, the plan didn't work because of Uriah's integrity. Uriah refused to take comfort with his wife while his fellow soldiers were suffering the hardships of battle. So David sent Uriah to the front lines in order to make sure that he

would be killed in combat (2 Sam. 11). David's secret was safe, but only for the moment. God later sent Nathan the prophet to confront the king about his sin. Nathan's stinging rebuke exposed the king's sin. Faced with the truth, David acknowledged his sin and repented immediately. In time, David discovered the blessing of repentance.

In Psalm 51, written after his encounter with Nathan, David acknowledged that his sin was an offense against God's standard of righteousness and that he needed to repent. David begged for God's mercy on the basis of God's own lovingkindness, and because of the history of mercies God had shown so many times before. David asked God to wash him and make him clean. His plea was that he knew he had sinned, and he knew the sin was ultimately against God Himself. He knew full well that God is perfect and blameless, and therefore the perfect source of mercy for a blameworthy sinner.

## RECOGNIZING SIN

Repentance begins with recognizing sin. That occurs through the process of people's conscience moving them to understand that they have done wrong. It can also occur through the words of another person (such as Nathan to King David), or through reading God's Word. When sin is revealed, sorrow is a common response. But sorrow alone cannot bring forgiveness and set people free. Confession may be good for the soul, but only confession that leads to genuine repentance has lasting results. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 7:10, "For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation." Godly sorrow results in conviction. Because sin separates people from God, He wants to help them deal with sin when it occurs. Believers who are sensitive to God's guidance will become sensitive to their own sins, for God will reveal their sins to them.

Christians are set free from the power of sin through repentance. They still struggle with sin (Rom. 7:15-20), but they are able to recognize their sin, repent, and restore their relationship with God.

## REPENTING FROM SIN

Repentance releases people from the power of sin in their lives. Repentance strengthens people's relationships with God and with others. Repentance brings healing and sets people free. Genuine repentance occurs only when people accept responsibility for their wrong choices and actions and confess their sin to God. In this way, nothing is hidden, nothing is held back. In the process of repentance, sin is abandoned and righteousness is embraced. David knew that true repentance would have to go beyond formalities like sacrifices and burnt offerings. "The sacrifices of God," said David, "are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart-these, O God, You will not despise" (Ps. 51:16, 17).

When repentance is genuine, God can use our humility to reach and teach others. Out of personal brokenness, we, as repentant sinners who have been restored, are able to instruct others on the path to repentance. "Then I will teach transgressors Your ways," said David, "and sinners shall be converted to You." If God would deliver him from the guilt of bloodshed, David promised that his tongue would sing aloud of God's righteousness (Ps. 51:13, 14).

At times people refuse to repent because their hearts are hard. But who are they trying to fool? "Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?"

(Rom. 2:4). Out of His kindness, God calls people to repent and turn from sin. In His patience, He waits for them to respond. It is not God's plan for anyone to perish apart from Him, and He patiently waits for people to respond to His grace (2 Pet. 3:9).

## GOD'S REMEDY FOR SIN

Sin is a self-inflicted wound to the soul. God's remedy for sin is to bring it into the open-through confession and repentance-so that it can

be cleansed and healed. Repentance brings life to the soul by removing every impediment from a person's relationship to God. The key is not that we must keep tabs on every sin and be sure to confess each one by name in order to "be clean." The key is that we have an understanding of our basic sinfulness and an attitude of openness to God whereby, when we sin and He reveals it to us, we are quick to repent and change our ways.

We can succumb to the deceptions of sin and reap death as a result, or we can confess our sin in godly repentance and be purified by our heavenly Father. When we allow God to purify our hearts, the result is joy, gladness, and an unhindered relationship with Him.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of repentance include:

- Ezekiel 33:10-16
- Matthew 9:13
- Luke 3:8; 13:1-8; 15:7, 10; 17:3, 4; 24:44-49
- Acts 3:19; 11:18; 26:20
- 1 John 1:9

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on repentance at 2 Corinthians 7:7-10.

## PSALM 52

### THE END OF THE WICKED AND THE PEACE OF THE GODLY

*To the Chief Musician. A Contemplation[a]*
*of David when Doeg the Edomite went and*
*told Saul, and said to him, "David has*
*gone to the house of Ahimelech."*

1 Why do you boast in evil, O mighty man?
The goodness of God *endures* continually.
2 Your tongue devises destruction,
Like a sharp razor, working deceitfully.
3 You love evil more than good,
Lying rather than speaking righteousness.
Selah
4 You love all devouring words,
*You* deceitful tongue.
5 God shall likewise destroy you forever;
He shall take you away, and pluck you out of *your* dwelling place,
And uproot you from the land of the living.
Selah
6 The righteous also shall see and fear,
And shall laugh at him, *saying,*
7 "Here is the man *who* did not make God his strength,
But trusted in the abundance of his riches,
*And* strengthened himself in his wickedness."
8 But I *am* like a green olive tree in the house of God;
I trust in the mercy of God forever and ever.
9 I will praise You forever,
Because You have done *it;*
And in the presence of Your saints
I will wait on Your name, for *it is* good.

## PSALM 53

### FOLLY OF THE GODLESS, AND THE RESTORATION OF ISRAEL

*To the Chief Musician. Set to "Mahalath."*
*A Contemplation[a] of David.*

1 The fool has said in his heart,
"*There is* no God."
They are corrupt, and have done abominable iniquity;
*There is* none who does good.
2 God looks down from heaven upon the children of men,
To see if there are *any* who understand, who seek God.
3 Every one of them has turned aside;
They have together become corrupt;
*There is* none who does good,
No, not one.
4 Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge,
Who eat up my people *as* they eat bread,
And do not call upon God?
5 There they are in great fear
*Where* no fear was,
For God has scattered the bones of him
who encamps against you;
You have put *them* to shame, Because God has despised them.
6 Oh, that the salvation of Israel would come out of Zion!
When God brings back the captivity of His people,
Let Jacob rejoice *and* Israel be glad.

## PSALM 54

### ANSWERED PRAYER FOR DELIVERANCE FROM ADVERSARIES

*To the Chief Musician. With stringed instruments.[a] A Contemplation[b] of David when the Ziphites went and said to Saul, "Is David not hiding with us?"*

1 Save me, O God, by Your name,
And vindicate me by Your strength.
2 Hear my prayer, O God;
Give ear to the words of my mouth.
3 For strangers have risen up against me,
And oppressors have sought after my life;
They have not set God before them.
Selah
4 Behold, God *is* my helper;
The Lord *is* with those who uphold my life.
5 He will repay my enemies for their evil.
Cut them off in Your truth.
6 I will freely sacrifice to You;
I will praise Your name, O LORD, for *it is* good.
7 For He has delivered me out of all trouble;
And my eye has seen *its desire* upon my enemies.

## PSALM 55

### TRUST IN GOD CONCERNING THE TREACHERY OF FRIENDS

*To the Chief Musician. With stringed instruments.[a] A Contemplation[b] of David.*

1 Give ear to my prayer, O God,
And do not hide Yourself from my supplication.
2 Attend to me, and hear me;
I am restless in my complaint, and moan noisily,
3 Because of the voice of the enemy,
Because of the oppression of the wicked;
For they bring down trouble upon me,
And in wrath they hate me.
4 My heart is severely pained within me,
And the terrors of death have fallen upon me.
5 Fearfulness and trembling have come upon me,
And horror has overwhelmed me.
6 So I said, “Oh, that I had wings like a dove!
I would fly away and be at rest.
7 Indeed, I would wander far off,
*And* remain in the wilderness.
Selah
8 I would hasten my escape
From the windy storm *and* tempest.”
9 Destroy, O Lord, *and* divide their tongues,
For I have seen violence and strife in the city.
10 Day and night they go around it on its walls;
Iniquity and trouble *are* also in the midst of it.
11 Destruction *is* in its midst;
Oppression and deceit do not depart from its streets.
12 For *it is* not an enemy *who* reproaches me;

Then I could bear *it.*
Nor *is it* one *who* hates me who has exalted *himself* against me;
Then I could hide from him.
13 But *it was* you, a man my equal,
My companion and my acquaintance.
14 We took sweet counsel together,
*And* walked to the house of God in the throng.
15 Let death seize them;
Let them go down alive into hell, For wickedness *is* in their dwellings
*and* among them.
16 As for me, I will call upon God,
And the LORD shall save me.
17 Evening and morning and at noon
I will pray, and cry aloud,
And He shall hear my voice.
18 He has redeemed my soul in peace from
the battle *that was* against me,
For there were many against me.
19 God will hear, and afflict them,
Even He who abides from of old.
Selah
Because they do not change,
Therefore they do not fear God.
20 He has put forth his hands against those who were at peace with him;
He has broken his covenant.
21 *The words* of his mouth were smoother than butter,
But war *was* in his heart;
His words were softer than oil,
Yet they *were* drawn swords.
22 Cast your burden on the LORD,
And He shall sustain you;
He shall never permit the righteous to be moved.

Cast your burden on the LORD, and
He shall sustain you; He shall never

permit the righteous to be moved.
PSALM 55:22

23 But You, O God, shall bring them down to the pit of destruction;
Bloodthirsty and deceitful men shall not live out half their days;
But I will trust in You.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Heard** *(55:17, 22)* God always hears our cries. Prayer is to be a constant expression of the human soul-seeking God “evening and morning and at noon.” In prayer, we can cast our burdens on the Lord, knowing that He will sustain us. Prayer opens heaven’s doors. There are many kinds of prayers-thanksgiving, confession, intercession, supplication, adoration. There are many ways to pray-alone, with a few others, in a large group, silently, aloud, even in song. God promises that however we pray, He will hear and sustain us. **Topic: Prayer**

## PSALM 56

### PRAYER FOR RELIEF FROM TORMENTORS

*To the Chief Musician. Set to "The Silent Dove*
*in Distant Lands."[a] A Michtam*
*of David when the Philistines*
*captured him in Gath.*

1 Be merciful to me, O God, for man would swallow me up;
Fighting all day he oppresses me.
2 My enemies would hound *me* all day,
For *there are* many who fight against me, O Most High.
3 Whenever I am afraid,
I will trust in You.
4 In God (I will praise His word),
In God I have put my trust;
I will not fear.
What can flesh do to me?
5 All day they twist my words;
All their thoughts *are* against me for evil.
6 They gather together,
They hide, they mark my steps,
When they lie in wait for my life.
7 Shall they escape by iniquity?
In anger cast down the peoples, O God!
8 You number my wanderings;
Put my tears into Your bottle;
*Are they* not in Your book?
9 When I cry out *to You*,
Then my enemies will turn back;
This I know, because God *is* for me.
10 In God (I will praise *His* word),
In the LORD (I will praise *His* word),

[11] In God I have put my trust;
I will not be afraid.
What can man do to me?
[12] Vows *made* to You *are binding* upon me, O God;
I will render praises to You,
[13] For You have delivered my soul from death.
*Have You* not *kept* my feet from falling,
That I may walk before God
In the light of the living?

## PSALM 57

### PRAYER FOR SAFETY FROM ENEMIES

*To the Chief Musician. Set to "Do Not Destroy."* [a] *A Michtam of David when he fled from Saul into the cave.*

1 Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me!
For my soul trusts in You;
And in the shadow of Your wings I will make my refuge,
Until *these* calamities have passed by.
2 I will cry out to God Most High,
To God who performs *all things* for me.
3 He shall send from heaven and save me;
He reproaches the one who would swallow me up.
Selah
God shall send forth His mercy and His truth.
4 My soul *is* among lions;
I lie *among* the sons of men
Who are set on fire,
Whose teeth *are* spears and arrows,
And their tongue a sharp sword.
5 Be exalted, O God, above the heavens;
*Let* Your glory *be* above all the earth.
6 They have prepared a net for my steps;
My soul is bowed down;
They have dug a pit before me;
Into the midst of it they *themselves* have fallen.
Selah
7 My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast;
I will sing and give praise.
8 Awake, my glory!
Awake, lute and harp!

I will awaken the dawn.
9 I will praise You, O Lord, among the peoples;
I will sing to You among the nations.
10 For Your mercy reaches unto the heavens,
And Your truth unto the clouds.
11 Be exalted, O God, above the heavens;
*Let* Your glory *be* above all the earth.

## PSALM 58

### THE JUST JUDGMENT OF THE WICKED

*To the Chief Musician.*
*Set to "Do Not Destroy."*[a]
*A Michtam of David.*

1 Do you indeed speak righteousness, you silent ones?
Do you judge uprightly, you sons of men?
2 No, in heart you work wickedness;
You weigh out the violence of your hands in the earth.
3 The wicked are estranged from the womb;
They go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies.
4 Their poison *is* like the poison of a serpent;
*They are* like the deaf cobra *that* stops its ear,
5 Which will not heed the voice of charmers,
Charming ever so skillfully.
6 Break their teeth in their mouth, O God!
Break out the fangs of the young lions, O LORD !
7 Let them flow away as waters *which* run continually;
*When* he bends *his bow,*
Let his arrows be as if cut in pieces.
8 *Let them be* like a snail which melts away as it goes,
*Like* a stillborn child of a woman, that they may not see the sun.
9 Before your pots can feel *the burning* thorns,
He shall take them away as with a whirlwind,
As in His living and burning wrath.
10 The righteous shall rejoice when he sees the vengeance;
He shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked,
11 So that men will say,
"Surely *there is* a reward for the righteous;
Surely He is God who judges in the earth."

## PSALM 59

### THE ASSURED JUDGMENT OF THE WICKED

*To the Chief Musician. Set to "Do Not Destroy."[a]*
*A Michtam of David when Saul sent men, and*
*they watched the house in order to kill him.*

1 Deliver me from my enemies, O my God;
Defend me from those who rise up against me.
2 Deliver me from the workers of iniquity,
And save me from bloodthirsty men.
3 For look, they lie in wait for my life;
The mighty gather against me,
Not *for* my transgression nor *for* my sin, O LORD.
4 They run and prepare themselves through no fault *of mine.*
Awake to help me, and behold!
5 You therefore, O LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel,
Awake to punish all the nations;
Do not be merciful to any wicked transgressors.
Selah
6 At evening they return,
They growl like a dog,
And go all around the city.
7 Indeed, they belch with their mouth;
Swords are in their lips;
For they say, "Who hears?"
8 But You, O LORD, shall laugh at them;
You shall have all the nations in derision.
9 I will wait for You, O You his Strength;[a]
For God is my defense.
10 My God of mercy[a] shall come to meet me;
God shall let me see my desire on my enemies.
11 Do not slay them, lest my people forget;

Scatter them by Your power,
And bring them down,
O Lord our shield.
12 *For* the sin of their mouth *and* the words of their lips,
Let them even be taken in their pride,
And for the cursing and lying *which* they speak.
13 Consume *them* in wrath, consume *them,*
That they *may* not *be;*
And let them know that God rules in Jacob
To the ends of the earth.
Selah
14 And at evening they return,
They growl like a dog,
And go all around the city.
15 They wander up and down for food,
And howl[a] if they are not satisfied.
16 But I will sing of Your power;
Yes, I will sing aloud of Your mercy in the morning;
For You have been my defense
And refuge in the day of my trouble.
17 To You, O my Strength, I will sing praises;
For God *is* my defense,
My God of mercy.

# PSALM 60

## URGENT PRAYER FOR THE RESTORED FAVOR OF GOD

*To the Chief Musician. Set to "Lily of the Testimony."* [a] *A Michtam of David. For teaching. When he fought against Mesopotamia and Syria of Zobah, and Joab returned and killed twelve thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt.*

1 O God, You have cast us off;
You have broken us down;
You have been displeased;
Oh, restore us again!
2 You have made the earth tremble;
You have broken it;
Heal its breaches, for it is shaking.
3 You have shown Your people hard things;
You have made us drink the wine of confusion.
4 You have given a banner to those who fear You,
That it may be displayed because of the truth. Selah
5 That Your beloved may be delivered,
Save *with* Your right hand, and hear me.
6 God has spoken in His holiness:
"I will rejoice;
I will divide Shechem
And measure out the Valley of Succoth.
7 Gilead *is* Mine, and Manasseh *is* Mine;
Ephraim also *is* the helmet for My head;
Judah *is* My lawgiver.
8 Moab *is* My washpot;
Over Edom I will cast My shoe;
Philistia, shout in triumph because of Me."
9 Who will bring me *to* the strong city?
Who will lead me to Edom?

10 *Is it* not You, O God, *who* cast us off?
And You, O God, *who* did not go out with our armies?
11 Give us help from trouble,
For the help of man *is* useless.
12 Through God we will do valiantly,
For *it is* He *who* shall tread down our enemies.[a]

## PSALM 61

### ASSURANCE OF GOD'S ETERNAL PROTECTION

*To the Chief Musician. On a stringed instrument.[a] A Psalm of David.*

1 Hear my cry, O God;
Attend to my prayer.
2 From the end of the earth I will cry to You,
When my heart is overwhelmed;
Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.
3 For You have been a shelter for me,
A strong tower from the enemy.
4 I will abide in Your tabernacle forever;
I will trust in the shelter of Your wings.
Selah
5 For You, O God, have heard my vows;
You have given *me* the heritage of those
who fear Your name.
6 You will prolong the king's life,
His years as many generations.
7 He shall abide before God forever.
Oh, prepare mercy and truth, *which* may preserve him!
8 So I will sing praise to Your name forever,
That I may daily perform my vows.

## PSALM 62

### A CALM RESOLVE TO WAIT FOR THE SALVATION OF GOD

*To the Chief Musician. To Jeduthun.*
*A Psalm of David.*

1 Truly my soul silently *waits* for God;
From Him *comes* my salvation.
2 He only *is* my rock and my salvation;
*He is* my defense;
I shall not be greatly moved.
3 How long will you attack a man?
You shall be slain, all of you,
Like a leaning wall and a tottering fence.
4 They only consult to cast *him* down from his high position;
They delight in lies;
They bless with their mouth,
But they curse inwardly.
Selah
5 My soul, wait silently for God alone,
For my expectation *is* from Him.
6 He only *is* my rock and my salvation;
*He is* my defense;
I shall not be moved.
7 In God *is* my salvation and my glory;
The rock of my strength,
*And* my refuge, *is* in God.
8 Trust in Him at all times, you people;
Pour out your heart before Him;
God *is* a refuge for us.
Selah
9 Surely men of low degree *are* a vapor,

Men of high degree *are* a lie;
If they are weighed on the scales,
They *are* altogether *lighter* than vapor.
10 Do not trust in oppression,
Nor vainly hope in robbery;
If riches increase,
Do not set *your* heart *on them.*
11 God has spoken once,
Twice I have heard this:
That power *belongs* to God.
12 Also to You, O Lord, *belongs* mercy;
For You render to each one according to his work.

## PSALM 63

### JOY IN THE FELLOWSHIP OF GOD

*A Psalm of David when he was*
*in the wilderness of Judah.*

1 O God, You *are* my God;
Early will I seek You;
My soul thirsts for You;
My flesh longs for You
In a dry and thirsty land
Where there is no water.
2 So I have looked for You in the sanctuary,
To see Your power and Your glory.
3 Because Your lovingkindness *is* better than life,
My lips shall praise You.
4 Thus I will bless You while I live;
I will lift up my hands in Your name.
5 My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness,
And my mouth shall praise *You* with joyful lips.
6 When I remember You on my bed,
I meditate on You in the *night* watches.
7 Because You have been my help,
Therefore in the shadow of Your wings I will rejoice.
8 My soul follows close behind You;
Your right hand upholds me.
9 But those *who* seek my life, to destroy *it,*
Shall go into the lower parts of the earth.
10 They shall fall by the sword;
They shall be a portion for jackals.
11 But the king shall rejoice in God;
Everyone who swears by Him shall glory;
But the mouth of those who speak lies shall be stopped.

## PSALM 64

### OPPRESSED BY THE WICKED BUT REJOICING IN THE LORD

*To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.*

1 Hear my voice, O God, in my meditation;
Preserve my life from fear of the enemy.
2 Hide me from the secret plots of the wicked,
From the rebellion of the workers of iniquity,
3 Who sharpen their tongue like a sword,
And bend *their bows to shoot* their
arrows-bitter words,
4 That they may shoot in secret at the blameless;
Suddenly they shoot at him and do not fear.
5 They encourage themselves *in* an evil matter;
They talk of laying snares secretly;
They say, "Who will see them?"
6 They devise iniquities:
"We have perfected a shrewd scheme."
Both the inward thought and the heart of man are deep.
7 But God shall shoot at them *with* an arrow;
Suddenly they shall be wounded.
8 So He will make them stumble over their own tongue;
All who see them shall flee away.
9 All men shall fear,
And shall declare the work of God;
For they shall wisely consider His doing.
10 The righteous shall be glad in the LORD,
and trust in Him.
And all the upright in heart shall glory.

## PSALM 65

### PRAISE TO GOD FOR HIS SALVATION AND PROVIDENCE

*To the Chief Musician. A Psalm*
*of David. A Song.*

1 Praise is awaiting You, O God, in Zion;
And to You the vow shall be performed.
2 O You who hear prayer,
To You all flesh will come.
3 Iniquities prevail against me;
*As for* our transgressions,
You will provide atonement for them.
4 Blessed *is the man* You choose,
And cause to approach *You*,
*That* he may dwell in Your courts.
We shall be satisfied with the goodness of Your house,
Of Your holy temple.
5 *By* awesome deeds in righteousness You will answer us,
O God of our salvation,
*You who are* the confidence of all the ends of the earth,
And of the far-off seas;
6 Who established the mountains by His strength,
*Being* clothed with power;
7 You who still the noise of the seas,
The noise of their waves, And the tumult of the peoples.
8 They also who dwell in the farthest parts are afraid of Your signs;
You make the outgoings of the morning and evening rejoice.
9 You visit the earth and water it,
You greatly enrich it;
The river of God is full of water;
You provide their grain,

For so You have prepared it.
10 You water its ridges abundantly,
You settle its furrows;
You make it soft with showers,
You bless its growth.
11 You crown the year with Your goodness,
And Your paths drip *with* abundance.
12 They drop *on* the pastures of the wilderness,
And the little hills rejoice on every side.
13 The pastures are clothed with flocks;
The valleys also are covered with grain;
They shout for joy, they also sing.

## PSALM 66

### PRAISE TO GOD FOR HIS AWESOME WORKS

*To the Chief Musician. A Song.*
*A Psalm.*

1 Make a joyful shout to God, all the earth!
2 Sing out the honor of His name;
Make His praise glorious.
3 Say to God,
"How awesome are Your works!
Through the greatness of Your power
Your enemies shall submit themselves to You.
4 All the earth shall worship You
And sing praises to You;
They shall sing praises *to* Your name."
Selah
5 Come and see the works of God;
*He is* awesome *in His* doing toward the sons of men.
6 He turned the sea into dry *land;*
They went through the river on foot.
There we will rejoice in Him.
7 He rules by His power forever;
His eyes observe the nations;
Do not let the rebellious exalt themselves.
Selah
8 Oh, bless our God, you peoples!
And make the voice of His praise to be heard,
9 Who keeps our soul among the living,
And does not allow our feet to be moved.
10 For You, O God, have tested us;
You have refined us as silver is refined.
11 You brought us into the net;

You laid affliction on our backs.
12 You have caused men to ride over our heads;
We went through fire and through water;
But You brought us out to rich *fulfillment.*
13 I will go into Your house with burnt offerings;
I will pay You my vows,
14 Which my lips have uttered
And my mouth has spoken when I was in trouble.
15 I will offer You burnt sacrifices of fat animals,
With the sweet aroma of rams;
I will offer bulls with goats. Selah
16 Come *and* hear, all you who fear God,
And I will declare what He has done for my soul.
17 I cried to Him with my mouth,
And He was extolled with my tongue.
18 If I regard iniquity in my heart,
The Lord will not hear.
19 *But* certainly God has heard *me;*
He has attended to the voice of my prayer.
20 Blessed *be* God,
Who has not turned away my prayer,
Nor His mercy from me!

**SOUL NOTE**

**Refining Fire** *(66:10)* Silver ore must be refined by fire in order to remove its impurities. Every time the silver is heated and the dross is removed, the metal becomes more and more purified. In like manner, the fire of trials purges sin, burning away the lusts and impurities that pollute people's lives. Although unpleasant, suffering often removes

the impurities from our lives and helps us grow toward perfection. God refines us “as silver is refined” so that we can reflect His glory.
**Topic: Suffering**

# PSALM 67

## AN INVOCATION AND A DOXOLOGY

*To the Chief Musician. On stringed*
*instruments.[a] A Psalm. A Song.*

1 God be merciful to us and bless us,
*And* cause His face to shine upon us,
Selah

> God be merciful to us and bless us,
> and cause His face to shine upon us.
> PSALM 67:1

2 That Your way may be known on earth,
Your salvation among all nations.
3 Let the peoples praise You, O God;
Let all the peoples praise You.
4 Oh, let the nations be glad and sing for joy!
For You shall judge the people righteously,
And govern the nations on earth.
Selah
5 Let the peoples praise You, O God;
Let all the peoples praise You.
6 *Then* the earth shall yield her increase;
God, our own God, shall bless us.
7 God shall bless us,
And all the ends of the earth shall fear Him.

## PSALM 68

### THE GLORY OF GOD IN HIS GOODNESS TO ISRAEL

*To the Chief Musician. A Psalm*
*of David. A Song.*

1 Let God arise,
Let His enemies be scattered;
Let those also who hate Him flee before Him.
2 As smoke is driven away,
So drive *them* away;
As wax melts before the fire,
*So* let the wicked perish at the presence of God.
3 But let the righteous be glad;
Let them rejoice before God;
Yes, let them rejoice exceedingly.
4 Sing to God, sing praises to His name;
Extol Him who rides on the clouds,[a]
By His name YAH,
And rejoice before Him.
5 A father of the fatherless, a defender of widows,
*Is* God in His holy habitation.
6 God sets the solitary in families;
He brings out those who are bound into prosperity;
But the rebellious dwell in a dry *land.*
7 O God, when You went out before Your people,
When You marched through the wilderness,
Selah
8 The earth shook;
The heavens also dropped *rain* at the presence of God;
Sinai itself *was moved* at the presence of
God, the God of Israel.

9 You, O God, sent a plentiful rain,
Whereby You confirmed Your inheritance,
When it was weary.
10 Your congregation dwelt in it;
You, O God, provided from Your goodness for the poor.
11 The Lord gave the word;
Great *was* the company of those who proclaimed *it:*
12 "Kings of armies flee, they flee,
And she who remains at home divides the spoil.
13 Though you lie down among the sheepfolds,
*You will be* like the wings of a dove covered with silver,
And her feathers with yellow gold."
14 When the Almighty scattered kings in it,
It was *white* as snow in Zalmon.
15 A mountain of God *is* the mountain of Bashan;
A mountain *of many* peaks *is* the mountain of Bashan.
16 Why do you fume with envy, you mountains of *many* peaks?
*This is* the mountain *which* God desires to dwell in;
Yes, the LORD will dwell *in it* forever.
17 The chariots of God *are* twenty thousand,
*Even* thousands of thousands;
The Lord is among them *as in* Sinai, in the Holy *Place.*
18 You have ascended on high,
You have led captivity captive;
You have received gifts among men,
Even *from* the rebellious,
That the LORD God might dwell *there.*
19 Blessed *be* the Lord,
*Who* daily loads us *with benefits,*
The God of our salvation!
Selah
20 Our God *is* the God of salvation;
And to GOD the Lord *belong* escapes from death.
21 But God will wound the head of His enemies,

The hairy scalp of the one who still goes on in his trespasses.
22 The Lord said, “I will bring back from Bashan,
I will bring *them* back from the depths of the sea,
23 That your foot may crush *them*[a] in blood,
And the tongues of your dogs *may have* their portion from *your* enemies.”
24 They have seen Your procession, O God,
The procession of my God, my King, into the sanctuary.
25 The singers went before, the players on instruments *followed* after;
Among *them were* the maidens playing timbrels.
26 Bless God in the congregations,
The Lord, from the fountain of Israel.
27 There *is* little Benjamin, their leader,
The princes of Judah *and* their company,
The princes of Zebulun *and* the princes of Naphtali.
28 Your God has commanded[a] your strength;
Strengthen, O God, what You have done for us.
29 Because of Your temple at Jerusalem,
Kings will bring presents to You.
30 Rebuke the beasts of the reeds,
The herd of bulls with the calves of the peoples,
*Till everyone* submits himself with pieces of silver.
Scatter the peoples *who* delight in war.
31 Envoys will come out of Egypt;
Ethiopia will quickly stretch out her hands to God.
32 Sing to God, you kingdoms of the earth;
Oh, sing praises to the Lord,
Selah
33 To Him who rides on the heaven of heavens, *which were* of old!
Indeed, He sends out His voice, a mighty voice.
34 Ascribe strength to God;
His excellence *is* over Israel,
And His strength *is* in the clouds.
35 O God, *You are* more awesome than Your holy places.

The God of Israel *is* He who gives
strength and power to *His* people.
Blessed *be* God!

## PSALM 69

### AN URGENT PLEA FOR HELP IN TROUBLE

*To the Chief Musician. Set to "The Lilies."* [a]
*A Psalm of David.*

1 Save me, O God!
For the waters have come up to *my* neck.
2 I sink in deep mire,
Where *there is* no standing;
I have come into deep waters,
Where the floods overflow me.
3 I am weary with my crying;
My throat is dry;
My eyes fail while I wait for my God.
4 Those who hate me without a cause
Are more than the hairs of my head;
They are mighty who would destroy me,
*Being* my enemies wrongfully;
Though I have stolen nothing,
I *still* must restore *it.*
5 O God, You know my foolishness;
And my sins are not hidden from You.
6 Let not those who wait for You,
O Lord GOD of hosts, be ashamed
because of me;
Let not those who seek You be
confounded because of me, O God of Israel.
7 Because for Your sake I have borne reproach;
Shame has covered my face.
8 I have become a stranger to my brothers,
And an alien to my mother's children;
9 Because zeal for Your house has eaten me up,

And the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me.
10 When I wept *and chastened* my soul with fasting,
That became my reproach.
11 I also made sackcloth my garment;
I became a byword to them.
12 Those who sit in the gate speak against me,
And I *am* the song of the drunkards.
13 But as for me, my prayer *is* to You,
O LORD, *in* the acceptable time;
O God, in the multitude of Your mercy,
Hear me in the truth of Your salvation.
14 Deliver me out of the mire,
And let me not sink;
Let me be delivered from those who hate me,
And out of the deep waters.
15 Let not the floodwater overflow me,
Nor let the deep swallow me up;
And let not the pit shut its mouth on me.
16 Hear me, O LORD, for Your
lovingkindness *is* good;
Turn to me according to the multitude of
Your tender mercies.
17 And do not hide Your face from Your servant,
For I am in trouble;
Hear me speedily.
18 Draw near to my soul, *and* redeem it;
Deliver me because of my enemies.
19 You know my reproach, my shame, and my dishonor;
My adversaries *are* all before You.
20 Reproach has broken my heart,
And I am full of heaviness;
I looked *for someone* to take pity, but *there was* none;
And for comforters, but I found none.
21 They also gave me gall for my food,
And for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.

22 Let their table become a snare before them,
And their well-being a trap.
23 Let their eyes be darkened, so that they do not see;
And make their loins shake continually.
24 Pour out Your indignation upon them,
And let Your wrathful anger take hold of them.
25 Let their dwelling place be desolate;
Let no one live in their tents.
26 For they persecute the *ones* You have struck,
And talk of the grief of those You have wounded.
27 Add iniquity to their iniquity,
And let them not come into Your righteousness.
28 Let them be blotted out of the book of the living,
And not be written with the righteous.
29 But I *am* poor and sorrowful;
Let Your salvation, O God, set me up on high.
30 I will praise the name of God with a song,
And will magnify Him with thanksgiving.
31 *This* also shall please the LORD better than an ox *or* bull,
Which has horns and hooves.
32 The humble shall see *this and* be glad;
And you who seek God, your hearts shall live.
33 For the LORD hears the poor,
And does not despise His prisoners.
34 Let heaven and earth praise Him,
The seas and everything that moves in them.
35 For God will save Zion
And build the cities of Judah,
That they may dwell there and possess it.
36 Also, the descendants of His servants shall inherit it,
And those who love His name shall dwell in it.

## SOUL NOTE

**Never Alone** *(69:1-12)* Loneliness is a heavy burden; people can feel alone even when surrounded by people. David's loneliness was so great that he felt like a stranger in his family (69:8). Even in his loneliness, however, David found himself alone with God; therefore, he was not alone at all. When our courage and strength fails, when people seem to have abandoned us, we can take comfort in knowing that God is always with us. When we know Him, we are never alone.
**Topic: Loneliness**

## LONELINESS AND PERSONAL GROWTH

# MIRIAM STARK PARENT

## (Psalm 69:1-8)

**I**n a world of E-mail, videoconferencing, voicemail, and other inventions that keep people instantaneously connected, many people still succumb to the age-old problem of loneliness. From the Garden of Eden to the present day, people have struggled with a sense of

loneliness and separateness.

## THE NEED FOR CONNECTEDNESS

From the moment of birth, humans seek attachment and connection. Without attachment or relationship, infants will fail to thrive. Without a feeling of connectedness, adults may yield to depression. Because God created people in His image, He made them relational. When God saw Adam alone in the Garden of Eden, He said being alone was "not good" (Gen. 2:18). Despite His own presence and relationship with Adam, God knew people also need human relationships. Human beings need both vertical intimacy (with God) and horizontal intimacy (with people) in order to be fulfilled. Without those relationships, they are vulnerable to the complex set of emotions described as "loneliness."

When sin entered the Garden, genuine intimacy disappeared. Adam and Eve blamed each other, lied, and excused themselves. From that moment, genuine intimacy with God and with other human beings was lost. In Christ, people can rediscover the pathway to genuine intimate connection and catch glimpses of it in a relationship with God and other Christians. Yet Christians are not yet able to fully appreciate the spiritual connection this side of heaven. Therefore, loneliness continues to be the constant companion of the human race.

## THE PROBLEM OF LONELINESS

Loneliness is a normal response to the perception of being alone when one desires intimacy. It is different from solitude, which is a state of being alone. Solitude may be desirable at certain times. Everyone needs moments of personal quietness and reflection when they are alone and free of distraction. Loneliness, on the other hand, comes when people don't desire to be alone or disconnected, yet perceive themselves to be either emotionally or physically isolated. It is painful and distressing to the core human need for intimacy.

People experience loneliness according to varying personalities, cultures, backgrounds, and other dynamics. Loneliness is an emotional response that is linked to a perceived cause. For example, situational loneliness is a frequent response to physical or emotional separation. It is that feeling of isolation or loss that people experience as sadness, anxiety, or a sense of deprivation in connection with a loss of some kind. It may be brief and contained, or deep and overwhelming. Physical separation is often a cause of situational loneliness. People may find themselves swept away by a sense of loneliness in response to being separated from friends and family. They know there are those who care, whose support is, perhaps, only a phone call away, but their situation (a job or school) demands separation. The intense longing that accompanies the separation is compelling and sometimes overwhelming. Where the separation is brief, loneliness increases the joy of the reunion. When the separation is extensive (such as through death), the loneliness is harder to handle. Death, divorce, life transitions, and personal mobility are the most common causes of situational loneliness. Intimate relationships are severed, changed and forever disrupted in some way.

Emotional separation can also lead to loneliness. The loneliest people are often those in crowds. People can feel lonely when they are surrounded by those with whom they perceive little or no intimate connection. This sense of disconnectedness seems to accentuate the loneliness and often leads to greater despair. This kind of loneliness is often felt as a form of anxiety, driving some to frantic efforts at superficial connection. Singles bars, clubs, and other gathering places thrive on those who are struggling to hold this deep loneliness at bay. When physical separation is coupled with emotional separation, the loneliness can seem unbearable.

Chronic loneliness can result from underlying feelings of not belonging or not being understood. Many desperately desire intimacy, but are unable to connect due to deeply held personal beliefs or social deficits. The person feels chronically alone and isolated, unable to have any hope of “connecting” again in the future. Such chronic

feelings of loneliness can lead to deep personal isolation and despair, often ending in suicide or angry, violent alienation.

## WHAT TO DO ABOUT LONELINESS

People need to understand the source of loneliness. Perhaps someone's loneliness is based on a perception, not an unchangeable circumstance. Perceptions can be changed once the person sees the cause of the loneliness. Is the person feeling lonely due to a mistaken perception of the situation? Can the situation be changed?

If the loneliness is based on a real circumstance, not just perception, the person needs to accept the situation and learn to handle it in the best way possible. The best remedy for loneliness is to focus one's energies on serving others who are in need. Doing so will distract a person from his or her problems and help others in the process.

A person's loneliness may be a healthy part of the grief process as he or she deals with loss. That is natural and can pass if the person does not let the loneliness cause complete isolation from others.

The experience of loneliness can cause people to draw closer to God and to others. If we are dealing with loneliness, we need to reach out to God and to others. If we know people who are experiencing loneliness, we can help them keep from becoming isolated by being true friends to them and by reminding them that, in Christ, they are never alone.

## FURTHER MEDITATION:

Other passages to study about the issue of loneliness include:

- Deuteronomy 31:6
- Psalms 23; 27

- Ecclesiastes 4:9-12
- Isaiah 49:15, 16; 54:10
- Matthew 28:20
- John 14:15-18, 23
- Romans 8:35-39
- Hebrews 10:24, 25

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on loneliness at Isaiah 41:10. See also the personality profile of Jeremiah the Lone Prophet.

# PSALM 70

## PRAYER FOR RELIEF FROM ADVERSARIES

*To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.*
*To bring to remembrance.*

1 *Make haste,* O God, to deliver me!
Make haste to help me, O LORD !
2 Let them be ashamed and confounded Who seek my life;
Let them be turned back[a] and confused Who desire my hurt.
3 Let them be turned back because of their shame,
Who say, “Aha, aha!”
4 Let all those who seek You rejoice and be glad in You;
And let those who love Your salvation say continually,
“Let God be magnified!”
5 But I *am* poor and needy;
Make haste to me, O God!
You *are* my help and my deliverer;
O LORD, do not delay.

## PSALM 71

### GOD THE ROCK OF SALVATION

1 In You, O LORD, I put my trust;
Let me never be put to shame.
2 Deliver me in Your righteousness, and
cause me to escape;
Incline Your ear to me, and save me.
3 Be my strong refuge,
To which I may resort continually;
You have given the commandment to
save me,
For You *are* my rock and my fortress.
4 Deliver me, O my God, out of the hand
of the wicked,
Out of the hand of the unrighteous and
cruel man.
5 For You are my hope, O Lord GOD;
*You are* my trust from my youth.
6 By You I have been upheld from birth;
You are He who took me out of my
mother's womb.
My praise *shall be* continually of You.
7 I have become as a wonder to many,
But You *are* my strong refuge.
8 Let my mouth be filled *with* Your praise
*And with* Your glory all the day.
9 Do not cast me off in the time of old age;
Do not forsake me when my strength
fails.
10 For my enemies speak against me;
And those who lie in wait for my life
take counsel together,

11 Saying, “God has forsaken him;
Pursue and take him, for *there is* none to
deliver *him.”*
12 O God, do not be far from me;
O my God, make haste to help me!
13 Let them be confounded *and* consumed
Who are adversaries of my life;
Let them be covered *with* reproach and
dishonor
Who seek my hurt.
14 But I will hope continually,
And will praise You yet more and more.
15 My mouth shall tell of Your
righteousness
*And* Your salvation all the day,
For I do not know *their* limits.
16 I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD;
I will make mention of Your
righteousness, of Yours only.
17 O God, You have taught me from my
youth;
And to this *day* I declare Your wondrous
works.
18 Now also when *I am* old and
grayheaded,
O God, do not forsake me,
Until I declare Your strength to *this*
generation,
Your power to everyone *who* is to come.
19 Also Your righteousness, O God, *is* very
high,
You who have done great things;
O God, who *is* like You?
20 *You,* who have shown me great and
severe troubles,

Shall revive me again,
And bring me up again from the depths
of the earth.
21 You shall increase my greatness,
And comfort me on every side.
22 Also with the lute I will praise You-
*And* Your faithfulness, O my God!
To You I will sing with the harp,
O Holy One of Israel.
23 My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing
to You,
And my soul, which You have redeemed.
24 My tongue also shall talk of Your
righteousness all the day long;
For they are confounded,
For they are brought to shame
Who seek my hurt.

**KEY PASSAGE**

# IN THE TWILIGHT

## (71:9)

Growing older is inevitable, but it doesn't have to tie people to their rocking chairs. Many older people can identify with the psalmist's plea, "Do not cast me off in the time of old age; do not forsake me when my strength fails." Older people often feel that because they

lack their youthful vigor, they cannot effectively serve God and will be cast aside. God says, however, that His people "shall still bear fruit in old age" (Ps. 92:14). Older believers have a lifetime of wisdom and experience that is valuable to younger people. Even in their advanced years, devoted believers can produce abundant spiritual fruit. Also, believers can and should continue to grow spiritually even in their twilight time. They can continue on and make a difference for God, helping build His kingdom. Young people must not dismiss older people; instead, they should look to their elders for the godly wisdom they have from years of knowing Christ.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about aging/elderly Gracefully Growing Older. See also the personality profile of The Graceful Aging of Caleb.

## PSALM 72

### GLORY AND UNIVERSALITY OF THE MESSIAH'S REIGN

*A Psalm of Solomon.*

1 Give the king Your judgments,
O God,
And Your righteousness to the king's
Son.
2 He will judge Your people with
righteousness,
And Your poor with justice.
3 The mountains will bring peace to the
people,
And the little hills, by righteousness.
4 He will bring justice to the poor of the
people;
He will save the children of the needy,
And will break in pieces the oppressor.
5 They shall fear You[a]
As long as the sun and moon endure,
Throughout all generations.
6 He shall come down like rain upon the
grass before mowing,
Like showers *that* water the earth.
7 In His days the righteous shall
flourish,
And abundance of peace,
Until the moon is no more.
8 He shall have dominion also from sea to
sea,
And from the River to the ends of the

earth.
9 Those who dwell in the wilderness will
bow before Him,
And His enemies will lick the dust.
10 The kings of Tarshish and of the isles
Will bring presents;
The kings of Sheba and Seba
Will offer gifts.
11 Yes, all kings shall fall down before
Him;
All nations shall serve Him.
12 For He will deliver the needy when he
cries,
The poor also, and *him* who has no
helper.
13 He will spare the poor and needy,
And will save the souls of the needy.
14 He will redeem their life from
oppression and violence;
And precious shall be their blood in His
sight.
15 And He shall live;
And the gold of Sheba will be given to
Him;
Prayer also will be made for Him
continually,
*And* daily He shall be praised.
16 There will be an abundance of grain in
the earth,
On the top of the mountains;
Its fruit shall wave like Lebanon;
And *those* of the city shall flourish like
grass of the earth.
17 His name shall endure forever;
His name shall continue as long as the

sun.
And *men* shall be blessed in Him;
All nations shall call Him blessed.
18 Blessed *be* the LORD God, the God of Israel,
Who only does wondrous things!
19 And blessed *be* His glorious name forever!
And let the whole earth be filled *with* His glory.
Amen and Amen.
20 The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.

## BOOK THREE: PSALMS 73-89

## PSALM 73

### THE TRAGEDY OF THE WICKED, AND THE BLESSEDNESS OF TRUST IN GOD

*A Psalm of Asaph.*

1 Truly God *is* good to Israel,
To such as are pure in heart.
2 But as for me, my feet had almost
stumbled;
My steps had nearly slipped.
3 For I *was* envious of the boastful,
When I saw the prosperity of the wicked.
4 For *there are* no pangs in their death,
But their strength *is* firm.
5 They *are* not in trouble *as other* men,
Nor are they plagued like *other* men.
6 Therefore pride serves as their necklace;
Violence covers them *like* a garment.
7 Their eyes bulge[a] with abundance;
They have more than heart could wish.
8 They scoff and speak wickedly
*concerning* oppression;
They speak loftily.
9 They set their mouth against the heavens,
And their tongue walks through the
earth.
10 Therefore his people return here,
And waters of a full *cup* are drained by
them.

11 And they say, “How does God know?
And is there knowledge in the Most
High?”
12 Behold, these *are* the ungodly,
Who are always at ease;
They increase *in* riches.
13 Surely I have cleansed my heart *in* vain,
And washed my hands in innocence.
14 For all day long I have been plagued,
And chastened every morning.
15 If I had said, “I will speak thus,”
Behold, I would have been untrue to the
generation of Your children.
16 When I thought *how* to understand this,
It *was* too painful for me-
17 Until I went into the sanctuary of God;
*Then* I understood their end.
18 Surely You set them in slippery places;
You cast them down to destruction.
19 Oh, how they are *brought* to desolation,
as in a moment!
They are utterly consumed with terrors.
20 As a dream when *one* awakes,
*So*, Lord, when You awake,
You shall despise their image.
21 Thus my heart was grieved,
And I was vexed in my mind.
22 I *was* so foolish and ignorant;
I was *like* a beast before You.
23 Nevertheless I *am* continually with You;
You hold *me* by my right hand.
24 You will guide me with Your counsel,
And afterward receive me *to* glory.
25 Whom have I in heaven *but You?*

And *there is* none upon earth *that* I
desire besides You.
26 My flesh and my heart fail;
*But* God *is* the strength of my heart and
my portion forever.
27 For indeed, those who are far from You
shall perish;
You have destroyed all those who desert
You for harlotry.
28 But *it is* good for me to draw near to
God;
I have put my trust in the Lord GOD,
That I may declare all Your works.

## SOUL NOTE

**The Best Counselor** *(73:23-26)* God is the ultimate counselor who is constantly with His people. The psalmist declared, “You will guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to glory” (73:24). Though friends, counselors, and advisors can be helpful, we ultimately must depend on and be accountable to God. We have no one in heaven but God, no one upon earth whom we should desire more than Him. We can take comfort in knowing that God hears our deepest cries, counsels us, and promises eternity with Him. **Topic: Accountability**

## PSALM 74

### A PLEA FOR RELIEF FROM OPPRESSORS

*A Contemplation[a] of Asaph.*

1 O God, why have You cast *us* off
forever?
*Why* does Your anger smoke against the
sheep of Your pasture?
2 Remember Your congregation, *which* You
have purchased of old,
The tribe of Your inheritance, *which* You
have redeemed-
This Mount Zion where You have dwelt.
3 Lift up Your feet to the perpetual
desolations.
The enemy has damaged everything in
the sanctuary.
4 Your enemies roar in the midst of Your
meeting place;
They set up their banners *for* signs.
5 They seem like men who lift up
Axes among the thick trees.
6 And now they break down its carved
work, all at once,
With axes and hammers.
7 They have set fire to Your sanctuary;
They have defiled the dwelling place of
Your name to the ground.
8 They said in their hearts,
"Let us destroy them altogether."
They have burned up all the meeting
places of God in the land.

9 We do not see our signs;
*There is* no longer any prophet;
Nor *is there* any among us who knows
how long.
10 O God, how long will the adversary
reproach?
Will the enemy blaspheme Your name
forever?
11 Why do You withdraw Your hand, even
Your right hand?
*Take it* out of Your bosom and destroy
*them.*
12 For God *is* my King from of old,
Working salvation in the midst of the
earth.
13 You divided the sea by Your strength;
You broke the heads of the sea serpents
in the waters.
14 You broke the heads of Leviathan in
pieces,
*And* gave him *as* food to the people
inhabiting the wilderness.
15 You broke open the fountain and the
flood;
You dried up mighty rivers.
16 The day *is* Yours, the night also *is*
Yours;
You have prepared the light and the sun.
17 You have set all the borders of the
earth;
You have made summer and winter.
18 Remember this, *that* the enemy has
reproached, O LORD,
And *that* a foolish people has
blasphemed Your name.

19 Oh, do not deliver the life of Your
turtledove to the wild beast!
Do not forget the life of Your poor
forever.
20 Have respect to the covenant;
For the dark places
of the earth are full of the haunts of cruelty.
21 Oh, do not let the oppressed return
ashamed!
Let the poor and needy praise Your
name.
22 Arise, O God, plead Your own cause;
Remember how the foolish man
reproaches You daily.
23 Do not forget the voice of Your
enemies;
The tumult of those who rise up against
You increases continually.

## PSALM 75

### THANKSGIVING FOR GOD'S RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT

*To the Chief Musician. Set to "Do Not Destroy."[a] A Psalm of Asaph. A Song.*

1 We give thanks to You, O God, we give thanks!
For Your wondrous works declare *that*
Your name is near.
2 "When I choose the proper time,
I will judge uprightly.
3 The earth and all its inhabitants are dissolved;
I set up its pillars firmly.
Selah
4 "I said to the boastful, 'Do not deal boastfully,'
And to the wicked, 'Do not lift up the horn.
5 Do not lift up your horn on high;
Do *not* speak with a stiff neck.' "
6 For exaltation *comes* neither from the east
Nor from the west nor from the south.
7 But God *is* the Judge:
He puts down one,
And exalts another.
8 For in the hand of the LORD *there is* a cup,
And the wine is red;
It is fully mixed, and He pours it out;

Surely its dregs shall all the wicked of
the earth
Drain *and* drink down.
9 But I will declare forever,
I will sing praises to the God of
Jacob.
10 “All the horns of the wicked I will also
cut off,
*But* the horns of the righteous shall be
exalted.”

## PSALM 76

### THE MAJESTY OF GOD IN JUDGMENT

*To the Chief Musician. On stringed instruments.[a] A Psalm of Asaph. A Song.*

1 In Judah God *is* known;
His name *is* great in Israel.
2 In Salem[a] also is His tabernacle,
And His dwelling place in Zion.
3 There He broke the arrows of the bow, The shield and sword of battle.
Selah
4 You *are* more glorious and excellent
*Than* the mountains of prey.
5 The stouthearted were plundered;
They have sunk into their sleep;
And none of the mighty men have found the use of their hands.
6 At Your rebuke, O God of Jacob,
Both the chariot and horse were cast into a dead sleep.
7 You, Yourself, *are* to be feared;
And who may stand in Your presence
When once You are angry?
8 You caused judgment to be heard from heaven;
The earth feared and was still,
9 When God arose to judgment,
To deliver all the oppressed of the earth.
Selah
10 Surely the wrath of man shall praise

You;
With the remainder of wrath You shall gird Yourself.
11 Make vows to the LORD your God, and pay *them;*
Let all who are around Him bring presents to Him who ought to be feared.
12 He shall cut off the spirit of princes;
*He is* awesome to the kings of the earth.

## PSALM 77

### THE CONSOLING MEMORY OF GOD'S REDEMPTIVE WORKS

*To the Chief Musician. To Jeduthun.*
*A Psalm of Asaph.*

1 I cried out to God with my voice-
To God with my voice;
And He gave ear to me.
2 In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord;
My hand was stretched out in the night
without ceasing;
My soul refused to be comforted.
3 I remembered God, and was troubled;
I complained, and my spirit was
overwhelmed.
Selah
4 You hold my eyelids *open;*
I am so troubled that I cannot speak.
5 I have considered the days of old,
The years of ancient times.
6 I call to remembrance my song in the night;
I meditate within my heart,
And my spirit makes diligent search.
7 Will the Lord cast off forever?
And will He be favorable no more?
8 Has His mercy ceased forever?
Has *His* promise failed forevermore?
9 Has God forgotten to be gracious?
Has He in anger shut up His tender
mercies?
Selah

10 And I said, “This *is* my anguish;
*But I will remember* the years of the right
hand of the Most High.”
11 I will remember the works of the LORD ;
Surely I will remember Your wonders of
old.
12 I will also meditate on all Your work,
And talk of Your deeds.
13 Your way, O God, *is* in the sanctuary;
Who *is* so great a God as *our* God?
14 You *are* the God who does wonders;
You have declared Your strength among
the peoples.
15 You have with *Your* arm redeemed Your
people,
The sons of Jacob and Joseph.
Selah
16 The waters saw You, O God;
The waters saw You, they were afraid;
The depths also trembled.
17 The clouds poured out water;
The skies sent out a sound;
Your arrows also flashed about.
18 The voice of Your thunder *was* in the
whirlwind;
The lightnings lit up the world;
The earth trembled and shook.
19 Your way *was* in the sea,
Your path in the great waters,
And Your footsteps were not known.
20 You led Your people like a flock
By the hand of Moses and Aaron.

## PSALM 78

### GOD'S KINDNESS TO REBELLIOUS ISRAEL

*A Contemplation[a] of Asaph.*

1 Give ear, O my people, *to* my law;
Incline your ears to the words of my mouth.
2 I will open my mouth in a parable;
I will utter dark sayings of old,
3 Which we have heard and known,
And our fathers have told us.
4 We will not hide *them* from their children,
Telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD,
And His strength and His wonderful works that He has done.
5 For He established a testimony in Jacob,
And appointed a law in Israel,
Which He commanded our fathers,
That they should make them known to their children;
6 That the generation to come might know *them*,
The children *who* would be born,
*That* they may arise and declare *them* to their children,
7 That they may set their hope in God,
And not forget the works of God,
But keep His commandments;
8 And may not be like their fathers,
A stubborn and rebellious generation,

A generation *that* did not set its heart
aright,
And whose spirit was not faithful to
God.
9 The children of Ephraim, *being* armed
*and* carrying bows,
Turned back in the day of battle.
10 They did not keep the covenant of God;
They refused to walk in His law,
11 And forgot His works
And His wonders that He had shown
them.
12 Marvelous things He did in the sight of
their fathers,
In the land of Egypt, *in* the field of
Zoan.
13 He divided the sea and caused them to
pass through;
And He made the waters stand up like a
heap.
14 In the daytime also He led them with the
cloud,
And all the night with a light of fire.
15 He split the rocks in the wilderness,
And gave *them* drink in abundance like
the depths.
16 He also brought streams out of the rock,
And caused waters to run down like
rivers.
17 But they sinned even more against Him
By rebelling against the Most High in the
wilderness.
18 And they tested God in their heart
By asking for the food of their fancy.
19 Yes, they spoke against God:

They said, “Can God prepare a table in
the wilderness?
20 Behold, He struck the rock,
So that the waters gushed out,
And the streams overflowed.
Can He give bread also?
Can He provide meat for His people? ”
21 Therefore the LORD heard *this* and was
furious;
So a fire was kindled against Jacob,
And anger also came up against Israel,
22 Because they did not believe in God,
And did not trust in His salvation.
23 Yet He had commanded the clouds
above,
And opened the doors of heaven,
24 Had rained down manna on them to eat,
And given them of the bread of heaven.
25 Men ate angels’ food;
He sent them food to the full.
26 He caused an east wind to blow in the
heavens;
And by His power He brought in the
south wind.
27 He also rained meat on them like the
dust,
Feathered fowl like the sand of the seas;
28 And He let *them* fall in the midst of their
camp,
All around their dwellings.
29 So they ate and were well filled,
For He gave them their own desire.
30 They were not deprived of their craving;
But while their food *was* still in their
mouths,

31 The wrath of God came against
them,
And slew the stoutest of them,
And struck down the choice *men* of
Israel.
32 In spite of this they still sinned,
And did not believe in His wondrous
works.
33 Therefore their days He consumed in
futility,
And their years in fear.
34 When He slew them, then they sought
Him;
And they returned and sought earnestly
for God.
35 Then they remembered that God *was*
their rock,
And the Most High God their Redeemer.
36 Nevertheless they flattered Him with
their mouth,
And they lied to Him with their tongue;
37 For their heart was not steadfast with
Him,
Nor were they faithful in His covenant.
38 But He, *being* full of compassion,
forgave *their* iniquity,
And did not destroy *them.*
Yes, many a time He turned His anger
away,
And did not stir up all His wrath;
39 For He remembered that they *were but*
flesh,
A breath that passes away and does not
come again.
40 How often they provoked Him in the

wilderness,
*And* grieved Him in the desert!
41 Yes, again and again they tempted God,
And limited the Holy One of Israel.
42 They did not remember His power:
The day when He redeemed them from
the enemy,
43 When He worked His signs in Egypt,
And His wonders in the field of Zoan;
44 Turned their rivers into blood,
And their streams, that they could not
drink.
45 He sent swarms of flies among them,
which devoured them,
And frogs, which destroyed them.
46 He also gave their crops to the caterpillar,
And their labor to the locust.
47 He destroyed their vines with hail,
And their sycamore trees with frost.
48 He also gave up their cattle to the hail,
And their flocks to fiery lightning.
49 He cast on them the fierceness of His
anger,
Wrath, indignation, and trouble,
By sending angels of destruction *among
them.*
50 He made a path for His anger;
He did not spare their soul from death,
But gave their life over to the plague,
51 And destroyed all the firstborn in Egypt,
The first of *their* strength in the tents of
Ham.
52 But He made His own people go forth
like sheep,
And guided them in the wilderness like

a flock;
53 And He led them on safely, so that they
did not fear;
But the sea overwhelmed their enemies.
54 And He brought them to His holy border,
This mountain *which* His right hand had
acquired.
55 He also drove out the nations before
them,
Allotted them an inheritance by survey,
And made the tribes of Israel dwell in
their tents.
56 Yet they tested and provoked the Most
High God,
And did not keep His testimonies,
57 But turned back and acted unfaithfully
like their fathers;
They were turned aside like a deceitful
bow.
58 For they provoked Him to anger with
their high places,
And moved Him to jealousy with their
carved images.
59 When God heard *this*, He was furious,
And greatly abhorred Israel,
60 So that He forsook the tabernacle of
Shiloh,
The tent He had placed among men,
61 And delivered His strength into captivity,
And His glory into the enemy’s hand.
62 He also gave His people over to the
sword,
And was furious with His inheritance.
63 The fire consumed their young men,
And their maidens were not given in

marriage.
64 Their priests fell by the sword,
And their widows made no lamentation.
65 Then the Lord awoke as *from* sleep,
Like a mighty man who shouts because
of wine.
66 And He beat back His enemies;
He put them to a perpetual reproach.
67 Moreover He rejected the tent of Joseph,
And did not choose the tribe of Ephraim,
68 But chose the tribe of Judah,
Mount Zion which He loved.
69 And He built His sanctuary like the
heights,
Like the earth which He has established
forever.
70 He also chose David His servant,
And took him from the sheepfolds;
71 From following the ewes that had young
He brought him,
To shepherd Jacob His people,
And Israel His inheritance.
72 So he shepherded them according to the
integrity of his heart,
And guided them by the skillfulness of
his hands.

## PSALM 79

### A DIRGE AND A PRAYER FOR ISRAEL, DESTROYED BY ENEMIES

*A Psalm of Asaph.*

1 O God, the nations have come into Your inheritance;
Your holy temple they have defiled;
They have laid Jerusalem in heaps.
2 The dead bodies of Your servants
They have given *as* food for the birds of the heavens,
The flesh of Your saints to the beasts of the earth.
3 Their blood they have shed like water all around Jerusalem,
And *there was* no one to bury *them.*
4 We have become a reproach to our neighbors,
A scorn and derision to those who are around us.
5 How long, LORD ?
Will You be angry forever?
Will Your jealousy burn like fire?
6 Pour out Your wrath on the nations that do not know You,
And on the kingdoms that do not call on Your name.
7 For they have devoured Jacob,
And laid waste his dwelling place.
8 Oh, do not remember former iniquities against us!

Let Your tender mercies come speedily
to meet us,
For we have been brought very low.
9 Help us, O God of our salvation,
For the glory of Your name;
And deliver us, and provide atonement
for our sins,
For Your name's sake!
10 Why should the nations say,
"Where *is* their God?"
Let there be known among the nations
in our sight
The avenging of the blood of Your
servants *which has been* shed.
11 Let the groaning of the prisoner come
before You;
According to the greatness of Your
power
Preserve those who are appointed to die;
12 And return to our neighbors sevenfold
into their bosom
Their reproach with which they have
reproached You, O Lord.
13 So we, Your people and sheep of Your
pasture,
Will give You thanks forever;
We will show forth Your praise to all
generations.

## PSALM 80

### PRAYER FOR ISRAEL'S RESTORATION

*To the Chief Musician. Set to "The Lilies."[a]*
*A Testimony[b] of Asaph. A Psalm.*

1 Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel,
You who lead Joseph like a flock;
You who dwell *between* the cherubim,
shine forth!
2 Before Ephraim, Benjamin, and
Manasseh,
Stir up Your strength,
And come *and* save us!
3 Restore us, O God;
Cause Your face to shine,
And we shall be saved!
4 O LORD God of hosts,
How long will You be angry
Against the prayer of Your people?
5 You have fed them with the bread of
tears,
And given them tears to drink in great
measure.
6 You have made us a strife to our
neighbors,
And our enemies laugh among
themselves.
7 Restore us, O God of hosts;
Cause Your face to shine,
And we shall be saved!
8 You have brought a vine out of Egypt;
You have cast out the nations, and

planted it.
9 You prepared *room* for it,
And caused it to take deep root,
And it filled the land.
10 The hills were covered with its
shadow,
And the mighty cedars with its boughs.
11 She sent out her boughs to the Sea,[a] And her branches to the River.[b]
12 Why have You broken down her hedges,
So that all who pass by the way pluck
her *fruit?*
13 The boar out of the woods uproots it,
And the wild beast of the field devours
it.
14 Return, we beseech You, O God of hosts;
Look down from heaven and see,
And visit this vine
15 And the vineyard which Your right hand
has planted,
And the branch *that* You made strong for
Yourself.
16 *It is* burned with fire, *it is* cut down;
They perish at the rebuke of Your
countenance.
17 Let Your hand be upon the man of Your
right hand,
Upon the son of man *whom* You made
strong for Yourself.
18 Then we will not turn back from You;
Revive us, and we will call upon Your
name.
19 Restore us, O LORD God of hosts;
Cause Your face to shine,
And we shall be saved!

## PSALM 81

### AN APPEAL FOR ISRAEL'S EPENTANCE

*To the Chief Musician. On an instrument*
*of Gath.[a] A Psalm of Asaph.*

1 Sing aloud to God our strength;
Make a joyful shout to the God of Jacob.
2 Raise a song and strike the timbrel,
The pleasant harp with the lute.
3 Blow the trumpet at the time of the New
Moon,
At the full moon, on our solemn feast
day.
4 For this *is* a statute for Israel,
A law of the God of Jacob.
5 This He established in Joseph *as* a
testimony,
When He went throughout the land of
Egypt,
*Where* I heard a language I did not
understand.
6 "I removed his shoulder from the
burden;
His hands were freed from the baskets.
7 You called in trouble, and I delivered
you;
I answered you in the secret place of
thunder; I tested you at the waters of Meribah.
Selah
8 "Hear, O My people, and I will admonish
you!
O Israel, if you will listen to Me!

9 There shall be no foreign god among
you;
Nor shall you worship any foreign god.
10 I *am* the LORD your God,
Who brought you out of the land of
Egypt;
Open your mouth wide, and I will
fill it.
11 “But My people would not heed My
voice,
And Israel would *have* none of Me.
12 So I gave them over to their own
stubborn heart,
To walk in their own counsels.
13 “Oh, that My people would listen to Me,
That Israel would walk in My ways!
14 I would soon subdue their enemies,
And turn My hand against their
adversaries.
15 The haters of the LORD would pretend
submission to Him,
But their fate would endure forever.
16 He would have fed them also with the
finest of wheat;
And with honey from the rock I would
have satisfied you.”

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# PRAISING THE LORD WITH ASAPH

# (PSALM 81)

Praise and worship are important to God's people and pleasing to God. People were created to bring glory to God, and God enjoys it when His people, alone or gathered with other believers, praise and worship Him. Asaph was the leader of Israel's worship (1 Chr. 15:17) and the author of several psalms. When King David brought the ark of the covenant to the tabernacle in Jerusalem, Asaph was one of the Levites chosen "to minister before the ark of the LORD, to commemorate, to thank, and to praise the LORD God of Israel" (1 Chr. 16:4). When David wrote a song to commemorate this event, he "delivered this psalm into the hand of Asaph and his brethren, to thank the LORD " (1 Chr. 16:7).

After the joyous celebration, regular worship in the tabernacle was begun, for David "left Asaph and his brothers there before the ark of the covenant of the LORD to minister before the ark regularly, as every day's work required" (1 Chr. 16:37). Most of Asaph's job in the tabernacle was to make music. King David saw to it that praise and worship included music, for Asaph was of the group separated out to "prophesy with harps, stringed instruments, and cymbals" (1 Chr. 25:1). According to 1 Chronicles 25:6, 7, Asaph and other music leaders were under the authority of the king himself. Also, 288 singers took part in the tabernacle worship services. Clearly, times of praise and worship were well planned and accomplished, with great glory to God.

Asaph encourages Christians everywhere to express joyful praise with the exuberance of the soul set free. We can praise God with our voices (trained or untrained) and with the accompaniment of many musical instruments. When we praise God, we focus on Him and give Him glory. All believers will one day join a vast choir of angels, "ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands" singing to

Christ in heaven (Rev. 5:11-13). *That* will certainly be a time of praise and worship!

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about The Importance of Praise and Worship. See also the key passage note at John 4:23, 24.

## PSALM 82

### A PLEA FOR JUSTICE

*A Psalm of Asaph.*

1 God stands in the congregation of the mighty;
He judges among the gods.[a]
2 How long will you judge unjustly,
And show partiality to the wicked?
Selah
3 Defend the poor and fatherless;
Do justice to the afflicted and needy.
4 Deliver the poor and needy;
Free *them* from the hand of the wicked.
5 They do not know, nor do they understand;
They walk about in darkness;
All the foundations of the earth are unstable.
6 I said, "You *are* gods,[a]
And all of you *are* children of the Most High.
7 But you shall die like men,
And fall like one of the princes."
8 Arise, O God, judge the earth;
For You shall inherit all nations.

## PSALM 83

### PRAYER TO FRUSTRATE CONSPIRACY AGAINST ISRAEL

*A Song. A Psalm of Asaph.*

1 Do not keep silent, O God!
Do not hold Your peace,
And do not be still, O God!
2 For behold, Your enemies make a tumult;
And those who hate You have lifted up
their head.
3 They have taken crafty counsel against
Your people,
And consulted together against Your
sheltered ones.
4 They have said, “Come, and let us cut
them off from *being* a nation,
That the name of Israel may be
remembered no more.”
5 For they have consulted together with
one consent;
They form a confederacy against You:
6 The tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites;
Moab and the Hagrites;
7 Gebal, Ammon, and Amalek;
Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre;
8 Assyria also has joined with them;
They have helped the children of Lot.
Selah
9 Deal with them as *with* Midian,
As *with* Sisera,
As *with* Jabin at the Brook Kishon,

10 Who perished at En Dor,
*Who* became *as* refuse on the earth.
11 Make their nobles like Oreb and like Zeeb,
Yes, all their princes like Zebah and Zalmunna,
12 Who said, “Let us take for ourselves
The pastures of God for a possession.”
13 O my God, make them like the whirling dust,
Like the chaff before the wind!
14 As the fire burns the woods,
And as the flame sets the mountains on fire,
15 So pursue them with Your tempest,
And frighten them with Your storm.
16 Fill their faces with shame,
That they may seek Your name, O LORD.
17 Let them be confounded and dismayed forever;
Yes, let them be put to shame and perish,
18 That they may know that You, whose name alone *is* the LORD,
*Are* the Most High over all the earth.

# PSALM 84

## THE BLESSEDNESS OF DWELLING IN THE HOUSE OF GOD

*To the Chief Musician. On an instrument of Gath.[a] A Psalm of the sons of Korah.*

[1] How lovely *is* Your tabernacle,
O LORD of hosts!
[2] My soul longs, yes, even faints
For the courts of the LORD ;
My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.
[3] Even the sparrow has found a home,
And the swallow a nest for herself,
Where she may lay her young-
*Even* Your altars, O LORD of hosts,
My King and my God.
[4] Blessed *are* those who dwell in Your house;
They will still be praising You.
Selah
[5] Blessed *is* the man whose strength *is* in You,
Whose heart *is* set on pilgrimage.
[6] *As they* pass through the Valley of Baca,
They make it a spring;
The rain also covers it with pools.
[7] They go from strength to strength;
*Each one* appears before God in Zion.[a]
[8] O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer;
Give ear, O God of Jacob! Selah

9 O God, behold our shield,
And look upon the face of Your
anointed.
10 For a day in Your courts *is* better than a
thousand.
I would rather be a doorkeeper in the
house of my God
Than dwell in the tents of wickedness.
11 For the LORD God *is* a sun and shield;
The LORD will give grace and glory;
No good *thing* will He withhold
From those who walk uprightly.
12 O LORD of hosts,
Blessed *is* the man who trusts in You!

**SOUL NOTE**

**Nothing Less** *(84:1, 2)* People can meet God anywhere, but going into a church provides a quiet place away from daily pressures. The psalmist longed for the "courts of the LORD " and he exclaimed, "My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God." Worship is more than just going to church and singing songs- worship is the cry of the soul to God, the desire to be with Him, praise Him, and hear His voice. We need God. Without Him, our soul experiences spiritual turbulence. **Topic: Praise and Worship**

# PSALM 85

## PRAYER THAT THE LORD WILL RESTORE FAVOR TO THE LAND

*To the Chief Musician. A Psalm*
*of the sons of Korah.*

1 LORD, You have been favorable to Your
land;
You have brought back the captivity of
Jacob.
2 You have forgiven the iniquity of Your
people;
You have covered all their sin.
Selah
3 You have taken away all Your wrath;
You have turned from the fierceness of
Your anger.
4 Restore us, O God of our salvation,
And cause Your anger toward us to
cease.
5 Will You be angry
with us forever?
Will You prolong
Your anger to
all generations?
6 Will You not revive
us again,
That Your people may rejoice in You?

> Will You not revive us again, that Your people may rejoice in You?
> PSALM 85:6

7 Show us Your mercy, LORD,

And grant us Your salvation.
[8] I will hear what God the LORD will
speak,
For He will speak peace
To His people and to His saints;
But let them not turn back to folly.
[9] Surely His salvation *is* near to those who
fear Him,
That glory may dwell in our land.
[10] Mercy and truth have met together;
Righteousness and peace have kissed.
[11] Truth shall spring out of the earth,
And righteousness shall look down from
heaven.
[12] Yes, the LORD will give *what is* good;
And our land will yield its increase.
[13] Righteousness will go before Him,
And shall make His footsteps *our*
pathway.

## PSALM 86

### PRAYER FOR MERCY, WITH MEDITATION ON THE EXCELLENCIES OF THE LORD

*A Prayer of David.*

1 Bow down Your ear, O LORD, hear me;
For I *am* poor and needy.
2 Preserve my life, for I *am* holy;
You are my God;
Save Your servant who trusts in You!
3 Be merciful to me, O Lord,
For I cry to You all day long.
4 Rejoice the soul of Your servant,
For to You, O Lord, I lift up my soul.
5 For You, Lord, *are* good, and ready to forgive,
And abundant in mercy to all those who call upon You.
6 Give ear, O LORD, to my prayer;
And attend to the voice of my supplications.
7 In the day of my trouble I will call upon You,
For You will answer me.
8 Among the gods *there is* none like You,
O Lord;
Nor *are there any works* like Your works.
9 All nations whom You have made

Shall come and worship before You,
O Lord,
And shall glorify Your name.
10 For You *are* great, and do wondrous
things;
You alone *are* God.
11 Teach me Your way, O LORD ;
I will walk in Your truth;
Unite my heart to fear Your name.
12 I will praise You, O Lord my God, with
all my heart,
And I will glorify Your name forevermore.
13 For great *is* Your mercy toward me,
And You have delivered my soul from
the depths of Sheol.
14 O God, the proud have risen against me,
And a mob of violent *men* have sought
my life,
And have not set You before them.
15 But You, O Lord, *are* a God full of
compassion, and gracious,
Longsuffering and abundant in mercy
and truth.
16 Oh, turn to me, and have mercy on me!
Give Your strength to Your servant,
And save the son of Your maidservant.
17 Show me a sign for good,
That those who hate me may see *it* and
be ashamed,
Because You, LORD, have helped me and
comforted me.

## PSALM 87

### THE GLORIES OF THE CITY OF GOD

*A Psalm of the sons of Korah. A Song.*

1 His foundation *is* in the holy mountains.
2 The LORD loves the gates of Zion
More than all the dwellings of Jacob.
3 Glorious things are spoken of you,
O city of God!
Selah
4 "I will make mention of Rahab and
Babylon to those who know Me;
Behold, O Philistia and Tyre, with
Ethiopia:
'This *one* was born there.' "
5 And of Zion it will be said,
"This *one* and that *one* were born in her;
And the Most High Himself shall
establish her."
6 The LORD will record,
When He registers the peoples:
"This *one* was born there."
Selah
7 Both the singers and the players on
instruments *say*,
"All my springs *are* in you."

# PSALM 88

## A PRAYER FOR HELP IN DESPONDENCY

*A Song. A Psalm of the sons of Korah. To the Chief Musician. Set to "Mahalath Leannoth." A Contemplation[a] of Heman the Ezrahite.*

1 O LORD, God of my salvation,
I have cried out day and night before You.
2 Let my prayer come before You;
Incline Your ear to my cry.
3 For my soul is full of troubles,
And my life draws near to the grave.
4 I am counted with those who go down to the pit;
I am like a man *who has* no strength,
5 Adrift among the dead,
Like the slain who lie in the grave,
Whom You remember no more,
And who are cut off from Your hand.
6 You have laid me in the lowest pit,
In darkness, in the depths.
7 Your wrath lies heavy upon me,
And You have afflicted *me* with all Your waves.
Selah
8 You have put away my acquaintances far from me;
You have made me an abomination to them;
*I am* shut up, and I cannot get out;
9 My eye wastes away because of affliction.

LORD, I have called daily upon You;
I have stretched out my hands to You.
10 Will You work wonders for the dead?
Shall the dead arise *and* praise You?
Selah
11 Shall Your lovingkindness be declared in the grave?
*Or* Your faithfulness in the place of destruction?
12 Shall Your wonders be known in the dark?
And Your righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?
13 But to You I have cried out, O LORD,
And in the morning my prayer comes before You.
14 LORD, why do You cast off my soul?
*Why* do You hide Your face from me?
15 I *have been* afflicted and ready to die from *my* youth;
I suffer Your terrors;
I am distraught.
16 Your fierce wrath has gone over me;
Your terrors have cut me off.
17 They came around me all day long like water;
They engulfed me altogether.
18 Loved one and friend You have put far from me,
*And* my acquaintances into darkness.

# PSALM 89

## REMEMBERING THE COVENANT WITH DAVID, AND SORROW FOR LOST BLESSINGS

*A Contemplation[g] of Ethan the Ezrahite.*

1 I will sing of the mercies of the LORD
forever;
With my mouth will I make known Your
faithfulness to all generations.
2 For I have said, "Mercy shall be built up
forever;
Your faithfulness
You shall
establish in the
very heavens."

> I will sing of the mercies of the LORD forever; with my mouth will I make known Your faithfulness to all generations.
> PSALM 89:1

3 "I have made a
covenant with
My chosen,
I have sworn to My servant David:
4 'Your seed I will establish forever,
And build up your throne to all
generations.' "
Selah
5 And the heavens will praise Your
wonders, O LORD ;
Your faithfulness also in the assembly of

the saints.
6 For who in the heavens can be compared
to the LORD ?
*Who* among the sons of the mighty can
be likened to the LORD ?
7 God is greatly to be feared in the
assembly of the saints,
And to be held in reverence by all *those*
around Him.
8 O LORD God of hosts,
Who *is* mighty like You, O LORD ?
Your faithfulness also surrounds You.
9 You rule the raging of the sea;
When its waves rise, You still them.
10 You have broken Rahab in pieces, as one
who is slain;
You have scattered Your enemies with
Your mighty arm.
11 The heavens *are* Yours, the earth also *is*
Yours;
The world and all its fullness, You have
founded them.
12 The north and the south, You have
created them;
Tabor and Hermon rejoice in Your name.
13 You have a mighty arm;
Strong is Your hand, *and* high is Your
right hand.
14 Righteousness and justice *are* the
foundation of Your throne;
Mercy and truth go before Your face.
15 Blessed *are* the people who know the
joyful sound!
They walk, O LORD, in the light of Your
countenance.

16 In Your name they rejoice all day long,
And in Your
righteousness
they are
exalted.
17 For You *are* the
glory of their
strength,
And in Your favor
our horn is
exalted.
18 For our shield *belongs* to the LORD,
And our king to the Holy One of
Israel.
19 Then You spoke in a vision to Your holy
one,[a]
And said: “I have given help to *one who*
*is* mighty;
I have exalted one chosen from the
people.
20 I have found My servant David;
With My holy oil I have anointed him,
21 With whom My hand shall be
established;
Also My arm shall strengthen him.
22 The enemy shall not outwit him,
Nor the son of wickedness afflict him.
23 I will beat down his foes before his
face,
And plague those who hate him.
24 “But My faithfulness and My mercy *shall*
*be* with him,
And in My name his horn shall be
exalted.
25 Also I will set his hand over the sea,

And his right hand over the rivers.
26 He shall cry to Me, ‘You *are* my
Father,
My God, and the rock of my salvation.’
27 Also I will make him *My* firstborn,
The highest of the kings of the earth.
28 My mercy I will keep for him forever,
And My covenant shall stand firm with
him.
29 His seed also I will make *to endure*
forever,
And his throne as the days of heaven.
30 “If his sons forsake My law
And do not walk in My judgments,
31 If they break My statutes
And do not keep My commandments,
32 Then I will punish their transgression
with the rod,
And their iniquity with stripes.
33 Nevertheless My lovingkindness I will
not utterly take from him,
Nor allow My faithfulness to fail.
34 My covenant I will not break,
Nor alter the word that has gone out of
My lips.
35 Once I have sworn by My holiness;
I will not lie to David:
36 His seed shall endure forever,
And his throne as the sun before Me;
37 It shall be established forever like the
moon,
Even *like* the faithful witness in the
sky.”
Selah

38 But You have cast off and abhorred,
You have been furious with Your
anointed.
39 You have renounced the covenant of
Your servant;
You have profaned his crown *by casting*
*it* to the ground.
40 You have broken down all his hedges;
You have brought his strongholds to
ruin.
41 All who pass by the way plunder
him;
He is a reproach to his neighbors.
42 You have exalted the right hand of his
adversaries;
You have made all his enemies
rejoice.
43 You have also turned back the edge of
his sword,
And have not sustained him in the
battle.
44 You have made his glory cease,
And cast his throne down to the
ground.
45 The days of his youth You have
shortened;
You have covered him with shame.
Selah
46 How long, LORD ?
Will You hide Yourself forever?
Will Your wrath burn like fire?
47 Remember how short my time is;
For what futility have You created all the
children of men?
48 What man can live and not see death?

Can he deliver his life from the power of the
grave?
Selah
49 Lord, where *are* Your former
lovingkindnesses,
*Which* You swore to David in Your
truth?
50 Remember, Lord, the reproach of Your
servants-
*How* I bear in my bosom *the reproach of*
all the many peoples,
51 With which Your enemies have
reproached, O LORD,
With which they have reproached the
footsteps of Your anointed.
52 Blessed *be* the LORD forevermore!
Amen and Amen.

## BOOK FOUR: PSALMS 90-106

## PSALM 90

### THE ETERNITY OF GOD, AND MAN'S FRAILTY

*A Prayer of Moses the man of God.*

1 Lord, You have been our dwelling place[a]
in all generations.
2 Before the mountains were brought
forth,
Or ever You had formed the earth and
the world,
Even from everlasting to everlasting, You
*are* God.
3 You turn man to destruction,
And say, "Return, O children of men."
4 For a thousand years in Your sight
*Are* like yesterday when it is past,
And *like* a watch in the night.
5 You carry them away *like* a flood;
*They are* like a sleep.
In the morning they are like grass *which* grows
up:
6 In the morning it flourishes and grows
up;
In the evening it is cut down and
withers.
7 For we have been consumed by Your
anger,
And by Your wrath we are terrified.
8 You have set our iniquities before You,

Our secret *sins* in the light of Your
countenance.
9 For all our days have passed away in
Your wrath;
We finish our years like a sigh.
10 The days of our lives *are* seventy years;
And if by reason of strength *they are*
eighty years,
Yet their boast *is* only labor and sorrow;
For it is soon cut off, and we fly away.
11 Who knows the power of Your anger?
For as the fear of You, *so is* Your wrath.
12 So teach *us* to number our days,
That we may gain a heart of wisdom.
13 Return, O LORD !
How long?
And have compassion on Your servants.
14 Oh, satisfy us early with Your mercy,
That we may rejoice and be glad all our
days!
15 Make us glad according to the days *in*
*which* You have afflicted us,
The years *in which* we have seen evil.
16 Let Your work appear to Your servants,
And Your glory to their children.
17 And let the beauty of the LORD our God
be upon us,
And establish the work of our hands for
us;
Yes, establish the work of our hands.

## PSALM 91

### SAFETY OF ABIDING IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD

1 He who dwells in the secret place of the
Most High
Shall abide under the shadow of the
Almighty.
2 I will say of the LORD, "*He is* my refuge
and my fortress;
My God, in Him I will trust."
3 Surely He shall deliver you from the
snare of the fowler[a]
*And* from the perilous pestilence.
4 He shall cover you with His feathers,
And under His wings you shall take
refuge;
His truth *shall be your* shield and buckler.
5 You shall not be afraid of the terror by
night,
*Nor* of the arrow *that* flies by day,
6 *Nor* of the pestilence *that* walks in
darkness,
*Nor* of the destruction *that* lays waste at
noonday.
7 A thousand may fall at your side,
And ten thousand at your right
hand;
*But* it shall not come near you.
8 Only with your eyes shall you look,
And see the reward of the wicked.
9 Because you have made the LORD, *who*
*is* my refuge,
*Even* the Most High, your dwelling place,

10 No evil shall befall you,
Nor shall any plague come near your dwelling;
11 For He shall give His angels charge over you,
To keep you in all your ways.
12 In *their* hands they shall bear you up,
Lest you dash your foot against a stone.
13 You shall tread upon the lion and the cobra,
The young lion and the serpent you shall trample underfoot.
14 “Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him;
I will set him on high, because he has known My name.
15 He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him;
I *will be* with him in trouble;
I will deliver him and honor him.
16 With long life I will satisfy him,
And show him My salvation.”

**SOUL NOTE**

**The Shadow of the Almighty** *(91:1-13)* When believers are afraid, they can run to a “refuge” and “fortress”-God Himself. God’s people dwell “in the secret place of the Most High” and “abide under the shadow of the Almighty” (91:1). No place could be more safe than there! Believers can trust that God will protect them in their times of

fear. This does not imply that God's people will never suffer or face difficulty; but it does promise that they need not be afraid, for they are in God's hands. **Topic: Fear/Fear of God**

## PSALM 92

### PRAISE TO THE LORD FOR HIS LOVE AND FAITHFULNESS

*A Psalm. A Song for the Sabbath day.*

[1] *It is* good to give thanks to the LORD,
And to sing praises to Your name,
O Most High;
[2] To declare Your lovingkindness in the
morning,
And Your faithfulness every night,
[3] On an instrument of ten strings,
On the lute,
And on the harp,
With harmonious sound.
[4] For You, LORD, have made me glad
through Your work;
I will triumph in the works of Your
hands.
[5] O LORD, how great are Your works!
Your thoughts are very deep.
[6] A senseless man does not know,
Nor does a fool understand this.
[7] When the wicked spring up like grass,
And when all the workers of iniquity
flourish,
*It is* that they may be destroyed forever.
[8] But You, LORD, *are* on high forevermore.
[9] For behold, Your enemies, O LORD,
For behold, Your enemies shall perish;
All the workers of iniquity shall be
scattered.

10 But my horn You have exalted like a
wild ox;
I have been anointed with fresh oil.
11 My eye also has seen *my desire* on my
enemies;
My ears hear *my desire* on the wicked
Who rise up against me.
12 The righteous shall flourish like a palm
tree,
He shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.
13 Those who are planted in the house of
the LORD
Shall flourish in the courts of our God.
14 They shall still bear fruit in old age;
They shall be fresh and flourishing,
15 To declare that the LORD is upright;
*He is* my rock, and *there is* no
unrighteousness in Him.

## PSALM 93

### THE ETERNAL REIGN OF THE LORD

1 The LOR Dreigns, He is clothed with
majesty;
The LORD is clothed,
He has girded Himself with strength.
Surely the world is established, so that it
cannot be moved.
2 Your throne *is* established from of old;
You *are* from everlasting.
3 The floods have lifted up, O LORD,
The floods have lifted up their voice;
The floods lift up their waves.
4 The LORD on high *is* mightier
Than the noise of many waters,
*Than* the mighty waves of the sea.
5 Your testimonies are very sure;
Holiness adorns Your house,
O LORD, forever.

## PSALM 94

### GOD THE REFUGE OF THE RIGHTEOUS

1 O LORD God, to whom vengeance belongs-
O God, to whom vengeance belongs, shine forth!
2 Rise up, O Judge of the earth;
Render punishment to the proud.
3 LORD, how long will the wicked,
How long will the wicked triumph?
4 They utter speech, *and* speak insolent things;
All the workers of iniquity boast in themselves.
5 They break in pieces Your people, O LORD,
And afflict Your heritage.
6 They slay the widow and the stranger,
And murder the fatherless.
7 Yet they say, "The LORD does not see,
Nor does the God of Jacob understand."
8 Understand, you senseless among the people;
And *you* fools, when will you be wise?
9 He who planted the ear, shall He not hear?
He who formed the eye, shall He not see?
10 He who instructs the nations, shall He not correct,
He who teaches man knowledge?

11 The LORD knows the thoughts of man,
That they *are* futile.
12 Blessed *is* the man whom You instruct,
O LORD,
And teach out of Your law,
13 That You may give him rest from the
days of adversity,
Until the pit is dug for the wicked.
14 For the LORD will not cast off His people,
Nor will He forsake His inheritance.
15 But judgment will return to
righteousness,
And all the upright in heart will follow
it.
16 Who will rise up for me against the
evildoers?
Who will stand up for me against the
workers of iniquity?
17 Unless the LORD *had been* my help,
My soul would soon have settled in
silence.
18 If I say, “My foot slips,”
Your mercy, O LORD, will hold me up.
19 In the multitude of my anxieties within
me,
Your comforts delight my soul.
20 Shall the throne of iniquity, which
devises evil by law,
Have fellowship with You?
21 They gather together against the life of
the righteous,
And condemn innocent blood.
22 But the LORD has been my defense,
And my God the rock of my refuge.

[23] He has brought on them their own iniquity,
And shall cut them off in their own wickedness;
The LORD our God shall cut them off.

## PSALM 95

### A CALL TO WORSHIP AND OBEDIENCE

1 Oh come, let us sing to the LORD !
Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our
salvation.
2 Let us come before His presence with
thanksgiving;
Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms.
3 For the LORD *is* the great God,
And the great King above all gods.
4 In His hand *are* the deep places of the
earth;
The heights of the hills *are* His also.
5 The sea *is* His, for He made it;
And His hands formed the dry *land.*
6 Oh come, let us worship and bow down;
Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker.
7 For He *is* our God,
And we *are* the people of His pasture,
And the sheep of
His hand.
Today, if you will
hear His voice:

> Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD our Maker. For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand.
> PSALM 95:6, 7

8 "Do not harden
your hearts,
as in the

rebellion,[a]
As *in* the day of
trial[b] in the
wilderness,
9 When your fathers tested Me;
They tried Me, though they saw My work.
10 For forty years I was grieved with *that*
generation,
And said, ‘It *is* a people who go astray in
their hearts,
And they do not know My ways.’
11 So I swore in My wrath,
‘They shall not enter My rest.’ ”

## PSALM 96

### A SONG OF PRAISE TO GOD COMING IN JUDGMENT

1 Oh, sing to the LORD a new song!
Sing to the LORD, all the earth.
2 Sing to the LORD, bless His name;
Proclaim the good news of His salvation
from day to day.
3 Declare His glory among the nations,
His wonders among all peoples.
4 For the LORD *is* great and greatly to be
praised;
He *is* to be feared above all gods.
5 For all the gods of the peoples *are* idols,
But the LORD made the heavens.
6 Honor and majesty *are* before Him;
Strength and beauty *are* in His
sanctuary.
7 Give to the LORD, O families of the
peoples,
Give to the LORD glory and strength.
8 Give to the LORD the glory *due* His
name;
Bring an offering, and come into His
courts.
9 Oh, worship the LORD in the beauty of
holiness!
Tremble before Him, all the earth.
10 Say among the
nations, “The
LORD reigns;
The world also is

firmly
established,
It shall not be
moved;
He shall judge the
peoples
righteously.”
11 Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth
be glad;
Let the sea roar, and all its fullness;
12 Let the field be joyful, and all that *is* in
it.
Then all the trees of the woods will
rejoice before the LORD.
13 For He is coming, for He is coming to
judge the earth.
He shall judge the world with
righteousness,
And the peoples with His truth.

## PSALM 97

### A SONG OF PRAISE TO THE SOVEREIGN LORD

1 The LORD reigns;
Let the earth rejoice;
Let the multitude of isles be glad!
2 Clouds and darkness surround Him;
Righteousness and justice *are* the
foundation of His throne.
3 A fire goes before Him,
And burns up His enemies round about.
4 His lightnings light the world;
The earth sees and trembles.
5 The mountains melt like wax at the
presence of the LORD,
At the presence of the Lord of the whole
earth.
6 The heavens declare His
righteousness,
And all the peoples see His glory.
7 Let all be put to shame who serve
carved images,
Who boast of idols.
Worship Him, all *you* gods.
8 Zion hears and is glad,
And the daughters of Judah rejoice
Because of Your judgments, O LORD.
9 For You, LORD, *are* most high above all
the earth;
You are exalted far above all gods.
10 You who love the LORD, hate evil!
He preserves the souls of His saints;
He delivers them out of the hand of the

wicked.
11 Light is sown for the righteous,
And gladness for the upright in heart.
12 Rejoice in the LORD, you righteous,
And give thanks at the remembrance of
His holy name.[a]

## PSALM 98

### A SONG OF PRAISE TO THE LORD FOR HIS SALVATION AND JUDGMENT

*A Psalm.*

1 Oh, sing to the LORD a new song!
For He has done marvelous things;
His right hand and His holy arm have
gained Him the victory.
2 The LORD has made known His
salvation;
His righteousness He has revealed in the
sight of the nations.
3 He has remembered His mercy and His
faithfulness to the house of Israel;
All the ends of the earth have seen the
salvation of our God.
4 Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth;
Break forth in song, rejoice, and sing
praises.
5 Sing to the LORD with the harp,
With the harp and the sound of a psalm,
6 With trumpets and the sound of a horn;
Shout joyfully before the LORD, the
King.
7 Let the sea roar, and all its fullness,
The world and those who dwell in it;
8 Let the rivers clap *their* hands;
Let the hills be joyful together before the
LORD,
9 For He is coming to judge the earth.
With righteousness He shall judge the

world,
And the peoples with equity.

## PSALM 99

### PRAISE TO THE LORD FOR HIS HOLINESS

1 The LORD reigns;
Let the peoples tremble!
He dwells *between* the cherubim;
Let the earth be moved!
2 The LORD *is* great in Zion,
And He *is* high above all the
peoples.
3 Let them praise Your great and awesome
name-
He *is* holy.
4 The King's strength also loves
justice;
You have established equity;
You have executed justice and
righteousness in Jacob.
5 Exalt the LORD our God,
And worship at His footstool-
He *is* holy.
6 Moses and Aaron were among His
priests,
And Samuel was among those who
called upon His name;
They called upon the LORD, and He
answered them.
7 He spoke to them in the cloudy
pillar;
They kept His testimonies and the
ordinance He gave them.
8 You answered them, O LORD our God;
You were to them God-Who-Forgives,

Though You took vengeance on their
deeds.
9 Exalt the LORD our God,
And worship at His holy hill;
For the LORD our God *is* holy.

## PSALM 100

### A SONG OF PRAISE FOR THE LORD 'S FAITHFULNESS TO HIS PEOPLE

*A Psalm of Thanksgiving.*

1 Make a joyful shout to the LORD, all you
lands!
2 Serve the LORD with gladness;
Come before His presence with singing.
3 Know that the LORD, He *is* God;
*It is* He *who* has made us, and not we
ourselves;[a]
*We are* His people and the sheep of His
pasture.
4 Enter into His gates with thanksgiving,
*And* into His courts with praise.
Be thankful to Him, *and* bless His
name.
5 For the LORD *is* good;
His mercy *is* everlasting,
And His truth *endures* to all generations.

**SOUL NOTE**

**We Are His People** *(100:1-3)* Psalm 100 is an expression of confidence in God. We know who we are because we know who He

is: “Know that the LORD, He is God; it is He who has made us... we are His people” (100:3). Thus, God’s people can enter His presence with thanksgiving, having confidence that His mercy and truth are available at all times. Secure in our relationship with God, we can be confident of our value in this world as we “serve the LORD with gladness” (100:2). **Topic: Self-Esteem**

## PSALM 101

### PROMISED FAITHFULNESS TO THE LORD

*A Psalm of David.*

1 I will sing of mercy and justice;
To You, O LORD, I will sing praises.
2 I will behave wisely in a perfect way.
Oh, when will You come to me?
I will walk within my house with a
perfect heart.
3 I will set nothing wicked before my eyes;
I hate the work of those who fall away;
It shall not cling to me.
4 A perverse heart shall depart from me;
I will not know wickedness.
5 Whoever secretly slanders his neighbor,
Him I will destroy;
The one who has a haughty look and a
proud heart,
Him I will not endure.
6 My eyes *shall be* on the faithful of the
land,
That they may dwell with me;
He who walks in a perfect way,
He shall serve me.
7 He who works deceit shall not dwell
within my house;
He who tells lies shall not continue in
my presence.
8 Early I will destroy all the wicked of the
land,
That I may cut off all the evildoers from

the city of the LORD.

## PSALM 102

### THE LORD 'S ETERNAL LOVE

*A Prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed and pours out his complaint before the LORD.*

1 Hear my prayer, O LORD,
And let my cry come to You.
2 Do not hide Your face from me in the
day of my trouble;
Incline Your ear to me;
In the day that I call, answer me
speedily.
3 For my days are consumed like smoke,
And my bones are burned like a hearth.
4 My heart is stricken and withered like
grass,
So that I forget to eat my bread.
5 Because of the sound of my groaning
My bones cling to my skin.
6 I am like a pelican of the wilderness;
I am like an owl of the desert.
7 I lie awake,
And am like a sparrow alone on the
housetop.
8 My enemies reproach me all day long;
Those who deride me swear an oath
against me.
9 For I have eaten ashes like bread,
And mingled my drink with weeping,
10 Because of Your indignation and Your
wrath;

For You have lifted me up and cast me
away.
11 My days *are* like a shadow that lengthens,
And I wither away like grass.
12 But You, O LORD, shall endure forever,
And the remembrance of Your name to
all generations.
13 You will arise *and* have mercy on Zion;
For the time to favor her,
Yes, the set time, has come.
14 For Your servants take pleasure in her
stones,
And show favor to her dust.
15 So the nations shall fear the name of the
LORD,
And all the kings of the earth Your glory.
16 For the LORD shall build up Zion;
He shall appear in His glory.
17 He shall regard the prayer of the
destitute,
And shall not despise their prayer.
18 This will be written for the generation to
come,
That a people yet to be created may
praise the LORD.
19 For He looked down from the height of
His sanctuary;
From heaven the LORD viewed the earth,
20 To hear the groaning of the prisoner,
To release those appointed to death,
21 To declare the name of the LORD in Zion,
And His praise in Jerusalem,
22 When the peoples are gathered together,
And the kingdoms, to serve the LORD.

[23] He weakened my strength in the way;
He shortened my days.
[24] I said, “O my God,
Do not take me away in the midst of my days;
Your years *are* throughout all generations.
[25] Of old You laid the foundation of the earth,
And the heavens *are* the work of Your hands.
[26] They will perish, but You will endure;
Yes, they will all grow old like a garment;
Like a cloak You will change them,
And they will be changed.
[27] But You *are* the same,
And Your years will have no end.
[28] The children of Your servants will continue,
And their descendants will be established before You.”

## PSALM 103

### PRAISE FOR THE LORD ’S MERCIES

*A Psalm of David.*

1 Bless the LORD, O my soul;
And all that is within me, *bless* His holy name!
2 Bless the LORD, O my soul,
And forget not all His benefits:
3 Who forgives all your iniquities,
Who heals all your diseases,
4 Who redeems your life from destruction,
Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies,
5 Who satisfies your mouth with good *things,*
*So that* your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.
6 The LORD executes righteousness
And justice for all who are oppressed.
7 He made known His ways to Moses,
His acts to the children of Israel.
8 The LORD *is* merciful and gracious,
Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy.
9 He will not always strive *with us,*
Nor will He keep *His anger* forever.
10 He has not dealt with us according to our sins,
Nor punished us according to our iniquities.
11 For as the heavens are high above the

earth,
*So* great is His mercy toward those who
fear Him;
12 As far as the east is from the west,
*So* far has He removed our
transgressions from us.
13 As a father pities *his* children,
*So* the LORD pities those who fear Him.
14 For He knows our frame;
He remembers that we *are* dust.
15 *As for* man, his days *are* like grass;
As a flower of the field, so he flourishes.
16 For the wind passes over it, and it is
gone,
And its place remembers it no more.[a]
17 But the mercy of the LORD *is* from
everlasting to everlasting
On those who fear Him,
And His righteousness to children's
children,
18 To such as keep His covenant,
And to those who remember His
commandments to do them.
19 The LORD has established His throne in
heaven,
And His kingdom rules over all.
20 Bless the LORD, you His angels,
Who excel in strength, who do His word,
Heeding the voice of His word.
21 Bless the LORD, all *you* His hosts,
*You* ministers of His, who do His
pleasure.
22 Bless the LORD, all His works,
In all places of His dominion.
Bless the LORD, O my soul!

## SOUL NOTE

**Children's Children** *(103:17, 18)* One of the great promises of the Bible is that the mercy of the Lord continues from one generation to the next, even to our children's children. This does not mean that the children of believers will automatically believe in God, but that God's mercy and goodness are available to each generation that follows the good example set by the previous generation. Parents must set the right example for their children. They are living not merely for themselves; they are setting a precedent that will affect generations to come. **Topic: Parenting**

## PSALM 104

### PRAISE TO THE SOVEREIGN LORD FOR HIS CREATION AND PROVIDENCE

1 Bless the LORD, O my soul!

O LORD my God, You are very great:
You are clothed with honor and majesty,

2 Who cover *Yourself* with light as *with* a garment,
Who stretch out the heavens like a curtain.
3 He lays the beams of His upper chambers in the waters,
Who makes the clouds His chariot,
Who walks on the wings of the wind,
4 Who makes His angels spirits,
His ministers a flame of fire.
5 *You who* laid the foundations of the earth,
So *that* it should not be moved forever,
6 You covered it with the deep as *with* a garment;
The waters stood above the mountains.
7 At Your rebuke they fled;
At the voice of Your thunder they hastened away.
8 They went up over the mountains;
They went down into the valleys,
To the place which You founded for them.
9 You have set a boundary that they may

not pass over,
That they may not return to cover the earth.
10 He sends the springs into the valleys;
They flow among the hills.
11 They give drink to every beast of the field;
The wild donkeys quench their thirst.
12 By them the birds of the heavens have their home;
They sing among the branches.
13 He waters the hills from His upper chambers;
The earth is satisfied with the fruit of Your works.
14 He causes the grass to grow for the cattle,
And vegetation for the service of man,
That he may bring forth food from the earth,
15 And wine *that* makes glad the heart of man,
Oil to make *his* face shine,
And bread *which* strengthens man's heart.
16 The trees of the LORD are full *of sap*,
The cedars of Lebanon which He planted,
17 Where the birds make their nests;
The stork has her home in the fir trees.
18 The high hills *are* for the wild goats;
The cliffs are a refuge for the rock badgers.[a]
19 He appointed the moon for seasons;
The sun knows its going down.
20 You make darkness, and it is night,

In which all the beasts of the forest
creep about.
21 The young lions roar after their prey,
And seek their food from God.
22 *When* the sun rises, they gather together
And lie down in their dens.
23 Man goes out to his work
And to his labor until the evening.
24 O LORD, how
manifold are
Your works!
In wisdom You
have made
them all.
The earth is full
of Your
possessions-
25 This great and wide sea,
In which *are* innumerable teeming
things,
Living things both small and great.
26 There the ships sail about;
*There is* that Leviathan
Which You have made to play there.
27 These all wait for You,
That You may give *them* their food in
due season.
28 *What* You give them they gather in;
You open Your hand, they are filled with
good.
29 You hide Your face, they are troubled;
You take away their breath, they die and
return to their dust.
30 You send forth Your Spirit, they are
created;

And You renew the face of the earth.
31 May the glory of the LORD endure
forever;
May the LORD rejoice in His works.
32 He looks on the earth, and it trembles;
He touches the hills, and they smoke.
33 I will sing to the LORD as long as I live;
I will sing praise to my God while I have
my being.
34 May my meditation be sweet to Him;
I will be glad in the LORD.
35 May sinners be consumed from the
earth,
And the wicked be no more.

Bless the LORD, O my soul!
Praise the LORD !

# PSALM 105

## THE ETERNAL FAITHFULNESS OF THE LORD

1 Oh, give thanks to the LORD !
Call upon His name;
Make known His
deeds among
the peoples!
2 Sing to Him, sing
psalms to Him;
Talk of all His
wondrous
works!
3 Glory in His holy
name;
Let the hearts of those rejoice who seek
the LORD !

> Glory in His holy name; let the hearts of those rejoice who seek the LORD !
> PSALM 105:3

4 Seek the LORD and His strength;
Seek His face evermore!
5 Remember His marvelous works which
He has done,
His wonders, and the judgments of His
mouth,
6 O seed of Abraham His servant,
You children of Jacob, His chosen ones!
7 He *is* the LORD our God;
His judgments *are* in all the earth.
8 He remembers His covenant forever,

The word *which* He commanded, for a
thousand generations,
9 *The covenant* which He made with
Abraham,
And His oath to Isaac,
10 And confirmed it to Jacob for a statute,
To Israel *as* an everlasting covenant,
11 Saying, “To you I will give the land of
Canaan
As the allotment of your inheritance,”
12 When they were few in number,
Indeed very few, and strangers in it.
13 When they went from one nation to
another,
From *one* kingdom to another people,
14 He permitted no one to do them wrong;
Yes, He rebuked kings for their sakes,
15 *Saying*, “Do not touch My anointed
ones,
And do My prophets no harm.”
16 Moreover He called for a famine in the
land;
He destroyed all the provision of bread.
17 He sent a man before them-
Joseph-*who* was sold as a slave.
18 They hurt his feet with fetters,
He was laid in irons.
19 Until the time that his word came to pass,
The word of the LORD tested him.
20 The king sent and released him,
The ruler of the people let him go free.
21 He made him lord of his house,
And ruler of all his possessions,
22 To bind his princes at his pleasure,

And teach his elders wisdom.
23 Israel also came into Egypt,
And Jacob dwelt in the land of Ham.
24 He increased His people greatly,
And made them stronger than their
enemies.
25 He turned their heart to hate His people,
To deal craftily with His servants.
26 He sent Moses His servant,
*And* Aaron whom He had chosen.
27 They performed His signs among them,
And wonders in the land of Ham.
28 He sent darkness, and made *it* dark;
And they did not rebel against His word.
29 He turned their waters into blood,
And killed their fish.
30 Their land abounded with frogs,
*Even* in the chambers of their kings.
31 He spoke, and there came swarms of
flies,
*And* lice in all their territory.
32 He gave them hail for rain,
*And* flaming fire in their land.
33 He struck their vines also, and their fig
trees,
And splintered the trees of their
territory.
34 He spoke, and locusts came,
Young locusts without number,
35 And ate up all the vegetation in their
land,
And devoured the fruit of their ground.
36 He also destroyed all the firstborn in
their land,

The first of all their strength.
37 He also brought them out with silver
and gold,
And *there was* none feeble among His
tribes.
38 Egypt was glad when they departed,
For the fear of them had fallen upon
them.
39 He spread a cloud for a covering,
And fire to give light in the night.
40 *The people* asked, and He brought quail,
And satisfied them with the bread of
heaven.
41 He opened the rock, and water gushed
out;
It ran in the dry places *like* a river.
42 For He remembered His holy promise,
*And* Abraham His servant.
43 He brought out His people with joy,
His chosen ones with gladness.
44 He gave them the lands of the Gentiles,
And they inherited the labor of the
nations,
45 That they might observe His statutes
And keep His laws.

Praise the LORD !

## PSALM 106

### JOY IN FORGIVENESS OF ISRAEL'S SINS

1 Praise the LORD !

Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for *He is*
good!
For His mercy *endures* forever.

2 Who can utter the mighty acts of the
LORD ?
Who can declare all His praise?
3 Blessed *are* those who keep justice,
*And* he who does[a] righteousness at all
times!
4 Remember me, O LORD, with the favor
*You have toward* Your people.
Oh, visit me with Your salvation,
5 That I may see the benefit of Your
chosen ones,
That I may rejoice in the gladness of
Your nation,
That I may glory with Your inheritance.
6 We have sinned with our fathers,
We have committed iniquity,
We have done wickedly.
7 Our fathers in Egypt did not understand
Your wonders;
They did not remember the multitude of
Your mercies,
But rebelled by the sea-the Red Sea.
8 Nevertheless He saved them for His
name's sake,

That He might make His mighty power
known.
9 He rebuked the Red Sea also, and it
dried up;
So He led them through the depths,
As through the wilderness.
10 He saved them from the hand of him
who hated *them*,
And redeemed them from the hand of
the enemy.
11 The waters covered their enemies;
There was not one of them left.
12 Then they believed His words;
They sang His praise.
13 They soon forgot His works;
They did not wait for His counsel,
14 But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness,
And tested God in the desert.
15 And He gave them their request,
But sent leanness into their soul.
16 When they envied Moses in the camp,
*And* Aaron the saint of the LORD,
17 The earth opened up and swallowed
Dathan,
And covered the faction of Abiram.
18 A fire was kindled in their company;
The flame burned up the wicked.
19 They made a calf in Horeb,
And worshiped the molded image.
20 Thus they changed their glory
Into the image of an ox that eats grass.
21 They forgot God their Savior,
Who had done great things in Egypt,
22 Wondrous works in the land of Ham,

Awesome things by the Red Sea.
23 Therefore He said that He would destroy them,
Had not Moses His chosen one stood before Him in the breach,
To turn away His wrath, lest He destroy *them.*
24 Then they despised the pleasant land;
They did not believe His word,
25 But complained in their tents,
*And* did not heed the voice of the LORD.
26 Therefore He raised His hand *in an oath* against them,
To overthrow them in the wilderness,
27 To overthrow their descendants among the nations,
And to scatter them in the lands.
28 They joined themselves also to Baal of Peor,
And ate sacrifices made to the dead.
29 Thus they provoked *Him* to anger with their deeds,
And the plague broke out among them.
30 Then Phinehas stood up and intervened,
And the plague was stopped.
31 And that was accounted to him for righteousness
To all generations forevermore.
32 They angered *Him* also at the waters of strife,[a]
So that it went ill with Moses on account of them;
33 Because they rebelled against His Spirit,
So that he spoke rashly with his lips.

34 They did not destroy the peoples,
Concerning whom the LORD had
commanded them,
35 But they mingled with the Gentiles
And learned their works;
36 They served their idols,
Which became a snare to them.
37 They even sacrificed their sons
And their daughters to demons,
38 And shed innocent blood,
The blood of their sons and daughters,
Whom they sacrificed to the idols of
Canaan;
And the land was polluted with blood.
39 Thus they were defiled by their own
works,
And played the harlot by their own
deeds.
40 Therefore the wrath of the LORD was
kindled against His people,
So that He abhorred His own
inheritance.
41 And He gave them into the hand of the
Gentiles,
And those who hated them ruled over
them.
42 Their enemies also oppressed them,
And they were brought into subjection
under their hand.
43 Many times He delivered them;
But they rebelled in their counsel,
And were brought low for their iniquity.
44 Nevertheless He regarded their affliction,
When He heard their cry;
45 And for their sake He remembered His

covenant,
And relented according to the multitude
of His mercies.
46 He also made them to be pitied
By all those who carried them away
captive.
47 Save us, O LORD our God,
And gather us from among the Gentiles,
To give thanks to Your holy name,
To triumph in Your praise.
48 Blessed *be* the LORD God of Israel
From everlasting to everlasting!
And let all the people say, “Amen!”

Praise the LORD !

## BOOK FIVE: PSALMS 107-150

### PSALM 107

**THANKSGIVING TO THE LORD FOR HIS GREAT WORKS OF DELIVERANCE**

1 Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for *He is*
good!
For His mercy *endures* forever.
2 Let the redeemed of the LORD say *so,*
Whom He has redeemed from the hand
of the enemy,
3 And gathered out of the lands,
From the east and from the west,
From the north and from the south.
4 They wandered in the wilderness in a
desolate way;
They found no city to dwell in.
5 Hungry and thirsty, Their soul fainted in them.
6 Then they cried out to the LORD in their
trouble,
*And* He delivered them out of their
distresses.
7 And He led them forth by the right way,
That they might go to a city for a
dwelling place.
8 Oh, that *men* would give thanks to the
LORD *for* His goodness,
And *for* His wonderful works to the
children of men!
9 For He satisfies the longing soul,
And fills the hungry soul with goodness.

10 Those who sat in darkness and in the shadow of death,
Bound in affliction and irons-
11 Because they rebelled against the words of God,
And despised the counsel of the Most High,
12 Therefore He brought down their heart with labor;
They fell down, and *there was* none to help.
13 Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble,
*And* He saved them out of their distresses.
14 He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death,
And broke their chains in pieces.
15 Oh, that *men* would give thanks to the LORD *for* His goodness,
And *for* His wonderful works to the children of men!
16 For He has broken the gates of bronze,
And cut the bars of iron in two.
17 Fools, because of their transgression,
And because of their iniquities, were afflicted.
18 Their soul abhorred all manner of food,
And they drew near to the gates of death.
19 Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble,
*And* He saved them out of their distresses.
20 He sent His word and healed them,

And delivered *them* from their
destructions.
21 Oh, that *men* would give thanks to the
LORD *for* His goodness,
And *for* His wonderful works to the
children of men!
22 Let them sacrifice the sacrifices of
thanksgiving,
And declare His works with rejoicing.
23 Those who go down to the sea in ships,
Who do business on great waters,
24 They see the works of the LORD,
And His wonders in the deep.
25 For He commands and raises the stormy
wind,
Which lifts up the waves of the sea.
26 They mount up to the heavens,
They go down again to the depths;
Their soul melts because of trouble.
27 They reel to and fro, and stagger like a
drunken man,
And are at their wits' end.
28 Then they cry out to the LORD in their
trouble,
And He brings them out of their
distresses.
29 He calms the storm,
So that its waves are still.
30 Then they are glad because they are quiet;
So He guides them to their desired
haven.
31 Oh, that *men* would give thanks to the
LORD *for* His goodness,
And *for* His wonderful works to the
children of men!

32 Let them exalt Him also in the assembly
of the people,
And praise Him in the company of the
elders.
33 He turns rivers into a wilderness,
And the watersprings into dry ground;
34 A fruitful land into barrenness,
For the wickedness of those who dwell
in it.
35 He turns a wilderness into pools of water,
And dry land into watersprings.
36 There He makes the hungry dwell,
That they may establish a city for a
dwelling place,
37 And sow fields and plant vineyards,
That they may yield a fruitful harvest.
38 He also blesses them, and they multiply
greatly;
And He does not let their cattle decrease.
39 When they are diminished and brought
low
Through oppression, affliction and
sorrow,
40 He pours contempt on princes,
And causes them to wander in the
wilderness *where there is* no way;
41 Yet He sets the poor on high, far from
affliction,
And makes *their* families like a flock.
42 The righteous see *it* and rejoice,
And all iniquity stops its mouth.
43 Whoever *is* wise will observe these
*things,*
And they will understand the
lovingkindness of the LORD.

## PSALM 108

### ASSURANCE OF GOD'S VICTORY OVER ENEMIES

*A Song. A Psalm of David.*

1 O God, my heart is steadfast;
I will sing and give praise, even with my glory.
2 Awake, lute and harp!
I will awaken the dawn.
3 I will praise You, O LORD, among the peoples,
And I will sing praises to You among the nations.
4 For Your mercy *is* great above the heavens,
And Your truth *reaches* to the clouds.
5 Be exalted, O God, above the heavens,
And Your glory above all the earth;
6 That Your beloved may be delivered,
Save *with* Your right hand, and hear me.
7 God has spoken in His holiness:
"I will rejoice;
I will divide Shechem
And measure out the Valley of Succoth.
8 Gilead *is* Mine; Manasseh *is* Mine;
Ephraim also *is* the helmet for My head;
Judah *is* My lawgiver.
9 Moab *is* My washpot;
Over Edom I will cast My shoe;
Over Philistia I will triumph."
10 Who will bring me *into* the strong city?
Who will lead me to Edom?

11 *Is it* not *You,* O God, *who* cast us off?
And *You,* O God, *who* did not go out
with our armies?
12 Give us help from trouble,
For the help of man is useless.
13 Through God we will do valiantly,
For *it is* He *who* shall tread down our
enemies.[a]

## PSALM 109

### PLEA FOR JUDGMENT OF FALSE ACCUSERS

*To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.*

1 Do not keep silent,
O God of my praise!
2 For the mouth of the wicked and the
mouth of the deceitful
Have opened against me;
They have spoken against me with a
lying tongue.
3 They have also surrounded me with
words of hatred,
And fought against me without a cause.
4 In return for my love they are my
accusers,
But I *give myself to* prayer.
5 Thus they have rewarded me evil for
good,
And hatred for my love.
6 Set a wicked man over him,
And let an accuser[a] stand at his right
hand.
7 When he is judged, let him be found
guilty,
And let his prayer become sin.
8 Let his days be few,
*And* let another take his office.
9 Let his children be fatherless,
And his wife a widow.
10 Let his children continually be
vagabonds, and beg;

Let them seek *their bread*[a] also from
their desolate places.
11 Let the creditor seize all that he has,
And let strangers plunder his labor.
12 Let there be none to extend mercy to
him,
Nor let there be any to favor his
fatherless children.
13 Let his posterity be cut off,
*And* in the generation following let their
name be blotted out.
14 Let the iniquity of his fathers be
remembered before the LORD,
And let not the sin of his mother be
blotted out.
15 Let them be continually before the LORD,
That He may cut off the memory of
them from the earth;
16 Because he did not remember to show
mercy,
But persecuted the poor and needy man,
That he might even slay the broken in
heart.
17 As he loved cursing, so let it come to
him;
As he did not delight in blessing, so let it
be far from him.
18 As he clothed himself with cursing as
with his garment,
So let it enter his body like water,
And like oil into his bones.
19 Let it be to him like the garment which
covers him,
And for a belt with which he girds
himself continually.

20 *Let* this *be* the LORD ’s reward to my accusers,
And to those who speak evil against my person.
21 But You, O GOD the Lord,
Deal with me for Your name’s sake;
Because Your mercy *is* good, deliver me.
22 For I *am* poor and needy,
And my heart is wounded within me.
23 I am gone like a shadow when it lengthens;
I am shaken off like a locust.
24 My knees are weak through fasting,
And my flesh is feeble from lack of fatness.
25 I also have become a reproach to them;
*When* they look at me, they shake their heads.
26 Help me, O LORD my God!
Oh, save me according to Your mercy,
27 That they may know that this *is* Your hand-
*That* You, LORD, have done it!
28 Let them curse, but You bless;
When they arise, let them be ashamed,
But let Your servant rejoice.
29 Let my accusers be clothed with shame,
And let them cover themselves with their own disgrace as with a mantle.
30 I will greatly praise the LORD with my mouth;
Yes, I will praise Him among the multitude.
31 For He shall stand at the right hand of the poor,

To save *him* from those who condemn him.

## PSALM 110

### ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE MESSIAH'S REIGN

*A Psalm of David.*

1 The LORD said to my Lord,
"Sit at My right hand,
Till I make Your enemies Your
footstool."
2 The LORD shall send the rod of Your
strength out of Zion.
Rule in the midst of Your enemies!
3 Your people *shall be* volunteers
In the day of Your power;
In the beauties of holiness, from the
womb of the morning,
You have the dew of Your youth.
4 The LORD has sworn
And will not relent,
"You *are* a priest forever
According to the order of Melchizedek."
5 The Lord *is* at Your right hand;
He shall execute kings in the day of His
wrath.
6 He shall judge among the nations,
He shall fill *the places* with dead bodies,
He shall execute the heads of many
countries.
7 He shall drink of the brook by the
wayside;
Therefore He shall lift up the head.

## PSALM 111

### PRAISE TO GOD FOR HIS FAITHFULNESS AND JUSTICE

1 Praise the LORD !

I will praise the LORD with *my* whole heart,
In the assembly of the upright and *in* the congregation.

2 The works of the LORD *are* great,
Studied by all who have pleasure in them.
3 His work *is* honorable and glorious,
And His righteousness endures forever.
4 He has made His wonderful works to be remembered;
The LORD *is* gracious and full of compassion.
5 He has given food to those who fear Him;
He will ever be mindful of His covenant.
6 He has declared to His people the power of His works,
In giving them the heritage of the nations.
7 The works of His hands *are* verity and justice;
All His precepts *are* sure.
8 They stand fast forever and ever,
*And are* done in truth and uprightness.
9 He has sent redemption to His people;

He has commanded His covenant
forever:
Holy and awesome *is* His name.
10 The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of
wisdom;
A good understanding have all those
who do *His commandments.*
His praise endures forever.

## PSALM 112

### THE BLESSED STATE OF THE RIGHTEOUS

1 Praise the LORD !

Blessed *is* the man *who* fears the LORD,
*Who* delights greatly in His
commandments.

2 His descendants will be mighty on
earth;
The generation of the upright will be
blessed.
3 Wealth and riches *will be* in his house,
And his righteousness endures forever.
4 Unto the upright there arises light in the
darkness;
*He is* gracious, and full of compassion,
and righteous.
5 A good man deals graciously and lends;
He will guide his affairs with
discretion.
6 Surely he will never be shaken;
The righteous will be in everlasting
remembrance.
7 He will not be afraid of evil tidings;
His heart is steadfast, trusting in the
LORD.
8 His heart *is* established;
He will not be afraid,
Until he sees *his desire* upon his
enemies.
9 He has dispersed abroad,

He has given to the poor;
His righteousness endures forever;
His horn will be exalted with honor.
10 The wicked will see *it* and be grieved;
He will gnash his teeth and melt away;
The desire of the wicked shall perish.

## PSALM 113

### THE MAJESTY AND CONDESCENSION OF GOD

1 Praise the LORD !

Praise, O servants of the LORD,
Praise the name of the LORD !

2 Blessed be the name of the LORD
From this time forth and forevermore!
3 From the rising of the sun to its going down
The LORD 's name *is* to be praised.
4 The LORD *is* high above all nations,
His glory above the heavens.
5 Who *is* like the LORD our God,
Who dwells on high,
6 Who humbles Himself to behold
*The things that are* in the heavens and in the earth?
7 He raises the poor out of the dust,
*And* lifts the needy out of the ash heap,
8 That He may seat *him*
with princes-With the princes of His people.
9 He grants the barren woman a home,
Like a joyful mother of children.

Praise the LORD !

## PSALM 114

### THE POWER OF GOD IN HIS DELIVERANCE OF ISRAEL

1 When Israel went out of Egypt,
The house of Jacob from a people of
strange language,
2 Judah became His sanctuary,
*And* Israel His dominion.
3 The sea saw *it* and fled;
Jordan turned back.
4 The mountains skipped like rams,
The little hills like lambs.
5 What ails you, O sea, that you fled?
O Jordan, *that* you turned back?
6 O mountains, *that* you skipped like rams?
O little hills, like lambs?
7 Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the
Lord,
At the presence of the God of Jacob,
8 Who turned the rock *into* a pool of
water,
The flint into a fountain of waters.

## PSALM 115

### THE FUTILITY OF IDOLS AND THE TRUSTWORTHINESS OF GOD

1 Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us,
But to Your name give glory,
Because of Your mercy,
Because of Your truth.
2 Why should the Gentiles say,
"So where *is* their God?"
3 But our God *is* in heaven;
He does whatever He pleases.
4 Their idols *are* silver and gold,
The work of men's hands.
5 They have mouths, but they do not speak;
Eyes they have, but they do not see;
6 They have ears, but they do not hear;
Noses they have, but they do not smell;
7 They have hands, but they do not handle;
Feet they have, but they do not walk;
Nor do they mutter through their throat.
8 Those who make them are like them;
*So is* everyone who trusts in them.
9 O Israel, trust in the LORD ;
He *is* their help and their shield.
10 O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD ;
He *is* their help and their shield.
11 You who fear the LORD, trust in the LORD ;
He *is* their help and their shield.
12 The LORD has been mindful of *us;*

He will bless us;
He will bless the house of Israel;
He will bless the house of Aaron.
13 He will bless those who fear the LORD,
*Both* small and great.
14 May the LORD give you increase more
and more,
You and your children.
15 *May* you *be* blessed by the LORD,
Who made heaven and earth.
16 The heaven, *even* the heavens, *are* the
LORD 's;
But the earth He has given to the
children of men.
17 The dead do not praise the LORD,
Nor any who go down into silence.
18 But we will bless the LORD
From this time forth and forevermore.

Praise the LORD !

## PSALM 116

### THANKSGIVING FOR DELIVERANCE FROM DEATH

1 I love the LORD, because He has heard
My voice *and* my supplications.
2 Because He has inclined His ear to me,
Therefore I will call *upon Him* as long as
I live.
3 The pains of death surrounded me,
And the pangs of Sheol laid hold of me;
I found trouble and sorrow.
4 Then I called upon the name of the
LORD :
"O LORD, I implore You, deliver my soul!"
5 Gracious *is* the LORD, and righteous;
Yes, our God *is* merciful.
6 The LORD preserves the simple;
I was brought low, and He saved me.
7 Return to your rest, O my soul,
For the LORD has dealt bountifully with
you.
8 For You have delivered my soul from
death,
My eyes from tears,
*And* my feet from falling.
9 I will walk before the LORD
In the land of the living.
10 I believed, therefore I spoke,
"I am greatly afflicted."
11 I said in my haste,
"All men *are* liars."
12 What shall I render to the LORD

*For* all His benefits toward me?
13 I will take up the cup of salvation,
And call upon the name of the LORD.
14 I will pay my vows to the LORD
Now in the presence of all His people.
15 Precious in the sight of the LORD
*Is* the death of His saints.
16 O LORD, truly I *am* Your servant;
I *am* Your servant, the son of Your maidservant;
You have loosed my bonds.
17 I will offer to You the sacrifice of thanksgiving,
And will call upon the name of the LORD.
18 I will pay my vows to the LORD
Now in the presence of all His people,
19 In the courts of the LORD 's house,
In the midst of you, O Jerusalem.

Praise the LORD !

**SOUL NOTE**

**True Home** *(116:15)* Death is real-everyone must die. For most, death is a great tragedy. It is sad when loved ones die, and it is natural to grieve. But God says that the death of a believer is "precious in the sight of the LORD." For believers, death is merely a gateway into the home in heaven where they ultimately belong. The time on this earth

is a pilgrimage through a strange land. Through death, believers enter their true eternal home-heaven. **Topic: Death**

## PSALM 117

### LET ALL PEOPLES PRAISE THE LORD

1 Praise the LORD, all you Gentiles!
Laud Him, all you peoples!
2 For His merciful kindness is great toward us,
And the truth of the LORD *endures* forever.

Praise the LORD !

## PSALM 118

### PRAISE TO GOD FOR HIS EVERLASTING MERCY

1 Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for *He is*
good!
For His mercy *endures* forever.
2 Let Israel now say,
"His mercy *endures* forever."
3 Let the house of Aaron now say,
"His mercy *endures* forever."
4 Let those who fear the LORD now say,
"His mercy *endures* forever."
5 I called on the LORD in distress;
The LORD answered me *and set me* in a
broad place.
6 The LORD *is* on my side;
I will not fear.
What can man do to me?
7 The LORD is for me among those who
help me;
Therefore I shall see *my desire* on those
who hate me.
8 *It is* better to trust in the LORD
Than to put confidence in man.
9 *It is* better to trust in the LORD
Than to put confidence in princes.
10 All nations surrounded me,
But in the name of the LORD I will
destroy them.
11 They surrounded me,
Yes, they surrounded me;
But in the name of the LORD I will
destroy them.

12 They surrounded me like bees;
They were quenched like a fire of thorns;
For in the name of the LORD I will
destroy them.
13 You pushed me violently, that I might
fall,
But the LORD helped me.
14 The LORD *is* my strength and song,
And He has become my salvation.[a]
15 The voice of rejoicing and salvation
*Is* in the tents of the righteous;
The right hand of the LORD does
valiantly.
16 The right hand of the LORD is exalted;
The right hand of the LORD does
valiantly.
17 I shall not die, but live,
And declare the works of the LORD.
18 The LORD has chastened me severely,
But He has not given me over to death.
19 Open to me the gates of righteousness;
I will go through them,
*And* I will praise the LORD.
20 This is the gate of the LORD,
Through which the righteous shall enter.
21 I will praise You,
For You have answered me,
And have become my salvation.
22 The stone *which* the builders rejected
Has become the chief cornerstone.
23 This was the LORD 's doing;
It *is* marvelous in our eyes.
24 This *is* the day the LORD has made;
We will rejoice and be glad in it.

[25] Save now, I pray, O LORD ;
O LORD, I pray, send now prosperity.
[26] Blessed *is* he who comes in the name of
the LORD !
We have blessed you from the house of
the LORD.
[27] God *is* the LORD,
And He has given us light;
Bind the sacrifice with cords to the
horns of the altar.
[28] You *are* my God, and I will praise You;
*You are* my God, I will exalt You.
[29] Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for *He is*
good!
For His mercy *endures* forever.

## PSALM 119

### MEDITATIONS ON THE EXCELLENCIES OF THE WORD OF GOD

א ALEPH

1 Blessed *are* the undefiled in the way,
Who walk in the law of the LORD !
2 Blessed *are* those who keep His testimonies,
Who seek Him with the whole heart!
3 They also do no iniquity;
They walk in His ways.
4 You have commanded *us*
To keep Your precepts diligently.
5 Oh, that my ways were directed
To keep Your statutes!
6 Then I would not be ashamed,
When I look into all Your commandments.
7 I will praise You with uprightness of heart,
When I learn Your righteous judgments.
8 I will keep Your statutes;
Oh, do not forsake me utterly!

ב BETH

9 How can a young man cleanse his way?
By taking heed according to Your word.
10 With my whole heart I have sought You;
Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments!

11 Your word I have hidden in my heart,
That I might not sin against You.
12 Blessed *are* You, O LORD !
Teach me Your statutes.
13 With my lips I have declared
All the judgments of Your mouth.
14 I have rejoiced in the way of Your
testimonies,
As *much as* in all riches.
15 I will meditate on Your precepts,
And contemplate
Your ways.
16 I will delight
myself in Your
statutes;
I will not forget
Your word.

ג GIMEL

17 Deal bountifully with Your servant,
*That* I may live and keep Your word.
18 Open my eyes, that I may see
Wondrous things from Your law.
19 I *am* a stranger in the earth;
Do not hide Your commandments from
me.
20 My soul breaks with longing
For Your judgments at all times.
21 You rebuke the proud-the cursed,
Who stray from Your commandments.
22 Remove from me reproach and
contempt,
For I have kept Your testimonies.
23 Princes also sit *and* speak against me,

*But* Your servant meditates on Your
statutes.
24 Your testimonies also *are* my delight
*And* my counselors.

ד DALETH

25 My soul clings to the dust;
Revive me according to Your word.
26 I have declared my ways, and You
answered me;
Teach me Your statutes.
27 Make me understand the way of Your
precepts;
So shall I meditate on Your wonderful
works.
28 My soul melts from heaviness;
Strengthen me according to Your word.
29 Remove from me the way of lying,
And grant me Your law graciously.
30 I have chosen the way of truth;
Your judgments I have laid *before me.*
31 I cling to Your testimonies;
O LORD, do not put me to shame!
32 I will run the course of Your
commandments,
For You shall enlarge my heart.

ה HE

33 Teach me, O LORD, the way of Your
statutes,
And I shall keep it
*to* the end.

Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin

against You.
PSALM 119:11

34 Give me
understanding,
and I shall keep
Your law;
Indeed, I shall
observe it with
*my* whole heart.
35 Make me walk in the path of Your
commandments,
For I delight in it.
36 Incline my heart to Your testimonies,
And not to covetousness.
37 Turn away my eyes from looking at
worthless things,
*And* revive me in Your way.[a]
38 Establish Your word to Your servant,
Who *is devoted* to fearing You.
39 Turn away my reproach which I dread,
For Your judgments *are* good.
40 Behold, I long for Your precepts;
Revive me in Your righteousness.

## ו WAW

41 Let Your mercies come also to me,
O LORD -
Your salvation according to Your
word.
42 So shall I have an answer for him who
reproaches me,
For I trust in Your word.
43 And take not the word of truth utterly

out of my mouth,
For I have hoped in Your ordinances.
44 So shall I keep Your law continually,
Forever and ever.
45 And I will walk at liberty,
For I seek Your precepts.
46 I will speak of Your testimonies also
before kings,
And will not be ashamed.
47 And I will delight myself in Your
commandments,
Which I love.
48 My hands also I will lift up to Your
commandments,
Which I love,
And I will meditate on Your statutes.

ז ZAYIN

49 Remember the word to Your servant,
Upon which You have caused me to
hope.
50 This *is* my comfort in my affliction,
For Your word has given me life.
51 The proud have me in great derision,
*Yet* I do not turn aside from Your law.
52 I remembered Your judgments of old,
O LORD,
And have comforted myself.
53 Indignation has taken hold of me
Because of the wicked, who forsake Your
law.
54 Your statutes have been my songs
In the house of my pilgrimage.
55 I remember Your name in the night,

O LORD,
And I keep Your law.
56 This has become mine,
Because I kept Your precepts.

## ח HETH

57 *You are* my portion, O LORD ;
I have said that I would keep Your words.
58 I entreated Your favor with *my* whole heart;
Be merciful to me according to Your word.
59 I thought about my ways,
And turned my feet to Your testimonies.
60 I made haste, and did not delay
To keep Your commandments.
61 The cords of the wicked have bound me,
*But* I have not forgotten Your law.
62 At midnight I will rise to give thanks to You,
Because of Your righteous judgments.
63 I *am* a companion of all who fear You,
And of those who keep Your precepts.
64 The earth, O LORD, is full of Your mercy;
Teach me Your statutes.

## ט TETH

65 You have dealt well with Your servant,
O LORD, according to Your word.
66 Teach me good judgment and knowledge,
For I believe Your commandments.
67 Before I was afflicted I went astray,
But now I keep Your word.

68 You *are* good, and do good;
Teach me Your statutes.
69 The proud have forged a lie against me,
*But* I will keep Your precepts with *my*
whole heart.
70 Their heart is as fat as grease,
*But* I delight in Your law.
71 *It is* good for me that I have been
afflicted,
That I may learn Your statutes.
72 The law of Your mouth *is* better to me
Than thousands of *coins of* gold and
silver.

YOD

73 Your hands have made me and
fashioned me;
Give me understanding, that I may learn
Your commandments.
74 Those who fear You will be glad when
they see me,
Because I have hoped in Your word.
75 I know, O LORD, that Your judgments *are*
right,
And *that* in faithfulness You have
afflicted me.
76 Let, I pray, Your merciful kindness be for
my comfort,
According to Your word to Your servant.
77 Let Your tender mercies come to me,
that I may live;
For Your law *is* my delight.
78 Let the proud be ashamed,
For they treated me wrongfully with

falsehood;
*But* I will meditate on Your precepts.
79 Let those who fear You turn to me,
Those who know Your testimonies.
80 Let my heart be blameless regarding
Your statutes,
That I may not be ashamed.

כ KAPH

81 My soul faints for Your salvation,
But I hope in Your word.
82 My eyes fail *from searching* Your word,
Saying, “When will You comfort me?”
83 For I have become like a wineskin in
smoke,
*Yet* I do not forget Your statutes.
84 How many *are* the days of Your servant?
When will You execute judgment on
those who persecute me?
85 The proud have dug pits for me,
Which *is* not according to Your law.
86 All Your commandments *are* faithful;
They persecute me wrongfully;
Help me!
87 They almost made an end of me on
earth,
But I did not forsake Your precepts.
88 Revive me according to Your
lovingkindness,
So that I may keep
the testimony of
Your mouth.

ל LAMED

89 Forever, O LORD,
Your word is
settled in
heaven.
90 Your faithfulness *endures* to all
generations;
You established the earth, and it abides.
91 They continue this day according to Your
ordinances,
For all *are* Your servants.
92 Unless Your law *had been* my delight,
I would then have perished in my
affliction.
93 I will never forget Your precepts,
For by them You have given me life.
94 I *am* Yours, save me;
For I have sought Your precepts.
95 The wicked wait for me to destroy me,
*But* I will consider Your testimonies.
96 I have seen the consummation of all
perfection,
*But* Your commandment *is* exceedingly broad.

## מ MEM

97 Oh, how I love Your law!
It *is* my meditation all the day.
98 You, through Your commandments,
make me wiser than my enemies;
For they *are* ever with me.
99 I have more understanding than all my
teachers,
For Your testimonies *are* my meditation.
100 I understand more than the ancients,
Because I keep Your precepts.

101 I have restrained my feet from every evil
way,
That I may keep Your word.
102 I have not departed from Your
judgments,
For You Yourself have taught me.
103 How sweet are Your words to my taste,
*Sweeter* than honey to my mouth!
104 Through Your precepts I get
understanding;
Therefore I hate every false way.

- NUN

105 Your word *is* a lamp to my feet
And a light to my
path.

> Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.
> PSALM 119:105

106 I have sworn and
confirmed
That I will keep
Your righteous
judgments.
107 I am afflicted very
much;
Revive me, O LORD, according to Your
word.
108 Accept, I pray, the freewill offerings of
my mouth, O LORD,
And teach me Your judgments.
109 My life *is* continually in my hand, Yet I do not forget Your law.
110 The wicked have laid a snare for me,
Yet I have not strayed from Your

precepts.
111 Your testimonies I have taken as a
heritage forever,
For they *are* the rejoicing of my heart.
112 I have inclined my heart to perform Your
statutes
Forever, to the very end.

## SAMEK

113 I hate the double-minded,
But I love Your law.
114 You *are* my hiding place and my
shield;
I hope in Your word.
115 Depart from me, you evildoers,
For I will keep the commandments of
my God!
116 Uphold me according to Your word, that
I may live;
And do not let me be ashamed of my
hope.
117 Hold me up, and I shall be safe,
And I shall observe Your statutes
continually.
118 You reject all those who stray from Your
statutes,
For their deceit *is* falsehood.
119 You put away all the wicked of the earth
*like* dross;
Therefore I love Your testimonies.
120 My flesh trembles for fear of You,
And I am afraid of Your judgments.

## AYIN

121 I have done justice and righteousness;
Do not leave me to my oppressors.
122 Be surety for Your servant for good;
Do not let the proud oppress me.
123 My eyes fail *from seeking* Your
salvation
And Your righteous word.
124 Deal with Your servant according to Your
mercy,
And teach me Your statutes.
125 I *am* Your servant;
Give me understanding,
That I may know Your testimonies.
126 *It is* time for *You* to act, O LORD,
*For* they have regarded Your law as void.
127 Therefore I love Your commandments
More than gold, yes, than fine gold!
128 Therefore all *Your* precepts *concerning*
all *things*
I consider *to be* right;
I hate every false way.

## פ PE

129 Your testimonies are wonderful;
Therefore my soul keeps them.
130 The entrance of Your words gives light;
It gives understanding to the simple.
131 I opened my mouth and panted,
For I longed for Your commandments.
132 Look upon me and be merciful to me,
As Your custom *is* toward those who
love Your name.
133 Direct my steps by Your word,
And let no iniquity have dominion over

me.
134 Redeem me from the oppression of man,
That I may keep Your precepts.
135 Make Your face shine upon Your
servant,
And teach me Your statutes.
136 Rivers of water run down from my eyes,
Because *men* do not keep Your law.

צ TSADDE
137 Righteous *are* You, O LORD,
And upright *are* Your judgments.
138 Your testimonies, *which* You have
commanded,
*Are* righteous and very faithful.
139 My zeal has consumed me,
Because my enemies have forgotten Your
words.
140 Your word *is* very pure;
Therefore Your servant loves it.
141 I *am* small and despised,
*Yet* I do not forget Your precepts.
142 Your righteousness *is* an everlasting
righteousness,
And Your law *is* truth.
143 Trouble and anguish have overtaken me,
*Yet* Your commandments *are* my
delights.
144 The righteousness of Your testimonies *is*
everlasting;
Give me understanding, and I shall live.

ק QOPH
145 I cry out with *my* whole heart;

Hear me, O LORD !
I will keep Your statutes.
146 I cry out to You;
Save me, and I will keep Your
testimonies.
147 I rise before the dawning of the
morning,
And cry for help;
I hope in Your word.
148 My eyes are awake through the *night*
watches,
That I may meditate on Your word.
149 Hear my voice according to Your
lovingkindness;
O LORD, revive me according to Your
justice.
150 They draw near who follow after
wickedness;
They are far from Your law.
151 You *are* near, O LORD,
And all Your commandments *are* truth.
152 Concerning Your testimonies,
I have known of old that You have
founded them forever.

ר RESH
153 Consider my affliction and deliver me,
For I do not forget Your law.
154 Plead my cause and redeem me;
Revive me according to Your word.
155 Salvation *is* far from the wicked,
For they do not seek Your statutes.
156 Great *are* Your tender mercies,
O LORD ;

Revive me according to Your judgments.
157 Many *are* my persecutors and my
enemies,
*Yet* I do not turn from Your testimonies.
158 I see the treacherous, and am disgusted,
Because they do not keep Your word.
159 Consider how I love Your precepts;
Revive me, O LORD, according to Your
lovingkindness.
160 The entirety of Your word *is* truth,
And every one of Your righteous
judgments *endures* forever.

ש SHIN

161 Princes persecute me without a cause,
But my heart stands in awe of Your word.
162 I rejoice at Your word
As one who finds great treasure.
163 I hate and abhor lying,
*But* I love Your law.
164 Seven times a day I praise You,
Because of Your righteous judgments.
165 Great peace have those who love Your
law,
And nothing causes them to stumble.
166 LORD, I hope for Your salvation,
And I do Your commandments.
167 My soul keeps Your testimonies,
And I love them exceedingly.
168 I keep Your precepts and Your
testimonies,
For all my ways *are* before You.

ת TAU

169 Let my cry come before You, O LORD ;
Give me
understanding
according to
Your word.
170 Let my
supplication
come before
You;
Deliver me
according to
Your word.
171 My lips shall utter praise,
For You teach me Your statutes.
172 My tongue shall speak of Your word,
For all Your commandments *are*
righteousness.
173 Let Your hand become my help,
For I have chosen Your precepts.
174 I long for Your salvation, O LORD,
And Your law *is* my delight.
175 Let my soul live, and it shall praise You;
And let Your judgments help me.
176 I have gone astray like a lost sheep;
Seek Your servant,
For I do not forget Your commandments.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Hide and Seek** *(119:11)* So powerful is the Word of God that it can actually keep people from sinning. When believers hide Scripture in their hearts by reading, memorizing, meditating, and applying it to their lives, they are insulating themselves against the pressure of temptation. Often, people give in to the lure of temptation because their hearts and minds are not focused on God and His revelation of Himself. Believers should know in their hearts what the Bible says so that they can stand up to temptation and not sin against God. **Topic: Temptation**

## PSALM 120

### PLEA FOR RELIEF FROM BITTER FOES

*A Song of Ascents.*

1 In my distress I cried to the LORD,
And He heard me.
2 Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips
*And* from a deceitful tongue.
3 What shall be given to you,
Or what shall be done to you,
You false tongue?
4 Sharp arrows of the warrior,
With coals of the broom tree!
5 Woe is me, that I dwell in Meshech,
*That* I dwell among the tents of Kedar!
6 My soul has dwelt too long
With one who hates peace.
7 I *am for* peace;
But when I speak, they *are* for war.

## PSALM 121

### GOD THE HELP OF THOSE WHO SEEK HIM

*A Song of Ascents.*

1 I will lift up my eyes to the hills-
From whence
comes my help?
2 My help *comes*
from the LORD,
Who made heaven
and earth.
3 He will not allow
your foot to be
moved;
He who keeps you will not slumber.

> I will lift up my eyes to the hills-from whence comes my help? My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth.
> PSALM 121:1, 2

4 Behold, He who keeps Israel
Shall neither slumber nor sleep.
5 The LORD *is* your keeper;
The LORD *is* your shade at your right
hand.
6 The sun shall not strike you by day,
Nor the moon by night.
7 The LORD shall preserve you from all
evil;
He shall preserve your soul.
8 The LORD shall preserve your going out

and your coming in
From this time forth, and even
forevermore.

## PSALM 122

### THE JOY OF GOING TO THE HOUSE OF THE LORD

*A Song of Ascents. Of David.*

1 I was glad when they said to me,
"Let us go into the house of the LORD."
2 Our feet have been standing
Within your gates, O Jerusalem!
3 Jerusalem is built
As a city that is compact together,
4 Where the tribes go up,
The tribes of the LORD,
To the Testimony of Israel,
To give thanks to the name of the LORD.
5 For thrones are set there for judgment,
The thrones of the house of David.
6 Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:
"May they prosper who love you.
7 Peace be within your walls,
Prosperity within your palaces."
8 For the sake of my brethren and
companions,
I will now say, "Peace *be* within you."
9 Because of the house of the LORD our
God
I will seek your good.

## PSALM 123

### PRAYER FOR RELIEF FROM CONTEMPT

*A Song of Ascents.*

1 Unto You I lift up my eyes,
O You who dwell in the heavens.
2 Behold, as the eyes of servants *look* to
the hand of their masters,
As the eyes of a maid to the hand of her
mistress,
So our eyes *look* to the LORD our God,
Until He has mercy on us.
3 Have mercy on us, O LORD, have mercy
on us!
For we are exceedingly filled with
contempt.
4 Our soul is exceedingly filled
With the scorn of those who are at ease,
With the contempt of the proud.

## PSALM 124

### THE LORD THE DEFENSE OF HIS PEOPLE

*A Song of Ascents. Of David.*

1 "If it had not been the LORD who was on
our side,"
Let Israel now say-
2 "If it had not been the LORD who was on
our side,
When men rose up against us,
3 Then they would have swallowed us
alive,
When their wrath was kindled against us;
4 Then the waters would have
overwhelmed us,
The stream would have gone over our
soul;
5 Then the swollen waters
Would have gone over our soul."
6 Blessed *be* the LORD,
Who has not given us *as* prey to their
teeth.
7 Our soul has escaped as a bird from the
snare of the fowlers;[a]
The snare is broken, and we have
escaped.
8 Our help *is* in the name of the LORD,
Who made heaven and earth.

## PSALM 125

### THE LORD THE STRENGTH OF HIS PEOPLE

*A Song of Ascents.*

1 Those who trust in the LORD
*Are* like Mount Zion,
*Which* cannot be moved, *but* abides
forever.
2 As the mountains surround Jerusalem,
So the LORD surrounds His people
From this time forth and forever.
3 For the scepter of wickedness shall not
rest
On the land allotted to the righteous,
Lest the righteous reach out their hands
to iniquity.
4 Do good, O LORD, to *those who are*
good,
And to *those who are* upright in their
hearts.
5 As for such as turn aside to their
crooked ways,
The LORD shall lead them away
With the workers of iniquity.

Peace *be* upon Israel!

## PSALM 126

### A JOYFUL RETURN TO ZION

*A Song of Ascents.*

1 When the LORD brought back the
captivity of Zion,
We were like those who dream.
2 Then our mouth was filled with
laughter,
And our tongue with singing.
Then they said among the nations,
"The LORD has done great things for
them."
3 The LORD has done great things for us,
*And* we are glad.
4 Bring back our captivity, O LORD,
As the streams in the South.
5 Those who sow in tears
Shall reap in joy.
6 He who continually goes forth
weeping,
Bearing seed for sowing,
Shall doubtless come again with
rejoicing,
Bringing his sheaves *with him.*

## PSALM 127

### LABORING AND PROSPERING WITH THE LORD

*A Song of Ascents. Of Solomon.*

1 Unless the LORD builds the house,
They labor in vain who build it;
Unless the LORD guards the city,
The watchman stays awake in vain.
2 *It is* vain for you to rise up early,
To sit up late,
To eat the bread of sorrows;
*For* so He gives His beloved sleep.
3 Behold, children *are* a heritage from the
LORD,
The fruit of the womb *is* a reward.
4 Like arrows in the hand of a warrior,
So *are* the children of one's youth.
5 Happy *is* the man who has his quiver
full of them;
They shall not be ashamed,
But shall speak with their enemies in the
gate.

**KEY PASSAGE**

# A SOLID FOUNDATION

## (127:3-5)

God values families, calling children “a heritage from the LORD.” Families are the foundation of society, the place where children are taught about faith in God and given love, nurture, and guidance. So why are there so many sad and separated families? Many families have ignored God in their family life, so He is not sought when the family faces troubles and difficulty. “Unless the LORD builds the house, they labor in vain who build it,” wrote Solomon (Ps. 127:1). Putting the Lord at the base does not guarantee a perfect family; it does, however, provide a foundation upon which to build and guidelines by which to make decisions and handle difficulties. The family with God as its foundation will offer a solid, stable, and loving home. And it’s never too late. This kind of foundation can always be laid, even under an existing house. The structure can then be remodeled on the firmest possible footing.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about family life Strong Families. See also the personality profile of Timothy Timothy: A Godly Heritage.

## PSALM 128

### BLESSINGS OF THOSE WHO FEAR THE LORD

*A Song of Ascents.*

1 Blessed *is* every one who fears the
LORD,
Who walks in His ways.
2 When you eat the labor of your
hands,
You *shall be* happy, and *it shall be* well
with you.
3 Your wife *shall be* like a fruitful vine
In the very heart of your house,
Your children like olive plants
All around your table.
4 Behold, thus shall the man be blessed
Who fears the LORD.
5 The LORD bless you out of Zion,
And may you see the good of
Jerusalem
All the days of your life.
6 Yes, may you see your children's
children.

Peace *be* upon Israel!

## PSALM 129

### SONG OF VICTORY OVER ZION'S ENEMIES

*A Song of Ascents.*

1 "Many a time they have afflicted me from my youth,"
Let Israel now say-
2 "Many a time they have afflicted me from my youth;
Yet they have not prevailed against me.
3 The plowers plowed on my back;
They made their furrows long."
4 The LORD *is* righteous;
He has cut in pieces the cords of the wicked.
5 Let all those who hate Zion
Be put to shame and turned back.
6 Let them be as the grass *on* the housetops,
Which withers before it grows up,
7 With which the reaper does not fill his hand,
Nor he who binds sheaves, his arms.
8 Neither let those who pass by them say,
"The blessing of the LORD *be* upon you;
We bless you in the name of the LORD !"

## PSALM 130

### WAITING FOR THE REDEMPTION OF THE LORD

*A Song of Ascents.*

1 Out of the depths I have cried to You,
O LORD ;
2 Lord, hear my voice!
Let Your ears be attentive
To the voice of my supplications.
3 If You, LORD, should mark iniquities,
O Lord, who could stand?
4 But *there is* forgiveness with You,
That You may be feared.
5 I wait for the LORD, my soul waits,
And in His word I do hope.
6 My soul *waits* for the Lord
More than those who watch for the
morning-
*Yes, more than* those who watch for the
morning.
7 O Israel, hope in the LORD ;
For with the LORD *there is* mercy,
And with Him *is* abundant redemption.
8 And He shall redeem Israel
From all his iniquities.

## SOUL NOTE

**Light in the Darkness** *(ch. 130)* From the depths, the psalmist cried out to God. The writer recognized that people need God most when they are most depressed. Feelings of sadness can overwhelm a person, like impenetrable darkness. The psalmist called out to God, remembering His care (130:2), forgiveness (130:4), and redemption (130:7). Then, like a light shining in the darkness, he was willing to wait for the Lord and hope in Him (130:5-7). When life seems to be nothing but darkness, we must call out to God, trust Him, and never lose hope. **Topic: Depression**

## THE VALLEY OF DEPRESSION

MICHAEL R. LYLES

(Psalm 130)

**A**t times, everybody feels sad, down, and blue. Solomon wrote of "a time to weep" and "a time to mourn" (Eccl. 3:4). The writer of Hebrews assured believers they would have times of need in their lives (Heb. 4:16).

Depression, however, is a deeper level of emotional turmoil and can affect many people in many ways. According to research, nearly one person in five will experience significant and persistent levels of depression. Significant and persistent depression causes people to

miss more work than diabetes and heart disease, as well as being a major risk factor after heart attacks and strokes. Depression affects individuals, families, coworkers, and others who are in regular contact with the depressed person. Clearly, depression is a serious concern for many people.

## CAUSES OF DEPRESSION

Depression can be caused by a variety of factors, including stress, fear, loneliness, guilt, and anger. David wrote of his depression caused by unconfessed sin, leading to a groaning in his soul and a loss of strength (Ps. 38). God used depression as a signal to get Nehemiah's attention to do His work (Neh. 1; 2). Job experienced financial, personal, and relational losses that led him to curse the day he was born (Job 1-3). Elijah was so depressed after a great victory that he wanted to die (1 Kin. 19:4). Many other Bible characters shared the lonely path of depression.

Although environmental issues such as work, stress, family, and other relationships can add to depression, actually a number of medical factors are involved, including thyroid abnormalities, female hormone fluctuations, and diabetes. Nutritional shortages leading to B-12 or iron deficiencies can cause sadness. Patients with a recent history of stroke or heart attack are at high risk for depression. Common prescription drugs such as anti-hypertensives or oral contraceptives, and recreational drugs such as alcohol and cocaine, can cause significant levels of depression. Abnormalities in the brain's management of hormones such as seroto-nin and norepinephrine can also bring on overwhelming feelings of doom and gloom. Understanding the physical components that can cause depression can help to put this disorder in context and give an idea of how widespread it is.

## SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION

Psalm 102 provides a virtual checklist of symptoms that King David

experienced during a particularly stressful period in his life. “Let my cry come to You. Do not hide Your face from me in the day of my trouble” (102:1, 2). He wrote of feeling stricken physically and described losing meaning and purpose in his life: “My days are consumed like smoke, and my bones are burned like a hearth. My heart is stricken and withered like grass” (102:3, 4). He lost his appetite: “I forget to eat my bread” (102:4). He felt isolated and rejected: “I am like a pelican of the wilderness; I am like an owl of the desert” (102:6). He couldn’t sleep: “I lie awake” (102:7). He had frequent crying spells: “I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping” (102:9).

Serious depression can present itself in a number of ways. When the above symptoms are experienced in a dramatic, disabling fashion for weeks or months at a time, it is called “major depression.” When these symptoms are low-grade and chronic, it is called “dysthymic disorder.” Depression can also alternate in a pattern of mood swings-with a person feeling irritable and then euphoric, having insomnia, or being agitated. This is called “bipolar disorder” or “manic depressive illness.”

**RESPONDING TO DEPRESSION**

Elijah demonstrated both healthy and unhealthy responses to depression (1 Kin. 19). After the great victory on Mount Carmel, his life was threatened and he became afraid. He focused on the situation instead of on God. During a sequence of events, he sank deeper and deeper into a depressed state. His fear became so intense that he eventually ran away, isolated himself, and prayed that he would die (1 Kin. 19:4).

A summary of his behavior can be described as the HALT syndrome-a very vulnerable place for a person to be. At his most depressed state he was:

**H**ungry-He stopped eating.

**A**ngry-He was mad at God for not caring about him.

**L**onely-He left his servant and traveled alone.

**T**ired-He collapsed into sleep.

Any time a person experiences an intense combination of these characteristics, he or she is becoming vulnerable to developing some form of depression.

## RECOVERING HOPE

God counteracted the HALT syndrome in Elijah's life at every level. He responded by providing food for Elijah. An angel touched Elijah, reminding him that he was not alone. Two times God encouraged Elijah to regain his strength by eating, drinking, and resting. God brought him out of the HALT syndrome, which enabled Elijah to listen and obey (1 Kin. 19:5-18).

The story of Elijah reminds us of the importance of having a real and personal relationship with God. When we are depressed, we may often feel like running away from our problems like Elijah. We must avoid isolating ourselves, as tempting as that might be. We may need to be accountable to a friend, pastor, family member, or Christian therapist who can help us through the difficult times. Depressed people must be careful to stay clear of addictive behaviors, unhealthy relationships, or socially avoidant behaviors, for these will only deepen a depressed state.

Though he felt hopeless, Elijah accepted God's help. He recognized God's voice and was strengthened and encouraged. He was then able to return to his life with a new ability to cope and a new hope for the future.

## FURTHER MEDITATION:

Other passages to study about the issue of depression include:

- Psalms 27; 34; 40:1-3; 42; 43; 88; 143; 147:3
- Isaiah 41:10; 43:2
- Romans 8:18-39
- 2 Corinthians 1:8-11

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on depression at 1 Kings 19:1-18. See also the personality profile of Elijah and the Darkness of Depression.

## PSALM 131

### SIMPLE TRUST IN THE LORD

*A Song of Ascents. Of David.*

1 LORD, my heart is not haughty,
Nor my eyes lofty.
Neither do I concern myself with great matters,
Nor with things too profound for me.
2 Surely I have calmed and quieted my soul,
Like a weaned child with his mother;
Like a weaned child *is* my soul within me.
3 O Israel, hope in the LORD
From this time forth and forever.

## PSALM 132

### THE ETERNAL DWELLING OF GOD IN ZION

*A Song of Ascents.*

1 LORD, remember David
*And* all his afflictions;
2 How he swore to the LORD,
*And* vowed to the Mighty One of Jacob:
3 "Surely I will not go into the chamber of
my house,
Or go up to the comfort of my bed;
4 I will not give sleep to my eyes
*Or* slumber to my eyelids,
5 Until I find a place for the LORD,
A dwelling place for the Mighty One of
Jacob."
6 Behold, we heard of it in Ephrathah;
We found it in the fields of the woods.[a]
7 Let us go into His tabernacle;
Let us worship at His footstool.
8 Arise, O LORD, to Your resting place,
You and the ark of Your strength.
9 Let Your priests be clothed with
righteousness,
And let Your saints shout for joy.
10 For Your servant David's sake,
Do not turn away the face of Your
Anointed.
11 The LORD has sworn *in* truth to David;
He will not turn from it:
"I will set upon your throne the fruit of
your body.

12 If your sons will keep My covenant
And My testimony which I shall teach them,
Their sons also shall sit upon your throne forevermore.”
13 For the LORD has chosen Zion;
He has desired *it* for His dwelling place:
14 “This *is* My resting place forever;
Here I will dwell, for I have desired it.
15 I will abundantly bless her provision;
I will satisfy her poor with bread.
16 I will also clothe her priests with salvation,
And her saints shall shout aloud for joy.
17 There I will make the horn of David grow;
I will prepare a lamp for My Anointed.
18 His enemies I will clothe with shame,
But upon Himself His crown shall flourish.”

## PSALM 133

### BLESSED UNITY OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD

*A Song of Ascents. Of David.*

[1] Behold, how good and how pleasant *it is*
For brethren to dwell together in unity!
[2]*It is* like the precious oil upon the head,
Running down on the beard,
The beard of Aaron,
Running down on the edge of his
garments.
[3]*It is* like the dew of Hermon,
Descending upon the mountains of Zion;
For there the LORD commanded the
blessing-
Life forevermore.

## PSALM 134

### PRAISING THE LORD IN HIS HOUSE AT NIGHT

*A Song of Ascents.*

1 Behold, bless the LORD,
All *you* servants of the LORD,
Who by night stand in the house of the
LORD !
2 Lift up your hands *in* the sanctuary,
And bless the LORD.
3 The LORD who made heaven and earth
Bless you from Zion!

## PSALM 135

### PRAISE TO GOD IN CREATION AND REDEMPTION

1 Praise the LORD !

Praise the name of the LORD ;
Praise *Him,* O you servants of the LORD !

2 You who stand in the house of the LORD,
In the courts of the house of our God,
3 Praise the LORD,
for the LORD *is*
good;
Sing praises to His
name, for *it is*
pleasant.
4 For the LORD has
chosen Jacob
for Himself,
Israel for His special treasure.
5 For I know that the LORD *is* great,
And our Lord *is* above all gods.
6 Whatever the LORD pleases He does,
In heaven and in earth,
In the seas and in all deep places.
7 He causes the vapors to ascend from the
ends of the earth;
He makes lightning for the rain;
He brings the wind out of His treasuries.
8 He destroyed the firstborn of Egypt,
Both of man and beast.
9 He sent signs and wonders into the

midst of you, O Egypt,
Upon Pharaoh and all his servants.
10 He defeated many nations
And slew mighty kings-
11 Sihon king of the Amorites,
Og king of Bashan,
And all the kingdoms of Canaan-
12 And gave their land *as* a heritage,
A heritage to Israel His people.
13 Your name, O LORD, *endures* forever,
Your fame, O LORD, throughout all
generations.
14 For the LORD will judge His people,
And He will have compassion on His
servants.
15 The idols of the nations *are* silver and
gold,
The work of men's hands.
16 They have mouths, but they do not
speak;
Eyes they have, but they do not see;
17 They have ears, but they do not hear;
Nor is there *any* breath in their mouths.
18 Those who make them are like them;
*So is* everyone who trusts in them.
19 Bless the LORD, O house of Israel!
Bless the LORD, O house of Aaron!
20 Bless the LORD, O house of Levi!
You who fear the
LORD, bless the
LORD !
21 Blessed be the
LORD out of
Zion,
Who dwells in

Jerusalem!

Praise the LORD !

## PSALM 136

### THANKSGIVING TO GOD FOR HIS ENDURING MERCY

1 Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for *He is*
good!
For His mercy *endures* forever.

> Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.
> PSALM 136:1

2 Oh, give thanks to the God of gods!
For His mercy *endures* forever.
3 Oh, give thanks to the Lord of lords!
For His mercy *endures* forever:
4 To Him who alone does great
wonders,
For His mercy *endures* forever;
5 To Him who by wisdom made the
heavens,
For His mercy *endures* forever;
6 To Him who laid out the earth above the
waters,
For His mercy *endures* forever;
7 To Him who made great lights,
For His mercy *endures* forever-
8 The sun to rule by day,
For His mercy *endures* forever;
9 The moon and stars to rule by night,
For His mercy *endures* forever.
10 To Him who struck Egypt in their
firstborn,

For His mercy *endures* forever;
11 And brought out Israel from among
them,
For His mercy *endures* forever;
12 With a strong hand, and with an
outstretched arm,
For His mercy *endures* forever;
13 To Him who divided the Red Sea in
two,
For His mercy *endures* forever;
14 And made Israel pass through the midst
of it,
For His mercy *endures* forever;
15 But overthrew Pharaoh and his army in
the Red Sea,
For His mercy *endures* forever;
16 To Him who led His people through the
wilderness,
For His mercy *endures* forever;
17 To Him who struck down great
kings,
For His mercy *endures* forever;
18 And slew famous kings,
For His mercy *endures* forever-
19 Sihon king of the Amorites, For His mercy *endures* forever;
20 And Og king of Bashan,
For His mercy *endures* forever-
21 And gave their land as a heritage,
For His mercy *endures* forever;
22 A heritage to Israel His servant,
For His mercy *endures* forever.
23 Who remembered us in our lowly state,
For His mercy *endures* forever;
24 And rescued us from our enemies,

For His mercy *endures* forever;
25 Who gives food to all flesh,
For His mercy *endures* forever.
26 Oh, give thanks to the God of heaven!
For His mercy *endures* forever.

## PSALM 137

### LONGING FOR ZION IN A FOREIGN LAND

1 By the rivers of Babylon,
There we sat down, yea, we wept
When we remembered Zion.
2 We hung our harps
Upon the willows in the midst of it.
3 For there those who carried us away
captive asked of us a song,
And those who plundered us *requested*
mirth,
*Saying,* "Sing us *one* of the songs of Zion!"
4 How shall we sing the LORD 's song
In a foreign land?
5 If I forget you, O Jerusalem,
Let my right hand forget *its skill!*
6 If I do not remember you,
Let my tongue cling to the roof of my
mouth-
If I do not exalt Jerusalem
Above my chief joy.
7 Remember, O LORD, against the sons of
Edom
The day of Jerusalem,
Who said, "Raze *it*, raze *it*,
To its very foundation!"
8 O daughter of Babylon, who are to be
destroyed,
Happy the one who repays you as you
have served us!
9 Happy the one who takes and dashes
Your little ones against the rock!

## PSALM 138

### THE LORD 'S GOODNESS TO THE FAITHFUL

*A Psalm of David.*

1 I will praise You with my whole heart;
Before the gods I will sing praises to You.
2 I will worship toward Your holy temple,
And praise Your name
For Your lovingkindness and Your truth;
For You have magnified Your word above
all Your name.
3 In the day when I cried out, You
answered me,
*And* made me bold *with* strength in my
soul.
4 All the kings of the earth shall praise
You, O LORD,
When they hear the words of Your
mouth.
5 Yes, they shall sing of the ways of the
LORD,
For great *is* the glory of the LORD.
6 Though the LORD *is* on high,
Yet He regards the lowly;
But the proud He knows from afar.
7 Though I walk in the midst of trouble,
You will revive me;
You will stretch out Your hand
Against the wrath of my enemies,
And Your right hand will save me.
8 The LORD will perfect *that which*
concerns me;

Your mercy, O LORD, *endures* forever;
Do not forsake the works of Your hands.

## PSALM 139

### GOD'S PERFECT KNOWLEDGE OF MAN

*For the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.*

1 O LORD, You have searched me and
known *me.*
2 You know my sitting down and my rising
up;
You understand my thought afar off.
3 You comprehend my path and my lying
down,
And are acquainted with all my ways.
4 For *there is* not a word on my tongue,
*But* behold, O LORD, You know it
altogether.
5 You have hedged me behind and before,
And laid Your hand upon me.
6 *Such* knowledge *is* too wonderful for me;
It is high, I cannot *attain* it.
7 Where can I go from Your Spirit?
Or where can I flee from Your presence?
8 If I ascend into heaven, You *are* there;
If I make my bed in hell, behold, You *are*
*there.*
9 *If* I take the wings of the morning,
*And* dwell in the uttermost parts of the
sea,
10 Even there Your hand shall lead me,
And Your right hand shall hold me.
11 If I say, "Surely the darkness shall fall[a]
on me,"
Even the night shall be light about me;

12 Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from
You,
But the night shines as the day;
The darkness and the light *are* both alike
*to You*.
13 For You formed my inward parts;
You covered me in my mother's womb.
14 I will praise You, for I am fearfully *and*
wonderfully made;[a]
Marvelous are Your works,
And *that* my soul knows very well.
15 My frame was not hidden from You,
When I was made in secret,
*And* skillfully wrought in the lowest
parts of the earth.
16 Your eyes saw my substance, being yet
unformed.
And in Your book they all were written,
The days fashioned for me,
When *as yet there were* none of them.
17 How precious also are Your thoughts to
me, O God!
How great is the sum of them!
18 *If* I should count them, they would be
more in number than the sand;
When I awake, I am still with You.
19 Oh, that You would slay the wicked,
O God!
Depart from me, therefore, you
bloodthirsty men.
20 For they speak against You wickedly;
Your enemies take *Your name* in
vain.[a]
21 Do I not hate them, O LORD, who hate
You?

And do I not loathe those who rise up
against You?
22 I hate them with perfect hatred;
I count them my enemies.
23 Search me, O God, and know my heart;
Try me, and know my anxieties;
24 And see if *there is any* wicked way in
me,
And lead me in the way everlasting.

**SOUL NOTE**

**In God's Image** *(139:14)* The Bible clearly states that all people are "fearfully and wonderfully made" by God from the moment of conception. God determines each person's physical being. His people should accept any genetic limitations as part of His sovereignty over their lives. We are made in the image of God, and we know that He does not make mistakes. When we face physical or emotional difficulties because of our genetics, we must remember that we are no less important or perfect in God's eyes than someone else. God works through all kinds of people to accomplish His will. **Topic: Genetic Issues**

**THE DEBATE OF LIFE: ABORTION**

# CRAIG AND JANET PARSHALL

## (Psalm 139:16)

**P**erhaps no issue in our culture has elicited such emotion as abortion. It has alienated friends, divided churches, and devastated individuals. That's because abortion is about people. It's about those who have perished and those who were responsible. It's about those who have stood fast for God's truth in the midst of an opposing culture and those who were silent. It's also about those who have sinned and yet still have the promise of redemption, forgiveness, and healing through Jesus Christ. They are our neighbors, our church members, the strangers we have never met, and our friends. The debate is about lives.

### WHY SANCTIFY LIFE?

Christians who oppose abortion do so because of the sanctity of human life. It's not merely speculation or personal philosophy; the sanctity of life stands as a fundamental biblical principle. How people approach the matter of life and God's sovereign hand in its creation affects every other aspect of their relationship with God and with each other.

Psalm 139:13-16 gives a powerful, poetic look inside the wondrous world of the pregnant womb: "For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well. My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret.... Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed, and in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them." Obviously, human life

is no accident of biology. God, the grand Designer of the universe, forms the “inward parts” and works to “weave” together a masterful conception. Genesis demonstrates God as the Creator of life. “So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Gen. 1:27). A personal God personally created life so that people could have a personal family relationship with Him. God brings life into the world purposefully and deliberately. He has the compassion of a Father who yearns for His children.

God not only creates life, but He also blesses it. His creations are “fearfully and wonderfully made.” The lives He creates are not inconveniences or problems-they are the highest expression of His moral goodness. In the Garden of Eden, immediately after the creation of human life, the Bible explains that God “blessed them” (Gen. 1:28). God creates and blesses life itself and, therefore, deems it sanctified.

## HOW IS SANCTITY OF LIFE COMMUNICATED?

In ancient Egypt, Pharaoh gave a terrifying edict to the Jewish midwives. During the delivery of every Jewish baby, the midwives were to immediately kill the boys. They refused to comply, and God blessed their obedience (Ex. 1:17-21).

In the same manner, many Christians not only refuse to participate in or support abortion, they also exercise their right to lawfully denounce this practice. Yet in what way should Christians let their voice be heard? Scripture provides the principle of speaking the truth in love (Eph. 4:15). This same precept also describes God’s nature as having both mercy and truth (Ps. 89:14). To speak the truth in love means to speak gently with Christ’s confidence behind one’s words.

The truth is that abortion is a corrupt practice that is protected by the courts. The Bible denounces corruption “which devises evil by

law" and seeks to "condemn innocent blood" (Ps. 94:20, 21). We should communicate this hard truth, however, with the kind of gentle love that reflects the compassionate essence of God. The point is not to win the debate. The point is to win people over to the truth and to the Lord Jesus Christ. When love is our motivation for communicating truth, we can be more effective in gaining people's attention.

## WHO CAN WE BLESS BY THE SANCTITY OF LIFE?

One of the most remarkable facts about the current crisis of our nation is the way that God has brought people who were deeply involved in the practice of abortion to understand the truth of God's Word. Abortionists, abortion clinic owners, and others who have had abortions have been transformed through the power of Jesus Christ.

Women who have had abortions need the healing touch of the great soul physician, Jesus Christ. An angry crowd once brought to Jesus a woman who had been caught in flagrant sin. Certainly she was morally guilty. Yet Jesus focused on her restoration, not her moral consequence. As the Son of God, He was able to forgive her and give her healing and wholeness (John 8:11).

The abortion issue is not just about death, it is about life. It is about the divine source of life, God Himself. Jesus said, "The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). God's tender mercies are awesome and available for all our needs. No one is beyond hope. No one is beyond the reach of the gospel. No person is exempt from Christ's ability to lovingly communicate the truth about the sanctity of all life.

## FURTHER MEDITATION:

Other passages to study about the issue of abortion include:

Exodus 20:13; 21:22, 23

- Proverbs 28:13
- Isaiah 44:2; 46:3
- Jeremiah 1:5
- Matthew 18:1-6
- Luke 1:44
- 1 John 1:9

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on abortion at Psalm 139:16. See also the personality profile of Herod: When A Choice Is Deadly.

**KEY PASSAGE**

## A NEW LIFE

## (139:16)

God knows each person from the moment of conception. His eyes see the unformed body in the mother's womb, and all of the child's days are already written in His book. The prophet Jeremiah wrote these words from God, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you" (Jer. 1:5). Many claim that a child in the womb is no more than a mass of tissue, but the Bible makes it clear that God sees the tiny embryo as a new life with a future already prepared. How sad that many children will not live beyond the womb because of abortion. To abort a child is to end a human life unjustly-in short, to commit murder. Every child conceived is a child of God.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about The Debate of Life: Abortion. See also the personality profile of Herod: When a Choice is Deadly.

## PSALM 140

### PRAYER FOR DELIVERANCE FROM EVIL MEN

*To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.*

1 Deliver me, O LORD, from evil men;
Preserve me from violent men,
2 Who plan evil things in *their* hearts;
They continually gather together *for* war.
3 They sharpen their tongues like a serpent;
The poison of asps *is* under their lips.
Selah
4 Keep me, O LORD, from the hands of the wicked;
Preserve me from violent men,
Who have purposed to make my steps stumble.
5 The proud have hidden a snare for me, and cords;
They have spread a net by the wayside;
They have set traps for me.
Selah
6 I said to the LORD : "You *are* my God;
Hear the voice of my supplications, O LORD.
7 O GOD the Lord, the strength of my salvation,
You have covered my head in the day of battle.
8 Do not grant, O LORD, the desires of the wicked;

Do not further his *wicked* scheme,
*Lest* they be exalted.
Selah
9 "*As for* the head of those who surround me,
Let the evil of their lips cover them;
10 Let burning coals fall upon them;
Let them be cast into the fire,
Into deep pits, that they rise not up again.
11 Let not a slanderer be established in the earth;
Let evil hunt the violent man to overthrow *him.*"
12 I know that the LORD will maintain
The cause of the afflicted,
*And* justice for the poor.
13 Surely the righteous shall give thanks to Your name;
The upright shall dwell in Your presence.

## PSALM 141

### PRAYER FOR SAFEKEEPING FROM WICKEDNESS

*A Psalm of David.*

1 LORD, I cry out to You;
Make haste to me!
Give ear to my voice when I cry out to You.
2 Let my prayer be set before You *as* incense,
The lifting up of my hands *as* the evening sacrifice.
3 Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth;
Keep watch over the door of my lips.
4 Do not incline my heart to any evil thing,
To practice wicked works
With men who work iniquity;
And do not let me eat of their delicacies.
5 Let the righteous strike me;
*It shall be* a kindness.
And let him rebuke me;
*It shall be* as excellent oil;
Let my head not refuse it.
For still my prayer *is* against the deeds of the wicked.
6 Their judges are overthrown by the sides of the cliff,
And they hear my words, for they are sweet.
7 Our bones are scattered at the mouth of the grave,

As when one plows and breaks up the
earth.
8 But my eyes *are* upon You, O GOD the
Lord;
In You I take refuge;
Do not leave my soul destitute.
9 Keep me from the snares they have laid
for me,
And from the traps of the workers of
iniquity.
10 Let the wicked fall into their own nets,
While I escape safely.

## PSALM 142

### A PLEA FOR RELIEF FROM PERSECUTORS

*A Contemplation[a] of David. A Prayer*
*when he was in the cave.*

1 I cry out to the LORD with my voice;
With my voice to the LORD I make my
supplication.
2 I pour out my complaint before Him;
I declare before Him my trouble.
3 When my spirit was overwhelmed
within me,
Then You knew my path.
In the way in which I walk
They have secretly set a snare for me.
4 Look on *my* right hand and see,
For *there is* no one who acknowledges
me;
Refuge has failed me;
No one cares for my soul.
5 I cried out to You, O LORD :
I said, “You *are* my refuge,
My portion in the land of the living.
6 Attend to my cry,
For I am brought very low;
Deliver me from my persecutors,
For they are stronger than I.
7 Bring my soul out of prison,
That I may praise Your name;
The righteous shall surround me,
For You shall deal bountifully with me.”

## PSALM 143

### AN EARNEST APPEAL FOR GUIDANCE AND DELIVERANCE

*A Psalm of David.*

1 Hear my prayer, O LORD,
Give ear to my supplications!
In Your faithfulness answer me,
*And* in Your righteousness.
2 Do not enter into judgment with Your servant,
For in Your sight no one living is righteous.
3 For the enemy has persecuted my soul;
He has crushed my life to the ground;
He has made me dwell in darkness,
Like those who have long been dead.
4 Therefore my spirit is overwhelmed within me;
My heart within me is distressed.
5 I remember the days of old;
I meditate on all Your works;
I muse on the work of Your hands.
6 I spread out my hands to You;
My soul *longs* for You like a thirsty land.
Selah
7 Answer me speedily, O LORD ;
My spirit fails!
Do not hide Your face from me,
Lest I be like those who go down into the pit.
8 Cause me to hear Your lovingkindness in

the morning,
For in You do I trust;
Cause me to know the way in which I should walk,
For I lift up my soul to You.
9 Deliver me, O LORD, from my enemies;
In You I take shelter.[a]
10 Teach me to do Your will,
For You *are* my God;
Your Spirit *is* good.
Lead me in the land of uprightness.
11 Revive me, O LORD, for Your name's sake!
For Your righteousness' sake bring my soul out of trouble.
12 In Your mercy cut off my enemies,
And destroy all those who afflict my soul;
For I *am* Your servant.

## PSALM 144

### A SONG TO THE LORD WHO PRESERVES AND PROSPERS HIS PEOPLE

*A Psalm of David.*

1 Blessed *be* the LORD my Rock,
Who trains my hands for war,
*And* my fingers for battle-
2 My lovingkindness and my fortress,
My high tower and my deliverer,
My shield and *the One* in whom I take refuge,
Who subdues my people[a] under me.
3 LORD, what *is* man, that You take knowledge of him?
*Or* the son of man, that You are mindful of him?
4 Man is like a breath;
His days *are* like a passing shadow.
5 Bow down Your heavens, O LORD, and come down;
Touch the mountains, and they shall smoke.
6 Flash forth lightning and scatter them;
Shoot out Your arrows and destroy them.
7 Stretch out Your hand from above;
Rescue me and deliver me out of great waters,
From the hand of foreigners,
8 Whose mouth speaks lying words,
And whose right hand *is* a right hand of falsehood.

[9] I will sing a new song to You, O God;
On a harp of ten strings I will sing
praises to You,
[10] *The One* who gives salvation to kings,
Who delivers David His servant
From the deadly sword.
[11] Rescue me and deliver me from the hand
of foreigners,
Whose mouth speaks lying words,
And whose right hand *is* a right hand of
falsehood-
[12] That our sons *may be* as plants grown
up in their youth;
*That* our daughters *may be* as
pillars,
Sculptured in palace style;
[13] *That* our barns *may be* full,
Supplying all kinds of produce;
*That* our sheep may bring forth
thousands
And ten thousands in our fields;
[14] *That* our oxen *may be* well laden;
*That there be* no breaking in or going
out;
*That there be* no outcry in our streets.
[15] Happy *are* the
people who are
in such a state;
Happy *are* the
people whose
God *is* the
LORD !

Happy are the people who are in such a state; happy are the people whose God is the LORD !

PSALM 144:15

## PSALM 145

### A SONG OF GOD'S MAJESTY AND LOVE

*A Praise of David.*

1 I will extol You, my God, O King;
And I will bless Your name forever and ever.
2 Every day I will bless You,
And I will praise Your name forever and ever.
3 Great *is* the LORD, and greatly to be praised;
And His greatness *is* unsearchable.
4 One generation shall praise Your works to another,
And shall declare Your mighty acts.
5 I[a] will meditate on the glorious splendor of Your majesty,
And on Your wondrous works.[b]
6 *Men* shall speak of the might of Your awesome acts,
And I will declare Your greatness.
7 They shall utter the memory of Your great goodness,
And shall sing of Your righteousness.
8 The LORD *is* gracious and full of compassion,
Slow to anger and great in mercy.
9 The LORD *is* good to all,
And His tender mercies *are* over all His works.
10 All Your works shall praise You, O LORD,
And Your saints shall bless You.
11 They shall speak of the glory of Your kingdom,
And talk of Your power,
12 To make known to the sons of men His mighty acts,
And the glorious majesty of His kingdom.
13 Your kingdom *is* an everlasting kingdom, And Your dominion *endures* throughout all generations.[a]
14 The LORD upholds all who fall,

And raises up all *who are* bowed down.
15 The eyes of all look expectantly to You,
And You give them their food in due season.
16 You open Your hand And satisfy the desire of every living thing.
17 The LORD *is* righteous in all His ways,
Gracious in all His works.
18 The LORD *is* near to all who call upon Him,
To all who call upon Him in truth.
19 He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him;
He also will hear their cry and save them.
20 The LORD preserves all who love Him,
But all the wicked He will destroy.
21 My mouth shall speak the praise of the LORD,
And all flesh shall bless His holy name Forever and ever.

The LORD is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger and great in mercy.
PSALM 145:8

## PSALM 146

### THE HAPPINESS OF THOSE WHOSE HELP IS THE LORD

1 Praise the LORD!

Praise the LORD, O my soul!

2 While I live I will praise the LORD;
I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.
3 Do not put your trust in princes,
*Nor* in a son of man, in whom *there is* no help.
4 His spirit departs, he returns to his earth;
In that very day his plans perish.
5 Happy *is he* who *has* the God of Jacob for his help,
Whose hope *is* in the LORD his God,
6 Who made heaven and earth,
The sea, and all that *is* in them;
Who keeps truth forever,
7 Who executes justice for the oppressed,
Who gives food to the hungry.
The LORD gives freedom to the prisoners.
8 The LORD opens *the eyes of* the blind;
The LORD raises those who are bowed down;
The LORD loves the righteous.
9 The LORD watches over the strangers;
He relieves the fatherless and widow;
But the way of the wicked He turns
upside down.
10 The LORD shall reign forever-
Your God, O Zion, to all generations.

Praise the LORD!

## PSALM 147

### PRAISE TO GOD FOR HIS WORD AND PROVIDENCE

1 Praise the LORD!
For *it is* good to sing praises to our God;
For *it is* pleasant, *and* praise is beautiful.
2 The LORD builds up Jerusalem;
He gathers together the outcasts of Israel.
3 He heals the brokenhearted
And binds up their wounds.
4 He counts the number of the stars;
He calls them all by name.
5 Great *is* our Lord, and mighty in power;
His understanding *is* infinite.
6 The LORD lifts up the humble;
He casts the wicked down to the ground.
7 Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving;
Sing praises on the harp to our God,
8 Who covers the heavens with clouds,
Who prepares rain for the earth,
Who makes grass to grow on the mountains.
9 He gives to the beast its food,
*And* to the young ravens that cry.
10 He does not delight in the strength of the horse;
He takes no pleasure in the legs of a man.
11 The LORD takes pleasure in those who fear Him,
In those who hope in His mercy.
12 Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem!
Praise your God, O Zion!
13 For He has strengthened the bars of your gates;
He has blessed your children within you.

14 He makes peace *in* your borders,
*And* fills you with the finest wheat.
15 He sends out His command *to the* earth;
His word runs very swiftly.
16 He gives snow like wool;
He scatters the frost like ashes;
17 He casts out His hail like morsels;
Who can stand before His cold?
18 He sends out His word and melts them;
He causes His wind to blow, *and* the waters flow.
19 He declares His word to Jacob,
His statutes and His judgments to Israel.
20 He has not dealt thus with any nation;
And *as for His* judgments, they have not known them.

Praise the LORD!

## PSALM 148

### PRAISE TO THE LORD FROM CREATION

1 Praise the LORD!

Praise the LORD from the heavens;
Praise Him in the heights!

2 Praise Him, all His angels;
Praise Him, all His hosts!
3 Praise Him, sun and moon;
Praise Him, all you stars of light!
4 Praise Him, you heavens of heavens,
And you waters above the heavens!
5 Let them praise the name of the LORD,
For He commanded and they were created.
6 He also established them forever and ever;
He made a decree which shall not pass away.
7 Praise the LORD from the earth,
You great sea creatures and all the depths;
8 Fire and hail, snow and clouds;
Stormy wind, fulfilling His word;
9 Mountains and all hills;
Fruitful trees and all cedars;
10 Beasts and all cattle;
Creeping things and flying fowl;
11 Kings of the earth and all peoples;
Princes and all judges of the earth;
12 Both young men and maidens;
Old men and children.
13 Let them praise the name of the LORD,
For His name alone is exalted;
His glory *is* above the earth and heaven.

14 And He has exalted the horn of His people,
The praise of all His saints-
Of the children of Israel,
A people near to Him.

Praise the LORD!

## PSALM 149

### PRAISE TO GOD FOR HIS SALVATION AND JUDGMENT

1 Praise the LORD!

Sing to the LORD a new song,
*And* His praise in the assembly of saints.

2 Let Israel rejoice in their Maker;
Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.
3 Let them praise His name with the dance;
Let them sing praises to Him with the timbrel and harp.
4 For the LORD takes pleasure in His people;
He will beautify the humble with salvation.
5 Let the saints be joyful in glory;
Let them sing aloud on their beds.
6 *Let* the high praises of God *be* in their mouth,
And a two-edged sword in their hand,
7 To execute vengeance on the nations,
And punishments on the peoples;
8 To bind their kings with chains,
And their nobles with fetters of iron;
9 To execute on them the written judgment-
This honor have all His saints.

Praise the LORD!

**THE IMPORTANCE OF PRAISE AND WORSHIP**

# AL DENSON

(Psalm 149)

**P**salms was the national hymnbook of Israel. It contains 150 poems, or psalms, to be set to music, and worship is the central theme of all of them. The psalms magnify the Lord, exalt His attributes, praise His names, His Word, and His goodness. If we want to learn how to praise and worship our Father, then let Psalms be our textbook. The Hebrew title of the Book of Psalms is "Praise" or "the Book of Praises." If we hold our Bible in our hands and turn to the middle of it, we will be in the Book of Psalms. Likewise, praise of God should be at the center of our lives.

## THE PURPOSE OF PRAISE AND WORSHIP

God delights in praise because He knows it is a special way that we can relate to Him and draw closer to Him. C. S. Lewis said that just as a car is made to run on gas, God made us to run on Himself. God is powerful, sovereign, and holy, and we receive all that we are and have from Him. Apart from God, we have no energy, no power, and no fulfillment in life. Praise releases that energy and power in our lives. God wants us to praise and worship Him not because *He* needs

it, but because *we* need it. Praise is a gift to us from God that helps us function more effectively. Praise can change our attitudes.

## THE POWER OF PRAISE AND WORSHIP

Praise expresses and strengthens our faith. True praise is not an attempt to manipulate God into producing the results we desire; rather, true praise expresses acceptance of what God has brought into our lives. Praise helps us accept the situation whether it changes or not. Praise also makes us aware that difficult circumstances are God's blessings in disguise. When we trust God completely, He is free to work and bring victory to every situation. The victory may come in the form of having our circumstances change, or the circumstances may remain the same while the change comes in us. Either way, our faith is strengthened. Every time we are reminded how much larger God is than our problem, we will be able to trust Him more when the next test of faith comes along.

God's presence is always in us, like electricity in a lamp, but praise is the switch that turns on the power, making us more aware of His presence in our lives. When we focus our attention on God through praise, we acknowledge Him as our power source and we begin to see our problems in the light of His great power. Praise invites the Holy Spirit to make us confident that God is in control.

## THE PURIFYING OF PRAISE AND WORSHIP

As fire brings the impurities in gold to the surface so they can be skimmed off, when the "heat" is turned up in our lives, the impurities come to the surface as well. If we resist the purification process, however, those impurities settle back into our lives. God wants us to be free, so He allows us to go through the "Refiner's fire" that will cause the impurities in our lives to rise to the surface. As these impurities are dealt with, the hurtful things that bind us are burned away. When we respond to the fire with praise and worship, we will experience a new purification and freedom.

## THE PEACE OF PRAISE AND WORSHIP

When we give God our praise and worship, we are offering ourselves to Him completely, bowing before Him, yielding to Him fully. Often our praise will be joyful and enthusiastic, but not always. It is important to understand that God's enjoyment of our praise is not based on how we are feeling. We will bring a special kind of joy to the Lord when we praise Him even if we are depressed or exhausted. Praise causes us to enter the influence of His perspective. When that happens, the hurt, fear, frustration, or resentment we are feeling can be replaced with a peace that we never dreamed possible.

The Bible does not command us to *feel* thankful, but to *be* thankful. To give thanks when we do not feel like it is not hypocrisy; it is obedience. This does not mean that we should deny our negative thoughts and feelings. The psalmists were always honest about their feelings and told God about them. But they always combined the pouring out of their feelings with sincere praise.

When, with an act of our will, we choose to keep praising in spite of our pain or confusion, God brings peace, freedom, and joy. When we praise and worship God, we give Him something that nothing else in creation can give-love and adoration. Psalm 22:3 says that God is holy, that He is "enthroned in the praises of Israel." Psalm 84:1, 2, 4 expresses the joy of worship, "How lovely is Your tabernacle, O LORD of hosts! My soul longs, yes, even faints for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. . . . Blessed are those who dwell in Your house; they will still be praising You."

We were created to be worshipers of God. He made us for Himself and He wants to have an intimate relationship with us that will last throughout eternity. Praise and worship bring to our lives purpose, power, unity, and peace. Praise and worship will bless our Father and make Him glad.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of praise and worship include:

- 2 Samuel 22:2-51
- Psalms 8:1; Psalms 19; 27; 29; 47; 150
- Ephesians 1:3-14
- Revelation 4:4-11; 5:9-14; 7:9-17; 11:15-18; 15:3, 4

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on praise and worship at John 4:23, 24. See also the personality profile of Praising the Lord with Asaph.

## PSALM 150

### LET ALL THINGS PRAISE THE LORD

1 Praise the LORD!

Praise God in His sanctuary;
Praise Him in His mighty firmament!

2 Praise Him for His mighty acts;
Praise Him according to His excellent greatness!
3 Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet;
Praise Him with the lute and harp!
4 Praise Him with the timbrel and dance;
Praise Him with stringed instruments and flutes!
5 Praise Him with loud cymbals;
Praise Him with clashing cymbals!
6 Let everything that has breath praise the LORD.

Praise the LORD!

### SOUL NOTE

**Joyous Praise** *(ch. 150)* Worship can be expressed to God at any time and in any place. The psalmist called for praise in the sanctuary and in the firmament. The music of praise can be loud and joyous, accompanied by trumpets, lutes, harps, timbrel, dance, stringed instruments, flutes, and cymbals. The focus of praise is God Himself-His "mighty acts" and His "excellent greatness." In short, "let

everything that has breath praise the LORD" (150:6). When believers gather to worship or when they worship in solitude, they must worship joyfully! They are praising the God of the universe who loves them. He deserves our joyous praise. **Topic: Praise and Worship**

# Proverbs



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# Proverbs

People often turn to the Proverbs when confused or in crisis, for this book is a collection of wise sayings based on God's perspective on life. Compiled by "Solomon the son of David, king of Israel" (1:1), the Proverbs' purpose is to help people live wisely and productively. The sayings included in this book are meant to influence people's thinking, emotions, and behavior. Obedience to these truths brings God's blessings. Disobedience leads to foolish choices and disastrous consequences.

Much of the work of soul care comes from the wisdom and instruction of these proverbs. To read them is to discover nitty-gritty truths that work as well today as they did when they were first penned. As we apply this inspired advice to our daily lives, we will find that the advice makes sense of often difficult choices. The truths contained in this book are not meant to be exhaustive or automatic, but they are potent. The Proverbs are meant to make us stop, think, and then act differently.

Proverbs is the first of three volumes of "wisdom literature" in the Bible. These proverbs are not just clever sayings to be engraved on a plaque; they are practical truths to be lived out in our lives. The Proverbs are short poems containing everything from spirit wisdom to practical advice and timely warnings. They cover a wide range of topics including marriage, family, child-rearing, work, relationships, morality, and personal responsibility. A daily dose of Proverbs is like taking spiritual vitamins to help nourish our souls.

**SOUL CONCERNS IN**

## PROVERBS

FEAR/FEAR OF GOD (1:7)
PARENTING (22:6)

CHILD DISCIPLINE (22:15)
GOSSIP (26:20-26)
WOMEN'S ISSUES (CH. 31)

## THE BEGINNING OF KNOWLEDGE

**1** The proverbs of Solomon the son of David,
of Israel:

2 To know wisdom and instruction,
To perceive the words of understanding,
3 To receive the instruction of wisdom,
Justice, judgment, and equity;
4 To give prudence to the simple,
To the young man knowledge and
discretion-
5 A wise *man* will hear and increase
learning,
And a man of understanding will attain
wise counsel,
6 To understand a proverb and an
enigma,
The words of the wise and their riddles.
7 The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of
knowledge,
*But* fools despise wisdom and instruction.

## SHUN EVIL COUNSEL

8 My son, hear the instruction of your
father,
And do not forsake the law of your
mother;
9 For they *will be* a graceful ornament on
your head,
And chains about your neck.
10 My son, if sinners entice you,
Do not consent.
11 If they say, “Come with us,
Let us lie in wait to *shed* blood;

Let us lurk secretly for the innocent
without cause;
12 Let us swallow them alive like Sheol,[a]
And whole, like those who go down to
the Pit;
13 We shall find all *kinds* of precious
possessions,
We shall fill our houses with spoil;
14 Cast in your lot among us,
Let us all have one purse”-
15 My son, do not walk in the way with
them,
Keep your foot from their path;
16 For their feet run to evil,
And they make haste to shed blood.
17 Surely, in vain the net is spread
In the sight of any bird;
18 But they lie in wait for their *own* blood,
They lurk secretly for their *own* lives.
19 So *are* the ways of everyone who is
greedy for gain;
It takes away the life of its owners.

## THE CALL OF WISDOM

20 Wisdom calls aloud outside;
She raises her voice in the open squares.
21 She cries out in the chief concourses,[a]
At the openings of the gates in the city
She speaks her words:
22 “How long, you simple ones, will you
love simplicity?
For scorners delight in their scorning,
And fools hate knowledge.
23 Turn at my rebuke;

Surely I will pour out my spirit on you;
I will make my words known to you.
24 Because I have called and you refused,
I have stretched out my hand and no
one regarded,
25 Because you disdained all my counsel,
And would have none of my rebuke,
26 I also will laugh at your calamity;
I will mock when your terror comes,
27 When your terror comes like a storm,
And your destruction comes like a
whirlwind,
When distress and anguish come upon
you.
28 “Then they will call on me, but I will not
answer;
They will seek me diligently, but they
will not find me.
29 Because they hated knowledge
And did not choose the fear of the LORD,
30 They would have none of my counsel
*And* despised my every rebuke.
31 Therefore they shall eat the fruit of their
own way,
And be filled to the full with their own
fancies.
32For the turning away of the simple will
slay them,
And the complacency of fools will
destroy them;
33 But whoever listens to me will dwell
safely,
And will be secure, without fear of evil.”

## SOUL NOTE

**Find the Way** *(1:4)* King Solomon compiled these proverbs to "give prudence to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion." Solomon wanted to help his readers to navigate the challenges and difficulties of life with greater wisdom, and ultimately with success. Through these ancient words of life experience collected by Solomon, God speaks to His people as a wise and loving Father guiding them through life's difficulties, temptations, and dilemmas. When we listen to His voice and seek His wisdom, He will show us the right way to go in every situation.**Topic: Wisdom**

## KEY PASSAGE

# AWESOME

# (1:7)

The Book of Proverbs emphasizes that "the fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge." Fear of God means reverential awe of the Supreme Being, the Creator, the final Judge. While knowledge is possible without knowing God, it misses the point, since God is the Source of everything. It's ridiculous for humans to claim great knowledge and wisdom without having any respect for God. All human knowledge is a tiny portion of all that there is to be known, a

speck of all that God has created.

Human beings then, as they seek wisdom and knowledge, should do so in the context of a proper fear of God. Then they will be able to use that wisdom and knowledge for whatever purposes God desires in order to build His kingdom. When God's people fear Him, they understand His power over their lives and willingly allow His hand to guide them.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about fear/fear of God On Fearing God. See also the personality profile of Gideon and the Fear of God.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Right Stand** *(1:8-19)* Solomon often addressed his readers as "my son,"teaching as a parent would instruct a beloved child. Solomon advised young people to choose their peers carefully. If friends try to entice them to sin, wise young people will choose to "not walk in the way with them" (1:15). Parents must consistently guide their children in the path of wisdom by their teaching and their example so that their children will stand for what's right. **Topic: Adolescent Problems**

# ON FEARING GOD

GARY W. MOON

# (Proverbs 1:7)

**N**o Fear." This slogan appears on the T-shirts of sports enthusiasts on the court or on the field. In response to its popularity, some Christian T-shirts began popping up with the answering slogan, "Fear God." But what is meant by the instruction, "Fear God"?

In the first few words of Proverbs 1:7, the theological foundation of this book of wisdom is established. "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge." The fear of God, as the foundation for wise living, is a recurring theme throughout Scripture.

The Book of Deuteronomy contains the great summary of God's total claim on humanity and an expected response to His requirements. It is a summary of how God's children are to live each day of life. "And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God . . . and to love Him" (Deut. 10:12).

There is a great riddle wrapped inside this passage. Israel was given directions that were foreign to their neighbors-to stand before God in both fear and love. Even today, living with fear and love seems to be a perplexing paradox.

## THE PARADOX OF FEAR AND LOVE

Since fear is the most primitive of all human emotions, all forms of anxiety disorder are rooted in fear. Fear is also the body's natural alarm system. Any perceived threat will switch on the sympathetic nervous system's "fight or flight" response. The heart begins to race. Breathing becomes shallow and rapid. Blood flows away from the extremities and digestive organs and into the large muscles. Hands and feet become cold. Sweating increases to cool down the body which has gone into hyper-drive. In short, the person is ready to fight the object of fear or to run and hide.

When that same person experiences love (or laughter or relaxation), the body's response is very different. In this instance, it is the parasympathetic nervous system which dominates. The preparation is to approach and enjoy, not flee or fight. Fear and love are physiological opposites. So again, how can it be that people are to both fear and love God?

## FEARING GOD

The word "fear" has many synonyms such as reverence, awe, dismay, dread, distress, trouble, terror, horror, and respect. However, most of these synonyms for "fear" have not survived the journey from Bible times and culture to present day. For most people, to fear means to dread instead of to hold in awe or reverence.

Some would argue that little is lost and much gained if we retranslate Proverbs 1:7 as, "The reverence of God is the beginning of wisdom." However, the fear of God does not totally equate with reverence and awe. The Hebrew concept of God was filled with wonder, awesomeness, majesty, and yes, terror and fear-a lineup that moderns may struggle to comprehend. So while substituting other words for "fear" may be helpful in certain situations or with some individuals, one must continue to pursue a deeper appreciation for God that preserves the idea of fearing Him. He is much more complex and awe-inspiring than a "big buddy in the sky." God is the ultimate Friend and Father, but He is also holy and completely "other." To see Him in all His glory might very well be enough to stop an earthly human heart.

## LOVING GOD

People's love for God should create a sense of heart-pounding anguish at the very thought of moral evil, revolt, rebellion, or compromise. With this in mind, a person ought to be terrified at the possibility of living life apart from His presence or on any other terms but His own. The new person in Christ should mature into a sense of

being delivered from worldly fear, since the presence of Christ's love pushes out fear:"Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear. . . . But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us" (1 John 4:17-19). The maturing disciple, however, should likewise experience a sense of terror at the possibility of being alienated from God or incurring His displeasure.

On one hand, Christ impressed upon His disciples the necessity to fear God who can destroy both the body and the soul (Matt. 10:28; Luke 12:5). He did not downplay the reality of the prospect of judgment. On the other hand, Jesus presented a radical means for overcoming fear-being led by the Spirit of God to receive a sense of adoption by which one cries, "Abba, Father" (Rom. 8:15). God's gift to His children is not a "spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind" (2 Tim. 1:7). Through the mystery of Christ, it is possible to move from the fear of being punished in His presence, to the joy of being drawn by and into His love.

We ought to fear God, yes. But we should not run from Him. We ought to run *to* Him. We can come out of hiding and flee back into His presence and His standards for living. Then we can let fear keep us from leaving again as bonds of love grow and keep us tied to His presence.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of fear/fear of God include:

- Joshua 24:14
- 1 Samuel 12:14
- Job 28:28
- Psalms 19:9; 27:1-3; 31:19; 33:18; 111:10
- Proverbs 14:26; 15:16

- Ecclesiastes 12:13
- Matthew 10:28
- 2 Corinthians 7:1

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on fear/fear of God at Proverbs 1:7. See also the personality profile of Gideon and the Fear of God.

## THE VALUE OF WISDOM

**2** My son, if you receive my words,
And treasure my commands within you,

2 So that you incline your ear to wisdom,
*And* apply your heart to understanding;
3 Yes, if you cry out for discernment,
*And* lift up your voice for understanding,
4 If you seek her as silver,
And search for her as *for* hidden
treasures;
5 Then you will understand the fear of the
LORD,
And find the knowledge of God.
6 For the LORD gives wisdom;
From His mouth *come* knowledge and
understanding;
7 He stores up sound wisdom for the
upright;
*He is* a shield to those who walk
uprightly;
8 He guards the paths of justice,
And preserves the way of His saints.
9 Then you will understand righteousness
and justice,
Equity *and* every good path.
10 When wisdom enters your heart,
And knowledge is pleasant to your
soul,
11 Discretion will preserve you;
Understanding will keep you,
12 To deliver you from the way of evil,
From the man who speaks perverse
things,

13 From those who leave the paths of uprightness
To walk in the ways of darkness;
14 Who rejoice in doing evil,
*And* delight in the perversity of the wicked;
15 Whose ways *are* crooked,
And *who are* devious in their paths;
16 To deliver you from the immoral woman,
From the seductress *who* flatters with her words,
17 Who forsakes the companion of her youth,
And forgets the covenant of her God.
18 For her house leads down to death,
And her paths to the dead;
19 None who go to her return,
Nor do they regain the paths of life-
20 So you may walk in the way of goodness,
And keep *to* the paths of righteousness.
21 For the upright will dwell in the land,
And the blameless will remain in it;
22 But the wicked will be cut off from the earth,
And the unfaithful will be uprooted from it.

Child Discipline

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# THE WISE SON

## (Proverbs 2-3)

Christian parents hope to raise their children to be wise-to fear the Lord and serve Him. Wise Christian parents understand that just as God disciplines His children in order to teach them to do right, so parents must discipline their children for the same reason (Prov. 3:12). God has given parents this responsibility, and they must take it seriously.

Children need discipline-indeed, they desire it. They need to know the boundaries and the rules; they need to know that their parents will consistently discipline them should they try to cross those boundaries or break those rules. Parents who commit themselves to teaching their children to be wise will find their children's hearts open like a treasure chest, waiting to be filled. That treasure chest, filled with wisdom learned from listening to and watching their parents, can be drawn from for the rest of their lives. So how can parents teach wisdom?

First, the parents must live wisely by fearing the Lord (Prov. 1:7), trusting Him, seeking His guidance, and following His commands. When children see wisdom lived out in their homes, they will learn what it means to follow God.

Second, parents must encourage their children to build that personal relationship with God: "Trust in the LORD with all your heart" (Prov. 3:5). The Book of Proverbs advises children to learn to discern between wisdom and folly, to not despise the discipline given by parents or by God, and to continue to seek wisdom all the days of their lives.

Children need to know that their parents have placed boundaries around them because of love for them. They learn about God's love and discipline as they experience parental love and discipline. Parents who teach their children wisdom are giving them a lasting gift, for "length of days is in her right hand. . . . Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace" (Prov. 3:16, 17).

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about child discipline Bringing Out the Best in a Strong-willed Child. See also the key passage note at Proverbs 22:15.

## GUIDANCE FOR THE YOUNG

**3** My son, do not forget my law,
But let your heart keep my commands;

2 For length of days and long life
And peace they will add to you.
3 Let not mercy and truth forsake you;
Bind them around your neck,
Write them on the tablet of your heart,
4 *And* so find favor and high esteem
In the sight of God and man.
5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart,
And lean not on your own
understanding;
6 In all your ways acknowledge Him,
And He shall direct[a] your paths.
7 Do not be wise in your own eyes;
Fear the LORD and depart from evil.
8 It will be health to your flesh,
[a] And strength[b] to your bones.
9 Honor the LORD with your possessions,
And with the firstfruits of all your
increase;
10 So your barns will be filled with plenty,
And your vats will overflow with new
wine.
11 My son, do not despise the chastening of
the LORD,
Nor detest His correction;
12 For whom the LORD loves He corrects,
Just as a father the son *in whom* he
delights.
13 Happy *is* the man *who* finds wisdom,
And the man *who* gains understanding;

14 For her proceeds *are* better than the
profits of silver,
And her gain than fine gold.
15 She *is* more precious than rubies,
And all the things you may desire cannot
compare with her.
16 Length of days *is* in her right hand,
In her left hand riches and honor.
17 Her ways *are* ways of pleasantness,
And all her paths *are* peace.
18 She *is* a tree of life to those who take
hold of her,
And happy *are all* who retain her.
19 The LORD by wisdom founded the earth;
By understanding He established the
heavens;
20 By His knowledge the depths were
broken up,
And clouds drop down the dew.
21 My son, let them not depart from your eyes-
Keep sound wisdom and discretion;
22 So they will be life to your soul
And grace to your neck.
23 Then you will walk safely in your way,
And your foot will not stumble.
24 When you lie down, you will not be
afraid;
Yes, you will lie down and your sleep
will be sweet.
25 Do not be afraid of sudden terror,
Nor of trouble from the wicked when it
comes;
26 For the LORD will be your confidence,
And will keep your foot from being

caught.
27 Do not withhold good from those to
whom it is due,
When it is in the power of your hand to
do *so.*
28 Do not say to your neighbor, “
Go, and come back,
And tomorrow I will give *it,*
”When *you have* it with you.
29 Do not devise evil against your neighbor,
For he dwells by you for safety’s sake.
30 Do not strive with a man without cause,
If he has done you no harm.
31 Do not envy the oppressor,
And choose none of his ways;
32 For the perverse *person is* an
abomination to the LORD,
But His secret counsel *is* with the
upright.
33 The curse of the LORD *is* on the house of
the wicked,
But He blesses the home of the just.
34 Surely He scorns the scornful,
But gives grace to the humble.
35 The wise shall inherit glory,
But shame shall be the legacy of fools.

**KEY PASSAGE**

# TRUST IN HIM

## (3:5, 6)

It's one thing for people to trust God with their eternal destiny; it is quite another for them to trust God to handle the challenges and difficulties of daily life. These verses encourage God's people to trust in God with all their hearts and acknowledge Him in all their ways. When we do so, He promises to direct, or straighten, our paths. We need to trust God to help us handle the difficult situations we face, even in cases where we can't begin to see how He could. Also, trusting the Lord means to trust Him in all areas. If we really want to know God's will for our lives, or even for our actions in a particular situation, we must begin by trusting that God cares about every aspect of living, and that He will provide what we need.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about trust Learning to Trust. See also the personality profile of Habakkuk: The Tower of Trust.

### SOUL NOTE

**Health and Strength** *(3:7, 8)* Modern medical research is proving the positive relationship between health and godliness, a fact that believers have understood for a long time. Living a godly lifestyle brings physical, emotional, and spiritual health and blessing. Being a believer will not exempt a person from physical problems, but at times it may keep a person from some kinds of diseases. And knowing that one belongs to God brings spiritual contentment that will have a positive effect on the body as well. **Topic: Health/Spirituality**

**SECURITY IN WISDOM**

**4** Hear, *my* children, the instruction of a father,
And give attention to know understanding;

2 For I give you good doctrine:
Do not forsake my law.
3 When I was my father's son,
Tender and the only one in the sight of my mother,
4 He also taught me,
and said to me: "Let your heart retain my words;
Keep my commands, and live.
5 Get wisdom! Get understanding!
Do not forget, nor turn away from the
words of my mouth.
6 Do not forsake her, and she will preserve you;
Love her, and she will keep you.
7 Wisdom is the principal thing;
Therefore get wisdom.
And in all your getting, get understanding.

> Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom.
> And in all your getting, get understanding.
> PROVERBS 4:7

8 Exalt her, and she will promote you;
She will bring you honor, when you embrace her.
9 She will place on your head an ornament of grace;
A crown of glory she will deliver to you."
10 Hear, my son, and receive my sayings,
And the years of your life will be many.
11 I have taught you in the way of wisdom;
I have led you in right paths.
12 When you walk, your steps will not be hindered,
And when you run, you will not stumble.

13 Take firm hold of instruction, do not let go;
Keep her, for she *is* your life.
14 Do not enter the path of the wicked,
And do not walk in the way of evil.
15 Avoid it, do not travel on it;
Turn away from it and pass on.
16 For they do not sleep unless they have done evil;
And their sleep is taken away unless they make *someone* fall.
17 For they eat the bread of wickedness,
And drink the wine of violence.
18 But the path of the just *is* like the shining sun,[a]
That shines ever brighter unto the perfect day.
19 The way of the wicked *is* like darkness;
They do not know what makes them stumble.
20 My son, give attention to my words;
Incline your ear to my sayings.
21 Do not let them depart from your eyes;
Keep them in the midst of your heart;
22 For they *are* life to those who find them,
And health to all their flesh.
23 Keep your heart with all diligence,
For out of it *spring* the issues of life.
24 Put away from you a deceitful mouth,
And put perverse lips far from you.
25 Let your eyes look straight ahead,
And your eyelids look right before you.
26 Ponder the path of your feet,
And let all your ways be established.
27 Do not turn to the right or the left;
Remove your foot from evil.

## SOUL NOTE

**Beautiful Wisdom** *(4:1-13)* Wisdom is "the principal thing," (4:7), and is called "good doctrine" (4:2). Wisdom refers to the core truths about life that are passed on from godly parents to their children, from generation to generation. Solomon challenges people to seek out and obtain wisdom, to never forget it or forsake it (4:5, 6). Wisdom is pictured as a woman, a beauty that a good son will pursue and court as he would a wife: Love her, exalt her, embrace her, "keep her, for she is your life" (4:13).Wisdom is of permanent importance. It should be sought ardently and treasured dearly.**Topic: Wisdom**

## THE PERIL OF ADULTERY

5 My son, pay attention to my wisdom;
Lend your ear to my understanding,
2 That you may preserve discretion,
And your lips may keep knowledge.
3 For the lips of an immoral woman drip honey,
And her mouth *is* smoother than oil;
4 But in the end she is bitter as wormwood,
Sharp as a two-edged sword.
5 Her feet go down to death,
Her steps lay hold of hell.[a]
6 Lest you ponder *her* path of life-
Her ways are unstable;
You do not know *them.*
7 Therefore hear me now, *my* children,
And do not depart from the words of my mouth.
8 Remove your way far from her,
And do not go near the door of her house,
9 Lest you give your honor to others,
And your years to the cruel *one;*
10 Lest aliens be filled with your wealth,
And your labors *go* to the house of a foreigner;
11 And you mourn at last,
When your flesh and your body are consumed,
12 And say:
"How I have hated instruction,
And my heart despised correction!
13 I have not obeyed the voice of my teachers,
Nor inclined my ear to those who instructed me!
14 I was on the verge of total ruin,
In the midst of the assembly and congregation."
15 Drink water from your own cistern,
And running water from your own well.

16 Should your fountains be dispersed abroad,
Streams of water in the streets?
17 Let them be only your own,
And not for strangers with you.
18 Let your fountain be blessed,
And rejoice with the wife of your youth.
19 *As a* loving deer and a graceful doe,
Let her breasts satisfy you at all times;
And always be enraptured with her love.
20 For why should you, my son, be enraptured by an immoral woman,
And be embraced in the arms of a seductress?
21 For the ways of man *are* before the eyes of the LORD,
And He ponders all his paths.
22 His own iniquities entrap the wicked *man,*
And he is caught in the cords of his sin.
23 He shall die for lack of instruction,
And in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray.

**KEY PASSAGE**

# ILLICIT ATTRACTION

## (5:1-23)

The Bible does not speak against sexual fulfillment-in fact, sexual delight and marital love are exalted in the Song of Solomon. The Bible does, however, speak against sexual sin. One of the warnings that runs through Proverbs is to avoid the immoral woman. The warning implicitly acknowledges the power and attractiveness of

illicit sex at certain times in life. Adultery is a great tragedy, for it has severe consequences. People risk all that they have built over a lifetime-marriage, family, ministry, respect, honor-when they commit adultery. Sexual sin can be very appealing, almost an overwhelming temptation.

The way out is to rejoice in one's marriage and to be satisfied with one's spouse's love (5:18, 19). Sexual fulfillment is always depicted in the Bible as within the boundaries of marriage. To violate that commitment will lead to pain, grief, and self-destruction.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Adultery. See also the personality profile of The Woman Caught in Adultery: Sin No More.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Fresh Water** *(5:15-23)* This beautiful metaphor describes the joy of marital fidelity. To "drink water from your own cistern" pictures the marriage partners belonging only to each other, "enraptured with" each other's love. By contrast, to become enraptured by another, to turn to adultery, may feel exciting at first, but will end up being "bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword" (5:4). God's Word clearly teaches that married people should keep their vows and remain committed to each other. Adultery is embracing a false love-it will hurt everyone involved. **Topic: Adultery**

## DANGEROUS PROMISES

**6** My son, if you become surety for your friend,
*If* you have shaken hands in pledge for a stranger,

2 You are snared by the words of your mouth;
You are taken by the words of your mouth.
3 So do this, my son, and deliver yourself;
For you have come into the hand of your friend:
Go and humble yourself;
Plead with your friend.
4 Give no sleep to your eyes,
Nor slumber to your eyelids.
5 Deliver yourself like a gazelle from the hand *of the hunter*,
And like a bird from the hand of the fowler.[a]

## THE FOLLY OF INDOLENCE

6 Go to the ant, you sluggard!
Consider her ways and be wise,
7 Which, having no captain,
Overseer or ruler,
8 Provides her supplies in the summer,
*And* gathers her food in the harvest.
9 How long will you slumber, O sluggard?
When will you rise from your sleep?
10 A little sleep, a little slumber,
A little folding of the hands to sleep-
11 So shall your poverty come on you like a prowler,
And your need like an armed man.

## THE WICKED MAN

12 A worthless person, a wicked man,
Walks with a perverse mouth;
13 He winks with his eyes,

He shuffles his feet,
He points with his fingers;
14 Perversity *is* in his heart,
He devises evil continually,
He sows discord.
15 Therefore his calamity shall come suddenly;
Suddenly he shall be broken without remedy.
16 These six *things* the LORD hates,
Yes, seven *are* an abomination to Him:
17 A proud look,
A lying tongue,
Hands that shed innocent blood,
18 A heart that devises wicked plans,
Feet that are swift in running to evil,
19 A false witness *who* speaks lies,
And one who sows discord among brethren.

## BEWARE OF ADULTERY

20 My son, keep your father's command,
And do not forsake the law of your mother.
21 Bind them continually upon your heart;
Tie them around your neck.
22 When you roam, they[a] will lead you;
When you sleep, they will keep you;
And *when* you awake, they will speak with you.
23 For the commandment *is* a lamp,
And the law a light;
Reproofs of instruction *are* the way of life,
24 To keep you from the evil woman,
From the flattering tongue of a seductress.
25 Do not lust after her beauty in your heart,
Nor let her allure you with her eyelids.
26 For by means of a harlot
*A man is reduced* to a crust of bread;

And an adulteress[a] will prey upon his precious life.
27 Can a man take fire to his bosom,
And his clothes not be burned?
28 Can one walk on hot coals,
And his feet not be seared?
29 So *is* he who goes in to his neighbor's wife;
Whoever touches her shall not be innocent.
30 *People* do not despise a thief
If he steals to satisfy himself when he is starving.
31 Yet *when* he is found, he must restore sevenfold;
He may have to give up all the substance of his house.
32 Whoever commits adultery with a woman lacks understanding;
He *who* does so destroys his own soul.
33 Wounds and dishonor he will get,
And his reproach will not be wiped away.
34 For jealousy *is* a husband's fury;
Therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance.
35 He will accept no recompense,
Nor will he be appeased though you give many gifts.

7 My son, keep my words,
And treasure my commands within you.
2 Keep my commands and live,
And my law as the apple of your eye.
3 Bind them on your fingers;
Write them on the tablet of your heart.
4 Say to wisdom, “You *are* my sister,”
And call understanding *your* nearest kin,
5 That they may keep you from the immoral woman,
From the seductress *who* flatters with her words.

**THE CRAFTY HARLOT**

6 For at the window of my house
I looked through my lattice,
7 And saw among the simple,
I perceived among the youths,
A young man devoid of understanding,
8 Passing along the street near her corner;
And he took the path to her house
9 In the twilight, in the evening,
In the black and dark night.
10 And there a woman met him,
*With* the attire of a harlot, and a crafty heart.
11 She *was* loud and rebellious,
Her feet would not stay at home.
12 At times *she was* outside, at times in the open square,
Lurking at every corner.
13 So she caught him and kissed him;
With an impudent face she said to him:
14 “*I have* peace offerings with me;
Today I have paid my vows.
15 So I came out to meet you,
Diligently to seek your face,
And I have found you.

16 I have spread my bed with tapestry,
Colored coverings of Egyptian linen.
17 I have perfumed my bed
With myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon.
18 Come, let us take our fill of love until morning;
Let us delight ourselves with love.
19 For my husband *is* not at home;
He has gone on a long journey;
20 He has taken a bag of money with him,
*And* will come home on the appointed day."
21 With her enticing speech she caused him to yield,
With her flattering lips she seduced him.
22 Immediately he went after her, as an ox goes to the slaughter,
Or as a fool to the correction of the stocks,[a]
23 Till an arrow struck his liver.
As a bird hastens to the snare,
He did not know it *would cost* his life.
24 Now therefore, listen to me, *my* children;
Pay attention to the words of my mouth:
25 Do not let your heart turn aside to her ways,
Do not stray into her paths;
26 For she has cast down many wounded,
And all who were slain by her were strong *men.*
27 Her house *is* the way to hell,[a]
Descending to the chambers of death.

## THE EXCELLENCE OF WISDOM

**8** Does not wisdom cry out,
And understanding lift up her voice?

2 She takes her stand on the top of the high hill,
Beside the way, where the paths meet.
3 She cries out by the gates, at the entry of the city,
At the entrance of the doors:
4 "To you, O men, I call,
And my voice *is* to the sons of men.
5 O you simple ones, understand prudence,
And you fools, be of an understanding heart.
6 Listen, for I will speak of excellent things,
And from the opening of my lips *will come* right things;
7 For my mouth will speak truth;
Wickedness *is* an abomination to my lips.
8 All the words of my mouth *are* with righteousness;
Nothing crooked or perverse *is* in them.
9 They *are* all plain to him who understands,
And right to those who find knowledge.
10 Receive my instruction, and not silver,
And knowledge rather than choice gold;
11 For wisdom *is* better than rubies,
And all the things one may desire cannot be compared with her.
12 "I, wisdom, dwell with prudence,
And find out knowledge *and* discretion.
13 The fear of the LORD *is* to hate evil;
Pride and arrogance and the evil way
And the perverse mouth I hate.
14 Counsel *is* mine, and sound wisdom;
I *am* understanding, I have strength.
15 By me kings reign,
And rulers decree justice.
16 By me princes rule, and nobles,

All the judges of the earth.[a]
17 I love those who love me,
And those who seek me diligently will find me.
18 Riches and honor *are* with me,
Enduring riches and righteousness.
19 My fruit *is* better than gold, yes, than fine gold,
And my revenue than choice silver.
20 I traverse the way of righteousness,
In the midst of the paths of justice,
21 That I may cause those who love me to inherit wealth,
That I may fill their treasuries.
22 "The LORD possessed me at the beginning of His way,
Before His works of old.
23 I have been established from everlasting,
From the beginning, before there was ever an earth.
24 When *there were* no depths I was brought forth,
When *there were* no fountains abounding with water.
25 Before the mountains were settled,
Before the hills, I was brought forth;
26 While as yet He had not made the earth or the fields,
Or the primal dust of the world.
27 When He prepared the heavens, I *was* there,
When He drew a circle on the face of the deep,
28 When He established the clouds above,
When He strengthened the fountains of the deep,
29 When He assigned to the sea its limit,
So that the waters would not transgress His command,
When He marked out the foundations of the earth,
30 Then I was beside Him *as* a master craftsman;[a]
And I was daily *His* delight,
Rejoicing always before Him,
31 Rejoicing in His inhabited world,
And my delight *was* with the sons of men.
32 "Now therefore, listen to me, *my* children,

For blessed *are those who* keep my ways.
33 Hear instruction and be wise,
And do not disdain *it.*
34 Blessed is the man who listens to me,
Watching daily at my gates,
Waiting at the posts of my doors.
35 For whoever finds me finds life,
And obtains favor from the LORD;
36 But he who sins against me wrongs his own soul;
All those who hate me love death.”

## THE WAY OF WISDOM

**9** Wisdom has built her house,
She has hewn out her seven pillars;
2 She has slaughtered her meat,
She has mixed her wine,
She has also furnished her table.
3 She has sent out her maidens,
She cries out from the highest places of the city,
4 "Whoever *is* simple, let him turn in here!"
*As for* him who lacks understanding, she says to him,
5 "Come, eat of my bread
And drink of the wine I have mixed.
6 Forsake foolishness and live,
And go in the way of understanding.
7 "He who corrects a scoffer gets shame for himself,
And he who rebukes a wicked *man only* harms himself.
8 Do not correct a scoffer, lest he hate you;
Rebuke a wise *man*, and he will love you.
9 Give *instruction* to a wise *man*, and he will be still wiser;
Teach a just *man*, and he will increase in learning.
10 "The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of wisdom,
And the knowledge of the Holy One *is* understanding.
11 For by me your days will be multiplied,
And years of life will be added to you.
12 If you are wise, you are wise for yourself,
And *if* you scoff, you will bear *it* alone."

## THE WAY OF FOLLY

13 A foolish woman is clamorous;
*She is* simple, and knows nothing.
14 For she sits at the door of her house,
On a seat *by* the highest places of the city,
15 To call to those who pass by,

Who go straight on their way:
16 “Whoever *is* simple, let him turn in here”;
And *as for* him who lacks understanding, she says to him,
17 “Stolen water is sweet,
And bread *eaten* in secret is pleasant.”
18 But he does not know that the dead *are* there,
*That* her guests *are* in the depths of hell.[a]

## SOUL NOTE

**Wisdom’s House** *(9:1-18)* This chapter describes wisdom and foolishness as two women. The first invites people to a feast where they can learn “the fear of the LORD” (9:6, 10). The other has not prepared a feast; what she has is only stolen water and bread. Those who accept wisdom’s invitation will gain God’s blessings; those who pick folly will face a life of self-indulgence leading to the depths of hell. There is a choice: We can prefer the path of wisdom or the path of foolishness. That will affect every other choice we ever make.
**Topic: Wisdom**

## WISE SAYINGS OF SOLOMON

**10** The proverbs of Solomon:
A wise son makes a glad father,
But a foolish son *is* the grief of his mother.

2 Treasures of wickedness profit nothing,
But righteousness delivers from death.
3 The LORD will not allow the righteous soul to famish,
But He casts away the desire of the wicked.
4 He who has a slack hand becomes poor,
But the hand of the diligent makes rich.
5 He who gathers in summer *is* a wise son;
He who sleeps in harvest *is* a son who causes shame.
6 Blessings *are* on the head of the righteous,
But violence covers the mouth of the wicked.
7 The memory of the righteous *is* blessed,
But the name of the wicked will rot.
8 The wise in heart will receive commands,
But a prating fool will fall.
9 He who walks with integrity walks securely,
But he who perverts his ways will become known.
10 He who winks with the eye causes trouble,
But a prating fool will fall.
11 The mouth of the righteous *is* a well of life,
But violence covers the mouth of the wicked.
12 Hatred stirs up strife,
But love covers all sins.
13 Wisdom is found on the lips of him who has understanding,
But a rod *is* for the back of him who is devoid of understanding.
14 Wise *people* store up knowledge,
But the mouth of the foolish *is* near destruction.
15 The rich man’s wealth *is* his strong city;
The destruction of the poor *is* their poverty.
16 The labor of the righteous *leads* to life,

The wages of the wicked to sin.
17 He who keeps instruction *is in* the way of life,
But he who refuses correction goes astray.
18 Whoever hides hatred *has* lying lips,
And whoever spreads slander *is* a fool.
19 In the multitude of words sin is not lacking,
But he who restrains his lips *is* wise.
20 The tongue of the righteous *is* choice silver;
The heart of the wicked *is worth* little.
21 The lips of the righteous feed many,
But fools die for lack of wisdom.[a]
22 The blessing of the LORD makes *one* rich,
And He adds no sorrow with it.
23 To do evil *is* like sport to a fool,
But a man of understanding has wisdom.
24 The fear of the wicked will come upon him,
And the desire of the righteous will be granted.
25 When the whirlwind passes by, the wicked *is* no *more*,
But the righteous *has* an everlasting foundation.
26 As vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes,
So *is* the lazy *man* to those who send him.
27 The fear of the LORD prolongs days,
But the years of the wicked will be shortened.
28 The hope of the righteous *will be* gladness,
But the expectation of the wicked will perish.
29 The way of the LORD *is* strength for the upright,
But destruction *will come* to the workers of iniquity.
30 The righteous will never be removed,
But the wicked will not inhabit the earth.
31 The mouth of the righteous brings forth wisdom,
But the perverse tongue will be cut out.
32 The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable,
But the mouth of the wicked *what is* perverse.

**11** Dishonest scales *are* an abomination to the LORD,
But a just weight *is* His delight.

2 When pride comes, then comes shame;
But with the humble *is* wisdom.
3 The integrity of the upright will guide them,
But the perversity of the unfaithful will destroy them.
4 Riches do not profit in the day of wrath,
But righteousness delivers from death.
5 The righteousness of the blameless will direct[a] his way aright,
But the wicked will fall by his own wickedness.
6 The righteousness of the upright will deliver them,
But the unfaithful will be caught by *their* lust.
7 When a wicked man dies, *his* expectation will perish,
And the hope of the unjust perishes.
8 The righteous is delivered from trouble,
And it comes to the wicked instead.
9 The hypocrite with *his* mouth destroys his neighbor,
But through knowledge the righteous will be delivered.
10 When it goes well with the righteous, the city rejoices;
And when the wicked perish, *there is* jubilation.
11 By the blessing of the upright the city is exalted,
But it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked.
12 He who is devoid of wisdom despises his neighbor,
But a man of understanding holds his peace.
13 A talebearer reveals secrets,
But he who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter.
14 Where *there is* no counsel, the people fall;
But in the multitude of counselors *there is* safety.

> Where there is no counsel, the people fall; but in the multitude of counselors there is safety.
> PROVERBS 11:14

15 He who is surety for a stranger will suffer,

But one who hates being surety is secure.
16 A gracious woman retains honor,
But ruthless *men* retain riches.
17 The merciful man does good for his own soul,
But *he who is* cruel troubles his own flesh.
18 The wicked *man* does deceptive work,
But he who sows righteousness *will have* a sure reward.
19 As righteousness *leads* to life,
So he who pursues evil *pursues it* to his own death.
20 Those who are of a perverse heart *are* an abomination to the LORD,
But *the* blameless in their ways *are* His delight.
21 *Though they* join forces,[a] the wicked will not go unpunished;
But the posterity of the righteous will be delivered.
22 *As* a ring of gold in a swine's snout,
*So is* a lovely woman who lacks discretion.
23 The desire of the righteous *is* only good,
*But* the expectation of the wicked *is* wrath.
24 There is *one* who scatters, yet increases more;
And there is *one* who withholds more than is right,
But it *leads* to poverty.
25 The generous soul will be made rich,
And he who waters will also be watered himself.
26 The people will curse him who withholds grain,
But blessing *will be* on the head of him who sells *it.*
27 He who earnestly seeks good finds favor,
But trouble will come to him who seeks *evil.*
28 He who trusts in his riches will fall,
But the righteous will flourish like foliage.
29 He who troubles his own house will inherit the wind,
And the fool *will be* servant to the wise of heart.
30 The fruit of the righteous *is a* tree of life,
And he who wins souls *is* wise.
31 If the righteous will be recompensed on the earth,
How much more the ungodly and the sinner.

**12** Whoever loves instruction loves knowledge,
But he who hates correction *is* stupid.

2 A good *man* obtains favor from the LORD,
But a man of wicked intentions He will condemn.
3 A man is not established by wickedness,
But the root of the righteous cannot be moved.
4 An excellent[a] wife *is* the crown of her husband,
But she who causes shame *is* like rottenness in his bones.
5 The thoughts of the righteous *are* right,
*But* the counsels of the wicked *are* deceitful.
6 The words of the wicked *are,* "Lie in wait for blood,"
But the mouth of the upright will deliver them.
7 The wicked are overthrown and *are* no more,
But the house of the righteous will stand.
8 A man will be commended according to his wisdom,
But he who is of a perverse heart will be despised.
9 Better *is the one* who is slighted but has a servant,
Than he who honors himself but lacks bread.
10 A righteous *man* regards the life of his animal,
But the tender mercies of the wicked *are* cruel.
11 He who tills his land will be satisfied with bread,
But he who follows frivolity *is* devoid of understanding.[a]
12 The wicked covet the catch of evil *men,*
But the root of the righteous yields *fruit.*
13 The wicked is ensnared by the transgression of *his* lips,
But the righteous will come through trouble.
14 A man will be satisfied with good by the fruit of *his* mouth,
And the recompense of a man's hands will be rendered to him.
15 The way of a fool *is* right in his own eyes,
But he who heeds counsel *is* wise.
16 A fool's wrath is known at once,
But a prudent *man* covers shame.
17 He *who* speaks truth declares righteousness,
But a false witness, deceit.

18 There is one who speaks like the piercings of a sword,
But the tongue of the wise *promotes* health.
19 The truthful lip shall be established forever,
But a lying tongue *is* but for a moment.
20 Deceit is in the heart of those who devise evil,
But counselors of peace have joy.
21 No grave trouble will overtake the righteous,
But the wicked shall be filled with evil.
22 Lying lips *are* an abomination to the LORD,
But those who deal truthfully *are* His delight.
23 A prudent man conceals knowledge,
But the heart of fools proclaims foolishness.
24 The hand of the diligent will rule,
But the lazy *man* will be put to forced labor.
25 Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression,
But a good word makes it glad.
26 The righteous should choose his friends carefully,
For the way of the wicked leads them astray.
27 The lazy *man* does not roast what he took in hunting,
But diligence *is* man's precious possession.
28 In the way of righteousness *is* life,
And in *its* pathway *there is* no death.

**13** A wise son *heeds* his father’s instruction,
But a scoffer does not listen to rebuke.

2 A man shall eat well by the fruit of *his* mouth,
But the soul of the unfaithful feeds on violence.
3 He who guards his mouth preserves his life,
*But* he who opens wide his lips shall have destruction.
4 The soul of a lazy *man* desires, and *has* nothing;
But the soul of the diligent shall be made rich.
5 A righteous *man* hates lying,
But a wicked *man* is loathsome and comes to shame.
6 Righteousness guards *him whose* way is blameless,
But wickedness overthrows the sinner.
7 There is one who makes himself rich, yet *has* nothing;
*And* one who makes himself poor, yet *has* great riches.
8 The ransom of a man’s life *is* his riches,
But the poor does not hear rebuke.
9 The light of the righteous rejoices,
But the lamp of the wicked will be put out.
10 By pride comes nothing but strife,
But with the well-advised *is* wisdom.
11 Wealth *gained by* dishonesty will be diminished,
But he who gathers by labor will increase.
12 Hope deferred makes the heart sick,
But *when* the desire comes, *it is* a tree of life.
13 He who despises the word will be destroyed,
But he who fears the commandment will be rewarded.
14 The law of the wise *is* a fountain of life,
To turn *one* away from the snares of death.
15 Good understanding gains favor,
But the way of the unfaithful *is* hard.
16 Every prudent *man* acts with knowledge,
But a fool lays open *his* folly.
17 A wicked messenger falls into trouble,
But a faithful ambassador *brings* health.

18 Poverty and shame *will come* to him who disdains correction,
But he who regards a rebuke will be honored.
19 A desire accomplished is sweet to the soul,
But *it is* an abomination to fools to depart from evil.
20 He who walks with wise
*men* will be wise, But the companion of fools will be destroyed.
21 Evil pursues sinners,
But to the righteous, good shall be repaid.
22 A good *man* leaves an inheritance to his children's children,
But the wealth of the sinner is stored up for the righteous.
23 Much food *is in* the fallow *ground* of the poor,
And for lack of justice there is waste.[a]
24 He who spares his rod hates his son,
But he who loves him disciplines him promptly.
25 The righteous eats to the satisfying of his soul,
But the stomach of the wicked shall be in want.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Balancing Act** *(13:24)* When it comes to raising children, Scripture condemns the two extremes of permissiveness and child abuse. Proverbs emphasizes that parental discipline is an expression of love. Discipline and correction are a parent's way of showing love and concern. Undisciplined children often develop insecurity and a poor self-image. Moreover, they don't know how to act properly in many situations. Proper and consistent discipline, done with a balance of love and concern, communicates to a child that he or she is genuinely loved. **Topic: Child Discipline**

**14** The wise woman builds her house,
But the foolish pulls it down with her hands.

2 He who walks in his uprightness fears the LORD,
But *he who is* perverse in his ways despises Him.
3 In the mouth of a fool *is* a rod of pride,
But the lips of the wise will preserve them.
4 Where no oxen *are,* the trough *is* clean;
But much increase *comes* by the strength of an ox.
5 A faithful witness does not lie,
But a false witness will utter lies.
6 A scoffer seeks wisdom and does not *find it,*
But knowledge *is* easy to him who understands.
7 Go from the presence of a foolish man,
When you do not perceive *in him* the lips of knowledge.
8 The wisdom of the prudent *is* to understand his way,
But the folly of fools *is* deceit.
9 Fools mock at sin,
But among the upright *there is* favor.
10 The heart knows its own bitterness,
And a stranger does not share its joy.
11 The house of the wicked will be overthrown,
But the tent of the upright will flourish.
12 There is a way *that seems* right to a man,
But its end *is* the way of death.
13 Even in laughter the heart may sorrow,
And the end of mirth *may be* grief.
14 The backslider in heart will be filled with his own ways,
But a good man *will be satisfied* from above.[a]
15 The simple believes every word,
But the prudent considers well his steps.
16 A wise *man* fears and departs from evil,
But a fool rages and is self-confident.
17 A quick-tempered *man* acts foolishly,
And a man of wicked intentions is hated.

18 The simple inherit folly,
But the prudent are crowned with knowledge.
19 The evil will bow before the good,
And the wicked at the gates of the righteous.
20 The poor *man* is hated even by his own neighbor,
But the rich *has* many friends.
21 He who despises his neighbor sins;
But he who has mercy on the poor, happy *is* he.
22 Do they not go astray who devise evil?
But mercy and truth *belong* to those who devise good.
23 In all labor there is profit,
But idle chatter[a] *leads* only to poverty.
24 The crown of the wise is their riches,
*But* the foolishness of fools *is* folly.
25 A true witness delivers souls,
But a deceitful *witness* speaks lies.
26 In the fear of the LORD *there is* strong confidence,
And His children will have a place of refuge.
27 The fear of the LORD *is* a fountain of life,
To turn *one* away from the snares of death.
28 In a multitude of people *is* a king's honor,
But in the lack of people *is* the downfall of a prince.
29 *He who is* slow to wrath has great understanding,
But *he who is* impulsive[a] exalts folly.
30 A sound heart *is* life to the body,
But envy *is* rottenness to the bones.
31 He who oppresses the poor reproaches his Maker,
But he who honors Him has mercy on the needy.
32 The wicked is banished in his wickedness,
But the righteous has a refuge in his death.
33 Wisdom rests in the heart of him who has understanding,
But *what is* in the heart of fools is made known.
34 Righteousness exalts a nation,
But sin *is* a reproach to *any* people.

35 The king’s favor *is* toward a wise servant,
But his wrath *is against* him who causes shame.

**15** A soft answer turns away wrath,
But a harsh word stirs up anger.

> A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.
> PROVERBS 15:1

2 The tongue of the wise uses knowledge rightly,
But the mouth of fools pours forth foolishness.
3 The eyes of the LORD *are* in every place,
Keeping watch on the evil and the good.
4 A wholesome tongue *is* a tree of life,
But perverseness in it breaks the spirit.
5 A fool despises his father's instruction,
But he who receives correction is prudent.
6 *In* the house of the righteous *there is* much treasure,
But in the revenue of the wicked is trouble.
7 The lips of the wise disperse knowledge,
But the heart of the fool *does* not *do* so.
8 The sacrifice of the wicked *is* an abomination to the LORD,
But the prayer of the upright *is* His delight.
9 The way of the wicked *is* an abomination to the LORD,
But He loves him who follows righteousness.
10 Harsh discipline *is* for him who forsakes the way,
*And* he who hates correction will die.
11 Hell[a] and Destruction[b] *are* before the LORD;
So how much more the hearts of the sons of men.
12 A scoffer does not love one who corrects him,
Nor will he go to the wise.
13 A merry heart makes a cheerful countenance,
But by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken.
14 The heart of him who has understanding seeks knowledge,
But the mouth of fools feeds on foolishness.
15 All the days of the afflicted *are* evil,
But he who is of a merry heart *has* a continual feast.

16 Better *is* a little with the fear of the LORD,
Than great treasure with trouble.
17 Better *is* a dinner of herbs[a] where love is,
Than a fatted calf with hatred.
18 A wrathful man stirs up strife,
But *he who is* slow to anger allays contention.
19 The way of the lazy *man is* like a hedge of thorns,
But the way of the upright *is* a highway.
20 A wise son makes a father glad,
But a foolish man despises his mother.
21 Folly *is* joy *to him who is* destitute of discernment,
But a man of understanding walks uprightly.
22 Without counsel, plans go awry,
But in the multitude of counselors they are established.
23 A man has joy by the answer of his mouth,
And a word *spoken* in due season, how good *it is!*
24 The way of life *winds* upward for the wise,
That he may turn away from hell[a] below.
25 The LORD will destroy the house of the proud,
But He will establish the boundary of the widow.
26 The thoughts of the wicked *are* an abomination to the LORD,
But *the words* of the pure *are* pleasant.
27 He who is greedy for gain troubles his own house,
But he who hates bribes will live.
28 The heart of the righteous studies how to answer,
But the mouth of the wicked pours forth evil.
29 The LORD *is* far from the wicked,
But He hears the prayer of the righteous.
30 The light of the eyes rejoices the heart,
*And* a good report makes the bones healthy.[a]
31 The ear that hears the rebukes of life
Will abide among the wise.
32 He who disdains instruction despises his own soul,
But he who heeds rebuke gets understanding.

33 The fear of the LORD *is* the instruction of wisdom,
And before honor *is* humility.

**KEY PASSAGE**

# REJOICE!

# (15:13-15)

The Bible is a book of joy. God wants His people to be in right relationship with Him, and He promises that He will give them joy.

- •Jesus prayed for His followers to have His joy (John 15:11; 17:13).
- •Belief in Christ gives "joy inexpressible" (1 Pet. 1:8).
- •In a time of trial, God's people can "count it all joy" (James 1:2).
- •A fruit of the Spirit is joy (Gal. 5:22).
- •Believers look forward to God's kingdom, described as "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 14:17).

The joy given by God should give us "a cheerful countenance" and "a merry heart" (Prov. 15:13, 15). God's people should be the most joyful people there are, because they know God, His love and salvation, and their eternal destiny. "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!" (Phil. 4:4).

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Laughing with Joy. See also the

personality profile of Isaac: Unexpected Laughter.

**16** The preparations of the heart *belong* to man,
But the answer of the tongue *is* from the LORD.

2 All the ways of a man *are* pure in his own eyes,
But the LORD weighs the spirits.
3 Commit your works to the LORD,
And your thoughts will be established.
4 The LORD has made all for Himself,
Yes, even the wicked for the day of doom.
5 Everyone proud in heart *is* an abomination to the LORD;
*Though they join* forces,[a] none will go unpunished.
6 In mercy and truth Atonement is provided for iniquity;
And by the fear of the LORD *one* departs from evil.
7 When a man's ways please the LORD
makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.

> When a man's ways please the LORD, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.
> PROVERBS 16:7.

8 Better *is* a little with righteousness,
Than vast revenues without justice.
9 A man's heart plans his way,
But the LORD directs his steps.
10 Divination *is* on the lips of the king;
His mouth must not transgress in judgment.
11 Honest weights and scales *are* the LORD's;
All the weights in the bag *are* His work.
12 *It is* an abomination for kings to commit wickedness,
For a throne is established by righteousness.
13 Righteous lips *are* the delight of kings,
And they love him who speaks *what is* right.
14 As messengers of death *is* the king's wrath,
But a wise man will appease it.
15 In the light of the king's face *is* life,

And his favor *is* like a cloud of the latter rain.
16 How much better to get wisdom than gold!
And to get understanding is to be chosen rather than silver.
17 The highway of the upright *is* to depart from evil;
He who keeps his way preserves his soul.
18 Pride *goes* before destruction,
And a haughty spirit before a fall.
19 Better *to be* of a humble spirit with the lowly,
Than to divide the spoil with the proud.
20 He who heeds the word wisely will find good,
And whoever trusts in the LORD, happy *is* he.
21 The wise in heart will be called prudent,
And sweetness of the lips increases learning.
22 Understanding *is* a wellspring of life to him who has it.
But the correction of fools *is* folly.
23 The heart of the wise teaches his mouth,
And adds learning to his lips.
24 Pleasant words *are like* a honeycomb,
Sweetness to the soul and health to the bones.
25 There is a way *that seems* right to a man,
But its end *is* the way of death.
26 The person who labors, labors for himself,
For his *hungry* mouth drives him *on*.
27 An ungodly man digs up evil,
And *it is* on his lips like a burning fire.
28 A perverse man sows strife,
And a whisperer separates the best of friends.
29 A violent man entices his neighbor,
And leads him in a way *that is* not good.
30 He winks his eye to devise perverse things;
He purses his lips *and* brings about evil.
31 The silver-haired head *is* a crown of glory,
*If* it is found in the way of righteousness.
32 *He who is* slow to anger *is* better than the mighty,

And he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.
33 The lot is cast into the lap,
But its every decision *is* from the LORD.

## SOUL NOTE

**Look Down, Look Out** *(16:18)* The Bible warns about the dangers of pride. At its root, pride is really the idolatry of self-worshiping oneself instead of God. A proud attitude says, “I don’t need God, I can handle this myself.” It is a “haughty spirit” by which people think they can look down on everyone and everything else. Such an attitude, says the Bible, goes “before a fall.” Whenever people let pride control their thoughts and actions, they may succeed temporarily, but ultimately they are headed for disaster. **Topic: Pride**

**17** Better *is* a dry morsel with quietness,
Than a house full of feasting[a] *with* strife.

2 A wise servant will rule over a son who causes shame,
And will share an inheritance among the brothers.
3 The refining pot *is* for silver and the furnace for gold,
But the LORD tests the hearts.
4 An evildoer gives heed to false lips;
A liar listens eagerly to a spiteful tongue.
5 He who mocks the poor reproaches his Maker;
He who is glad at calamity will not go unpunished.
6 Children's children *are* the crown of old men,
And the glory of children *is* their father.
7 Excellent speech is not becoming to a fool,
Much less lying lips to a prince.
8 A present *is* a precious stone in the eyes of its possessor;
Wherever he turns, he prospers.
9 He who covers a transgression seeks love,
But he who repeats a matter separates friends.
10 Rebuke is more effective for a wise *man*
Than a hundred blows on a fool.
11 An evil *man* seeks only rebellion;
Therefore a cruel messenger will be sent against him.
12 Let a man meet a bear robbed of her cubs,
Rather than a fool in his folly.
13 Whoever rewards evil for good,
Evil will not depart from his house.
14 The beginning of strife *is like* releasing water;
Therefore stop contention before a quarrel starts.
15 He who justifies the wicked, and he who condemns the just,
Both of them alike *are* an abomination to the LORD.
16 Why *is there* in the hand of a fool the purchase price of wisdom,
Since *he has* no heart *for it?*
17 A friend loves at all times,
And a brother is born for adversity.

18 A man devoid of understanding shakes hands in a pledge,
*And* becomes surety for his friend.
19 He who loves transgression loves strife,
And he who exalts his gate seeks destruction.
20 He who has a deceitful heart finds no good,
And he who has a perverse tongue falls into evil.
21 He who begets a scoffer *does so* to his sorrow,
And the father of a fool has no joy.
22 A merry heart does good, *like* medicine,[a]
But a broken spirit dries the bones.
23 A wicked *man* accepts a bribe behind the back[a]
To pervert the ways of justice.
24 Wisdom *is* in the sight of him who has understanding,
But the eyes of a fool *are* on the ends of the earth.
25 A foolish son *is* a grief to his father,
And bitterness to her who bore him.
26 Also, to punish the righteous *is* not good,
*Nor* to strike princes for *their* uprightness.
27 He who has knowledge spares his words,
*And* a man of understanding is of a calm spirit.
28 Even a fool is counted wise when he holds his peace;
*When* he shuts his lips, *he is considered* perceptive.

## SOUL NOTE

**Children's Glory** *(17:6)* The Bible takes a high view of children and of parenting. The picture that "children's children are the crown of old men" makes many grandfathers nod in agreement. The statement that "the glory of children is their father" makes many fathers feel the weight of their responsibility. Children do indeed look up to their fathers with great respect, and wise fathers do well to take that respect

seriously by how they raise their children, how they live, and how they love. Fathers are always having an effect for good and bad on their kids. **Topic: Fatherhood**

**KEY PASSAGE**

# GOOD MEDICINE

**(17:22)**

A right relationship with God gives people joy (1 Pet. 1:8). That joy gives a merry heart (Prov. 15:15). That merry heart, in turn, "does good, like medicine." There is a definite relationship between godliness, joy, and good health. When people's consciences are clear and their hearts are right with God, they can experience good emotional health no matter what their circumstances. In turn, that affects their physical health. Modern science has shown the correlation between emotional and physical health; King Solomon already knew that, stating, "a broken spirit dries the bones." The bottom line: God's people should be joyful, allowing that joy to permeate every area of their lives. This will have a positive effect on both their emotional and physical health.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Health and Spirituality. See also the personality profile of Paul: Strength in Weakness.

**18** A man who isolates himself seeks his own desire;
He rages against all wise judgment.

2 A fool has no delight in understanding,
But in expressing his own heart.
3 When the wicked comes, contempt comes also;
And with dishonor *comes* reproach.
4 The words of a man's mouth *are* deep waters;
The wellspring of wisdom *is* a flowing brook.
5 *It is* not good to show partiality to the wicked,
*Or* to overthrow the righteous in judgment.
6 A fool's lips enter into contention,
And his mouth calls for blows.
7 A fool's mouth *is* his destruction,
And his lips *are* the snare of his soul.
8 The words of a talebearer *are* like tasty trifles,[a]
And they go down into the inmost body.
9 He who is slothful in his work
Is a brother to him who is a great destroyer.
10 The name of the LORD *is* a strong tower;
The righteous run to it and are safe.
11 The rich man's wealth *is* his strong city,
And like a high wall in his own esteem.
12 Before destruction the heart of a man is haughty,
And before honor *is* humility.
13 He who answers a matter before he hears *it*,
It *is* folly and shame to him.
14 The spirit of a man will sustain him in sickness,
But who can bear a broken spirit?
15 The heart of the prudent acquires knowledge,
And the ear of the wise seeks knowledge.
16 A man's gift makes room for him,
And brings him before great men.
17 The first *one* to plead his cause *seems* right,
Until his neighbor comes and examines him.

18 Casting lots causes contentions to cease,
And keeps the mighty apart.
19 A brother offended *is harder to win* than a strong city,
And contentions *are* like the bars of a castle.
20 A man's stomach shall be satisfied from the fruit of his mouth;
*From* the produce of his lips he shall be filled.
21 Death and life *are* in the power of the tongue,
And those who love it will eat its fruit.
22 *He who* finds a wife finds a good *thing*,
And obtains favor from the LORD.
23 The poor *man* uses entreaties,
But the rich answers roughly.
24 A man *who has* friends must himself be friendly,[a]
But there is a friend *who* sticks closer than a brother.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Just Between Us** *(18:8)* Gossip wounds people. It can deeply hurt families, communities, and churches. Gossips love to take their pieces of information, their "tasty trifles," and pass them along. They have so little to occupy their minds that they feed on others' problems. Often their motive is attention, or maybe they wish to put someone down to raise themselves up. Gossip can take place when sharing prayer requests, or in blatantly divulging harmful pieces of information "just between us."Don't pass along "tasty trifles." Refuse to take part in gossip. **Topic: Gossip**

**19** Better *is* the poor who walks in his integrity
Than *one who is* perverse in his lips, and is a fool.

2 Also it is not good *for* a soul *to be* without knowledge,
And he sins who hastens with *his* feet.
3 The foolishness of a man twists his way,
And his heart frets against the LORD.
4 Wealth makes many friends,
But the poor is separated from his friend.
5 A false witness will not go unpunished,
And *he who* speaks lies will not escape.
6 Many entreat the favor of the nobility,
And every man *is* a friend to one who gives gifts.
7 All the brothers of the poor hate him;
How much more do his friends go far from him!
He may pursue *them with* words, *yet* they abandon *him.*
8 He who gets wisdom loves his own soul;
He who keeps understanding will find good.
9 A false witness will not go unpunished,
And *he who* speaks lies shall perish.
10 Luxury is not fitting for a fool,
Much less for a servant to rule over princes.
11 The discretion of a man makes him slow to anger,
And his glory *is* to overlook a transgression.
12 The king's wrath *is* like the roaring of a lion,
But his favor *is* like dew on the grass.
13 A foolish son *is* the ruin of his father,
And the contentions of a wife *are* a continual dripping.
14 Houses and riches *are* an inheritance from fathers,
But a prudent wife *is* from the LORD.
15 Laziness casts *one* into a deep sleep,
And an idle person will suffer hunger.
16 He who keeps the commandment keeps his soul,
*But* he who is careless[a] of his ways will die.
17 He who has pity on the poor lends to the LORD,

And He will pay back what he has given.
18 Chasten your son while there is hope,
And do not set your heart on his destruction.[a]
19 *A man of* great wrath will suffer punishment;
For if you rescue *him,* you will have to do it again.
20 Listen to counsel and receive instruction,
That you may be wise in your latter days.
21 There are many plans in a man's heart,
Nevertheless the LORD's counsel-that will stand.
22 What is desired in a man is kindness,
And a poor man is better than a liar.
23 The fear of the LORD *leads* to life,
And *he who has it* will abide in satisfaction;
He will not be visited with evil.
24 A lazy *man* buries his hand in the bowl,[a]
And will not so much as bring it to his mouth again.
25 Strike a scoffer, and the simple will become wary;
Rebuke one who has understanding, *and* he will discern knowledge.
26 He who mistreats *his* father *and* chases away *his*
mother *Is* a son who causes shame and brings reproach.
27 Cease listening to instruction, my son,
And you will stray from the words of knowledge.
28 A disreputable witness scorns justice,
And the mouth of the wicked devours iniquity.
29 Judgments are prepared for scoffers,
And beatings for the backs of fools.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Fix the Faucet** *(19:13, 14)* In our families we reveal our real selves.

At times, actions and attitudes are at their worst at home. There is nothing worse than living in a family filled with turmoil, where a foolish child has broken a parent's heart or where grouchy spouses nag at each other like dripping faucets. The practical truths expressed in Proverbs are reminders of the importance of healthy family living. Family members should learn to treat one another with love and respect so that home is not a place of turmoil, but of blessing. **Topic: Family Life**

**20** Wine *is* a mocker,
Strong drink *is* a brawler,
And whoever is led astray by it is not wise.

2 The wrath[a] of a king *is* like the roaring of a lion;
*Whoever* provokes him to anger sins *against* his own life.
3 *It is* honorable for a man to stop striving,
Since any fool can start a quarrel.
4 The lazy *man* will not plow because of winter;
He will beg during harvest and *have* nothing.
5 Counsel in the heart of man *is like* deep water,
But a man of understanding will draw it out.
6 Most men will proclaim each his own goodness,
But who can find a faithful man?
7 The righteous *man* walks in his integrity;
His children *are* blessed after him.
8 A king who sits on the throne of judgment
Scatters all evil with his eyes.
9 Who can say, "I have made my heart clean,
I am pure from my sin"?
10 Diverse weights *and* diverse measures,
They *are* both alike, an abomination to the LORD.
11 Even a child is known by his deeds,
Whether what he does *is* pure and right.
12 The hearing ear and the seeing eye,
The LORD has made them both.
13 Do not love sleep, lest you come to poverty;
Open your eyes, *and* you will be satisfied with bread.
14 "*It is* good for nothing,"[a] cries the buyer;
But when he has gone his way, then he boasts.
15 There is gold and a multitude of rubies,
But the lips of knowledge *are* a precious jewel.
16 Take the garment of one who is surety *for* a stranger,
And hold it as a pledge *when it* is for a seductress.
17 Bread gained by deceit *is* sweet to a man,

But afterward his mouth will be filled with gravel.
18 Plans are established by counsel;
By wise counsel wage war.
19 He who goes about *as* a talebearer reveals secrets;
Therefore do not associate with one who flatters with his lips.
20 Whoever curses his father or his mother,
His lamp will be put out in deep darkness.
21 An inheritance gained hastily at the beginning
Will not be blessed at the end.
22 Do not say, “I will recompense evil”;
Wait for the LORD, and He will save you.
23 Diverse weights *are* an abomination to the LORD,
And dishonest scales *are* not good.
24 A man’s steps *are* of the LORD;
How then can a man understand his own way?
25 *It is* a snare for a man to devote rashly *something as* holy,
And afterward to reconsider *his* vows.
26 A wise king sifts out the wicked,
And brings the threshing wheel over them.
27 The spirit of a man *is* the lamp of the LORD,
Searching all the inner depths of his heart.[a]
28 Mercy and truth preserve the king,
And by lovingkindness he upholds his throne.
29 The glory of young men *is* their strength,
And the splendor of old men *is* their gray head.
30 Blows that hurt cleanse away evil,
As *do* stripes the inner depths of the heart.[a]

**21** The king’s heart *is* in the hand of the LORD,
*Like* the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes.
2 Every way of a man *is* right in his own eyes,
But the LORD weighs the hearts.
3 To do righteousness and justice
*Is* more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice.
4 A haughty look, a proud heart,
*And* the plowing[a] of the wicked *are* sin.
5 The plans of the diligent *lead* surely to plenty,
But *those of* everyone *who is* hasty, surely to poverty.
6 Getting treasures by a lying tongue
*Is* the fleeting fantasy of those who seek death.[a]
7 The violence of the wicked will destroy them,[a]
Because they refuse to do justice.
8 The way of a guilty man *is* perverse;[a]
But *as for* the pure, his work *is* right.
9 Better to dwell in a corner of a housetop,
Than in a house shared with a contentious woman.
10 The soul of the wicked desires evil;
His neighbor finds no favor in his eyes.
11 When the scoffer is punished, the simple is made wise;
But when the wise is instructed, he receives knowledge.
12 The righteous *God* wisely considers the house of the wicked,
Overthrowing the wicked for *their* wickedness.
13 Whoever shuts his ears to the cry of the poor
Will also cry himself and not be heard.
14 A gift in secret pacifies anger,
And a bribe behind the back,[a] strong wrath.
15 *It is* a joy for the just to do justice,
But destruction *will come* to the workers of iniquity.
16 A man who wanders from the way of understanding
Will rest in the assembly of the dead.
17 He who loves pleasure *will be* a poor man;
He who loves wine and oil will not be rich.

18 The wicked *shall be* a ransom for the righteous,
And the unfaithful for the upright.
19 Better to dwell in the wilderness,
Than with a contentious and angry woman.
20 *There is* desirable treasure,
And oil in the dwelling of the wise,
But a foolish man squanders it.
21 He who follows righteousness and mercy
Finds life, righteousness and honor.
22 A wise *man* scales the city of the mighty,
And brings down the trusted stronghold.
23 Whoever guards his mouth and tongue
Keeps his soul from troubles.

> Whoever guards his mouth and tongue keeps his soul from troubles.
> PROVERBS 21:23

24 A proud *and* haughty *man*-"Scoffer" *is* his name;
He acts with arrogant pride.
25 The desire of the lazy *man* kills him,
For his hands refuse to labor.
26 He covets greedily all day long,
But the righteous gives and does not spare.
27 The sacrifice of the wicked *is* an abomination;
How much more *when* he brings it with wicked intent!
28 A false witness shall perish,
But the man who hears *him* will speak endlessly.
29 A wicked man hardens his face,
But *as for* the upright, he establishes[a] his way.
30 *There is* no wisdom or understanding
Or counsel against the LORD.
31 The horse *is* prepared for the day of battle,
But deliverance *is* of the LORD.

**22** A *good* name is to be chosen rather than great riches,
Loving favor rather than silver and gold.

2 The rich and the poor have this in common,
The LORD *is* the maker of them all.
3 A prudent *man* foresees evil and hides himself,
But the simple pass on and are punished.
4 By humility *and* the fear of the LORD
*Are* riches and honor and life.
5 Thorns *and* snares *are* in the way of the perverse;
He who guards his soul will be far from them.
6 Train up a child in the way he should go,
And when he is old he will not depart from it.
7 The rich rules over the poor,
And the borrower *is* servant to the lender.
8 He who sows iniquity will reap sorrow,
And the rod of his anger will fail.
9 He who has a generous eye will be blessed,
For he gives of his bread to the poor.
10 Cast out the scoffer, and contention will leave;
Yes, strife and reproach will cease.
11 He who loves purity of heart *And has* grace on his lips,
The king *will be* his friend.
12 The eyes of the LORD preserve knowledge,
But He overthrows the words of the faithless.
13 The lazy *man* says, "*There is* a lion outside!
I shall be slain in the streets!"
14 The mouth of an immoral woman *is* a deep pit;
He who is abhorred by the LORD will fall there.
15 Foolishness *is* bound up in the heart of a child;
The rod of correction will drive it far from him.
16 He who oppresses the poor to increase his *riches,*
*And* he who gives to the rich, *will* surely *come* to poverty.

**SAYINGS OF THE WISE**

17 Incline your ear and hear the words of the wise,
And apply your heart to my knowledge;
18 For *it is* a pleasant thing if you keep them within you;
Let them all be fixed upon your lips,
19 So that your trust may be in the LORD;
I have instructed you today, even you.
20 Have I not written to you excellent things
Of counsels and knowledge,
21 That I may make you know the certainty of the words of truth,
That you may answer words of truth To those who send to you?
22 Do not rob the poor because he *is* poor,
Nor oppress the afflicted at the gate;
23 For the LORD will plead their cause,
And plunder the soul of those who plunder them.
24 Make no friendship with an angry man,
And with a furious man do not go,
25 Lest you learn his ways
And set a snare for your soul.
26 Do not be one of those who shakes hands in a pledge,
One of those who is surety for debts;
27 If you have nothing *with which* to pay,
Why should he take away your bed from under you?
28 Do not remove the ancient landmark
Which your fathers have set.
29 Do you see a man *who* excels in his work?
He will stand before kings;
He will not stand before unknown *men.*

**GODLY PARENTING**

# GRACE KETTERMAN

## (Proverbs 22:6)

**P**arents today are grossly confused by lovely-sounding misinformation about how to raise children. An example is the rose theory. It alleges that children are like rosebuds. If no one bothers or interferes with them, they will naturally unfold into gorgeous roses. Sounds lovely! Trouble is, of course, children are not born into the plant kingdom! Children need strong and loving parents. Following are seven functions of great parenting.

### NURTURING

Beyond the obvious nurturing found in healthy food, parents must feed children spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and socially. They are to teach them to play and to pray, to laugh and to cry, to handle anger correctly, to express sadness, and to recover from loss and grief. They can teach them to think, to listen, to learn, and to communicate. Above all, they must teach them about God.

### PROTECTION

No infant could survive long without the protection of a loving parent. Good parents must find the proper balance of protection without overprotection. In an increasingly violent world, physical protection demands constant vigilance.

But in the eternal sense, parents must protect their children's minds. By example and teaching, parents can and must protect children from agnosticism, prejudice, and hatred. They must counter cultural trends toward superficiality and materialism, and children must be trained in the way to live so as to guard against these things. Even though they may temporarily rebel, they are likely to return to

those good early teachings (Prov. 22:6).

## CREATIVITY

God has given scientists knowledge that can enable most couples who have difficulty conceiving and bearing children to do so. But those who cannot conceive and carry to term might yet become parents by adoption. A friend adopted a year-old foster child. While waiting to receive the child, she learned about the foster mom-what perfume she wore, how she held, fed and changed the baby. This wise adoptive mother made the baby's transition to a new home easier.

Good parents are creative in the ways they live-how they correct their children, spend their money, plan for the future, and teach the truth of God to their families (Deut. 6:4-9).

## EDUCATION

Many parents of toddlers these days seek the preschool that offers the best academic program, but preschoolers need something much more basic than knowledge. They must have the foundation of trust. Trust comes from parents' consistent response to the child's needs. The response may be in tender love or tough, but the certainty that Mom and Dad are there, they care, and they will take charge provides healthy, growing trust.

Preschoolers who learn to respect boundaries and obey rules become far safer teens. Proverbs 29:15, 17 makes it clear that children respond to the rod of correction. I like to think of this rod as that of the ever-present shepherd's rod, used to prod the wayward sheep away from danger. At times, the crook must rescue the lamb that evaded the prods and fell into real danger.

Children can learn to know right from wrong. They must learn the qualities that later become the fruits of the Holy Spirit-love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness,

and self-control (Gal. 5:22, 23). By demonstrating these superb values, parents are preparing their children for eternity.

## MOTIVATION

My father would regularly ask me, “Grace, do you think you’ll ever amount to anything?” His face showed me he knew I would, but he set me thinking. His further teaching was that my life was not an accident, that God had His best plan for my life. My job was to find and follow it.

Motivation to make one’s life count for God is imparted by parents who bless their children with this truth and help them discover God’s best. Sadly, some parents try to motivate success by pronouncing negative predictions. Done in anger, these statements become a curse, causing some children to fail because they come to believe these curses are true. God prompted Paul to write, “Children, obey your parents in all things. . . . Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged” (Col. 3:20, 21). When parents bless their children, it is easier for children to be obedient.

## RELINQUISHMENT

The main goal of godly parenting is to turn out useful, God-fearing adults whose lives will matter. Teaching responsibility by assigning tasks, instructing as to how to do them well, and then expressing approval and appreciation will prepare children to become healthy, independent adults.

However, releasing young people into today’s world is a panicky process. This process can be made more reassuring when parents remember that they are transferring them from the shelter of their parental wings to the perfect care of the heavenly Father.

## A PLACE FOR RETURNING

My mom and dad are gone now, and so is the warm old home. I now visit the nearby cemetery. There I smile and remember. I weep and miss the old love. But I go from there a stronger woman because I know I'm a composite of the nurturing, protection, creativity, education, motivation, and relinquishment they put together. Above all and surrounding all is the certainty they gave me that I am a child of God, relying on Him.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of parenting include:

- Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 11:18, 19
- 1 Samuel 1:19-28
- Psalms 34:11; 127:3-5
- Proverbs 23:15-26
- Matthew 19:14
- 1 Timothy 5:4
- 2 Timothy 1:5

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on parenting at 1 Samuel 1:27, 28. See also the personality profile of Abraham: A Parent's Heart.

**KEY PASSAGE**

# SPARE AND SPOIL

# (22:15)

The Bible emphasizes the importance of parental instruction and correction in raising children. God has given parents the responsibility to train their children in the way they should go (Prov. 22:6). Parents must deal with misbehavior by using corrective discipline. The "rod of correction" has gotten bad press because of the problem of child abuse. Good parents, however, understand the need for the "rod of correction," such as a spanking, but not in anger and *never* abusive. This "rod," used sparingly for only blatant misbehavior (and not childish irresponsibility), is guaranteed to drive foolishness from the heart of a child. "Do not withhold correction from a child," continued Solomon, for it will "deliver his soul from hell" (Prov. 23:13, 14). Parents show great love for their children when they lovingly and consistently discipline them. When parents train their children in the way they should go, the parents have sown seeds of hope that when their children are old they "will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6).

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about child discipline Bringing Out the Best in a Strong-willed Child. See also the personality profile of The Wise Son.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Ready to Explode** *(22:24, 25)* Anger can be a dangerous emotion if it energizes destructive behavior. This proverb encourages people to "make no friendship with an angry man." People may not be able to avoid the anger expressed by others, but they can avoid close ties with "furious" people. Such people are ready to explode, and those around them will either catch the brunt of that fury or become guilty by association. The advice to stay away from people who cannot control their anger should be taken seriously. People must choose carefully those who will be their closest friends, spouses, and

business partners. **Topic: Anger**

## BRINGING OUT THE BEST IN A STRONG-WILLED CHILD

CYNTHIA ULRICH TOBIAS

(Proverbs 22:15)

**M**ichael Tobias, you need to pick those toys up and put them in the basket now!" Even as I heard myself issue the order to my four-year-old, I realized I was in trouble. I sometimes forget that I am dealing with a child who is just as strong-willed as I am, and barking out orders has never been an effective means of communicating with me. But I had already climbed out on my limb, and I was not about to come back.

Noting that Mike was making no move to clean up, I moved a little further out on the limb. "Mike, if I have to pick up those toys, I am going to give them to some other kids." He shrugged. "Give them to some other kids," he said. I could not hide my surprise. Some of those toys were among his favorites. But he had just climbed out on his limb, too. Without another word, I scooped up the toys and took them to the garage. Later in the week, I gave the toys to a ministry at our church. Six months later, he had never once asked for any of those toys. He knew that he had called my bluff, and he was fully prepared to accept the consequences.

Anyone with a strong-willed child already realizes that the discipline strategies that work for other kids simply do not have the

same effect. From the cradle to the grave, strong-willed children will present challenges to their parents unlike other children. Although people have often been led to believe that strong will denotes defiance, rebellion, and disobedience, that steely determination does not have to be a negative trait! When parents know how to bring out the best in a strong-willed child, they find incredible strength and possibilities without sacrificing any bottom-line accountability.

## STRONG-WILLED CHILDREN AND AUTHORITY

Strong-willed children do not have trouble with authority itself-only with how it is communicated. Strong-willed children know they should not get by with bad behavior. When they push, they want their parents to push back. They just don't want the parent to simply issue orders. These children want to be treated with respect and courtesy. Instead of saying, "Get downstairs right now and get in that car!" a parent will get better cooperation with "The car is leaving in two minutes-let's go!" Instead of, "You're not watching television until that homework gets done!" try "Feel free to turn on your favorite show as soon as your homework is done." A friendly, respectful tone does not indicate weakness on a parent's part if the bottom line stays intact.

## STRONG-WILLED CHILDREN AND CONTROL

Strong-willed children do not need to control their parents-they just cannot let parents take all the control away from them. These children realize the bottom line early on when it comes to the issue of control. Children always have the choice to obey or disobey. If parents use words like, "You will . . ." or "This is how it's going to be . . ." strong-willed children may end up exercising the only control they have left-disobedience-even if the consequences are unpleasant or harmful. Parents can and should enforce the rules, but they need to realize that they cannot force a child to obey them. Inspire, motivate, hold the child accountable, and the parent will find that the child's

obedience becomes less and less of a battleground.

## STRONG-WILLED CHILDREN AND RELATIONSHIPS

The quality of the relationship between a child and parent determines the effectiveness of discipline strategies. If parents have cultivated a relationship with their strong-willed child, the child will try much harder to cooperate and keep parents happy. On the other hand, if a child senses that the parental relationship is hostile, he or she thinks, "Why bother? They don't like me anyway!" If a child perceives that parents spend the majority of their time yelling, the relationship seems hostile.

Strong-willed children who respect the relationship with their parents do not want to shame or embarrass them. These children must be convinced of the strength of a parent's love in order to be motivated not to disappoint or jeopardize the relationship. When strong-willed children surrender their strong will to Christ, they may do so not because of the threat of eternal punishment, but because of the promise of the wonderful relationship with Jesus Christ.

## STRONG-WILLED CHILDREN AND SCRIPTURE

Some parents get a little defensive about seeking the cooperation of their children. After all, the Bible mandates that children should obey their parents, right? The often-quoted "Children, obey your parents"(Eph. 6:1) is followed by "Fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath" (Eph. 6:4). Also, Proverbs 22:6 teaches, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." For "in the way he should go," the Amplified Bible has "according to his individual gifts or bents." This means that parents must consider the ways of God and each child's uniqueness. No two children are the same, and no one method of discipline and correction will work for everyone. Understanding our children's unique gifts and bents helps us to be better parents. What should stay consistent is the love and respect we communicate to each unique creation God

entrusts to our care.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of child discipline include:

- Deuteronomy 6:5-9; 8:5
- Proverbs 3:11, 12; 19:18; 22:6, 15; 29:15, 17
- Ephesians 6:1-4

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on child discipline at Proverbs 22:15. See also the personality profile of The Wise Son.

**23** When you sit down to eat with a ruler,
Consider carefully what *is* before you;
2 And put a knife to your throat
If you *are* a man given to appetite.
3 Do not desire his delicacies,
For they *are* deceptive food.
4 Do not overwork to be rich;
Because of your own understanding, cease!
5 Will you set your eyes on that which is not?
For *riches* certainly make themselves wings;
They fly away like an eagle *toward* heaven.
6 Do not eat the bread of a miser,[a]
Nor desire his delicacies;
7 For as he thinks in his heart, so *is* he.
"Eat and drink!" he says to you, But his heart is not with you.
8 The morsel you have eaten, you will vomit up,
And waste your pleasant words.
9 Do not speak in the hearing of a fool,
For he will despise the wisdom of your words.
10 Do not remove the ancient landmark,
Nor enter the fields of the fatherless;
11 For their Redeemer *is* mighty;
He will plead their cause against you.
12 Apply your heart to instruction,
And your ears to words of knowledge.
13 Do not withhold correction from a child,
For *if* you beat him with a rod, he will not die.
14 You shall beat him with a rod,
And deliver his soul from hell.[a]
15 My son, if your heart is wise,
My heart will rejoice-indeed, I myself;
16 Yes, my inmost being will rejoice
When your lips speak right things.
17 Do not let your heart envy sinners,

But *be zealous* for the fear of the LORD all the day;
18 For surely there is a hereafter,
And your hope will not be cut off.
19 Hear, my son, and be wise;
And guide your heart in the way.
20 Do not mix with winebibbers,
*Or* with gluttonous eaters of meat;
21 For the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty,
And drowsiness will clothe *a man* with rags.
22 Listen to your father who begot you,
And do not despise your mother when she is old.
23 Buy the truth, and do not sell *it*,
*Also* wisdom and instruction and understanding.
24 The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice,
And he who begets a wise *child* will delight in him.
25 Let your father and your mother be glad,
And let her who bore you rejoice.
26 My son, give me your heart,
And let your eyes observe my ways.
27 For a harlot *is* a deep pit,
And a seductress *is* a narrow well.
28 She also lies in wait as *for* a victim,
And increases the unfaithful among men.
29 Who has woe?
Who has sorrow?
Who has contentions?
Who has complaints?
Who has wounds without cause?
Who has redness of eyes?
30 Those who linger long at the wine,
Those who go in search of mixed wine.
31 Do not look on the wine when it is red,
When it sparkles in the cup,
*When* it swirls around smoothly;

32 At the last it bites like a serpent,
And stings like a viper.
33 Your eyes will see strange things,
And your heart will utter perverse things.
34 Yes, you will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea,
Or like one who lies at the top of the mast, *saying:*
35 "They have struck me, *but* I was not hurt;
They have beaten me, but I did not feel *it.*
When shall I awake, that I may seek another *drink?* "

**KEY PASSAGE**

# TOXIC WASTE

**(23:19-21)**

Like any loving father, Solomon advises his son to be wise and to stay away from drunkards. All those addicted to alcohol can tell you about the "drowsiness" it causes, but most probably won't admit to the possibility that their drinking could clothe them with rags. Yet alcohol often leads to loss-of reputation, money, marriage, family, or employment.

Alcohol, like most drugs, is a toxic poison to which the body reacts. People first must condition themselves to the taste of alcohol. Then they often indulge in excess and get drunk-a pattern that all too often becomes a way of life. Not only does that lead to often embarrassing situations, it also leads to sickness. People addicted to alcohol can't stop drinking-they feel that they must drink in order to get moving, get through the day, or get to sleep. Alcohol becomes

more important for life than God. God's people must steer clear of such indulgences.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about drug abuse The Trap of Substance Abuse. See also the personality profile of Belshazzar's Substance Abuse.

**KEY PASSAGE**

# EATING TOO MUCH

**(23:2)**

Some people attempt to fill the emptiness in their lives with drugs, alcohol, sex, money, or even hard work. Others use food, and such people find themselves trapped in emotional eating-leading to such problems as obesity and bulimia. The Bible says, "Put a knife to your throat if you are a man given to appetite." The instruction graphically pictures cutting out anything that might lead to addictions in order to feed an appetite of some kind. There is nothing wrong with food. There must be a balance, however, between enjoying what God has provided, and using food to meet emotional needs and thus allowing it to control one's life. The fruit of the Spirit called self-control applies to many areas of life, including eating. God desires to fill any emptiness, helping us to lead balanced, healthy lives.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Eating Disorders: Anorexia and Bulimia Nervosa. See also the personality profile of Eli: Unbridled Appetites.

**24** Do not be envious of evil men,
Nor desire to be with them;
2 For their heart devises violence,
And their lips talk of troublemaking.
3 Through wisdom a house is built,
And by understanding it is established;
4 By knowledge the rooms are filled
With all precious and pleasant riches.
5 A wise man *is* strong,
Yes, a man of knowledge increases strength;
6 For by wise counsel you will wage your own war,
And in a multitude of counselors *there is* safety.
7 Wisdom *is* too lofty for a fool;
He does not open his mouth in the gate.
8 He who plots to do evil
Will be called a schemer.
9 The devising of foolishness *is* sin,
And the scoffer *is* an abomination to men.
10 *If* you faint in the day of adversity,
Your strength *is* small.
11 Deliver *those who* are drawn toward death,
And hold back *those* stumbling to the slaughter.
12 If you say, “Surely we did not know this,”
Does not He who weighs the hearts consider *it?*
He who keeps your soul, does He *not* know *it?*
And will He *not* render to *each* man according to his deeds?
13 My son, eat honey because *it is* good,
And the honeycomb *which is* sweet to your taste;
14 So *shall* the knowledge of wisdom *be* to your soul;
If you have found *it,* there is a prospect,
And your hope will not be cut off.
15 Do not lie in wait, O wicked *man,*
against the dwelling of the righteous;
Do not plunder his resting place;

16 For a righteous *man* may fall seven times
And rise again,
But the wicked shall fall by calamity.
17 Do not rejoice when your enemy falls,
And do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles;
18 Lest the LORD see *it,* and it displease Him,
And He turn away His wrath from him.
19 Do not fret because of evildoers,
Nor be envious of the wicked;
20 For there will be no prospect for the evil *man;*
The lamp of the wicked will be put out.
21 My son, fear the LORD and the king;
Do not associate with those given to change;
22 For their calamity will rise suddenly,
And who knows the ruin those two can bring?

## FURTHER SAYINGS OF THE WISE

23 These *things* also *belong* to the wise:
*It is* not good to show partiality in judgment.
24 He who says to the wicked, "You *are* righteous,"
Him the people will curse;
Nations will abhor him.
25 But those who rebuke *the wicked* will have delight,
And a good blessing will come upon them.
26 He who gives a right answer kisses the lips.
27 Prepare your outside work,
Make it fit for yourself in the field;
And afterward build your house.
28 Do not be a witness against your neighbor without cause,
For would you deceive[a] with your lips?
29 Do not say, "I will do to him just as he has done to me;
I will render to the man according to his work."
30 I went by the field of the lazy *man,*
And by the vineyard of the man devoid of understanding;

31 And there it was, all overgrown with thorns;
Its surface was covered with nettles;
Its stone wall was broken down.
32 When I saw *it,* I considered *it* well;
I looked on *it and* received instruction:
33 A little sleep, a little slumber,
A little folding of the hands to rest;
34 So shall your poverty come *like* a prowler,
And your need like an armed man.

**KEY PASSAGE**

# TRY AGAIN

**(24:16)**

Failure is never final until a person quits trying. As the person continues to try, failure is really no more than a setback, a possibility to learn from mistakes and try again. This verse contrasts the righteous person and the wicked person. The righteous person may fail time and time again, but they continue to "rise again," to get up and keep trying. When the wicked person fails, however, they are led into a downward spiral that causes "calamity." There is no recovery, no learning, no more trying.

Failure is a part of the human experience. It can be painful and embarrassing, but it can also be a great teacher. God's definition of success does not preclude failure, but it includes a willingness to refuse to quit, to learn from one's mistakes, and to try again. Failure can be our greatest teacher.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about God's View Of Failure. See also the personality profile of Peter: Failure is not Forever.

## FURTHER WISE SAYINGS OF SOLOMON

**25** These also *are* proverbs of Solomon which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied:

2 *It is* the glory of God to conceal a matter,
But the glory of kings *is* to search out a matter.
3 *As* the heavens for height and the earth for depth,
So the heart of kings *is* unsearchable.
4 Take away the dross from silver,
And it will go to the silversmith *for* jewelry.
5 Take away the wicked from before the king,
And his throne will be established in righteousness.
6 Do not exalt yourself in the presence of the king,
And do not stand in the place of the great;
7 For *it is* better that he say to you, “Come up here,”
Than that you should be put lower in the presence of the prince,
Whom your eyes have seen.
8 Do not go hastily to court;
For what will you do in the end,
When your neighbor has put you to shame?
9 Debate your case with your neighbor,
And do not disclose the secret to another;
10 Lest he who hears *it* expose your shame,
And your reputation be ruined.
11 A word fitly spoken *is like* apples of gold
In settings of silver.

> A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver.
> PROVERBS 25:11

12 *Like* an earring of gold and an ornament of fine gold
*Is* a wise rebuker to an obedient ear.
13 Like the cold of snow in time of harvest

*Is* a faithful messenger to those who send him,
For he refreshes the soul of his masters.
14 Whoever falsely boasts of giving
*Is like* clouds and wind without rain.
15 By long forbearance a ruler is persuaded,
And a gentle tongue breaks a bone.
16 Have you found honey?
Eat only as much as you need,
Lest you be filled with it and vomit.
17 Seldom set foot in your neighbor's house,
Lest he become weary of you and hate you.
18 A man who bears false witness against his neighbor
*Is like* a club, a sword, and a sharp arrow.
19 Confidence in an unfaithful *man* in time of trouble
*Is like* a bad tooth and a foot out of joint.
20 *Like* one who takes away a garment in cold weather,
*And like* vinegar on soda,
*Is* one who sings songs to a heavy heart.
21 If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat;
And if he is thirsty, give him water to drink;
22 For *so* you will heap coals of fire on his head,
And the LORD will reward you.
23 The north wind brings forth rain,
And a backbiting tongue an angry countenance.
24 *It is* better to dwell in a corner of a housetop,
Than in a house shared with a contentious woman.
25 *As* cold water to a weary soul,
So *is* good news from a far country.
26 A righteous *man* who falters before the wicked
*Is like* a murky spring and a polluted well.
27 *It is* not good to eat much honey;
So to seek one's own glory *is not* glory.
28 Whoever *has* no rule over his own spirit
*Is like* a city broken down, without walls.

**26** As snow in summer and rain in harvest,
So honor is not fitting for a fool.

2 Like a flitting sparrow, like a flying swallow,
So a curse without cause shall not alight.

3 A whip for the horse,
A bridle for the donkey,
And a rod for the fool's back.

4 Do not answer a fool according to his folly,
Lest you also be like him.

5 Answer a fool according to his folly,
Lest he be wise in his own eyes.

6 He who sends a message by the hand of a fool
Cuts off *his own* feet *and* drinks violence.

7 *Like* the legs of the lame that hang limp
*Is* a proverb in the mouth of fools.

8 Like one who binds a stone in a sling
*Is* he who gives honor to a fool.

9 *Like* a thorn *that* goes into the hand of a drunkard
*Is* a proverb in the mouth of fools.

10 The great *God* who formed everything
Gives the fool *his* hire and the transgressor *his* wages.[a]

11 As a dog returns to his own vomit,
*So* a fool repeats his folly.

12 Do you see a man wise in his own eyes?
*There is* more hope for a fool than for him.

13 The lazy *man* says, "*There is* a lion in the road!
A fierce lion *is* in the streets!"

14 *As* a door turns on its hinges,
So *does* the lazy *man* on his bed.

15 The lazy *man* buries his hand in the bowl;[a]
It wearies him to bring it back to his mouth.

16 The lazy *man is* wiser in his own eyes
Than seven men who can answer sensibly.

17 He who passes by *and* meddles in a quarrel not his own

*Is like* one who takes a dog by the ears.
18 Like a madman who throws firebrands, arrows, and death,
19 *Is* the man *who* deceives his neighbor,
And says, “I was only joking!”
20 Where *there is* no wood, the fire goes out;
And where *there is* no talebearer, strife ceases.
21 *As* charcoal *is* to burning coals, and wood to fire,
So *is* a contentious man to kindle strife.
22 The words of a talebearer *are* like tasty trifles,
And they go down into the inmost body.
23 Fervent lips with a wicked heart
*Are like* earthenware covered with silver dross.
24 He who hates, disguises *it* with his lips,
And lays up deceit within himself;
25 When he speaks kindly, do not believe him,
For *there are* seven abominations in his heart;
26 *Though his* hatred is covered by deceit,
His wickedness will be revealed before the assembly.
27 Whoever digs a pit will fall into it,
And he who rolls a stone will have it roll back on him.
28 A lying tongue hates *those who are* crushed by it,
And a flattering mouth works ruin.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Burn It Out** *(26:20-26)* Repeating Proverbs 18:8, gossip is once again described as “tasty.” Talebearers love to pass along information, but such people are no more than “fervent lips with a wicked heart” (26:23). Gossips cannot be trusted: When they speak kindly, they should not be believed (26:25). A gossip who willingly

passes along information *to* us will also be glad to pass along information *about* us. Believers ought to avoid gossips. Listening to a gossip adds fuel to the fire; to refuse to listen will force the fire to burn itself out. **Topic: Gossip**

## THE POWER OF GOSSIP

DIANNA BOOHER

(Proverbs 26:20-26)

**H**ave you heard about what happened to her?" "If they didn't want people to know, they shouldn't have done it." "I'm just concerned about her marriage. I wanted others to know what I heard was happening so we could all pray about it."

Gossip embroils at least three people in a harmful activity: the speaker, the listener, and the person who is the topic of conversation. Gossip sneaks into conversations under the guise of innocent information, truthful facts, or even as a misguided matter of prayer. Gossip is not an innocent pastime. It is sin.

### THE MATTER OF GOSSIP

Gossip, as opposed to innocent conversation, typically involves rumors, opinions, or "inside" information. The matter of gossip may even be truthful facts. However, the subject of the facts must be examined. Is it personal and private? Would the subject of the gossip consider the information intimate? Oftentimes, the very allure of

gossip is its sensational subject matter that exploits another person's personal issues.

## THE MANNER OF GOSSIP

Listeners can recognize the warning signs that a conversation is about to go downhill. Usually, gossip is shared in lowered tones among a select few people. In fact, Proverbs refers to a gossip as a "whisperer"(Prov. 16:28). Often, gossips feel inclined to add a caveat to their conversation with a demand for secrecy. "Don't tell anyone I said this but . . ." or a similar introduction should be a signal that the information should not be shared. Listening to the information will encourage the gossip to keep talking-to the next person and the next and the next.

## THE MOTIVE OF GOSSIP

There are several common reasons why people succumb to the urge either to gossip or listen to gossip. Gossips often feel important that they have the inside story; it is their way of getting much-desired attention. Listeners may listen to the scoop for the same reason. They feel flattered to be included as part of the "in-the-know" group. Some people enjoy contention, and gossip becomes a means of fanning the flame. Some try to make up for their own sense of inadequacy by cutting down others. Discrediting another person offers a quick, although not permanent, fix for envious feelings. Boredom can also tempt the gossip into destructive conversation.

## LISTENING TO GOSSIP

A nod or even silence is often taken as agreement to the rumor at hand. It's easy to get one's name passed along as a conspirator in the gossip: "Susan and I were talking about that yesterday. Frankly, we think . . ." Merely listening can embroil a person in the harmful effects of gossip. Another danger in listening to gossip is that it takes

time away from important activities like family or a job. Gossip also becomes dangerous when we, as the listeners, become the targets to be influenced. One may be tempted to believe something untrue, thereby coloring one's judgment without all the facts.

## RESPONDING TO GOSSIP

"I don't believe what you've heard is true.""I don't know about you, but I really don't pay much attention to the grapevine-things get so twisted." "Have you checked that out? Things like that have a way of being misinterpreted." Responses like these can discourage a gossip from continuing. Body language can also indicate one's disinterest.

When people discover themselves to be the object of gossip, they probably will want to set the record straight. The first inclination may be revenge. Instead, if the hurt is minor, they should ignore what they can. However, if personal integrity, credibility, job, or Christian witness may be in jeopardy, they must take action by going to the source of the gossip and setting the record straight with the appropriate truthful information. It should be clear to the gossips that they should discontinue saying anything more about the situation in light of the true facts. Many gossips will deny that they said what was heard, but most of them will stop once they know they have been identified as the source.

If Christians think their reputation may be damaged with others (a boss, spouse, neighbor) because of the rumor, they also may want to talk to those people to set the record straight. Without tattling on the gossip, they can explain the full situation and circumstances. Then they can take comfort in God's promise that He will take care of the situation in the big picture (Rom. 12:19 ). Graciousness is the best response to gossip.

## QUITTING THE HABIT

A gossip must enlist the help of others in order to break the habit.

Letting family and close friends know that one sincerely wants to stop gossiping helps stop gossip before it starts. Their gentle reminders (either verbally or with a subtle cue) will help curb the conversation when it gets dangerously close to gossip. Over time, they can learn to change the subject and go on to something else. Philippians 4:8 gives foolproof advice for getting over the habit of gossip: "Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy-meditate on these things."

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of gossip include:

- Leviticus 19:16
- Proverbs 11:9, 13; 16:28
- Ecclesiastes 7:21
- 2 Corinthians 12:20
- 1 Timothy 5:13
- 1 Peter 4:15

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on gossip at James 3:5-18. See also the personality profile of Diotrephes: Talking Too Much.

**27** Do not boast about tomorrow,
For you do not know what a day may bring forth.
2 Let another man praise you, and not your own mouth;
A stranger, and not your own lips.
3 A stone *is* heavy and sand *is* weighty,
But a fool's wrath *is* heavier than both of them.
4 Wrath *is* cruel and anger a torrent,
But who *is* able to stand before jealousy?
5 Open rebuke *is* better
Than love carefully concealed.
6 Faithful *are* the wounds of a friend,
But the kisses of an enemy *are* deceitful.
7 A satisfied soul loathes the honeycomb,
But to a hungry soul every bitter thing *is* sweet.
8 Like a bird that wanders from its nest
*Is* a man who wanders from his place.
9 Ointment and perfume delight the heart,
And the sweetness of a man's friend *gives delight* by hearty counsel.
10 Do not forsake your own friend or your father's friend,
Nor go to your brother's house in the day of your calamity;
Better *is* a neighbor nearby than a brother far away.
11 My son, be wise, and make my heart glad,
That I may answer him who reproaches me.
12 A prudent *man* foresees evil *and* hides himself;
The simple pass on *and* are punished.
13 Take the garment of him who is surety for a stranger,
And hold it in pledge *when* he is surety for a seductress.
14 He who blesses his friend with a loud voice, rising early in the morning,
It will be counted a curse to him.
15 A continual dripping on a very rainy day
And a contentious woman are alike;
16 Whoever restrains her restrains the wind,
And grasps oil with his right hand.
17 *As* iron sharpens iron,

So a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.
18 Whoever keeps the fig tree will eat its fruit;
So he who waits on his master will be honored.
19 As in water face *reflects* face,
So a man's heart *reveals* the man.
20 Hell[a] and Destruction[b] are never full;
So the eyes of man are never satisfied.
21 The refining pot *is* for silver and the furnace for gold,
And a man *is valued* by what others say of him.
22 Though you grind a fool in a mortar with a pestle along with crushed grain,
*Yet* his foolishness will not depart from him.
23 Be diligent to know the state of your flocks,
*And* attend to your herds;
24 For riches *are* not forever,
Nor does a crown *endure* to all generations.
25 *When* the hay is removed, and the tender grass shows itself,
And the herbs of the mountains are gathered in,
26 The lambs *will provide* your clothing,
And the goats the price of a field;
27 *You shall have* enough goats' milk for your food,
For the food of your household,
And the nourishment of your maidservants.

## SOUL NOTE

**Sharpener** *(27:17)* Believers' interaction with other believers is one of the most important aspects of Christian friendship and fellowship. Because they love us, Christian friends can hold us accountable, help us see our blind spots, and show us better ways to live. "As iron sharpens iron," one Christian can sharpen the other Christian's

character by holding them accountable for words and actions. When we allow Christian friends to sharpen us, we can learn and grow in areas that we might never have noticed on our own. God can work through our believing friends to teach us and guide us. **Topic: Accountability**

**28** The wicked flee when no one pursues,
But the righteous are bold as a lion.

2 Because of the transgression of a land, many *are* its princes;
But by a man of understanding *and* knowledge
Right will be prolonged.
3 A poor man who oppresses the poor
*Is like* a driving rain which leaves no food.
4 Those who forsake the law praise the wicked,
But such as keep the law contend with them.
5 Evil men do not understand justice,
But those who seek the LORD understand all.
6 Better *is* the poor who walks in his integrity
Than one perverse *in his* ways, though he *be* rich.
7 Whoever keeps the law *is* a discerning son,
But a companion of gluttons shames his father.
8 One who increases his possessions by usury and extortion
Gathers it for him who will pity the poor.
9 One who turns away his ear from hearing the law,
Even his prayer *is* an abomination.
10 Whoever causes the upright to go astray in an evil way,
He himself will fall into his own pit;
But the blameless will inherit good.
11 The rich man *is* wise in his own eyes,
But the poor who has understanding searches him out.
12 When the righteous rejoice, *there is* great glory;
But when the wicked arise, men hide themselves.
13 He who covers his sins will not prosper,
But whoever confesses and forsakes *them* will have mercy.
14 Happy *is* the man who is always reverent,
But he who hardens his heart will fall into calamity.
15 *Like* a roaring lion and a charging bear
*Is* a wicked ruler over poor people.
16 A ruler who lacks understanding *is* a great oppressor,
*But* he who hates covetousness will prolong *his* days.

17 A man burdened with bloodshed will flee into a pit;
Let no one help him.
18 Whoever walks blamelessly will be saved,
But *he who is* perverse *in his* ways will suddenly fall.
19 He who tills his land will have plenty of bread,
But he who follows frivolity will have poverty enough!
20 A faithful man will abound with blessings,
But he who hastens to be rich will not go unpunished.
21 To show partiality *is* not good,
Because for a piece of bread a man will transgress.
22 A man with an evil eye hastens after riches,
And does not consider that poverty will come upon him.
23 He who rebukes a man will find more favor afterward
Than he who flatters with the tongue.
24 Whoever robs his father or his mother,
And says, "*It is* no transgression,"
The same *is* companion to a destroyer.
25 He who is of a proud heart stirs up strife,
But he who trusts in the LORD will be prospered.
26 He who trusts in his own heart is a fool,
But whoever walks wisely will be delivered.
27 He who gives to the poor will not lack,
But he who hides his eyes will have many curses.
28 When the wicked arise, men hide themselves;
But when they perish, the righteous increase.

**29** He who is often rebuked, *and* hardens *his* neck,
Will suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.

2 When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice;
But when a wicked *man* rules, the people groan.
3 Whoever loves wisdom makes his father rejoice,
But a companion of harlots wastes *his* wealth.
4 The king establishes the land by justice,
But he who receives bribes overthrows it.
5 A man who flatters his neighbor
Spreads a net for his feet.
6 By transgression an evil man is snared,
But the righteous sings and rejoices.
7 The righteous considers the cause of the poor,
*But* the wicked does not understand *such* knowledge.
8 Scoffers set a city aflame,
But wise *men* turn away wrath.
9 *If* a wise man contends with a foolish man,
Whether *the fool* rages or laughs, *there is* no peace.
10 The bloodthirsty hate the blameless,
But the upright seek his well-being.[a]
11 A fool vents all his feelings,[a]
But a wise *man* holds them back.
12 If a ruler pays attention to lies,
All his servants *become* wicked.
13 The poor *man* and the oppressor have this in common:
The LORD gives light to the eyes of both.
14 The king who judges the poor with truth,
His throne will be established forever.
15 The rod and rebuke give wisdom,
But a child left *to himself* brings shame to his mother.
16 When the wicked are multiplied, transgression increases;
But the righteous will see their fall.
17 Correct your son, and he will give you rest;
Yes, he will give delight to your soul.

18 Where *there is* no revelation,[a] the people cast off restraint;
But happy *is* he who keeps the law.
19 A servant will not be corrected by mere words;
For though he understands, he will not respond.
20 Do you see a man hasty in his words?
*There is* more hope for a fool than for him.
21 He who pampers his servant from childhood
Will have him as a son in the end.
22 An angry man stirs up strife,
And a furious man abounds in transgression.
23 A man's pride will bring him low,
But the humble in spirit will retain honor.
24 Whoever is a partner with a thief hates his own life;
He swears to tell the truth,[a] but reveals nothing.
25 The fear of man brings a snare,
But whoever trusts in the LORD shall be safe.
26 Many seek the ruler's favor,
But justice for man *comes* from the LORD.
27 An unjust man *is* an abomination to the righteous,
And *he who is* upright in the way *is* an abomination to the wicked.

**SOUL NOTE**

**God-given Responsibility** *(29:15, 17)* Discipline teaches wisdom. Children who are lovingly disciplined learn right from wrong. Parents have the God-given responsibility to raise their children with correction and discipline so that those children grow into responsible adults. Proper, loving, and consistent discipline builds character and stability in children. Parents must take their responsibility seriously, preparing their children to become responsible adults who understand

the love and discipline of God. **Topic: Child Discipline**

## THE WISDOM OF AGUR

**30** The words of Agur the son of Jakeh, *his* utterance.
This man declared to Ithiel-to Ithiel and Ucal:

2 Surely I *am* more stupid than *any* man,
And do not have the understanding of a man.
3 I neither learned wisdom
Nor have knowledge of the Holy One.
4 Who has ascended into heaven, or descended?
Who has gathered the wind in His fists?
Who has bound the waters in a garment?
Who has established all the ends of the earth?
What *is* His name, and what *is* His Son's name,
If you know?
5 Every word of God *is* pure;
He *is* a shield to those who put their trust in Him.

> Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him.
> PROVERBS 30:5

6 Do not add to His words,
Lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar.
7 Two *things*
I request of You (Deprive me not before I die):
8 Remove falsehood and lies far from me;
Give me neither poverty nor riches-
Feed me with the food allotted to me;
9 Lest I be full and deny *You*,
And say, "Who *is* the LORD?"
Or lest I be poor and steal,
And profane the name of my God.
10 Do not malign a servant to his master,
Lest he curse you, and you be found guilty.

11 *There is* a generation *that* curses its father,
And does not bless its mother.
12 *There is* a generation *that is* pure in its own eyes, *Yet* is not washed from its filthiness.
13 *There is* a generation-oh, how lofty are their eyes!
And their eyelids are lifted up.
14 *There is* a generation whose teeth *are like* swords,
And whose fangs *are like* knives,
To devour the poor from off the earth,
And the needy from *among* men.
15 The leech has two daughters-Give *and* Give!
There are three *things that* are never satisfied,
Four never say, "Enough!":
16 The grave,[a]
The barren womb,
The earth *that* is not satisfied with water-
And the fire never says, "Enough!"
17 The eye *that* mocks *his* father,
And scorns obedience to *his* mother,
The ravens of the valley will pick it out,
And the young eagles will eat it.
18 There are three *things which* are too wonderful for me,
Yes, four *which* I do not understand:
19 The way of an eagle in the air,
The way of a serpent on a rock,
The way of a ship in the midst of the sea,
And the way of a man with a virgin.
20 This *is* the way of an adulterous woman:
She eats and wipes her mouth,
And says, "I have done no wickedness."
21 For three *things* the earth is perturbed,
Yes, for four it cannot bear up:
22 For a servant when he reigns,
A fool when he is filled with food,

23 A hateful *woman* when she is married,
And a maidservant who succeeds her mistress.
24 There are four *things which* are little on the earth,
But they *are* exceedingly wise:
25 The ants *are* a people not strong,
Yet they prepare their food in the summer;
26 The rock badgers[a] are a feeble folk,
Yet they make their homes in the crags;
27 The locusts have no king,
Yet they all advance in ranks;
28 The spider[a] skillfully grasps with its hands,
And it is in kings' palaces.
29 There are three *things which* are majestic in pace,
Yes, four *which* are stately in walk:
30 A lion, *which is* mighty among beasts
And does not turn away from any;
31 A greyhound,[a]
A male goat also,
And a king *whose* troops *are* with him.[b]
32 If you have been foolish in exalting yourself,
Or if you have devised evil, *put your* hand on *your* mouth.
33 For *as* the churning of milk produces butter,
And wringing the nose produces blood,
So the forcing of wrath produces strife.

## THE WORDS OF KING LEMUEL'S MOTHER

**31** The words of King Lemuel, the utterance which his mother taught him:

2 What, my son?
And what, son of my womb?
And what, son of my vows?
3 Do not give your strength to women,
Nor your ways to that which destroys kings.
4 *It is* not for kings, O Lemuel,
*It is* not for kings to drink wine,
Nor for princes intoxicating drink;
5 Lest they drink and forget the law,
And pervert the justice of all the afflicted.
6 Give strong drink to him who is perishing,
And wine to those who are bitter of heart.
7 Let him drink and forget his poverty,
And remember his misery no more.
8 Open your mouth for the speechless,
In the cause of all *who are* appointed to die.[a]
9 Open your mouth, judge righteously,
And plead the cause of the poor and needy.

## THE VIRTUOUS WIFE

10 Who[a] can find a virtuous[b] wife?
For her worth *is* far above rubies.
11 The heart of her husband safely trusts her;
So he will have no lack of gain.
12 She does him good and not evil
All the days of her life.
13 She seeks wool and flax,
And willingly works with her hands.
14 She is like the merchant ships,
She brings her food from afar.

15 She also rises while it is yet night,
And provides food for her household,
And a portion for her maidservants.
16 She considers a field and buys it;
From her profits she plants a vineyard.
17 She girds herself with strength,
And strengthens her arms.
18 She perceives that her merchandise *is* good,
And her lamp does not go out by night.
19 She stretches out her hands to the distaff,
And her hand holds the spindle.
20 She extends her hand to the poor,
Yes, she reaches out her hands to the needy.
21 She is not afraid of snow for her household,
For all her household *is* clothed with scarlet.
22 She makes tapestry for herself;
Her clothing *is* fine linen and purple.
23 Her husband is known in the gates,
When he sits among the elders of the land.
24 She makes linen garments and sells *them*,
And supplies sashes for the merchants.
25 Strength and honor *are* her clothing;
She shall rejoice in time to come.
26 She opens her mouth with wisdom,
And on her tongue *is* the law of kindness.
27 She watches over the ways of her household,
And does not eat the bread of idleness.
28 Her children rise up and call her blessed;
Her husband *also,* and he praises her:
29 "Many daughters have done well,
But you excel them all."
30 Charm *is* deceitful and beauty *is* passing,
But a woman *who* fears the LORD, she shall be praised.
31 Give her of the fruit of her hands,

And let her own works praise her in the gates.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# THE VIRTUOUS WOMAN

**(PROVERBS 31:10-31)**

For years, women have read this portrait of the virtuous woman and sighed at the seeming impossibility of doing all that she does. If this woman represents perfection, then it's an unattainable perfection, as impossible as the touched-up perfection of the model on the magazine cover. Many women feel that they simply can never meet the ideal.

Throughout the Book of Proverbs, wisdom has been portrayed as a woman, with the pronoun "she." In this final chapter, wisdom is once again embodied-this time as a virtuous wife. These verses form an acrostic poem, meaning that each verse begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The description of this woman, then, includes many characteristics-all noble, but not all necessary in the same woman in order for her to be considered wise, virtuous, or ideal. However, her life should challenge our steps daily. This woman is a good and devoted wife, a hard worker, a manager of wealth and of servants, a discerning consumer, and a caring mother. She reaches out to help the poor. She runs her own business. She is praised by her family.

It would be incorrect to hold up these verses as the ideal which any woman who wants to be virtuous must achieve. Instead, the picture is meant to inspire women to be faithful wives and mothers, to run their

households well, to have strength of character, and to use their gifts for God's glory. This woman is virtuous because her life is ordered by her reverence for God. All Christian women can aspire to that.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about women's issues Women Of God. See also the key passage note at Titus 2:3-5.

## WOMEN OF GOD

# SANDRA D. WILSON

# (Proverbs 31)

**S**he's a mystery to most. She's mind-boggling to many. She's the virtuous woman described in Proverbs 31:10-31. The word translated "virtuous" is the same Hebrew word translated "able" in Exodus 18:21. This word describes someone who is capable, strong, and valiant. The end of the Proverbs passage contains the secret to this remarkable woman's success: She feared the Lord (Prov. 31:30). Her reverential awe of God motivated and guided who she was and what she did. Consequently, this beloved wife and mother represents an ideal for women of God through the ages. But she is not the only virtuous example in Scripture. There are many inspiring women who should be admired.

### BIBLICAL WOMEN OF GOD

Several virtuous Old Testament women can be noted. There is Moses' sister, Miriam, a patriot and prophetess who proclaimed in

song God's goodness to Israel (Ex. 15:20, 21). In Exodus 35:20-29, unnamed women worshiped God and ministered to the believing assembly with their generosity and their creative skills. Ruth learned to trust God through her relationship with a godly mother-in-law (Ruth 1:16, 17). Hannah trusted God for a child, and kept her promise to God when the boy was born (1 Sam. 1:8-28). Esther bravely did her part to save her people (Esth. 4:13-17).

In the New Testament, Mary the mother of Jesus responded with astonishing faith to the angel's declaration (Luke 1:38).The prophetess Anna spoke of Israel's Messiah to all who came to the temple (Luke 2:36-38).

Jesus Himself repeatedly shattered cultural and ceremonial expectations by His interactions with women. For example, in John 4:7-42, Jesus revealed His identity to an unnamed woman, many times married, who subsequently became the first Samaritan evangelist. Both Mary and Martha were women of God. In settling the conflict between them, Jesus must have shocked bystanders by explicitly affirming Mary's better choice to be a disciple (Luke 10:38-42).

In the early church, women of God ministered wherever they were. Lydia, a successful businesswoman, became the first Christian convert in Europe (Acts 16:14). Priscilla and her husband, Aquila, ministered to Paul and many other believers (Acts 18:2, 24-28; Rom. 16:3-5).

## BEING WOMEN OF GOD

In a culture where values and expectations appear to shift constantly, women of God need to anchor their lives in timeless truths of Scripture and the examples of the godly women (and men) of the Bible. The following are some guidelines to successful living:

*Make Knowing God the Top Priority*

This is not easy when a woman is busy with family and/or career as well as church and community service. Nevertheless, cultivating ever-increasing intimacy with God needs to be a lifelong priority. To really know God, as opposed to merely knowing about God, Christians must intentionally create a spiritual environment. This means God is given one's undivided attention in ways that foster an intimate and interactive relationship. It requires times of solitude and stillness to develop inner quietness in order to hear God speak His thoughts from His Word and by His Spirit.*Commit to Knowing and Living in Truth* This means sifting through one's belief systems to retain and strengthen biblically based thinking and to discard unbiblical misbeliefs. The idea of committing to truth often seems most frightening to those who were most wounded in the past by abuse and neglect. A Christian counselor will help untangle childhood perceptions from reality. A Christ-centered support group can provide encouragement and accountability for the journey.

*Seek Healthy Christian Relationships*

An unbiblical overdependence on human relationships can lead to an "approval-addiction" that has the power to elevate the praise of people above the approval of God. Sometimes women draw a sense of personal worth from the quality of their relationships. If so, they are apt to believe they can "fix" every relationship with every person if they try hard enough. Romans 12:18 outlines the limits of a Christian's responsibility to live in harmony with others.

*Find or Become a Godly Mentor*

Titus 2:3-5 refers to a healthy model of mentoring between older and younger women. A mentor models Christ-centered living and encourages others during their struggles. For the mentor and the one being mentored, the experience is both edifying and humbling. Learning and blessing flow in both directions when people experience a purposeful and honest relationship with one another. Connection between godly older and younger women is sorely needed in

churches today to offset the cultural assault upon biblical values.

*Maintain Realistic Expectations*

Reality-based expectations benefit women in their approach to themselves, to others, and to God. With regard to themselves, it means that they seek increasing maturity in Christlikeness rather than perfection. This is not an apologetic for sloppy or sinful living; it is an acceptance of reality and of realistic expectations. Women do well to maintain an attitude of humility, never assuming that they have completely mastered any lesson. They must stay teachable by walking very close to the Teacher.

Having realistic expectations for others means that women can freely cultivate friendships and pour themselves into their families while remembering that even the best of people cannot meet their deepest longings. Others will disappoint them. Only God can do all things perfectly.

## WOMEN OF GOD IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Women of God were the last to leave the cross of Christ and the first to arrive at the tomb. Since that time, rules and roles for women have changed dramatically. Yet as the twenty-first century unfolds, one constant remains amid personal transitions and cultural upheavals: Like their biblical ancestors, women of God still worship, serve, and proclaim His goodness with their words and with their deeds.

## FURTHER MEDITATION:

Other passages to study about the issue of women's issues include:

- Genesis 2:18-25
- Proverbs 9:1-18; 11:16; 14:1
- 1 Peter 3:1-6

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on women's issues at Titus 2:3-5. See also the personality profile of The Virtuous Woman.

**SOUL NOTE**

**The Ideal Woman** *(31:10-31)* Who was this "virtuous wife," and why all these characteristics of perfection? This picture of the ideal is meant to be a guideline, not a list of demands. While many of the characteristics focus on this woman's household duties and responsibilities, she also works outside the home and has servants and wealth to manage. Obviously, not every woman has everything in common with this one-individual lives are different. But women can learn from this woman's wise use of her blessings and abilities, her love for and helpfulness to her husband, and her positive guidance and example to her children. **Topic: Women's Issues**

# Ecclesiastes



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# Ecclesiastes

A 16-ounce container has eight ounces of water in it. “The glass is half empty!” the pessimist grumbles. “I bet the water is tainted!” the cynic charges. “Water?” the skeptic scoffs. “I think the whole thing’s an illusion!”

Ecclesiastes is the ideal book for the rampant pessimism, cynicism, and skepticism of our times. It wrestles with the deepest struggles of the human soul in its attempt to find meaning and purpose in life. The author-widely thought to be Solomon-provides us with an honest view of human life in a fallen world.

Some view the author as a disillusioned pessimist who has lapsed into despair. Others see him as an astute realist who recognizes the limitations of human wisdom. This much is clear: The author demonstrates that a mere earthly, human perspective on life’s greatest issues leaves us bewildered and unsatisfied.

This book reminds us that short-term pleasure often leads to long-term despair. Attempts to acquire more money, indulge in pleasure, and become famous leave the soul empty. Escape, denial, and withdrawal provide no more relief than indulgence, indifference, or excess. Learning can result in cynicism (1:7, 8), pleasure leads to disappointment (2:1, 2); wealth often brings trouble (5:12), and human wisdom may very well end in despair (11:1-8).

In the end, the weary writer turns his perspective toward God. His hopeful conclusion? It’s through a relationship with the Creator that a person is able to find ultimate meaning and purpose. If your soul is marred by pessimism, cynicism, or skepticism, you’ve come to the right place!

**SOUL CONCERNS IN**

## ECCLESIASTES

DRUG ABUSE (2:1-3)

RELATIONSHIPS (4:9)

## THE VANITY OF LIFE

**1** The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.

2 “Vanity[a] of vanities,” says the Preacher;
“Vanity of vanities, all *is* vanity.”
3 What profit has a man from all his labor
In which he toils under the sun?
4 *One* generation passes away, and
*another* generation comes;
But the earth abides forever.
5 The sun also rises, and the sun goes
down,
And hastens to the place where it arose.
6 The wind goes toward the south,
And turns around to the north;
The wind whirls about continually,
And comes again on its circuit.
7 All the rivers run into the sea,
Yet the sea *is* not full;
To the place from which the rivers come,
There they return again.
8 All things *are* full of labor;
Man cannot express *it*.
The eye is not satisfied with seeing,
Nor the ear filled with hearing.
9 That which has been *is* what will be,
That which *is* done is what will be
done,
And *there is* nothing new under the sun.
10 Is there anything of which it may be
said,
“See, this *is* new”?
It has already been in ancient times
before us.

11 *There is* no remembrance of former
*things,*
Nor will there be any remembrance of
*things* that are to come
By *those* who will come after.

**THE GRIEF OF WISDOM**

12 I, the Preacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem. 13 And I set my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all that is done under heaven; this burdensome task God has given to the sons of man, by which they may be exercised. 14 I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and indeed, all *is* vanity and grasping for the wind.

15 *What is* crooked cannot be made
straight,
And what is lacking cannot be numbered.

16 I communed with my heart, saying, "Look, I have attained greatness, and have gained more wisdom than all who were before me in Jerusalem. My heart has understood great wisdom and knowledge." 17 And I set my heart to know wisdom and to know madness and folly. I perceived that this also is grasping for the wind.

18 For in much wisdom *is* much grief,
And he who increases knowledge
increases sorrow.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Life's Secret** *(1:1, 2)* "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." The words of Solomon describe the attitude of one who "has it all," but realizes that there is still a feeling of emptiness. The word "vanity" means "vapor" and pictures how quickly life passes. Like Solomon, many feel that their lives are meaningless, too. But in the final chapter, Solomon

gives the solution to humanity's dilemma: "Fear God and keep His commandments" (12:13). Because life is fleeting, God's people should accept every day as a gift from God, reverencing Him and living to please Him. That is the secret to a successful life. **Topic: Emotional Life**

## SOUL NOTE

**Looking for Meaning** *(1:16-18)* Wisdom is much to be desired, yet it can lead to great frustration. "In much wisdom is much grief, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow." The more people know, the more they feel responsible for that knowledge, and the more they realize the extent of their ignorance. Having great wisdom did not guarantee that Solomon would live wisely. Wisdom and knowledge for their own sakes do not give meaning to life; in fact, the wisest and most brilliant may face the most aching realization that something is missing. Without God, wisdom and knowledge are ultimately meaningless. **Topic: Wisdom**

## THE VANITY OF PLEASURE

**2** I said in my heart, “Come now, I will test you with mirth; therefore enjoy
pleasure”; but surely, this also *was* vanity. 2 I said of laughter-“Madness!”;
and of mirth, “What does it accomplish?” 3 I searched in my heart *how* to
gratify my flesh with wine, while guiding my heart with wisdom, and how to
lay hold on folly, till I might see what *was* good for the sons of men to do
under heaven all the days of their lives.

4 I made my works great, I built myself houses, and planted myself
vineyards. 5 I made myself gardens and orchards, and I planted all *kinds* of
fruit trees in them. 6 I made myself water pools from which to water the
growing trees of the grove. 7 I acquired male and female servants, and had
servants born in my house. Yes, I had greater possessions of herds and flocks
than all who were in Jerusalem before me. 8 I also gathered for myself silver
and gold and the special treasures of kings and of the provinces. I acquired
male and female singers, the delights of the sons of men, *and* musical
instruments[a] of all kinds.

9 So I became great and excelled more than all who were before me in
Jerusalem. Also my wisdom remained with me.

10 Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep
from them.
I did not withhold my heart from any
pleasure,
For my heart rejoiced in all my labor;
And this was my reward from all my
labor.
11 Then I looked on all the works that my
hands had done
And on the labor in which I had toiled;
And indeed all *was* vanity and grasping
for the wind.
*There was* no profit under the sun.

**THE END OF THE WISE AND THE FOOL**

12 Then I turned myself to consider
wisdom and madness and folly;
For what *can* the man *do* who succeeds
the king?-
*Only* what he has already done.
13 Then I saw that wisdom excels folly
As light excels darkness.
14 The wise man's eyes *are* in his head,
But the fool walks in darkness.
Yet I myself perceived
That the same event happens to them
all.
15 So I said in my heart,
"As it happens to the fool,
It also happens to me,
And why was I then more wise?"
Then I said in my heart, "
This also *is* vanity."
16 For *there is* no more remembrance of the
wise than of the fool forever,
Since all that now *is* will be forgotten in
the days to come.
And how does a wise *man* die?
As the fool!

17 Therefore I hated life because the work that was done under the sun *was* distressing to me, for all *is* vanity and grasping for the wind.

18 Then I hated all my labor in which I had toiled under the sun, because I must leave it to the man who will come after me. 19 And who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? Yet he will rule over all my labor in which I toiled and in which I have shown myself wise under the sun. This also *is* vanity. 20 Therefore I turned my heart and despaired of all the labor in which I had toiled under the sun. 21 For there is a man whose labor *is* with wisdom, knowledge, and skill; yet he must leave his heritage to a man who has not

labored for it. This also *is* vanity and a great evil. [22]For what has man for all his labor, and for the striving of his heart with which he has toiled under the sun? [23]For all his days *are* sorrowful, and his work burdensome; even in the night his heart takes no rest. This also is vanity.

[24]Nothing *is* better for a man *than* that he should eat and drink, and *that* his soul should enjoy good in his labor. This also, I saw, was from the hand of God. [25]For who can eat, or who can have enjoyment, more than I?[a] [26]For *God* gives wisdom and knowledge and joy to a man who *is* good in His sight; but to the sinner He gives the work of gathering and collecting, that he may give to *him who is* good before God. This also *is* vanity and grasping for the wind.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Out of Control** *(2:1-3)* King Solomon had the money, the time, and the power to indulge himself in any pleasure he desired. He sought to gratify himself with wine, only to find that he still struggled to find meaning and purpose in life. Thousands of years ago, this king discovered what many still don't seem to know-alcohol will not solve any problems, nor will it fill the emptiness within that drives people to such excess in the first place. Alcohol is a temporary salve, ultimately leaving drinkers empty in their search for peace and significance. **Topic: Drug Abuse**

**THE TRAP OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE**

MARK SHADOAN

(Ecclesiastes 2:1-3)

**C**raig helps coach his son's softball team, helps the kids with their homework and rarely misses a game or recital. He's devoted to his job, works long hours, and often brings projects home on weekends. People know him as a great neighbor and good friend. What they don't know is that he is a substance abuser on his way to an engulfing addiction.

## WHO SUFFERS FROM SUBSTANCE DISORDERS?

The prevalence of substance-induced disorders is high. In the United States, about 13 million people have some form of alcohol- related disorder. In addition, it is estimated that a minimum of 10 percent of any given community has some form of substance disorder diagnosis. Most substance abusers go undetected, however. For example, because women tend to drink covertly and are unlikely to act out socially, men represent a greater proportion of the statistics.

Substance disorders affect all strata of society. Women tend to have higher abuses with prescriptive drugs. Young adults between the ages of 18 and 29 tend to abuse alcohol more than any age group. Senior citizens seem to have the lowest statistics regarding abuse. Contrary to stereotypes, typical substance abusers are difficult to pick out of a crowd. They work, raise families, even go to church, and appear to have normal lives.

## TYPES OF DISORDERS

Two kinds of problems are identified as substance disorders-one is called *abuse*, the other is called *addiction*.

Substance abuse refers to the excessive, problematic use of a substance as a mechanism for coping with stress. Abuse does not mean addiction, although it may result in addiction. Substance

addiction refers to dependency on that substance in order to function. It spills over into one's personal life, family, friends, and even one's relationship with God. Addiction has a strong psychological and physical component where a pattern of use covers four stages: (1) experimentation, (2) heavy social or recreational use, (3) learning to use a substance for a mood altering effect, and (4) a clear addictive stage that is marked by physical and/or psychological dependence regardless of the consequences. At this last stage, the path to sobriety usually necessitates some form of intensive intervention.

## REASONS FOR DISORDERS

Substance disorders are rooted in an individual's attempt to avoid or ease pain. Drugs or alcohol, with their ability to shut out the world and give a false "high," ease the person's pain-for a while. Persistent triggers such as learned behavior, poor coping skills, avoidance of responsibility, stressful events, and mood disorders can bring on abusive drinking; in addition, addictive family patterns appear as a factor in alcoholism. With substance addiction, the person's relationship to the substance is idolatrous. The person lives for the substance and is dependent on it just to "feel normal."

Substance abusers typically vacillate between denial, anger, guilt, frustration, and fear when dealing with their own addictions. They often express annoyance when questioned or criticized. Many will use anger in an attempt to control others' responses to their behavior. Some will attempt to reduce their usage in an attempt to help themselves deal with their addiction. One way or another, each of these behaviors is the addict's way of avoiding responsibility for getting the help they really need.

## RESOURCES FOR RECOVERY

Substance disorder is often a family problem; therefore, treatment should include individual and family therapy that focuses on changing faulty belief systems and patterns that enable substance

disorders. Someone suffering from substance disorders must learn to identify needs and communicate feelings within the family structure in healthy ways. Even if substance abusers refuse help, their families should seek help in order to be able to cope with the abusers and find out how to help them deal with their addiction more effectively.

Ecclesiastes 2:1-3 discusses the misuse of drunken pleasure to deal with life. The writer gratified himself with wine in order to find mirth and pleasure, only to discover that this was "vanity." Recovering alcoholics and drug addicts will attest to the vanity, the futility, of trying to find pleasure or to dull pain through alcohol or drugs.

The Bible has a different approach to dealing with pain and life's difficulties. It encourages Christians to endure and persevere so God can work in their lives: "Count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience" (James 1:2, 3). People who have stood the test will receive a crown of life (James 1:12, 13). God promises to help people work through whatever personal problems they may face. To focus on avoiding pain leads to an exclusive focus on self and a refusal to trust God and learn the lessons He wants to teach through the pain or trial.

Recovery from substance abuse is a process of renewal: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Rom. 12:1, 2). "Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry" (Col. 3:5). The choice is between using substances to avoid pain or developing the mind of Christ to access spiritual resources for recovery.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of drug abuse include:

- Proverbs 20:1; 21:17; 23:21
- Romans 8:28; 13:13
- 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20; 10:13
- Ephesians 5:18
- 1 Thessalonians 5:4-10
- 1 John 1:9

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on drug abuse at Proverbs 23:19-21. See also the personality profile of Belshazzar's Substance Abuse.

**EVERYTHING HAS ITS TIME**

**3** To everything *there is* a season,
A time for every purpose under heaven:

2 A time to be born,
And a time to die;
A time to plant,
And a time to pluck *what is* planted;
3 A time to kill,
And a time to heal;
A time to break down,
And a time to build up;
4 A time to weep,
And a time to laugh;
A time to mourn,
And a time to dance;
5 A time to cast away stones,
And a time to gather stones;
A time to embrace,
And a time to refrain from embracing;
6 A time to gain,
And a time to lose,
A time to keep,
And a time to throw away;
7 A time to tear,
And a time to sew;
A time to keep silence,
And a time to speak;
8 A time to love,
And a time to hate;
A time of war,
And a time of peace.

**THE GOD-GIVEN TASK**

[9]What profit has the worker from that in which he labors? [10]I have seen the God-given task with which the sons of men are to be occupied. [11]He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end.

[12]I know that nothing *is* better for them than to rejoice, and to do good in their lives, [13]and also that every man should eat and drink and enjoy the good of all his labor-it *is* the gift of God.

[14] I know that whatever God does,
It shall be forever.
Nothing can be added to it,
And nothing taken from it.
God does *it,* that men should fear before
Him.
[15] That which is has already been,
And what is to be has already been;
And God requires an account of what is
past.

**INJUSTICE SEEMS TO PREVAIL**

[16]Moreover I saw under the sun:

*In* the place of judgment,
Wickedness *was* there;
And *in* the place of righteousness,
Iniquity *was* there.

[17]I said in my heart,
"God shall judge the righteous and the
wicked,
For *there is* a time there for every
purpose and for every work."

[18]I said in my heart, "Concerning the condition of the sons of men, God tests them, that they may see that they themselves are *like* animals." [19]For

what happens to the sons of men also happens to animals; one thing befalls them: as one dies, so dies the other. Surely, they all have one breath; man has no advantage over animals, for all *is* vanity. [20]All go to one place: all are from the dust, and all return to dust. [21]Who knows the spirit of the sons of men, which goes upward, and the spirit of the animal, which goes down to the earth?[a] [22]So I perceived that nothing *is* better than that a man should rejoice in his own works, for that *is* his heritage. For who can bring him to see what will happen after him?

**KEY PASSAGE**

# A TIME FOR EVERYTHING

## (3:1-11)

In beautiful poetry, Solomon reminds his readers that life continues to march on through a series of inevitable transitions. There are times for birth, death, weeping, laughing, mourning, dancing, silence, speaking, and even war and peace. People cannot control these situations, and their reactions to them are natural. Sometimes laughter is the only response, sometimes tears. Without God, powerful contrasts cause people pain and indicate meaninglessness in life.

As joyous or painful as they may be, these are natural transitions. If people have God in their lives, they can trust Him through the changes, knowing that every day that passes brings them closer to their eternal destiny in the presence of God Himself. Solomon observed that God "has put eternity in their hearts" (3:11). Nothing short of the promise of eternity can give true meaning to the changes and transitions of this life.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about life transitions Seasons Of Life. See also the personality profile of Timothy: Lots of Changes.

**4** Then I returned and considered all the oppression that is done under the sun:

And look! The tears of the oppressed,
But they have no comforter-
On the side of their oppressors *there is*
power,
But they have no comforter.
2 Therefore I praised the dead who were
already dead,
More than the living who are still alive.
3 Yet, better than both *is he* who has never
existed,
Who has not seen the evil work that is
done under the sun.

## THE VANITY OF SELFISH TOIL

4 Again, I saw that for all toil and every skillful work a man is envied by his neighbor. This also *is* vanity and grasping for the wind.

5 The fool folds his hands
And consumes his own flesh.
6 Better a handful *with* quietness
Than both hands full, *together with* toil
and grasping for the wind.
7 Then I returned, and I saw vanity under the sun:

8 There is one alone, without companion:
He has neither son nor brother.
Yet *there is* no end to all his labors,
Nor is his eye satisfied with riches.
*But he never asks,*
"For whom do I toil and deprive myself of
good?"
This also *is* vanity and a grave
misfortune.

## THE VALUE OF A FRIEND

9 Two *are* better than one,
Because they have a good reward for
their labor.
10 For if they fall, one will lift up his
companion.
But woe to him *who is* alone when he
falls,
For *he has* no one to help him up.
11 Again, if two lie down together, they will
keep warm;
But how can one be warm *alone?*
12 Though one may be overpowered by
another, two can withstand him.
And a threefold cord is not quickly
broken.

## POPULARITY PASSES AWAY

13 Better a poor and wise youth
Than an old and foolish king who will
be admonished no more.
14 For he comes out of prison to be king,
Although he was born poor in his
kingdom.
15 I saw all the living who walk under the
sun;
They were with the second youth who
stands in his place.
16 *There was* no end of all the people over
whom he was made king;
Yet those who come afterward will not
rejoice in him.
Surely this also *is* vanity and grasping
for the wind.

**BUILDING GOOD RELATIONSHIPS**

# LES AND LESLIE PARROTT

## (Ecclesiastes 4:9)

**A** pioneering band of researchers has recently studied the age-old mystery of what makes people happy, and their answer is not what might be expected. What comes up consistently at the top of the charts is not success, good looks, or any of those enviable assets. The clear winner is relationships-close relationships.

What can be done to build good relationships? To be honest, the answer is "not much." We cannot *do* a whole lot to cultivate healthy relationships. Techniques do not work. Real relationships evolve out of *being* a certain kind of person. We must focus on *who* we are in relationships rather than what we *do*. Following are a few of the most important ways of "being" in order to build good relationships:

### BE SOMEONE WHO LISTENS

At the heart of every good relationship is the ability to listen and understand what another person is saying. Without accurate listening, a good relationship can never be built. People who have good relationships take the time to hear what the other person is saying. They don't have a habit of interrupting or jumping to conclusions. They listen to the feelings the person is expressing, and they know how to respond appropriately. Like a mirror reflects an image, we can reflect the person's message by saying something like, "What I hear you saying is . . . " This kind of a reflection lets the person know we

are really interested in accurately understanding. It also does wonders for building good relationships.

**BE SOMEONE WHO IS SAFE**

A close relationship is built on feelings of security. If people do not feel safe, there is no hope of them ever opening up and being authentic. People who keep their word create a sense of security for people in a relationship. They follow through on the promises they make. If we promise to keep a secret, we must keep it. We must keep our word. Once we have earned a person's trust, our relationship will flourish.

**BE SOMEONE WHO LENDS A HAND**

In rewarding relationships, people not only have feelings of security, they also help each other out. Sometimes that help may be seen in tangible ways-a ride to a ball game, for example. And sometimes it may be through giving reassurance before they take a big test or have that big interview. The point is that we should help them because we *want* to, not because we *have* to. As the saying goes, "That's what friends are for."

**BE SOMEONEWHO WALKS IN ANOTHER'S SHOES**

To build good relationships, people have to learn to see the world from another person's perspective. The fancy word for this is "empathy," which can unlock mysteries by helping them understand the other person better. Once we put ourselves in other people's shoes, we begin to understand why they might react, feel, and think the way they do. Of course, empathy does not come naturally; it takes work. It takes a decision to see life as another person sees it. But the relational dividends of empathy are well worth the effort.

**BE SOMEONE WHO CAN RECEIVE**

When the scales of a relationship are unbalanced-when one is always receiving and one is always giving-both people will eventually feel cheated. In healthy relationships, people meet each other's needs. There is a give and take that keeps both people in balance. We can allow people to care for us as much as we care for them. We must not fall into the trap of thinking that in order to be a good friend we have to do all the giving.

**BE SOMEONEWHOWEATHERS TURBULENCE**

Almost every good relationship eventually encounters a rough spot, a time when both people feel like giving up. It is a scary phase in relationships, usually indicating that both parties are going beneath the surface to talk about their true feelings, their likes and dislikes, the good and the bad. But if we are mature enough, and if we persevere, the time of relational turbulence can lead to a deeper, more genuine, and more authentic relationship than before. Conflict is often the temporary price we pay for deepening intimacy in relationships.

**BE SOMEONE WHO KNOWS WHEN TO CALL IT QUITS**

There are some relationships that are not worth the work. Of course, every relationship needs nurturing, but some relationships, no matter how hard people try to make them work, are doomed to disaster. If we are in a relationship that leads us to do things that we do not want to do, the relationship is not healthy and should be stopped. If we are in a relationship where we are constantly trying to win the person's approval or never feel accepted, the relationship is probably not a good one. When that is the case, we need to call it quits before the other person's rejection damages us and limits our usefulness to God.

In summary, relationships are complex and require some fundamental elements and time. In building relationships, it is more profitable to examine ourselves to determine the type of person we are, rather than focusing only on the things we do.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of relationships include:

- Proverbs 13:20; 17:17; 22:24; 27:6-9
- Luke 6:28
- John 13:34, 35
- Romans 12:9-21
- Philippians 2:3, 4
- Colossians 3:13
- 1 John 4:7, 8

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on relationships at Ephesians 4:31, 32. See also the personality profile of David And Jonathan-best of Friends.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Eternal Friendships** *(4:9-12)* The Preacher observed the importance of friendships. God created people to be in relationship with Him and in relationships with one another. Friends who work on a task can rejoice together in its accomplishment. Friends can help each other-if one should fall, the other is there to "help him up." Those who have both a strong relationship with God and strong friendships with other believers will have bonds that strengthen life's joys and limit life's sorrows. Friendships among believers are precious, for they have the bond of Christ and of eternity. We should both find good friends and be good friends. **Topic: Relationships**

## FEAR GOD, KEEP YOUR VOWS

**5** Walk prudently when you go to the house of God; and draw near to hear
rather than to give the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they do
evil.

2 Do not be rash with your mouth,
And let not your heart utter anything
hastily before God.
For God *is* in heaven, and you on
earth;
Therefore let your words be few.
3 For a dream comes through much
activity,
And a fool's voice *is known* by *his* many
words.
4 When you make a vow to God, do not
delay to pay it;
For *He has* no pleasure in fools.
Pay what you have vowed-
5 Better not to vow than to vow and not
pay.

6 Do not let your mouth cause your flesh to sin, nor say before the
messenger *of God* that it *was* an error. Why should God be angry at your
excuse[a] and destroy the work of your hands? 7 For in the multitude of dreams
and many words *there is* also vanity. But fear God.

## THE VANITY OF GAIN AND HONOR

8 If you see the oppression of the poor, and the violent perversion of justice
and righteousness in a province, do not marvel at the matter; for high official
watches over high official, and higher officials are over them.

9 Moreover the profit of the land is for all; *even* the king is served from the
field.

10 He who loves silver will not be satisfied

with silver;
Nor he who loves abundance, with
increase.
This also *is* vanity.
11 When goods increase,
They increase who eat them;
So what profit have the owners
Except to see *them* with their eyes?
12 The sleep of a laboring man *is* sweet,
Whether he eats little or much;
But the abundance of the rich will not
permit him to sleep.
13 There is a severe evil *which* I have seen
under the sun:
Riches kept for their owner to his hurt.
14 But those riches perish through
misfortune;
When he begets a son, *there is* nothing
in his hand.
15 As he came from his mother's womb,
naked shall he return,
To go as he came;
And he shall take nothing from his labor
Which he may carry away in his hand.
16 And this also *is* a severe evil-
Just exactly as he came, so shall he go.
And what profit has he who has labored
for the wind?
17 All his days he also eats in darkness,
And *he has* much sorrow and sickness
and anger.
18 Here is what I have seen: *It is* good and fitting *for one* to eat and drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labor in which he toils under the sun all the days of his life which God gives him; for it *is* his heritage. 19 As for every man to whom God has given riches and wealth, and given him power to eat

of it, to receive his heritage and rejoice in his labor-this *is* the gift of God. [20]For he will not dwell unduly on the days of his life, because God keeps *him* busy with the joy of his heart.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Money Chains** *(5:12)* Many people desire to be rich, thinking that they will have no more worries. That is a paradox, however. A wealthy person may appear to live well, but "the abundance of the rich will not permit him to sleep." The rich lie awake worrying about losing their money, while poor laborers sleep soundly. Riches give freedom to do many things, but the chains of worry often ruin any true enjoyment. The moral is that God would have us be content whatever our financial status, for all wealth ultimately belongs to Him. **Topic: Money**

**SOUL NOTE**

**Fruits of Our Labors** *(5:18, 19)* Work is a double-edged sword in Scripture. Transformed into "sweat" as part of the Curse after the Fall (Gen. 3:19), work is also an honored activity through which God delivers many blessings. The Bible emphasizes the importance of work as a God-given activity in life, and it says that the ability to enjoy the fruits of one's labor is also something that God provides us. The ability to work, enjoy that work, make money, and enjoy and share that income with others-"this is the gift of God." **Topic: Work**

**6** There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, and it *is* common among men: [2]A man to whom God has given riches and wealth and honor, so that he lacks nothing for himself of all he desires; yet God does not give him power to eat of it, but a foreigner consumes it. This *is* vanity, and it *is* an evil affliction.

[3]If a man begets a hundred *children* and lives many years, so that the days of his years are many, but his soul is not satisfied with goodness, or indeed he has no burial, I say *that* a stillborn child *is* better than he- [4]for it comes in vanity and departs in darkness, and its name is covered with darkness. [5]Though it has not seen the sun or known *anything*, this has more rest than that man, [6]even if he lives a thousand years twice-but has not seen goodness. Do not all go to one place?

[7] All the labor of man *is* for his mouth,
And yet the soul is not satisfied.
[8] For what more has the wise *man* than
the fool?
What does the poor man have,
Who knows *how* to walk before the
living?
[9] Better *is* the sight of the eyes than the
wandering of desire.
This also *is* vanity and grasping for the
wind.
[10] Whatever one is, he has been named
already,
For it is known that he *is* man;
And he cannot contend with Him who is
mightier than he.
[11] Since there are many things that
increase vanity,
How *is* man the better?

[12]For who knows what *is* good for man in life, all the days of his vain life which he passes like a shadow? Who can tell a man what will happen after him under the sun?

## THE VALUE OF PRACTICAL WISDOM

**7** A good name *is* better than precious
ointment,
And the day of death than the day of
one's birth;

2 Better to go to the house of mourning
Than to go to the house of feasting,
For that *is* the end of all men;
And the living will take *it* to heart.
3 Sorrow *is* better than laughter,
For by a sad countenance the heart is
made better.
4 The heart of the wise *is* in the house of
mourning,
But the heart of fools *is* in the house of
mirth.

> A good name is better
> than precious ointment.
> ECCLESIASTES 7:1

5 *It is* better to hear the rebuke of the wise
Than for a man to hear the song of
fools.
6 For like the crackling of thorns under a
pot,
So *is* the laughter of the fool.
This also is vanity.
7 Surely oppression destroys a wise *man's*
reason,
And a bribe debases the heart.
8 The end of a thing *is* better than its
beginning;
The patient in spirit *is* better than the

proud in spirit.
9 Do not hasten in your spirit to be angry,
For anger rests in the bosom of fools.
10 Do not say,
"Why were the former days better than
these?"
For you do not inquire wisely concerning
this.
11 Wisdom *is* good with an inheritance,
And profitable to those who see the
sun.
12 For wisdom *is* a defense *as* money *is* a
defense,
But the excellence of knowledge *is that*
wisdom gives life to those who have
it.
13 Consider the work of God;
For who can make straight what He has
made crooked?
14 In the day of prosperity be joyful,
But in the day of adversity
consider:
Surely God has appointed the one as well as the other,
So that man can find out nothing *that will come* after him.
15 I have seen everything in my days of vanity:
There is a just *man* who perishes in his
righteousness,
And there is a wicked *man* who
prolongs *life* in his wickedness.
16 Do not be overly righteous,
Nor be overly wise:
Why should you destroy yourself?
17 Do not be overly wicked,
Nor be foolish:
Why should you die before your time?

18 *It is* good that you grasp this,
And also not remove your hand from the other;
For he who fears God will escape them all.
19 Wisdom strengthens the wise
More than ten rulers of the city.
20 For *there is* not a just man on earth who does good
And does not sin.
21 Also do not take to heart everything people say,
Lest you hear your servant cursing you.
22 For many times, also, your own heart has known
That even you have cursed others.
23 All this I have proved by wisdom.
I said, “I will be wise”;
But it *was* far from me.
24 As for that which is far off and exceedingly deep,
Who can find it out?
25 I applied my heart to know,
To search and seek out wisdom and the reason *of things*,
To know the wickedness of folly,
Even of foolishness *and* madness.
26 And I find more bitter than death
The woman whose heart *is* snares and nets,
Whose hands *are* fetters.
He who pleases God shall escape from her,
But the sinner shall be trapped by her.
27 “Here is what I have found,” says the

Preacher,
"*Adding* one thing to the other to find out
the reason,
28 Which my soul still seeks but I cannot
find:
One man among a thousand I have
found,
But a woman among all these I have not
found.
29 Truly, this only I have found:
That God made man upright,
But they have sought out many
schemes."

**SOUL NOTE**

**No More Tears** *(7:13, 14)* Some things cannot be fixed this side of heaven. Solomon observed that there are times when the crooked cannot be made straight: Some people stricken with cancer will die; some disabilities will never be healed. Solomon advises people to expect both good and bad in life-to enjoy the days of prosperity and be prepared for the days of adversity. No one goes through life without facing difficulties and problems. God never allows our journey here on earth to become so easy that we lose sight of heaven, where God promises to wipe every tear from our eyes (Rev. 21:4).
**Topic: Trials**

**8** Who *is* like a wise *man?*
And who knows the interpretation of a
thing?
A man's wisdom makes his face shine,
And the sternness of his face is
changed.

**OBEY AUTHORITIES FOR GOD'S SAKE**

[2]I *say,* "Keep the king's commandment for the sake of your oath to God. [3]Do not be hasty to go from his presence. Do not take your stand for an evil thing, for he does whatever pleases him."

[4] Where the word of a king *is, there is*
power;
And who may say to him, "What are
you doing?"
[5] He who keeps his command will
experience nothing harmful;
And a wise man's heart discerns both
time and judgment,
[6] Because for every matter there is a time
and judgment,
Though the misery of man increases
greatly.
[7] For he does not know what will happen;
So who can tell him when it will occur?
[8] No one has power over the spirit to
retain the spirit,
And no one has power in the day of
death.
*There is* no release from that war,
And wickedness will not deliver those
who are given to it.

[9]All this I have seen, and applied my heart to every work that is done under the sun: *There is* a time in which one man rules over another to his own hurt.

**DEATH COMES TO ALL**

10 Then I saw the wicked buried, who had come and gone from the place of
holiness, and they were forgotten[a] in the city where they had so done. This
also *is* vanity. 11 Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed
speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.
12 Though a sinner does evil a hundred *times,* and his *days* are prolonged, yet I
surely know that it will be well with those who fear God, who fear before
Him. 13 But it will not be well with the wicked; nor will he prolong *his* days,
*which are* as a shadow, because he does not fear before God.

14 There is a vanity which occurs on earth, that there are just *men* to whom
it happens according to the work of the wicked; again, there are wicked *men*
to whom it happens according to the work of the righteous. I said that this
also *is* vanity.

15 So I commended enjoyment, because a man has nothing better under the
sun than to eat, drink, and be merry; for this will remain with him in his labor
*all* the days of his life which God gives him under the sun.

16 When I applied my heart to know wisdom and to see the business that is
done on earth, even though one sees no sleep day or night, 17 then I saw all the
work of God, that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun.
For though a man labors to discover *it,* yet he will not find *it;* moreover,
though a wise *man* attempts to know *it,* he will not be able to find *it.*

**9** For I considered all this in my heart, so that I could declare it all: that the righteous and the wise and their works *are* in the hand of God. People know neither love nor hatred *by* anything *they see* before them. 2 All things *come* alike to all:

One event *happens* to the righteous and
the wicked;
To the good,[a] the clean, and the
unclean;
To him who sacrifices and him who does
not sacrifice.
As is the good, so *is* the sinner;
He who takes an oath as *he* who fears
an oath.

3 This *is* an evil in all that is done under the sun: that one thing *happens* to all. Truly the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil; madness *is* in their hearts while they live, and after that *they go* to the dead. 4 But for him who is joined to all the living there is hope, for a living dog is better than a dead lion.

5 For the living know that they will die;
But the dead know nothing,
And they have no more reward,
For the memory of them is forgotten.
6 Also their love, their hatred, and their
envy have now perished;
Nevermore will they have a share
In anything done under the sun.
7 Go, eat your bread with joy,
And drink your wine with a merry heart;
For God has already accepted your
works.
8 Let your garments always be white,
And let your head lack no oil.

9 Live joyfully with the wife whom you love all the days of your vain life which He has given you under the sun, all your days of vanity; for that *is*

your portion in life, and in the labor which you perform under the sun.

10 Whatever your hand finds to do, do *it* with your might; for *there is* no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going.

11 I returned and saw under the sun that-

The race *is* not to the swift,
Nor the battle to the strong,
Nor bread to the wise,
Nor riches to men of understanding,
Nor favor to men of skill;
But time and chance happen to them all.

12 For man also does not know his time:
Like fish taken in a cruel net,
Like birds caught in a snare,
So the sons of men *are* snared in an evil time,
When it falls suddenly upon them.

**WISDOM SUPERIOR TO FOLLY**

13 This wisdom I have also seen under the sun, and it *seemed* great to me: 14 *There was* a little city with few men in it; and a great king came against it, besieged it, and built great snares[a] around it. 15 Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city. Yet no one remembered that same poor man.

16 Then I said:
"Wisdom *is* better than strength.
Nevertheless the poor man's wisdom *is* despised,
And his words are not heard.
17 Words of the wise, *spoken* quietly,
*should be* heard Rather than the shout of a ruler of fools.
18 Wisdom *is* better than weapons of war;
But one sinner destroys much good."

## SOUL NOTE

**Get Together** *(9:9)* People get married because they want to be with one another. It is tragic, then, when married people spend very little time together. Caught up in the busy routines of each day, some spouses quickly go their separate ways and spend their time and energy in other matters. If this persists long enough, usually the joy of that marriage relationship begins to wane. Therefore, the Bible speaks to married people very practically when it encourages them to “live joyfully” with the one they love, to spend time with one another, and to enjoy one another’s company. **Topic: Marriage**

**10** Dead flies putrefy[a] the perfumer’s
ointment,
And cause it to give off a foul odor;
*So does* a little folly to one respected for
wisdom *and* honor.

2 A wise man’s heart *is* at his right hand,
But a fool’s heart at his left.
3 Even when a fool walks along the way,
He lacks wisdom,
And he shows everyone *that* he *is* a fool.
4 If the spirit of the ruler rises against you,
Do not leave your post;
For conciliation pacifies great offenses.
5 There is an evil I have seen under the
sun,
As an error proceeding from the ruler:
6 Folly is set in great dignity,
While the rich sit in a lowly place.
7 I have seen servants on horses,
While princes walk on the ground like
servants.
8 He who digs a pit will fall into it,
And whoever breaks through a wall will
be bitten by a serpent.
9 He who quarries stones may be hurt by
them,
*And* he who splits wood may be
endangered by it.
10 If the ax is dull,
And one does not sharpen the edge,
Then he must use more strength;
But wisdom brings success.
11 A serpent may bite when *it is* not
charmed;

The babbler is no different.
12 The words of a wise man’s mouth *are* gracious,
But the lips of a fool shall swallow him up;
13 The words of his mouth begin with foolishness, And the end of his talk *is* raving madness.
14 A fool also multiplies words.
No man knows what is to be;
Who can tell him what will be after him?
15 The labor of fools wearies them,
For they do not even know how to go to the city!
16 Woe to you, O land, when your king *is* a child,
And your princes feast in the morning!
17 Blessed *are* you, O land, when your king *is* the son of nobles,
And your princes feast at the proper time-
For strength and not for drunkenness!
18 Because of laziness the building decays,
And through idleness of hands the house leaks.
19 A feast is made for laughter,
And wine makes merry;
But money answers everything.
20 Do not curse the king, even in your thought;
Do not curse the rich, even in your bedroom;
For a bird of the air may carry your

voice,
And a bird in flight may tell the matter.

## THE VALUE OF DILIGENCE

**11** Cast your bread upon the waters,
For you will find it after many days.

2 Give a serving to seven, and also to
eight,
For you do not know what evil will be
on the earth.
3 If the clouds are full of rain,
They empty *themselves* upon the earth;
And if a tree falls to the south or the
north,
In the place where the tree falls, there it
shall lie.
4 He who observes the wind will not sow,
And he who regards the clouds will not
reap.
5 As you do not know what *is* the way of
the wind,[a]
*Or* how the bones *grow* in the womb of
her who is with child,
So you do not know the works of God
who makes everything.
6 In the morning sow your seed,
And in the evening do not withhold your
hand;
For you do not know which will
prosper,
Either this or that,
Or whether both alike *will be* good.
7 Truly the light is sweet,
And *it is* pleasant for the eyes to behold
the sun;
8 But if a man lives many years

*And* rejoices in them all,
Yet let him remember the days of
darkness,
For they will be many.
All that is coming *is* vanity.

**SEEK GOD IN EARLY LIFE**

9 Rejoice, O young man, in your youth,
And let your heart cheer you in the days
of your youth;
Walk in the ways of your heart,
And in the sight of your eyes;
But know that for all these
God will bring you into judgment.
10 Therefore remove sorrow from your
heart,
And put away evil from your flesh,
For childhood and youth *are* vanity.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Youthful Exuberance** *(11:9, 10)* How young people live and what they do will lay the groundwork for the rest of their lives. Solomon observed that there is something wonderful and exuberant about adolescence. He challenged his young readers to rejoice in their youth, but he also told them to set boundaries on that youthful excitement so that they do not destroy their lives. Many people spend their lives facing the consequences of bad choices made during adolescence. Young people must develop a personal relationship with God that will positively affect their actions and attitudes, allowing them to enjoy their youth without making devastating mistakes.
**Topic: Boundaries**

**12** Remember now your Creator in the
days of your youth,
Before the difficult days come,
And the years draw near when you say,
“I have no pleasure in them”:

2 While the sun and the light,
The moon and the stars,
Are not darkened,
And the clouds do not return after the
rain;
3 In the day when the keepers of the house tremble,
And the strong men bow down;
When the grinders cease because they are few,
And those that look through the windows grow dim;
4 When the doors are shut in the streets,
And the sound of grinding is low;
When one rises up at the sound of a
bird,
And all the daughters of music are
brought low.

> Let us hear the conclusion of
> the whole matter: Fear God and
> keep His commandments, for
> this is man’s all.
> ECCLESIASTES 12:13

5 Also they are afraid of height,
And of terrors in the way;
When the almond tree blossoms,
The grasshopper is a burden,
And desire fails.
For man goes to his eternal home,
And the mourners go about the
streets.

6 *Remember your Creator* before the silver
cord is loosed,[a]
Or the golden bowl is broken,
Or the pitcher shattered at the
fountain,
Or the wheel broken at the well.
7 Then the dust will return to the earth as
it was,
And the spirit will return to God who
gave it.
8 "Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher,
"All *is* vanity."

**THE WHOLE DUTY OF MAN**

9 And moreover, because the Preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yes, he pondered and sought out *and* set in order many proverbs. 10 The Preacher sought to find acceptable words; and *what was* written *was* upright-words of truth. 11 The words of the wise are like goads, and the words of scholars[a] are like well-driven nails, given by one Shepherd. 12 And further, my son, be admonished by these. Of making many books *there is* no end, and much study *is* wearisome to the flesh.

13 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole
matter:
Fear God and keep His commandments,
For this is man's all.
14 For God will bring every work into
judgment,
Including every secret thing,
Whether good or evil.

## SOUL NOTE

**This Old House** *(12:1-7)* The day will come when people will have to face the challenges of old age. Solomon described the human body as an old house whose windows are darkened and doors are shut- when the physical body can no longer keep up, or when the mind is no longer alert. What may appear to be a tragic loss from a human standpoint is viewed very differently from God's perspective. In the end, the body will return to the dust, but "the spirit will return to God who gave it" (12:7). The search for significance finds what it's looking for in a relationship with the eternal God. **Topic: Aging/Elderly**

# Song of Solomon



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# Song of Solomon

Among the many false charges leveled at Christianity is the idea that it is "prudish" about sex. Nothing could be further from the truth. Consider the Old Testament book known as the Song of Solomon that unabashedly celebrates the joy and intimacy of sexual love in marriage.

Attributed to Solomon, this is the song of a couple who have eyes only for each other. Solomon appears as a young shepherd who falls in love with a lowly Shulamite girl. He promises to marry her upon his return. When he returns, much to her surprise, he appears as king. Accompanied by his entire entourage, he takes her back to Jerusalem in his royal coach to become his bride.

Among the poem's many beautiful expressions is the delicate exhortation: "Do not stir up nor awaken love until it pleases" (2:7; 3:5; 8:4). This phrase expresses the importance of sexual abstinence before marriage. It recognizes that the passions of youth can be aroused before a relationship of true commitment has been established. Sex, then, is a jewel that must await the right setting.

The beauty and honesty of this love song serve as an important corrective to the sexual perversions of our age. Here is a balanced portrait of married love that is neither obscene nor ashamed; it shows neither erotic excess nor sexual denial. The Song of Solomon reminds us that sexual love is truly a celebration of two souls united in marriage!

**1** The song of songs, which *is* Solomon's.

**THE BANQUET**

**The Shulamite**[a]

2 Let him kiss me with the kisses of his
mouth-
For your[b] love *is* better than wine.
3 Because of the fragrance of your good
ointments,
Your name *is* ointment poured forth;
Therefore the virgins love you.
4 Draw me away!

**The Daughters of Jerusalem**

We will run after you.[a]

**The Shulamite**

The king has brought me into his
chambers.

**The Daughters of Jerusalem**

We will be glad and rejoice in you.[b]

We will remember your[c] love more than
wine.

**The Shulamite**

Rightly do they love you.[d]

5 I *am* dark, but lovely,
O daughters of Jerusalem,
Like the tents of Kedar,
Like the curtains of Solomon.

6 Do not look upon me, because I *am*
dark,
Because the sun has tanned me.
My mother's sons were angry with me;
They made me the keeper of the
vineyards,
*But* my own vineyard I have not kept.

**(To Her Beloved)**

7 Tell me, O you whom I love,
Where you feed *your flock,*
Where you make *it* rest at noon.
For why should I be as one who veils
herself[a]
By the flocks of your companions?

**The Beloved**

8 If you do not know, O fairest among
women,
Follow in the footsteps of the flock,
And feed your little goats
Beside the shepherds' tents.
9 I have compared you, my love,
To my filly among Pharaoh's chariots.
10 Your cheeks are lovely with ornaments,
Your neck with chains *of gold.*

**The Daughters of Jerusalem**

11 We will make you[a] ornaments of gold
With studs of silver.

**The Shulamite**

12 While the king *is* at his table,
My spikenard sends forth its fragrance.
13 A bundle of myrrh *is* my beloved to me,
That lies all night between my breasts.
14 My beloved *is* to me a cluster of henna
*blooms*

In the vineyards of En Gedi.

**The Beloved**

15 Behold, you *are* fair, my love!
Behold, you *are* fair!
You *have* dove's eyes.

**The Shulamite**

16 Behold, you *are* handsome, my beloved!
Yes, pleasant!
Also our bed *is* green.
17 The beams of our houses *are* cedar,
*And* our rafters of fir.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Wedding Celebration** *(1:2-4)* The Song of Solomon is a beautiful poem filled with words of love between a bride and groom. Solomon, disguised as a shepherd, meets the maiden and promises to return and take her as his bride. This book celebrates the sanctity and dignity of marriage as part of God's divine plan. Those who marry can enjoy each other as God's gift. They should seek each other's best and care for each other. Marriages need deep love, commitment, and loyalty between husband and wife in order for them to be able to give to each other sexually with enjoyment and fulfillment. **Topic: Marriage**

**2** I *am* the rose of Sharon,
*And* the lily of the valleys.

**The Beloved**

2 Like a lily among thorns,
So is my love among the daughters.

**The Shulamite**

3 Like an apple tree among the trees of the
woods,
So *is* my beloved among the sons.
I sat down in his shade with great
delight,
And his fruit *was* sweet to my taste.

**The Shulamite to the Daughters of Jerusalem**

4 He brought me to the banqueting house,
And his banner over me *was* love.
5 Sustain me with cakes of raisins,
Refresh me with apples,
For I *am* lovesick.
6 His left hand *is* under my head,
And his right hand embraces me.
7 I charge you,
O daughters of Jerusalem,
By the gazelles or by the does of the field,
Do not stir up nor awaken love Until it pleases.

**THE BELOVED'S REQUEST**

**The Shulamite**

8 The voice of my beloved!
Behold, he comes
Leaping upon the mountains,
Skipping upon the hills.
9 My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag.
Behold, he stands behind our wall;

He is looking through the windows,
Gazing through the lattice.
10 My beloved spoke, and said to me:
“Rise up, my love, my fair one,
And come away.
11 For lo, the winter is past,
The rain is over *and* gone.
12 The flowers appear on the earth;
The time of singing has come,
And the voice of the turtledove
Is heard in our land.
13 The fig tree puts forth her green figs,
And the vines *with* the tender grapes
Give a good smell.
Rise up, my love, my fair one,
And come away!
14 “O my dove, in the clefts of the rock,
In the secret *places* of the cliff,
Let me see your face,
Let me hear your voice;
For your voice *is* sweet,
And your face *is* lovely.”

**Her Brothers**

15 Catch us the foxes,
The little foxes that spoil the vines,
For our vines *have* tender grapes.

**The Shulamite**

16 My beloved *is* mine, and I *am* his.
He feeds *his flock* among the lilies.

**(To Her Beloved)**

17 Until the day breaks
And the shadows flee away
Turn, my beloved,
And be like a gazelle

Or a young stag
Upon the mountains of Bether.[a]

My beloved is mine, and I am his.
SONG OF SOLOMON 2:16

## A TROUBLED NIGHT

**The Shulamite**

3 By night on my bed I sought the one I love;
I sought him, but I did not find him.

2 “I will rise now,” *I said,*
“And go about the city;
In the streets and in the squares
I will seek the one I love.”
I sought him, but I did not find him.

3 The watchmen who go about the city
found me;
*I said,*
“Have you seen the one I love?”

4 Scarcely had I passed by them,
When I found the one I love.
I held him and would not let him go,
Until I had brought him to the house of
my mother,
And into the chamber of her who
conceived me.

5 I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem,
By the gazelles or by the does of the
field,
Do not stir up nor awaken love
Until it pleases.

## THE COMING OF SOLOMON

**The Shulamite**

6 Who *is* this coming out of the wilderness
Like pillars of smoke,
Perfumed with myrrh and frankincense,
With all the merchant’s fragrant
powders?

7 Behold, it *is* Solomon’s couch,
*With* sixty valiant men around it,
Of the valiant of Israel.
8 They all hold swords,
*Being* expert in war.
Every man *has* his sword on his thigh
Because of fear in the night.
9 Of the wood of Lebanon
Solomon the King
Made himself a palanquin:[a]
10 He made its pillars *of* silver,
Its support *of* gold,
Its seat *of* purple,
Its interior paved *with* love
By the daughters of Jerusalem.
11 Go forth, O daughters of Zion,
And see King Solomon with the crown
With which his mother crowned him
On the day of his wedding,
The day of the gladness of his heart.

## THE BRIDEGROOM PRAISES THE BRIDE

**The Beloved**

**4** Behold, you *are* fair, my love!
Behold, you *are* fair!
You *have* dove's eyes behind your veil.
Your hair *is* like a flock of goats,
Going down from Mount Gilead.

2 Your teeth *are* like a flock of shorn *sheep*
Which have come up from the washing,
Every one of which bears twins,
And none *is* barren among them.
3 Your lips *are* like a strand of scarlet,
And your mouth is lovely.
Your temples behind your veil
*Are* like a piece of pomegranate.
4 Your neck *is* like the tower of David,
Built for an armory,
On which hang a thousand bucklers,
All shields of mighty men.
5 Your two breasts *are* like two fawns,
Twins of a gazelle,
Which feed among the lilies.
6 Until the day breaks
And the shadows flee away,
I will go my way to the mountain of
myrrh
And to the hill of frankincense.
7 You *are* all fair, my love,
And *there is* no spot in you.
8 Come with me from Lebanon, *my*
spouse,
With me from Lebanon.
Look from the top of Amana,

From the top of Senir and Hermon,
From the lions’ dens,
From the mountains of the leopards.
9 You have ravished my heart,
My sister, *my* spouse;
You have ravished my heart
With one *look* of your eyes,
With one link of your necklace.
10 How fair is your love,
My sister, *my* spouse!
How much better than wine is your love,
And the scent of your perfumes
Than all spices!
11 Your lips, O *my* spouse,
Drip as the honeycomb;
Honey and milk *are* under your tongue;
And the fragrance of your garments
*Is* like the fragrance of Lebanon.
12 A garden enclosed
*Is* my sister, *my* spouse,
A spring shut up,
A fountain sealed.
13 Your plants *are* an orchard of
pomegranates
With pleasant fruits,
Fragrant henna with spikenard,
14 Spikenard and saffron,
Calamus and cinnamon,
With all trees of frankincense,
Myrrh and aloes,
With all the chief spices-
15 A fountain of gardens,
A well of living waters,
And streams from Lebanon.

**The Shulamite**

16 Awake, O north *wind*,
And come, O south!
Blow upon my garden,
Th*at* its spices may flow out.
Let my beloved come to his garden
And eat its pleasant fruits.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# SOLOMON AND THE SHULAMITE: THE LANGUAGE OF TRUE LOVE

## (SONG OF SOLOMON 4)

When God designed marital love, he included as part of its character an intimate shamelessness. Genesis reveals that Adam and Eve were "both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed" (Gen. 2:25). No fear, embarrassment, or shame complicated the early days of the original marriage. Later, echoes of that love were part of Jacob's love for Rachel (Gen. 29:18-20). That kind of innocent passion returns to the Bible pages in the Song of Solomon. In the privacy of love during the hours of anticipation before the wedding and the moments of delight in marriage, we overhear the whispered exchanges between the couple. We are slightly embarrassed at least in part because we are an eavesdropping audience. The couple has eyes and ears only for each other.

The Song of Solomon celebrates the blessing of God on the sexual relationship within marriage. The book enjoys, rather than explains,

sexual intimacy. We witness how God's blessing touches the way husbands and wives see each other. It shapes their intimate conversation. What would be lust outside of marriage becomes appropriate desire when protected by genuine commitment.

In the Song of Solomon 4, the couple develop a mental picture of each other as they describe the details of each other's physical body in the most beautiful and extravagant poetic terms. Love creates its own language. The lovers' words may seem awkward unless we have been in love ourselves. Their expressions remind us, however, that sexual love within marriage is part of God's plan and purpose for our lives. God finds no shame in marital sexuality. His rules lead to the most deeply satisfying enjoyment.

The Song of Solomon powerfully illustrates the value of appreciating both the spiritual and physical qualities of our partner. When we seek to meet our spouse's needs with delight, we help to deepen sexual intimacy within marriage. Enjoy your spouse as a great gift from God to you!

**To Learn More**: Turn to the article about Sex in Marriage. See also the key passage note at Hebrews 13:4.

**The Beloved**

5 I have come to my garden, my sister, *my*
spouse;
I have gathered my myrrh with my spice;
I have eaten my honeycomb with my
honey;
I have drunk my wine with my milk.

**(To His Friends)**

Eat, O friends!
Drink, yes, drink deeply,
O beloved ones!

**THE SHULAMITE'S TROUBLED EVENING**
**The Shulamite**

2 I sleep, but my heart is awake;
*It is* the voice of my beloved!
He knocks, *saying,*
"Open for me, my sister, my love,
My dove, my perfect one;
For my head is covered with dew,
My locks with the drops of the night."
3 I have taken off my robe;
How can I put it on *again?*
I have washed my feet;
How can I defile them?
4 My beloved put his hand
By the latch *of the door,*
And my heart yearned for him.
5 I arose to open for my beloved,
And my hands dripped *with* myrrh,
My fingers with liquid myrrh,
On the handles of the lock.
6 I opened for my beloved,
But my beloved had turned away *and*

was gone.
My heart leaped up when he spoke.
I sought him, but I could not find him;
I called him, but he gave me no answer.
7 The watchmen who went about the city
found me.
They struck me, they wounded me;
The keepers of the walls
Took my veil away from me.
8 I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem,
If you find my beloved,
That you tell him I *am* lovesick!

**The Daughters of Jerusalem**

9 What *is* your beloved
More than *another* beloved,
O fairest among women?
What *is* your beloved
More than *another* beloved,
That you so charge us?

**The Shulamite**

10 My beloved *is* white and ruddy,
Chief among ten thousand.
11 His head *is like* the finest gold;
His locks *are* wavy,
*And* black as a raven.
12 His eyes *are* like doves
By the rivers of waters,
Washed with milk,
*And* fitly set.
13 His cheeks *are* like a bed of spices,
Banks of scented herbs.
His lips *are* lilies,
Dripping liquid myrrh.
14 His hands *are* rods of gold

Set with beryl.
His body *is* carved ivory
Inlaid *with* sapphires.
15 His legs *are* pillars of marble
Set on bases of fine gold.
His countenance *is* like Lebanon,
Excellent as the cedars.
16 His mouth *is* most sweet,
Yes, he *is* altogether lovely.
This *is* my beloved,
And this *is* my friend,
O daughters of Jerusalem!

**The Daughters of Jerusalem**

**6** Where has your beloved gone,
O fairest among women?
Where has your beloved turned aside,
That we may seek him with you?

**The Shulamite**

2 My beloved has gone to his garden,
To the beds of spices,
To feed *his flock* in the gardens,
And to gather lilies.
3 I *am* my beloved's,
And my beloved *is* mine.
He feeds *his flock* among the lilies.

**PRAISE OF THE SHULAMITE'S BEAUTY**
**The Beloved**

4 O my love, you *are as* beautiful as
Tirzah,
Lovely as Jerusalem,
Awesome as *an army* with banners!
5 Turn your eyes away from me,
For they have overcome me.
Your hair *is* like a flock of goats
Going down from Gilead.
6 Your teeth *are* like a flock of sheep
Which have come up from the washing;
Every one bears twins,
And none *is* barren among them.
7 Like a piece of pomegranate
*Are* your temples behind your veil.
8 There are sixty queens
And eighty concubines,
And virgins without number.

9 My dove, my perfect one,
Is the only one,
The only one of her mother,
The favorite of the one who bore her.
The daughters saw her
And called her blessed,
The queens and the concubines,
And they praised her.
10 Who is she who looks forth as the
morning,
Fair as the moon,
Clear as the sun,
Awesome as *an army* with banners?

**The Shulamite**

11 I went down to the garden of nuts
To see the verdure of the valley,
To see whether the vine had budded
*And* the pomegranates had bloomed.
12 Before I was even aware,
My soul had made me
*As* the chariots of my noble people.[a]

**The Beloved and His Friends**

13 Return, return, O Shulamite;
Return, return, that we may look upon
you!

**The Shulamite**

What would you see in the
Shulamite-
As it were, the dance of the two
camps?[a]

**EXPRESSIONS OF PRAISE**
**The Beloved**

**7** How beautiful are your feet in sandals,
O prince's daughter!
The curves of your thighs *are* like jewels,
The work of the hands of a skillful
workman.

2 Your navel *is* a rounded goblet;
It lacks no blended beverage.
Your waist *is* a heap of wheat
Set about with lilies.
3 Your two breasts *are* like two fawns,
Twins of a gazelle.
4 Your neck *is* like an ivory tower,
Your eyes *like* the pools in Heshbon
By the gate of Bath Rabbim.
Your nose *is* like the tower of Lebanon
Which looks toward Damascus.
5 Your head *crowns* you like *Mount*
Carmel,
And the hair of your head *is* like purple;
A king *is* held captive by *your* tresses.
6 How fair and how pleasant you are,
O love, with your delights!
7 This stature of yours is like a palm tree,
And your breasts *like* its clusters.
8 I said, "I will go up to the palm tree,
I will take hold of its branches."
Let now your breasts be like clusters of
the vine,
The fragrance of your breath like apples,
9 And the roof of your mouth like the best
wine.

**The Shulamite**

*The wine* goes *down* smoothly for my
beloved,
Moving gently the lips of sleepers.[a]
10 I *am* my beloved's,
And his desire *is* toward me.
11 Come, my beloved,
Let us go forth to the field;
Let us lodge in the villages.
12 Let us get up early
to the vineyards;
Let us see if the vine has budded,
*Whether* the grape blossoms are open,
*And* the pomegranates are in bloom.
There I will give you my love.
13 The mandrakes give off a fragrance,
And at our gates *are* pleasant *fruits,*
All manner, new and old,
Which I have laid up for you, my
beloved.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Oneness** *(7:6-12)* Throughout the Song of Solomon, the husband and wife exult in each other's physical attractiveness. These explicit descriptions of their love underscore the importance of the soul relationship and deep commitment of the couple to one another. Three times a form of the refrain is repeated: "My beloved is mine, and I am his" (2:16; 6:3; 7:10). When a man and a woman become one in marriage, the bond of intimacy will strengthen their relationship. Within the bonds of marriage, God approves of and

encourages sexual pleasure. **Topic:** **Sex in Marriage**

**8** Oh, that you were like my brother,
Who nursed at my mother's breasts!
*If* I should find you outside,
I would kiss you;
I would not be despised.

2 I would lead you *and* bring you
Into the house of my mother,
She *who* used to instruct me.
I would cause you to drink of spiced
wine,
Of the juice of my pomegranate.
**(To the Daughters of Jerusalem)**

3 His left hand *is* under my head,
And his right hand embraces me.
4 I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem,
Do not stir up nor awaken love
Until it pleases.

**LOVE RENEWED IN LEBANON**
**A Relative**

5 Who *is* this coming up from the
wilderness,
Leaning upon her beloved?

I awakened you under the apple tree.
There your mother brought you forth;
There she *who* bore you brought *you*
forth.

**The Shulamite to Her Beloved**

6 Set me as a seal upon your heart,
As a seal upon your arm;
For love *is as* strong as death,
Jealousy *as* cruel as the grave;[a]

Its flames *are* flames of fire,
A most vehement[b] flame.
7 Many waters cannot quench love,
Nor can the floods drown it.
If a man would give for love
All the wealth of his house,
It would be utterly despised.

**The Shulamite's Brothers**

8 We have a little sister,
And she has no breasts.
What shall we do for our sister
In the day when she is spoken for?
9 If she *is* a wall,
We will build upon her
A battlement of silver;
And if she *is* a door,
We will enclose her
With boards of cedar.

**The Shulamite**

10 I *am* a wall,
And my breasts like towers;
Then I became in his eyes
As one who found peace.
11 Solomon had a vineyard at Baal Hamon;
He leased the vineyard to keepers;
Everyone was to bring for its fruit
A thousand silver coins.

**(To Solomon)**

12 My own vineyard *is* before me.
You, O Solomon, *may have* a thousand,
And those who tend its fruit two
hundred.

**The Beloved**

13 You who dwell in the gardens,

The companions listen for your
voice-
Let me hear it!

**The Shulamite**

14 Make haste, my beloved,
And be like a gazelle
Or a young stag
On the mountains of spices.

> Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is as strong as death, jealousy as cruel as the grave; its flames are flames of fire, a most vehement flame.
> SONG OF SOLOMON 8:6

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# Isaiah

We see them often in cartoons, and occasionally in real life-stern preacher-prophet types calling people to “Repent!” A few onlookers smile. Most shake their heads. Does anyone listen? Should anyone listen?

This book, written by the prophet Isaiah, is the first of seventeen Old Testament prophetic books. Isaiah was a prophet to the southern kingdom of Judah. He was one of Jerusalem’s most prominent citizens, having access to both the royal family and the priestly leadership. His life and prophetic ministry spanned the rule of several kings.

Isaiah has sometimes been called the Old Testament “gospel” because of its messianic emphasis. The visions and language are lofty and majestic. Because God’s people were deep in sin and civic confusion, they faced judgment (described in chapters 1 through 39). However, God promised to deliver His people by sending a Messiah to reign in peace and righteousness (as described in chapters 40 through 66). The picture of Christ in Isaiah 53-the Innocent Lamb and Suffering Servant-is stunning, especially since the passage describes Him in such rich detail hundreds of years before His birth.

Like the other prophets, Isaiah reminds us that our actions have consequences. We cannot turn our hearts away from God and expect His blessings. The book also assures us that comfort and peace come when we repent-turn back to God. Ultimately, Isaiah foresaw a coming day of social justice, racial harmony, and astonishing prosperity in a world where the Messiah reigns in righteousness. That’s a message worth hearing!

**SOUL CONCERNS IN**

## ISAIAH

BURNOUT (40:31)

GRIEF/LOSS (53:3, 4)

COMPASSION (61:2)

**1** The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, *and* Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

## THE WICKEDNESS OF JUDAH

2 Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth!
For the LORD has spoken:
"I have nourished and brought up
children,
And they have rebelled against Me;
3 The ox knows its owner
And the donkey its master's crib;
*But* Israel does not know,
My people do not consider."
4 Alas, sinful nation,
A people laden with iniquity,
A brood of evildoers,
Children who are corrupters!
They have forsaken the LORD,
They have provoked to anger
The Holy One of Israel,
They have turned away backward.
5 Why should you be stricken again?
You will revolt more and more.
The whole head is sick,
And the whole heart faints.
6 From the sole of the foot even to the head,
*There is* no soundness in it,
*But* wounds and bruises and putrefying sores;
They have not been closed or bound up, Or soothed with ointment.

"Come now, and let us reason
together," says the LORD, "Though
your sins are like scarlet, they shall be
as white as snow; though they are red

like crimson, they shall be as wool."
ISAIAH 1:18

7 Your country *is* desolate,
Your cities *are* burned with fire;
Strangers devour your land in your presence;
And *it is* desolate, as overthrown by strangers.
8 So the daughter of Zion is left as a booth in a vineyard,
As a hut in a garden of cucumbers,
As a besieged city.
9 Unless the LORD of hosts
Had left to us a very small remnant,
We would have become like Sodom,
We would have been made like Gomorrah.
10 Hear the word of the LORD,
You rulers of Sodom;
Give ear to the law of our God,
You people of Gomorrah:
11 "To what purpose *is* the multitude of your sacrifices to Me?"
Says the LORD.
"I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams
And the fat of fed cattle.
I do not delight in the blood of bulls,
Or of lambs or goats.
12 "When you come to appear before Me,
Who has required this from your hand,
To trample My courts?
13 Bring no more futile sacrifices;
Incense is an abomination to Me.
The New Moons, the Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies-
I cannot endure iniquity and the sacred meeting.
14 Your New Moons and your appointed feasts
My soul hates;
They are a trouble to Me,
I am weary of bearing *them.*

15 When you spread out your hands,
I will hide My eyes from you;
Even though you make many prayers,
I will not hear.
Your hands are full of blood.
16 “Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean;
Put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes.
Cease to do evil,
17 Learn to do good;
Seek justice,
Rebuke the oppressor;[a]
Defend the fatherless,
Plead for the widow.
18 “Come now, and let us reason together,”
Says the LORD,
“Though your sins are like scarlet,
They shall be as white as snow;
Though they are red like crimson,
They shall be as wool.
19 If you are willing and obedient,
You shall eat the good of the land;
20 But if you refuse and rebel,
You shall be devoured by the sword”;
For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

## THE DEGENERATE CITY

21 How the faithful city has become a harlot!
It was full of justice;
Righteousness lodged in it,
But now murderers.
22 Your silver has become dross,
Your wine mixed with water.
23 Your princes *are* rebellious,
And companions of thieves;

Everyone loves bribes,
And follows after rewards.
They do not defend the fatherless,
Nor does the cause of the widow come before them.
24 Therefore the Lord says,
The LORD of hosts, the Mighty One of Israel,
“Ah, I will rid Myself of My adversaries,
And take vengeance on My enemies.
25 I will turn My hand against you,
And thoroughly purge away your dross,
And take away all your alloy.
26 I will restore your judges as at the first,
And your counselors as at the beginning.
Afterward you shall be called the city of
righteousness, the faithful city.”
27 Zion shall be redeemed with justice,
And her penitents with righteousness.
28 The destruction of transgressors and of sinners *shall be* together,
And those who forsake the LORD shall be consumed.
29 For they[a] shall be ashamed of the terebinth trees
Which you have desired;
And you shall be embarrassed because of the gardens
Which you have chosen.
30 For you shall be as a terebinth whose leaf fades,
And as a garden that has no water.
31 The strong shall be as tinder,
And the work of it as a spark;
Both will burn together,
And no one shall quench *them.*

## THE FUTURE HOUSE OF GOD

**2** The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

2 Now it shall come to pass in the latter days
*That* the mountain of the LORD's house
Shall be established on the top of the mountains,
And shall be exalted above the hills;
And all nations shall flow to it.
3 Many people shall come and say,
"Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,
To the house of the God of Jacob;
He will teach us His ways,
And we shall walk in His paths."
For out of Zion shall go forth the law,
And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.
4 He shall judge between the nations,
And rebuke many people;
They shall beat their swords into plowshares,
And their spears into pruning hooks;
Nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
Neither shall they learn war anymore.

## THE DAY OF THE LORD

5 O house of Jacob, come and let us walk
In the light of the LORD.
6 For You have forsaken Your people, the house of Jacob,
Because they are filled with eastern ways;
They *are* soothsayers like the Philistines,
And they are pleased with the children of foreigners.
7 Their land is also full of silver and gold,
And there is no end to their treasures;
Their land is also full of horses,
And there is no end to their chariots.

8 Their land is also full of idols;
They worship the work of their own hands,
That which their own fingers have made.
9 People bow down,
And each man humbles himself;
Therefore do not forgive them.
10 Enter into the rock, and hide in the dust,
From the terror of the LORD
And the glory of His majesty.
11 The lofty looks of man shall be humbled,
The haughtiness of men shall be bowed down,
And the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day.
12 For the day of the LORD of hosts
*Shall come* upon everything proud and lofty,
Upon everything lifted up-
And it shall be brought low-
13 Upon all the cedars of Lebanon *that are* high and lifted up,
And upon all the oaks of Bashan;
14 Upon all the high mountains,
And upon all the hills *that are* lifted up;
15 Upon every high tower,
And upon every fortified wall;
16 Upon all the ships of Tarshish,
And upon all the beautiful sloops.
17 The loftiness of man shall be bowed down,
And the haughtiness of men shall be brought low;
The LORD alone will be exalted in that day,
18 But the idols He shall utterly abolish.
19 They shall go into the holes of the rocks,
And into the caves of the earth,
From the terror of the LORD
And the glory of His majesty,
When He arises to shake the earth mightily.
20 In that day a man will cast away his idols of silver

And his idols of gold,
Which they made, *each* for himself to worship,
To the moles and bats,
21 To go into the clefts of the rocks,
And into the crags of the rugged rocks,
From the terror of the LORD
And the glory of His majesty,
When He arises to shake the earth mightily.
22 Sever yourselves from such a man,
Whose breath *is* in his nostrils;
For of what account is he?

## SOUL NOTE

**Peace Plan** *(2:4, 5)* How we long for peace in the world and in our homes! The Bible promises that one day all nations will live in peace when the Messiah reigns. The nations will turn their implements of war into implements of commerce: "Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore" (2:4). This wonderful offer of God's peace is our promise of hope in a broken world. Until that day, God encourages us to "walk in the light of the LORD" (2:5). We walk in light when we follow God's plan for righteous living and seek guidance from His Word. **Topic: God's Promises**

**JUDGMENT ON JUDAH AND JERUSALEM**

**3** For behold, the Lord, the LORD of hosts,
Takes away from Jerusalem and from Judah
The stock and the store,
The whole supply of bread and the whole supply of water;

2 The mighty man and the man of war,
The judge and the prophet,
And the diviner and the elder;
3 The captain of fifty and the honorable man,
The counselor and the skillful artisan,
And the expert enchanter.
4 "I will give children *to be* their princes,
And babes shall rule over them.
5 The people will be oppressed,
Every one by another and every one by his neighbor;
The child will be insolent toward the elder,
And the base toward the honorable."
6 When a man takes hold of his brother
In the house of his father, *saying,*
"You have clothing;
You be our ruler,
And *let* these ruins *be* under your power,"[a]
7 In that day he will protest, saying,
"I cannot cure *your* ills,
For in my house *is* neither food nor clothing;
Do not make me a ruler of the people."
8 For Jerusalem stumbled,
And Judah is fallen,
Because their tongue and their doings
*Are* against the LORD,
To provoke the eyes of His glory.
9 The look on their countenance witnesses against them,
And they declare their sin as Sodom;

They do not hide *it.*
Woe to their soul!
For they have brought evil upon themselves.
10 “Say to the righteous that *it shall be* well *with them,*
For they shall eat the fruit of their doings.
11 Woe to the wicked! *It shall be* ill *with him,*
For the reward of his hands shall be given him.
12 *As for* My people, children *are* their oppressors,
And women rule over them.
O My people! Those who lead you cause *you* to err,
And destroy the way of your paths.”

## OPPRESSION AND LUXURY CONDEMNED

13 The LORD stands up to plead,
And stands to judge the people.
14 The LORD will enter into judgment
With the elders of His people
And His princes:
“For you have eaten up the vineyard;
The plunder of the poor *is* in your houses.
15 What do you mean by crushing My people
And grinding the faces of the poor?”
Says the Lord GOD of hosts.
16 Moreover the LORD says:

“Because the daughters of Zion are haughty,
And walk with outstretched necks
And wanton eyes,
Walking and mincing *as* they go,
Making a jingling with their feet,

17 Therefore the Lord will strike with a scab
The crown of the head of the daughters of Zion,
And the LORD will uncover their secret parts.”
18 In that day the Lord will take away the finery:

The jingling anklets, the scarves, and the crescents;
19 The pendants, the bracelets, and the veils;
20 The headdresses, the leg ornaments, and the headbands;
The perfume boxes, the charms,
21 and the rings;
The nose jewels,
22 the festal apparel, and the mantles;
The outer garments, the purses,
23 and the mirrors;
The fine linen, the turbans, and the robes.
24 And so it shall be:

Instead of a sweet smell there will be a stench;
Instead of a sash, a rope;
Instead of well-set hair, baldness;
Instead of a rich robe, a girding of sackcloth;
And branding instead of beauty.

25 Your men shall fall by the sword,
And your mighty in the war.
26 Her gates shall lament and mourn,
And she *being* desolate shall sit on the ground.

**4** And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying,
"We will eat our own food and wear our own apparel;
Only let us be called by your name,
To take away our reproach."

**THE RENEWAL OF ZION**

[2] In that day the Branch of the LORD shall be beautiful and glorious;
And the fruit of the earth *shall be* excellent and appealing
For those of Israel who have escaped.

[3]And it shall come to pass that *he who is* left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy-everyone who is recorded among the living in Jerusalem. [4]When the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and purged the blood of Jerusalem from her midst, by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning, [5]then the LORD will create above every dwelling place of Mount Zion, and above her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day and the shining of a flaming fire by night. For over all the glory there *will be* a covering. [6]And there will be a tabernacle for shade in the daytime from the heat, for a place of refuge, and for a shelter from storm and rain.

## GOD'S DISAPPOINTING VINEYARD

5 Now let me sing to my Well-beloved
A song of my Beloved regarding His vineyard:
My Well-beloved has a vineyard
On a very fruitful hill.

2 He dug it up and cleared out its stones,
And planted it with the choicest vine.
He built a tower in its midst, And also made a winepress in it;
So He expected *it* to bring forth *good* grapes,
But it brought forth wild grapes.
3 "And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah,
Judge, please, between Me and My vineyard.
4 What more could have been done to My vineyard
That I have not done in it?
Why then, when I expected *it* to bring forth *good* grapes,
Did it bring forth wild grapes?
5 And now, please let Me tell you what I will do to My vineyard:
I will take away its hedge, and it shall be burned;
*And* break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down.
6 I will lay it waste;
It shall not be pruned or dug,
But there shall come up briers and thorns.
I will also command the clouds
That they rain no rain on it."
7 For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts *is* the house of Israel,
And the men of Judah are His pleasant plant.
He looked for justice, but behold, oppression;
For righteousness, but behold, a cry *for help.*

## IMPENDING JUDGMENT ON EXCESSES

8 Woe to those who join house to house;
They add field to field,
Till *there is* no place

Where they may dwell alone in the midst of the land!
9 In my hearing the LORD of hosts *said*,
"Truly, many houses shall be desolate,
Great and beautiful ones, without inhabitant.
10 For ten acres of vineyard shall yield one bath,
And a homer of seed shall yield one ephah."
11 Woe to those who rise early in the morning,
*That* they may follow intoxicating drink;
Who continue until night, *till* wine inflames them!
12 The harp and the strings,
The tambourine and flute,
And wine are in their feasts;
But they do not regard the work of the LORD,
Nor consider the operation of His hands.
13 Therefore my people have gone into captivity,
Because *they have* no knowledge;
Their honorable men *are* famished,
And their multitude dried up with thirst.
14 Therefore Sheol has enlarged itself
And opened its mouth beyond measure;
Their glory and their multitude and their pomp,
And he who is jubilant, shall descend into it.
15 People shall be brought down,
Each man shall be humbled,
And the eyes of the lofty shall be humbled.
16 But the LORD of hosts shall be exalted in judgment,
And God who is holy shall be hallowed in righteousness.
17 Then the lambs shall feed in their pasture,
And in the waste places of the fat ones strangers shall eat.
18 Woe to those who draw iniquity with cords of vanity,
And sin as if with a cart rope;
19 That say, "Let Him make speed *and* hasten His work,
That we may see *it;*
And let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw near and come,
That we may know *it.* "

20 Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil;
Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness;
Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!
21 Woe to *those who are* wise in their own eyes,
And prudent in their own sight!
22 Woe to men mighty at drinking wine,
Woe to men valiant for mixing intoxicating drink,
23 Who justify the wicked for a bribe,
And take away justice from the righteous man!
24 Therefore, as the fire devours the stubble,
And the flame consumes the chaff,
*So* their root will be as rottenness,
And their blossom will ascend like dust;
Because they have rejected the law of the LORD of hosts,
And despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.
25 Therefore the anger of the LORD is aroused against His people;
He has stretched out His hand against them
And stricken them,
And the hills trembled.
Their carcasses *were* as refuse in the midst of the streets.

For all this His anger is not turned away,
But His hand *is* stretched out still.

26 He will lift up a banner to the nations from afar,
And will whistle to them from the end of the earth;
Surely they shall come with speed, swiftly.
27 No one will be weary or stumble among them,
No one will slumber or sleep;
Nor will the belt on their loins be loosed,
Nor the strap of their sandals be broken;
28 Whose arrows *are* sharp,
And all their bows bent;
Their horses' hooves will seem like flint,
And their wheels like a whirlwind.

29 Their roaring *will be* like a lion,
They will roar like young lions;
Yes, they will roar
And lay hold of the prey;
They will carry *it* away safely,
And no one will deliver.
30 In that day they will roar against them
Like the roaring of the sea.
And if *one* looks to the land,
Behold, darkness *and* sorrow;
And the light is darkened by the clouds.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Hooked** *(5:11)* The prophet Isaiah warned of judgment ("woe") on those addicted to alcohol. He said that they are so dependent on it that they begin early in the morning and continue drinking until late at night. The tragedy of addiction is that it controls and dominates the desires and choices of the addicted. The even greater tragedy is the rejection by the addicted of the Lord's work in their lives: "They do not regard the work of the LORD, nor consider the operation of His hands" (5:12). God alone can provide the lasting comfort, joy, and relief that people mistakenly seek in alcohol. **Topic: Addictions**

## ISAIAH CALLED TO BE A PROPHET

**6** In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high
and lifted up, and the train of His *robe* filled the temple. [2]Above it stood
seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he
covered his feet, and with two he flew. [3]And one cried to another and said:

"Holy, holy, holy *is* the LORD of hosts;
The whole earth *is* full of His glory!"

[4]And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out,
and the house was filled with smoke.

[5]So I said:

"Woe *is* me, for I am undone!
Because I *am* a man of unclean lips,
And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips;
For my eyes have seen the King,
The LORD of hosts."

[6]Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal *which*
he had taken with the tongs from the altar. [7]And he touched my mouth *with*
*it*, and said:

"Behold, this has touched your lips;
Your iniquity is taken away,
And your sin purged."

[8]Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying:

"Whom shall I send,
And who will go for Us?"

Then I said, "Here *am* I! Send me."
[9]And He said, "Go, and tell this people:

‘Keep on hearing, but do not understand;
Keep on seeing, but do not perceive.’

10 “Make the heart of this people dull,
And their ears heavy,
And shut their eyes;
Lest they see with their eyes,
And hear with their ears,
And understand with their heart,
And return and be healed.”
11 Then I said, “Lord, how long?”
And He answered:

“Until the cities are laid waste and without inhabitant,
The houses are without a man,
The land is utterly desolate,

12 The LORD has removed men far away,
And the forsaken places *are* many in the midst of the land.
13 But yet a tenth *will be* in it,
And will return and be for consuming,
As a terebinth tree or as an oak,
Whose stump *remains* when it is cut down.
So the holy seed *shall be* its stump.”

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# ISAIAH-SET FREE FROM SIN

# (ISAIAH 6)

God is the master of the unexpected invasion, and He will use any tool at hand when He breaks through a person's defenses. The walls of arguments, excuses, and ignorance that often stand between people and God crumble under God's persistent grace. His purpose is neither to defeat nor to conquer. He wants to set us free. He knows that everything we use to try to keep God out actually only keeps us imprisoned within.

Sometimes God uses a personal crisis or someone else's troubles to get our attention. Occasionally, God uses a national crisis to prepare us for change. Such was the case with Isaiah.

The death of godly king Uzziah marked the end of an era for the nation of Judah. In that moment of crisis, the prophet Isaiah saw a new vision of God sitting on the throne of heaven. He was vividly reminded that God was still on the throne in spite of the nation's uncertain future.

Isaiah's ministry eventually spanned the reigns of several kings. But his personal preparation for ministry occurred when he faced God in all His holiness and himself in all his sinfulness. His pronouncement of "woe" (Is. 6:5) upon himself was a confession of sin. Because of his repentant heart, Isaiah received a beautiful sign of forgiveness from the Lord. In his vision of God's holiness, Isaiah saw one of the angels take a burning coal off the altar of heaven and place it upon his, Isaiah's, lips and announce that his sin had been purged.

Isaiah's acute awareness of sin was replaced by a grateful willingness to serve the God who had cleansed him. The Lord asked: "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" Isaiah responded, "Here am I! Send me" (Is. 6:8). Our willingness to serve God and others will be deeply influenced by the degree to which we have received God's gracious work in our lives. If our defenses have fallen and we have been set free, we will want to be put to work just like

Isaiah. Forgiveness liberates us to be useful to the Lord.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about sin Victorious Living. See also the key passage note at 1 John 1:9.

## ISAIAH SENT TO KING AHAZ

7 Now it came to pass in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, the son of
Uzziah, king of Judah, *that* Rezin king of Syria and Pekah the son of
Remaliah, king of Israel, went up to Jerusalem to *make* war against it, but
could not prevail against it. 2And it was told to the house of David, saying,
"Syria's forces are deployed in Ephraim." So his heart and the heart of his
people were moved as the trees of the woods are moved with the wind.

3Then the LORD said to Isaiah, "Go out now to meet Ahaz, you and Shear-
Jashub[a] your son, at the end of the aqueduct from the upper pool, on the
highway to the Fuller's Field, 4and say to him: 'Take heed, and be quiet; do
not fear or be fainthearted for these two stubs of smoking firebrands, for the
fierce anger of Rezin and Syria, and the son of Remaliah. 5Because Syria,
Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah have plotted evil against you, saying, 6"Let
us go up against Judah and trouble it, and let us make a gap in its wall for
ourselves, and set a king over them, the son of Tabel"- 7thus says the Lord
GOD:

"It shall not stand,
Nor shall it come to pass.

8 For the head of Syria *is* Damascus,
And the head of Damascus *is* Rezin.
Within sixty-five years Ephraim will be broken,
*So that it will* not *be* a people.
9 The head of Ephraim *is* Samaria,
And the head of Samaria *is* Remaliah's son.
If you will not believe,
Surely you shall not be established." ' "

## THE IMMANUEL PROPHECY

10Moreover the LORD spoke again to Ahaz, saying, 11"Ask a sign for
yourself from the LORD your God; ask it either in the depth or in the height
above."

12 But Ahaz said, “I will not ask, nor will I test the LORD!”

13 Then he said, “Hear now, O house of David! *Is it* a small thing for you to
weary men, but will you weary my God also? 14 Therefore the Lord Himself
will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and
shall call His name Immanuel.[a] 15 Curds and honey He shall eat, that He may
know to refuse the evil and choose the good. 16 For before the Child shall
know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land that you dread will be
forsaken by both her kings. 17 The LORD will bring the king of Assyria upon
you and your people and your father’s house-days that have not come since
the day that Ephraim departed from Judah.”

18 And it shall come to pass in that day
*That* the LORD will whistle for the fly
That *is* in the farthest part of the rivers of Egypt,
And for the bee that *is* in the land of Assyria.
19 They will come, and all of them will rest
In the desolate valleys and in the clefts of the rocks,
And on all thorns and in all pastures.
20 In the same day the Lord will shave with a hired razor,
With those from beyond the River,[a] with the king of Assyria,
The head and the hair of the legs,
And will also remove the beard.
21 It shall be in that day
*That* a man will keep alive a young cow and two sheep;
22 So it shall be, from the abundance of milk they give,
That he will eat curds;
For curds and honey everyone will eat who is left in the land.
23 It shall happen in that day,
*That* wherever there could be a thousand vines
*Worth* a thousand *shekels* of silver,
It will be for briers and thorns.
24 With arrows and bows men will come there,
Because all the land will become briers and thorns.
25 And to any hill which could be dug with the hoe,
You will not go there for fear of briers and thorns;

But it will become a range for oxen
And a place for sheep to roam.

**SOUL NOTE**

**With Us** *(7:14)* When King Ahaz refused to ask God for a sign of His promises, the prophet Isaiah announced that God would give His own sign to the "house of David" (the messianic line, 7:13). God promised that a virgin would bear a Son whose name, Immanuel, means "God with us." Matthew quoted this passage as being fulfilled in the miraculous virgin birth of Jesus Christ (Matt. 1:23). The coming of Christ shows that God keeps His promises to be with us personally and permanently. **Topic: God's Promises**

## ASSYRIA WILL INVADE THE LAND

**8** Moreover the LORD said to me, “Take a large scroll, and write on it with a
man’s pen concerning Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz.[a] 2And I will take for
Myself faithful witnesses to record, Uriah the priest and Zechariah the son of
Jeberechiah.”

3Then I went to the prophetess, and she conceived and bore a son. Then the
LORD said to me, “Call his name Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz; 4for before the
child shall have knowledge to cry ‘My father’ and ‘My mother,’ the riches of
Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be taken away before the king of
Assyria.”

5The LORD also spoke to me again, saying:

6 “Inasmuch as these people refused
The waters of Shiloah that flow softly,
And rejoice in Rezin and in Remaliah’s son;
7 Now therefore, behold, the Lord brings up over them
The waters of the River,[a] strong and mighty-
The king of Assyria and all his glory;
He will go up over all his channels
And go over all his banks.
8 He will pass through Judah,
He will overflow and pass over,
He will reach up to the neck;
And the stretching out of his wings
Will fill the breadth of Your land, O Immanuel.[a]
9 “Be shattered, O you peoples, and be broken in pieces!
Give ear, all you from far countries.
Gird yourselves, but be broken in pieces;
Gird yourselves, but be broken in pieces.
10 Take counsel together, but it will come to nothing;
Speak the word, but it will not stand,
For God *is* with us.”[a]

**FEAR GOD, HEED HIS WORD**

11 For the LORD spoke thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me that
I should not walk in the way of this people, saying:

12 "Do not say, 'A conspiracy,'
Concerning all that this people call a conspiracy,
Nor be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled.
13 The LORD of hosts, Him you shall hallow;
*Let* Him *be* your fear,
And *let* Him *be* your dread.
14 He will be as a sanctuary,
But a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense
To both the houses of Israel,
As a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.
15 And many among them shall stumble;
They shall fall and be broken,
Be snared and taken."
16 Bind up the testimony,
Seal the law among my disciples.
17 And I will wait on the LORD,
Who hides His face from the house of Jacob;
And I will hope in Him.
18 Here am I and the children whom the LORD has given me!
*We* are for signs and wonders in Israel
From the LORD of hosts,
Who dwells in Mount Zion.

19 And when they say to you, "Seek those who are mediums and wizards,
who whisper and mutter," should not a people seek their God? *Should they seek* the dead on behalf of the living? 20 To the law and to the testimony! If
they do not speak according to this word, *it is* because *there is* no light in
them.

21 They will pass through it hard-pressed and hungry; and it shall happen,
when they are hungry, that they will be enraged and curse their king and their
God, and look upward. 22 Then they will look to the earth, and see trouble and
darkness, gloom of anguish; and *they will be* driven into darkness.

**THE GOVERNMENT OF THE PROMISED SON**

**9** Nevertheless the gloom *will* not *be* upon her who *is* distressed,
As when at first He lightly esteemed
The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali,
And afterward more heavily oppressed *her,*
*By* the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan,
In Galilee of the Gentiles.

2 The people who walked in darkness
Have seen a great light;
Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death,
Upon them a light has shined.
3 You have multiplied the nation
*And* increased its joy;[a]
They rejoice before You
According to the joy of harvest,
As *men* rejoice when they divide the spoil.

> For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
> ISAIAH 9:6

4 For You have broken the yoke of his burden
And the staff of his shoulder,
The rod of his oppressor,
As in the day of Midian.
5 For every warrior's sandal from the noisy battle,
And garments rolled in blood,
Will be used for burning *and* fuel of fire.
6 For unto us a Child is born,
Unto us a Son is given;

And the government will be upon His shoulder.
And His name will be called
Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
7 Of the increase of *His* government and peace
*There will be* no end,
Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom,
To order it and establish it with judgment and justice
From that time forward, even forever.
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

## THE PUNISHMENT OF SAMARIA

8 The Lord sent a word against Jacob,
And it has fallen on Israel.
9 All the people will know-
Ephraim and the inhabitant of Samaria-
Who say in pride and arrogance of heart:
10 "The bricks have fallen down,
But we will rebuild with hewn stones;
The sycamores are cut down,
But we will replace *them* with cedars."
11 Therefore the LORD shall set up
The adversaries of Rezin against him,
And spur his enemies on,
12 The Syrians before and the Philistines behind;
And they shall devour Israel with an open mouth.

For all this His anger is not turned away,
But His hand *is* stretched out still.

13 For the people do not turn to Him who strikes them,
Nor do they seek the LORD of hosts.
14 Therefore the LORD will cut off head and tail from Israel,
Palm branch and bulrush in one day.
15 The elder and honorable, he *is* the head;

The prophet who teaches lies, he *is* the tail.
16 For the leaders of this people cause *them* to err,
And *those who are* led by them are destroyed.
17 Therefore the Lord will have no joy in their young men,
Nor have mercy on their fatherless and widows;
For everyone *is* a hypocrite and an evildoer,
And every mouth speaks folly.

For all this His anger is not turned away,
But His hand *is* stretched out still.

18 For wickedness burns as the fire;
It shall devour the briers and thorns,
And kindle in the thickets of the forest;
They shall mount up *like* rising smoke.
19 Through the wrath of the LORD of hosts
The land is burned up,
And the people shall be as fuel for the fire;
No man shall spare his brother.
20 And he shall snatch on the right hand
And be hungry;
He shall devour on the left hand
And not be satisfied;
Every man shall eat the flesh of his own arm.
21 Manasseh *shall devour* Ephraim, and Ephraim Manasseh;
Together they *shall be* against Judah.

For all this His anger is not turned away,
But His hand *is* stretched out still.

**10** “Woe to those who decree unrighteous decrees,
Who write misfortune,
*Which* they have prescribed

2 To rob the needy of justice,
And to take what is right from the poor of My people,
That widows may be their prey,
And *that* they may rob the fatherless.
3 What will you do in the day of punishment,
And in the desolation *which* will come from afar?
To whom will you flee for help?
And where will you leave your glory?
4 Without Me they shall bow down among the prisoners,
And they shall fall among the slain.”
For all this His anger is not turned away,
But His hand *is* stretched out still.

**ARROGANT ASSYRIA ALSO JUDGED**

5 “Woe to Assyria, the rod of My anger
And the staff in whose hand is My indignation.
6 I will send him against an ungodly nation,
And against the people of My wrath
I will give him charge,
To seize the spoil, to take the prey,
And to tread them down like the mire of the streets.
7 Yet he does not mean so,
Nor does his heart think so;
But *it is* in his heart to destroy,
And cut off not a few nations.
8 For he says,
‘*Are* not my princes altogether kings?
9 *Is* not Calno like Carchemish?
*Is* not Hamath like Arpad?
*Is* not Samaria like Damascus?
10 As my hand has found the kingdoms of the idols,

Whose carved images excelled those of Jerusalem and Samaria,
11 As I have done to Samaria and her idols,
Shall I not do also to Jerusalem and her idols?' "
12 Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Lord has performed all His
work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, *that He will say,* "I will punish
the fruit of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his
haughty looks."
13 For he says:

"By the strength of my hand I have done *it,*
And by my wisdom, for I am prudent;
Also I have removed the boundaries of the people,
And have robbed their treasuries;
So I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant *man.*

14 My hand has found like a nest the riches of the people,
And as one gathers eggs *that are* left,
I have gathered all the earth;
And there was no one who moved *his* wing,
Nor opened *his* mouth with even a peep."
15 Shall the ax boast itself against him who chops with it?
*Or* shall the saw exalt itself against him who saws with it?
As if a rod could wield *itself* against those who lift it up,
*Or* as if a staff could lift up, *as if it were* not wood!
16 Therefore the Lord, the Lord[a] of hosts,
Will send leanness among his fat ones;
And under his glory
He will kindle a burning
Like the burning of a fire.
17 So the Light of Israel will be for a fire,
And his Holy One for a flame;
It will burn and devour
His thorns and his briers in one day.
18 And it will consume the glory of his forest and of his fruitful field,
Both soul and body;

And they will be as when a sick man wastes away.
19 Then the rest of the trees of his forest
Will be so few in number
That a child may write them.

## THE RETURNING REMNANT OF ISRAEL

20 And it shall come to pass in that day
*That* the remnant of Israel,
And such as have escaped of the house of Jacob,
Will never again depend on him who defeated them,
But will depend on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth.
21 The remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob,
To the Mighty God.
22 For though your people, O Israel, be as the sand of the sea,
A remnant of them will return;
The destruction decreed shall overflow with righteousness.
23 For the Lord GOD of hosts
Will make a determined end
In the midst of all the land.

24 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD of hosts: "O My people, who dwell in Zion, do not be afraid of the Assyrian. He shall strike you with a rod and lift up his staff against you, in the manner of Egypt. 25 For yet a very little while and the indignation will cease, as will My anger in their destruction." 26 And the LORD of hosts will stir up a scourge for him like the slaughter of Midian at the rock of Oreb; *as* His rod was on the sea, so will He lift it up in the manner of Egypt.

27 It shall come to pass in that day
*That* his burden will be taken away from your shoulder,
And his yoke from your neck,
And the yoke will be destroyed because of the anointing oil.
28 He has come to Aiath,
He has passed Migron;
At Michmash he has attended to his equipment.
29 They have gone along the ridge,

They have taken up lodging at Geba.
Ramah is afraid,
Gibeah of Saul has fled.
30 Lift up your voice,
O daughter of Gallim!
Cause it to be heard as far as Laish-
O poor Anathoth![a]
31 Madmenah has fled,
The inhabitants of Gebim seek refuge.
32 As yet he will remain at Nob that day;
He will shake his fist at the mount of the daughter of Zion,
The hill of Jerusalem.
33 Behold, the Lord,
The LORD of hosts,
Will lop off the bough with terror;
Those of high stature *will be* hewn down,
And the haughty will be humbled.
34 He will cut down the thickets of the forest with iron,
And Lebanon will fall by the Mighty One.

## THE REIGN OF JESSE'S OFFSPRING

**11** There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse,
And a Branch shall grow out of his roots.

2 The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him,
The Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
The Spirit of counsel and might,
The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.
3 His delight *is* in the fear of the LORD,
And He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes,
Nor decide by the hearing of His ears;
4 But with righteousness He shall judge the poor,
And decide with equity for the meek of the earth;
He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth,
And with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked.
5 Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins,
And faithfulness the belt of His waist.
6 "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb,
The leopard shall lie down with the young goat,
The calf and the young lion and the fatling together;
And a little child shall lead them.
7 The cow and the bear shall graze;
Their young ones shall lie down together;
And the lion shall eat straw like the ox.
8 The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole,
And the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den.
9 They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain,
For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD
As the waters cover the sea.
10 "And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse,
Who shall stand as a banner to the people;
For the Gentiles shall seek Him,
And His resting place shall be glorious."
11 It shall come to pass in that day

*That* the Lord shall set His hand again the second time
To recover the remnant of His people who are left,
From Assyria and Egypt,
From Pathros and Cush,
From Elam and Shinar,
From Hamath and the islands of the sea.
12 He will set up a banner for the nations,
And will assemble the outcasts of Israel,
And gather together the dispersed of Judah
From the four corners of the earth.
13 Also the envy of Ephraim shall depart,
And the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off;
Ephraim shall not envy Judah,
And Judah shall not harass Ephraim.
14 But they shall fly down upon the shoulder of the Philistines toward the west;
Together they shall plunder the people of the East;
They shall lay their hand on Edom and Moab;
And the people of Ammon shall obey them.
15 The LORD will utterly destroy[a] the tongue of the Sea of Egypt;
With His mighty wind He will shake His fist over the River,[b]
And strike it in the seven streams,
And make *men* cross over dryshod.
16 There will be a highway for the remnant of His people
Who will be left from Assyria,
As it was for Israel
In the day that he came up from the land of Egypt.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Branching Out** *(11:1, 2)* Isaiah referred to the Messiah as the Branch

(see also 4:2) that would grow from the family line of King David. While David's line was still on the throne, it was cut down like a tree. God never left His people without hope, however. God promised a day when David's family line would sprout and blossom in a new way. When Jesus was born, the angel announced, "The Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David" (Luke 1:32). God's promises provide a ray of light even when life seems darkest. **Topic: God's Promises**

**A HYMN OF PRAISE**

**12** And in that day you will say:

"O LORD, I will praise You;
Though You were angry with me,
Your anger is turned away, and You comfort me.
2 Behold, God *is* my salvation,
I will trust and not be afraid;
'For YAH, the LORD, *is* my strength and song;
He also has become my salvation.' "[a]

> "Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid; 'For YAH, the LORD, is my strength and song; He also has become my salvation.' "
> ISAIAH 12:2

3 Therefore with joy you will draw water
From the wells of salvation.
4 And in that day you will say:

"Praise the LORD, call upon His name;
Declare His deeds among the peoples,
Make mention that His name is exalted.

5 Sing to the LORD,
For He has done excellent things;
This *is* known in all the earth.
6 Cry out and shout, O inhabitant of Zion,
For great *is* the Holy One of Israel in your midst!"

## PROCLAMATION AGAINST BABYLON

**13** The burden against Babylon which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw.

2 “Lift up a banner on the high mountain,
Raise your voice to them;
Wave your hand, that they may enter the gates of the nobles.
3 I have commanded My sanctified ones;
I have also called My mighty ones for My anger-
Those who rejoice in My exaltation.”
4 The noise of a multitude in the mountains,
Like that of many people!
A tumultuous noise of the kingdoms of nations gathered together!
The LORD of hosts musters The army for battle.
5 They come from a far country,
From the end of heaven-
The LORD and His weapons of indignation,
To destroy the whole land.
6 Wail, for the day of the LORD *is* at hand!
It will come as destruction from the Almighty.
7 Therefore all hands will be limp,
Every man’s heart will melt,
8 And they will be afraid.
Pangs and sorrows will take hold of *them;*
They will be in pain as a woman in childbirth;
They will be amazed at one another;
Their faces *will be like* flames.
9 Behold, the day of the LORD comes,
Cruel, with both wrath and fierce anger,
To lay the land desolate;
And He will destroy its sinners from it.
10 For the stars of heaven and their constellations
Will not give their light;
The sun will be darkened in its going forth,
And the moon will not cause its light to shine.

11 “I will punish the world for *its* evil,
And the wicked for their iniquity;
I will halt the arrogance of the proud,
And will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible.
12 I will make a mortal more rare than fine gold,
A man more than the golden wedge of Ophir.
13 Therefore I will shake the heavens,
And the earth will move out of her place,
In the wrath of the LORD of hosts
And in the day of His fierce anger.
14 It shall be as the hunted gazelle,
And as a sheep that no man takes up;
Every man will turn to his own people,
And everyone will flee to his own land.
15 Everyone who is found will be thrust through,
And everyone who is captured will fall by the sword.
16 Their children also will be dashed to pieces before their eyes;
Their houses will be plundered
And their wives ravished.
17 “Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them,
Who will not regard silver;
And *as for* gold, they will not delight in it.
18 Also *their* bows will dash the young men to pieces,
And they will have no pity on the fruit of the womb;
Their eye will not spare children.
19 And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms,
The beauty of the Chaldeans’ pride,
Will be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.
20 It will never be inhabited,
Nor will it be settled from generation to generation;
Nor will the Arabian pitch tents there,
Nor will the shepherds make their sheepfolds there.
21 But wild beasts of the desert will lie there,
And their houses will be full of owls;
Ostriches will dwell there,

And wild goats will caper there.
22 The hyenas will howl in their citadels,
And jackals in their pleasant palaces.
Her time *is* near to come,
And her days will not be prolonged.”

## MERCY ON JACOB

**14** For the LORD will have mercy on Jacob, and will still choose Israel, and
settle them in their own land. The strangers will be joined with them, and
they will cling to the house of Jacob. 2Then people will take them and bring
them to their place, and the house of Israel will possess them for servants and
maids in the land of the LORD; they will take them captive whose captives
they were, and rule over their oppressors.

## FALL OF THE KING OF BABYLON

3It shall come to pass in the day the LORD gives you rest from your sorrow,
and from your fear and the hard bondage in which you were made to serve,
4that you will take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say:

"How the oppressor has ceased,
The golden[a] city ceased!
5 The LORD has broken the staff of the wicked,
The scepter of the rulers;
6 He who struck the people in wrath with a continual stroke,
He who ruled the nations in anger,
Is persecuted *and* no one hinders.
7 The whole earth is at rest *and* quiet;
They break forth into singing.
8 Indeed the cypress trees rejoice over you,
*And* the cedars of Lebanon,
*Saying*, 'Since you were cut down,
No woodsman has come up against us.'
9 "Hell from beneath is excited about you,
To meet *you* at your coming;
It stirs up the dead for you,
All the chief ones of the earth;
It has raised up from their thrones
All the kings of the nations.
10 They all shall speak and say to you:
'Have you also become as weak as we?

Have you become like us?
11 Your pomp is brought down to Sheol,
*And* the sound of your stringed instruments;
The maggot is spread under you,
And worms cover you.’

**THE FALL OF LUCIFER**

12 “How you are fallen from heaven,
O Lucifer,[a] son of the morning!
*How* you are cut down to the ground,
You who weakened the nations!
13 For you have said in your heart:
‘ I will ascend into heaven,
I will exalt my throne above the stars of God;
I will also sit on the mount of the congregation
On the farthest sides of the north;
14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds,
I will be like the Most High.’
15 Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol,
To the lowest depths of the Pit.
16 “Those who see you will gaze at you,
*And* consider you, *saying:*
‘ *Is* this the man who made the earth tremble,
Who shook kingdoms,
17 Who made the world as a wilderness
And destroyed its cities,
*Who* did not open the house of his prisoners?’
18 “All the kings of the nations,
All of them, sleep in glory,
Everyone in his own house;
19 But you are cast out of your grave
Like an abominable branch,
*Like* the garment of those who are slain,
Thrust through with a sword,

Who go down to the stones of the pit,
Like a corpse trodden underfoot.
20 You will not be joined with them in burial,
Because you have destroyed your land
*And* slain your people.
The brood of evildoers shall never be named.
21 Prepare slaughter for his children
Because of the iniquity of their fathers,
Lest they rise up and possess the land,
And fill the face of the world with cities."

## BABYLON DESTROYED

22 "For I will rise up against them," says the LORD of hosts,
"And cut off from Babylon the name and remnant,
And offspring and posterity," says the LORD.
23 "I will also make it a possession for the porcupine,
And marshes of muddy water;
I will sweep it with the broom of destruction," says the LORD of hosts.

## ASSYRIA DESTROYED

24 The LORD of hosts has sworn, saying,
"Surely, as I have thought, so it shall come to pass,
And as I have purposed, *so* it shall stand:
25 That I will break the Assyrian in My land,
And on My mountains tread him underfoot.
Then his yoke shall be removed from them,
And his burden removed from their shoulders.
26 This *is* the purpose that is purposed against the whole earth,
And this *is* the hand that is stretched out over all the nations.
27 For the LORD of hosts has purposed,
And who will annul *it?*
His hand *is* stretched out,
And who will turn it back?"

## PHILISTIA DESTROYED

28 This is the burden which came in the year that King Ahaz died.

29 “Do not rejoice, all you of Philistia,
Because the rod that struck you is broken;
For out of the serpent’s roots will come forth a viper,
And its offspring *will be* a fiery flying serpent.
30 The firstborn of the poor will feed,
And the needy will lie down in safety;
I will kill your roots with famine,
And it will slay your remnant.
31 Wail, O gate! Cry, O city!
All you of Philistia *are* dissolved;
For smoke will come from the north,
And no one *will be* alone in his appointed times.”
32 What will they answer the messengers of the nation?
That the LORD has founded Zion,
And the poor of His people shall take refuge in it.

### SOUL NOTE

**The Winning Team** *(14:12-15)* Although Isaiah’s message was directed against the king of Babylon, many believe the imagery parallels the fall of Satan. The Evil One may have power on earth for a brief time, but God’s judgment upon him has already been determined. Satan started as a great angel, and fell from his lofty position in heaven because of his pride. He sought to “be like the Most High,” but God said he “shall be brought down to Sheol, to the lowest depths of the Pit” (14:14, 15). As we fight battles against evil, we must remember that the war has already been won. **Topic: Spiritual Warfare**

**PROCLAMATION AGAINST MOAB**

**15** The burden against Moab.
Because in the night Ar of Moab is laid waste
*And* destroyed,
Because in the night Kir of Moab is laid waste
*And* destroyed,

2 He has gone up to the temple[a] and Dibon,
To the high places to weep.
Moab will wail over Nebo and over Medeba;
On all their heads *will be* baldness,
*And* every beard cut off.
3 In their streets they will clothe themselves with sackcloth;
On the tops of their houses
And in their streets
Everyone will wail, weeping bitterly.
4 Heshbon and Elealeh will cry out,
Their voice shall be heard as far as Jahaz;
Therefore the armed soldiers[a] of Moab will cry out;
His life will be burdensome to him.
5 "My heart will cry out for Moab;
His fugitives *shall flee* to Zoar,
*Like* a three-year-old heifer.[a]
For by the Ascent of Luhith They will go up with weeping;
For in the way of Horonaim
They will raise up a cry of destruction,
6 For the waters of Nimrim will be desolate,
For the green grass has withered away;
The grass fails, there is nothing green.
7 Therefore the abundance they have gained,
And what they have laid up,
They will carry away to the Brook of the Willows.
8 For the cry has gone all around the borders of Moab,
Its wailing to Eglaim

And its wailing to Beer Elim.
9 For the waters of Dimon[a] will be full of blood;
Because I will bring more upon Dimon,[b]
Lions upon him who escapes from Moab,
And on the remnant of the land.”

**MOAB DESTROYED**

**16** Send the lamb to the ruler of the land,
From Sela to the wilderness,
To the mount of the daughter of Zion.

2 For it shall be as a wandering bird thrown out of the nest;
*So* shall be the daughters of Moab at the fords of the Arnon.
3 “Take counsel, execute judgment;
Make your shadow like the night in the middle of the day;
Hide the outcasts,
Do not betray him who escapes.
4 Let My outcasts dwell with you, O Moab;
Be a shelter to them from the face of the spoiler.
For the extortioner is at an end,
Devastation ceases,
The oppressors are consumed out of the land.
5 In mercy the throne will be established;
And One will sit on it in truth, in the tabernacle of David,
Judging and seeking justice and hastening righteousness.”
6 We have heard of the pride of Moab-
*He is* very proud-
Of his haughtiness and his pride and his wrath;
*But* his lies *shall* not *be* so.
7 Therefore Moab shall wail for Moab;
Everyone shall wail.
For the foundations of Kir Hareseth you shall mourn;
Surely *they are* stricken.
8 For the fields of Heshbon languish, *And* the vine of Sibmah;
The lords of the nations have broken down its choice plants,
Which have reached to Jazer
And wandered through the wilderness.
Her branches are stretched out,
They are gone over the sea.
9 Therefore I will bewail the vine of Sibmah,

With the weeping of Jazer;
I will drench you with my tears,
O Heshbon and Elealeh;
For battle cries have fallen
Over your summer fruits and your harvest.
10 Gladness is taken away,
And joy from the plentiful field;
In the vineyards there will be no singing,
Nor will there be shouting;
No treaders will tread out wine in the presses;
I have made their shouting cease.
11 Therefore my heart shall resound like a harp for Moab,
And my inner being for Kir Heres.
12 And it shall come to pass,
When it is seen that Moab is weary on the high place,
That he will come to his sanctuary to pray;
But he will not prevail.
13 This *is* the word which the LORD has spoken concerning Moab since that time. 14 But now the LORD has spoken, saying, “Within three years, as the years of a hired man, the glory of Moab will be despised with all that great multitude, and the remnant *will be* very small *and* feeble.”

## PROCLAMATION AGAINST SYRIA AND ISRAEL

**17** The burden against Damascus.
"Behold, Damascus will cease from *being* a city,
And it will be a ruinous heap.

2 The cities of Aroer *are* forsaken;[a]
They will be for flocks
Which lie down, and no one will make *them* afraid.
3 The fortress also will cease from Ephraim,
The kingdom from Damascus, And the remnant of Syria;
They will be as the glory of the children of Israel,"
Says the LORD of hosts.
4 "In that day it shall come to pass
*That* the glory of Jacob will wane,
And the fatness of his flesh grow lean.
5 It shall be as when the harvester gathers the grain,
And reaps the heads with his arm;
It shall be as he who gathers heads of grain
In the Valley of Rephaim.
6 Yet gleaning grapes will be left in it,
Like the shaking of an olive tree,
Two *or* three olives at the top of the uppermost bough,
Four *or* five in its most fruitful branches,"
Says the LORD God of Israel.
7 In that day a man will look to his Maker,
And his eyes will have respect for the Holy One of Israel.
8 He will not look to the altars,
The work of his hands;
He will not respect what his fingers have made,
Nor the wooden images[a] nor the incense altars.
9 In that day his strong cities will be as a forsaken bough[a]
And an uppermost branch,[b]
Which they left because of the children of Israel;
And there will be desolation.

10 Because you have forgotten the God of your salvation,
And have not been mindful of the Rock of your stronghold,
Therefore you will plant pleasant plants
And set out foreign seedlings;
11 In the day you will make your plant to grow,
And in the morning you will make your seed to flourish;
*But* the harvest *will be* a heap of ruins
In the day of grief and desperate sorrow.
12 Woe to the multitude of many people
*Who* make a noise like the roar of the seas,
And to the rushing of nations
*That* make a rushing like the rushing of mighty waters!
13 The nations will rush like the rushing of many waters;
But *God* will rebuke them and they will flee far away,
And be chased like the chaff of the mountains before the wind,
Like a rolling thing before the whirlwind.
14 Then behold, at eventide, trouble!
*And* before the morning, he *is* no more.
This *is* the portion of those who plunder us,
And the lot of those who rob us.

## PROCLAMATION AGAINST ETHIOPIA

**18** Woe to the land shadowed with buzzing wings,
Which *is* beyond the rivers of Ethiopia,

2 Which sends ambassadors by sea,
Even in vessels of reed on the waters, *saying,*
"Go, swift messengers, to a nation tall and smooth *of skin,*
To a people terrible from their beginning onward,
A nation powerful and treading down,
Whose land the rivers divide."

3 All inhabitants of the world and dwellers on the earth:
When he lifts up a banner on the mountains, you see *it;*
And when he blows a trumpet, you hear *it.*

4 For so the LORD said to me,
"I will take My rest,
And I will look from My dwelling place
Like clear heat in sunshine,
Like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest."

5 For before the harvest, when the bud is perfect
And the sour grape is ripening in the flower,
He will both cut off the sprigs with pruning hooks
And take away *and* cut down the branches.

6 They will be left together for the mountain birds of prey
And for the beasts of the earth;
The birds of prey will summer on them,
And all the beasts of the earth will winter on them.

7 In that time a present will be brought to the LORD of hosts
From[a] a people tall and smooth *of skin,*
And from a people terrible from their beginning onward,
A nation powerful and treading down,
Whose land the rivers divide-
To the place of the name of the LORD of hosts,
To Mount Zion.

## PROCLAMATION AGAINST EGYPT

**19** The burden against Egypt.
Behold, the LORD rides on a swift cloud,
And will come into Egypt;
The idols of Egypt will totter at His presence,
And the heart of Egypt will melt in its midst.

2 "I will set Egyptians against Egyptians;
Everyone will fight against his brother,
And everyone against his neighbor,
City against city, kingdom against kingdom.
3 The spirit of Egypt will fail in its midst;
I will destroy their counsel,
And they will consult the idols and the charmers,
The mediums and the sorcerers.
4 And the Egyptians I will give
Into the hand of a cruel master,
And a fierce king will rule over them,"
Says the Lord, the LORD of hosts.
5 The waters will fail from the sea,
And the river will be wasted and dried up.
6 The rivers will turn foul;
The brooks of defense will be emptied and dried up;
The reeds and rushes will wither.
7 The papyrus reeds by the River,[a] by the mouth of the River,
And everything sown by the River,
Will wither, be driven away, and be no more.
8 The fishermen also will mourn;
All those will lament who cast hooks into the River,
And they will languish who spread nets on the waters.
9 Moreover those who work in fine flax And those who weave fine fabric
will be ashamed;
10 And its foundations will be broken.
All who make wages *will be* troubled of soul.

11 Surely the princes of Zoan *are* fools;
Pharaoh's wise counselors give foolish counsel.
How do you say to Pharaoh, "I *am* the son of the wise,
The son of ancient kings?"
12 Where *are* they?
Where are your wise men?
Let them tell you now,
And let them know what the LORD of hosts has purposed against Egypt.
13 The princes of Zoan have become fools;
The princes of Noph[a] are deceived;
They have also deluded Egypt, *Those who are* the mainstay of its tribes.
14 The LORD has mingled a perverse spirit in her midst;
And they have caused Egypt to err in all her work,
As a drunken man staggers in his vomit.
15 Neither will there be *any* work for Egypt,
Which the head or tail,
Palm branch or bulrush, may do.[a]
16 In that day Egypt will be like women, and will be afraid and fear because of the waving of the hand of the LORD of hosts, which He waves over it. 17 And the land of Judah will be a terror to Egypt; everyone who makes mention of it will be afraid in himself, because of the counsel of the LORD of hosts which He has determined against it.

## EGYPT, ASSYRIA, AND ISRAEL BLESSED

18 In that day five cities in the land of Egypt will speak the language of Canaan and swear by the LORD of hosts; one will be called the City of Destruction.[a]

19 In that day there will be an altar to the LORD in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar to the LORD at its border. 20 And it will be for a sign and for a witness to the LORD of hosts in the land of Egypt; for they will cry to the LORD because of the oppressors, and He will send them a Savior and a Mighty One, and He will deliver them. 21 Then the LORD will be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians will know the LORD in that day, and will make sacrifice and offering; yes, they will make a vow to the LORD and perform *it.*

22 And the LORD will strike Egypt, He will strike and heal *it;* they will return
to the LORD, and He will be entreated by them and heal them.

23 In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria, and the
Assyrian will come into Egypt and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the
Egyptians will serve with the Assyrians.

24 In that day Israel will be one of three with Egypt and Assyria-a blessing
in the midst of the land, 25 whom the LORD of hosts shall bless, saying,
"Blessed *is* Egypt My people, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel
My inheritance."

## THE SIGN AGAINST EGYPT AND ETHIOPIA

**20** In the year that Tartan[a] came to Ashdod, when Sargon the king of Assyria sent him, and he fought against Ashdod and took it, [2]at the same time the LORD spoke by Isaiah the son of Amoz, saying, “Go, and remove the sackcloth from your body, and take your sandals off your feet.” And he did so, walking naked and barefoot.

[3]Then the LORD said, “Just as My servant Isaiah has walked naked and barefoot three years *for* a sign and a wonder against Egypt and Ethiopia, [4]so shall the king of Assyria lead away the Egyptians as prisoners and the Ethiopians as captives, young and old, naked and barefoot, with their buttocks uncovered, to the shame of Egypt. [5]Then they shall be afraid and ashamed of Ethiopia their expectation and Egypt their glory. [6]And the inhabitant of this territory will say in that day, ‘Surely such *is* our expectation, wherever we flee for help to be delivered from the king of Assyria; and how shall we escape?’ ”

## THE FALL OF BABYLON PROCLAIMED

**21** The burden against the Wilderness of the Sea.

As whirlwinds in the South pass through,
*So* it comes from the desert, from a terrible land.

2 A distressing vision is declared to me;
The treacherous dealer deals treacherously,
And the plunderer plunders.
Go up, O Elam!
Besiege, O Media!
All its sighing I have made to cease.
3 Therefore my loins are filled with pain;
Pangs have taken hold of me, like the pangs of a woman in labor.
I was distressed when *I* heard *it;*
I was dismayed when *I* saw *it.*
4 My heart wavered, fearfulness frightened me;
The night for which I longed He turned into fear for me.
5 Prepare the table,
Set a watchman in the tower,
Eat and drink.
Arise, you princes, Anoint the shield!
6 For thus has the Lord said to me:
"Go, set a watchman,
Let him declare what he sees."
7 And he saw a chariot *with* a pair of horsemen,
A chariot of donkeys, *and* a chariot of camels,
And he listened earnestly with great care.
8 Then he cried, "A lion,[a] my Lord!
I stand continually on the watchtower in the daytime;
I have sat at my post every night.
9 And look, here comes a chariot of men *with* a pair of horsemen!"
Then he answered and said,
"Babylon is fallen, is fallen!

And all the carved images of her gods
He has broken to the ground."
10 Oh, my threshing and the grain of my floor!
That which I have heard from the LORD of hosts,
The God of Israel,
I have declared to you.

## PROCLAMATION AGAINST EDOM

11 The burden against Dumah.
He calls to me out of Seir,
"Watchman, what of the night?
Watchman, what of the night?"
12 The watchman said,
"The morning comes, and also the night.
If you will inquire, inquire;
Return! Come back!"

## PROCLAMATION AGAINST ARABIA

13 The burden against Arabia.

In the forest in Arabia you will lodge,
O you traveling companies of Dedanites.

14 O inhabitants of the land of Tema,
Bring water to him who is thirsty;
With their bread they met him who fled.
15 For they fled from the swords, from the drawn sword,
From the bent bow, and from the distress of war.
16 For thus the LORD has said to me: "Within a year, according to the year of a hired man, all the glory of Kedar will fail; 17 and the remainder of the number of archers, the mighty men of the people of Kedar, will be diminished; for the LORD God of Israel has spoken *it.* "

**PROCLAMATION AGAINST JERUSALEM**

**22** The burden against the Valley of Vision.
What ails you now, that you have all gone up to the housetops,
2 You who are full of noise, A tumultuous city, a joyous city?
Your slain *men are* not slain with the sword,
Nor dead in battle.
3 All your rulers have fled together;
They are captured by the archers.
All who are found in you are bound together;
They have fled from afar.
4 Therefore I said, “Look away from me,
I will weep bitterly;
Do not labor to comfort me
Because of the plundering of the daughter of my people.”
5 For *it is* a day of trouble and treading down and perplexity
By the Lord GOD of hosts
In the Valley of Vision-
Breaking down the walls
And of crying to the mountain.
6 Elam bore the quiver
With chariots of men *and* horsemen,
And Kir uncovered the shield.
7 It shall come to pass *that* your choicest valleys
Shall be full of chariots,
And the horsemen shall set themselves in array at the gate.
8 He removed the protection of Judah.
You looked in that day to the armor of the House of the Forest;
9 You also saw the damage to the city of David,
That it was great;
And you gathered together the waters of the lower pool.
10 You numbered the houses of Jerusalem,
And the houses you broke down
To fortify the wall.

11 You also made a reservoir between the two walls
For the water of the old pool.
But you did not look to its Maker,
Nor did you have respect for Him who fashioned it long ago.
12 And in that day the Lord GOD of hosts
Called for weeping and for mourning,
For baldness and for girding with sackcloth.
13 But instead, joy and gladness,
Slaying oxen and killing sheep,
Eating meat and drinking wine:
"Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!"
14 Then it was revealed in my hearing by the LORD of hosts,
"Surely for this iniquity there will be no atonement for you,
Even to your death," says the Lord GOD of hosts.

## THE JUDGMENT ON SHEBNA

15 Thus says the Lord GOD of hosts:
"Go, proceed to this steward,
To Shebna, who *is* over the house, *and say:*
16 'What have you here, and whom have you here,
That you have hewn a sepulcher here,
*As* he who hews himself a sepulcher on high,
Who carves a tomb for himself in a rock?
17 Indeed, the LORD will throw you away violently,
O mighty man,
And will surely seize you.
18 He will surely turn violently and toss you like a ball
Into a large country;
There you shall die, and there your glorious chariots
*Shall be* the shame of your master's house.
19 So I will drive you out of your office,
And from your position he will pull you down.[a]
20 ' Then it shall be in that day,
That I will call My servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah;

[21] I will clothe him with your robe
And strengthen him with your belt;
I will commit your responsibility into his hand.
He shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem
And to the house of Judah.
[22] The key of the house of David I will lay on his shoulder;
So he shall open, and no one shall shut;
And he shall shut, and no one shall open.
[23] I will fasten him *as* a peg in a secure place,
And he will become a glorious throne to his father's house.
[24]'They will hang on him all the glory of his father's house, the offspring and the posterity, all vessels of small quantity, from the cups to all the pitchers. [25]In that day,' says the LORD of hosts, 'the peg that is fastened in the secure place will be removed and be cut down and fall, and the burden that *was* on it will be cut off; for the LORD has spoken.' "

## PROCLAMATION AGAINST TYRE

**23** The burden against Tyre.
Wail, you ships of Tarshish!
For it is laid waste,
So that there is no house, no harbor;
From the land of Cyprus[a] it is revealed to them.

2 Be still, you inhabitants of the coastland,
You merchants of Sidon,
Whom those who cross the sea have filled.[a]
3 And on great waters the grain of Shihor,
The harvest of the River,[a] *is* her revenue;
And she is a marketplace for the nations.
4 Be ashamed, O Sidon;
For the sea has spoken,
The strength of the sea, saying,
"I do not labor, nor bring forth children;
Neither do I rear young men,
*Nor* bring up virgins."
5 When the report *reaches* Egypt,
They also will be in agony at the report of Tyre.
6 Cross over to Tarshish;
Wail, you inhabitants of the coastland!
7 *Is* this your joyous *city*,
Whose antiquity *is* from ancient days,
Whose feet carried her far off to dwell?
8 Who has taken this counsel against Tyre, the crowning *city*,
Whose merchants *are* princes,
Whose traders *are* the honorable of the earth?
9 The LORD of hosts has purposed it,
To bring to dishonor the pride of all glory,
To bring into contempt all the honorable of the earth.
10 Overflow through your land like the River,[a]
O daughter of Tarshish;

*There is* no more strength.
11 He stretched out His hand over the sea,
He shook the kingdoms;
The LORD has given a commandment against Canaan
To destroy its strongholds.
12 And He said, “You will rejoice no more,
O you oppressed virgin daughter of Sidon.
Arise, cross over to Cyprus;
There also you will have no rest.”
13 Behold, the land of the Chaldeans,
This people *which* was not;
Assyria founded it for wild beasts of the desert.
They set up its towers,
They raised up its palaces,
*And* brought it to ruin.
14 Wail, you ships of Tarshish!
For your strength is laid waste.
15 Now it shall come to pass in that day that Tyre will be forgotten seventy years, according to the days of one king. At the end of seventy years it will happen to Tyre as in the song of the harlot:
16 “Take a harp, go about the city,
You forgotten harlot;
Make sweet melody, sing many songs,
That you may be remembered.”
17 And it shall be, at the end of seventy years, that the LORD will deal with Tyre. She will return to her hire, and commit fornication with all the kingdoms of the world on the face of the earth. 18 Her gain and her pay will be set apart for the LORD; it will not be treasured nor laid up, for her gain will be for those who dwell before the LORD, to eat sufficiently, and for fine clothing.

## IMPENDING JUDGMENT ON THE EARTH

**24** Behold, the LORD makes the earth empty and makes it waste, Distorts its
surface And scatters abroad its inhabitants.

2 And it shall be:
As with the people, so with the priest;
As with the servant, so with his master;
As with the maid, so with her mistress;
As with the buyer, so with the seller;
As with the lender, so with the borrower;
As with the creditor, so with the debtor.
3 The land shall be entirely emptied and utterly plundered,
For the LORD has spoken this word.
4 The earth mourns *and* fades away,
The world languishes *and* fades away;
The haughty people of the earth languish.
5 The earth is also defiled under its inhabitants,
Because they have transgressed the laws,
Changed the ordinance,
Broken the everlasting covenant.
6 Therefore the curse has devoured the earth,
And those who dwell in it are desolate.
Therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned,
And few men *are* left.
7 The new wine fails, the vine languishes,
All the merry-hearted sigh.
8 The mirth of the tambourine ceases,
The noise of the jubilant ends,
The joy of the harp ceases.
9 They shall not drink wine with a song;
Strong drink is bitter to those who drink it.
10 The city of confusion is broken down;
Every house is shut up, so that none may go in.
11 *There is* a cry for wine in the streets,

All joy is darkened,
The mirth of the land is gone.
12 In the city desolation is left,
And the gate is stricken with destruction.
13 When it shall be thus in the midst of the land among the people,
*It shall be* like the shaking of an olive tree,
Like the gleaning of grapes when the vintage is done.
14 They shall lift up their voice, they shall sing;
For the majesty of the LORD
They shall cry aloud from the sea.
15 Therefore glorify the LORD in the dawning light,
The name of the LORD God of Israel in the coastlands of the sea.
16 From the ends of the earth we have heard songs:
"Glory to the righteous!"
But I said, "I am ruined, ruined!
Woe to me!
The treacherous dealers have dealt treacherously,
Indeed, the treacherous dealers have dealt very treacherously."
17 Fear and the pit and the snare
*Are* upon you, O inhabitant of the earth.
18 And it shall be
*That* he who flees from the noise of the fear
Shall fall into the pit,
And he who comes up from the midst of the pit
Shall be caught in the snare;
For the windows from on high are open,
And the foundations of the earth are shaken.
19 The earth is violently broken,
The earth is split open,
The earth is shaken exceedingly.
20 The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard,
And shall totter like a hut;
Its transgression shall be heavy upon it,
And it will fall, and not rise again.
21 It shall come to pass in that day

*That* the LORD will punish on high the host of exalted ones,
And on the earth the kings of the earth.
22 They will be gathered together,
*As* prisoners are gathered in the pit,
And will be shut up in the prison;
After many days they will be punished.
23 Then the moon will be disgraced
And the sun ashamed;
For the LORD of hosts will reign
On Mount Zion and in Jerusalem
And before His elders, gloriously.

**PRAISE TO GOD**

**25** O LORD, You *are* my God.
I will exalt You,
I will praise Your name,
For You have done wonderful *things;*
*Your* counsels of old *are* faithfulness *and* truth.

2 For You have made a city a ruin,
A fortified city a ruin,
A palace of foreigners to be a city no more;
It will never be rebuilt.
3 Therefore the strong people will glorify You;
The city of the terrible nations will fear You.
4 For You have been a strength to the poor,
A strength to the needy in his distress,
A refuge from the storm,
A shade from the heat;
For the blast of the terrible ones *is* as a storm *against* the wall.
5 You will reduce the noise of aliens,
As heat in a dry place;
*As* heat in the shadow of a cloud,
The song of the terrible ones will be diminished.
6 And in this mountain
The LORD of hosts will make for all people
A feast of choice pieces,
A feast of wines on the lees,
Of fat things full of marrow,
Of well-refined wines on the lees.
7 And He will destroy on this mountain
The surface of the covering cast over all people,
And the veil that is spread over all nations.
8 He will swallow up death forever,
And the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces;
The rebuke of His people

He will take away from all the earth;
For the LORD has spoken.
9 And it will be said in that day:
"Behold, this *is* our God;
We have waited for Him, and He will save us.
This *is* the LORD;
We have waited for Him;
We will be glad and rejoice in His salvation."
10 For on this mountain the hand of the LORD will rest,
And Moab shall be trampled down under Him,
As straw is trampled down for the refuse heap.
11 And He will spread out His hands in their midst
As a swimmer reaches out to swim,
And He will bring down their pride
Together with the trickery of their hands.
12 The fortress of the high fort of your walls
He will bring down, lay low,
*And* bring to the ground, down to the dust.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Final Victory** *(25:8)* Death is humanity's enemy. People fear death and the sorrow it brings. This is the first prophecy of the destruction of death and grief. In Christ's death, the curse and power of death were destroyed forever. Believers have the promise of new life now and eternal life with God. Isaiah writes that "the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces." In Revelation, John describes the same picture: "God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. . . . There shall be no more pain" (Rev. 21:4). For believers, death is the gateway to eternal life. **Topic: Death**

**A SONG OF SALVATION**

**26** In that day this song will be sung in the land of Judah:

"We have a strong city;
*God* will appoint salvation *for* walls and bulwarks.

2 Open the gates,
That the righteous nation which keeps the truth may enter in.
3 You will keep *him* in perfect peace,
*Whose* mind *is* stayed *on You,*
Because he trusts in You.
4 Trust in the LORD forever,
For in YAH, the LORD, *is* everlasting strength.[a]
5 For He brings down those who dwell on high,
The lofty city;
He lays it low,
He lays it low to the ground,
He brings it down to the dust.
6 The foot shall tread it down
-The feet of the poor
*And* the steps of the needy."
7 The way of the just *is* uprightness;
O Most Upright,
You weigh the path of the just.
8 Yes, in the way of Your judgments,
O LORD, we have waited for You;
The desire of *our* soul *is* for Your name
And for the remembrance of You.
9 With my soul I have desired You in the night,
Yes, by my spirit within me I will seek You early;
For when Your judgments *are* in the earth,
The inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.
10 Let grace be shown to the wicked,
*Yet* he will not learn righteousness;

In the land of uprightness he will deal unjustly,
And will not behold the majesty of the LORD.
11 LORD, *when* Your hand is lifted up, they will not see.
But they will see and be ashamed
For *their* envy of people;
Yes, the fire of Your enemies shall devour them.
12 LORD, You will establish peace for us,
For You have also done all our works in us.
13 O LORD our God, masters besides
You Have had dominion over us;
*But* by You only we make mention of Your name.
14*They are* dead, they will not live;
*They are* deceased, they will not rise.
Therefore You have punished and destroyed them,
And made all their memory to perish.
15 You have increased the nation, O LORD,
You have increased the nation;
You are glorified;
You have expanded all the borders of the land.
16 LORD, in trouble they have visited You,
They poured out a prayer *when* Your chastening *was* upon them.
17 As a woman with child
Is in pain and cries out in her pangs,
*When* she draws near the time of her delivery,
So have we been in Your sight, O LORD.
18 We have been with child, we have been in pain;
We have, as it were, brought forth wind;
We have not accomplished any deliverance in the earth,
Nor have the inhabitants of the world fallen.
19 Your dead shall live;
*Together with* my dead body[a] they shall arise.
Awake and sing, you who dwell in dust;
For your dew *is like* the dew of herbs,
And the earth shall cast out the dead.

## TAKE REFUGE FROM THE COMING JUDGMENT

20 Come, my people, enter your chambers,
And shut your doors behind you;
Hide yourself, as it were, for a little moment,
Until the indignation is past.
21 For behold, the LORD comes out of His place
To punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity;
The earth will also disclose her blood,
And will no more cover her slain.

### SOUL NOTE

**Perfect Peace** *(26:3)* Occasions for anxiety happen. Jesus reminded His followers that "in the world you will have tribulation" (John 16:33). The prophet Isaiah wrote that God gives peace in spite of conflict and turmoil. Peace is so basic to God's nature that it is part of His name. God the Father is the "God of peace" (Phil. 4:9; Heb. 13:20). God the Son is the Prince of Peace (Is. 9:6). And God the Holy Spirit produces peace in our lives (Gal. 5:22). To have "perfect peace," wrote Isaiah, we must focus our minds on God and trust in Him. **Topic: Anxiety**

### SOUL NOTE

**Secure in Him** *(26:4, 5)* The answer to human insecurities is to "trust in the LORD forever." In Him we should find our security, peace, and confidence. We are surrounded by plenty of problems that fill our

thoughts. Beset by fear and insecurity, we feel shaky, unstable, and unsafe. Jesus told His followers, on this eve of His death, “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you. . . . Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27). With Christ’s peace in our hearts we can be secure, knowing that He is in control. **Topic: Insecurity**

**27** In that day the LORD with His severe sword, great and strong,
Will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent,
Leviathan that twisted serpent;
And He will slay the reptile that *is* in the sea.

## THE RESTORATION OF ISRAEL

2 In that day sing to her,
"A vineyard of red wine![a]
3 I, the LORD, keep it,
I water it every moment;
Lest any hurt it,
I keep it night and day.
4 Fury *is* not in Me.
Who would set briers *and* thorns
Against Me in battle?
I would go through them,
I would burn them together.
5 Or let him take hold of My strength,
*That* he may make peace with Me;
*And* he shall make peace with Me."
6 Those who come He shall cause to take root in Jacob;
Israel shall blossom and bud,
And fill the face of the world with fruit.
7 Has He struck Israel as He struck those who struck him?
Or has He been slain according to the slaughter of those who were slain by Him?
8 In measure, by sending it away,
You contended with it.
He removes *it* by His rough wind
In the day of the east wind.
9 Therefore by this the iniquity of Jacob will be covered;
And this *is* all the fruit of taking away his sin:
When he makes all the stones of the altar
Like chalkstones that are beaten to dust,

Wooden images[a] and incense altars shall not stand.
10 Yet the fortified city *will be* desolate,
The habitation forsaken and left like a wilderness;
There the calf will feed, and there it will lie down
And consume its branches.
11 When its boughs are withered, they will be broken off;
The women come *and* set them on fire.
For it *is* a people of no understanding;
Therefore He who made them will not have mercy on them,
And He who formed them will show them no favor.
12 And it shall come to pass in that day
*That* the LORD will thresh,
From the channel of the River[a] to the Brook of Egypt;
And you will be gathered one by one,
O you children of Israel.
13 So it shall be in that day:
The great trumpet will be blown;
They will come, who are about to perish in the land of Assyria,
And they who are outcasts in the land of Egypt,
And shall worship the LORD in the holy mount at Jerusalem.

## WOE TO EPHRAIM AND JERUSALEM

**28** Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim,
Whose glorious beauty *is* a fading flower
Which *is* at the head of the verdant valleys,
To those who are overcome with wine!

2 Behold, the Lord has a mighty and strong one,
Like a tempest of hail and a destroying storm,
Like a flood of mighty waters overflowing,
Who will bring *them* down to the earth with *His* hand.
3 The crown of pride, the drunkards of Ephraim,
Will be trampled underfoot;
4 And the glorious beauty is a fading flower
Which *is* at the head of the verdant valley,
Like the first fruit before the summer,
Which an observer sees;
He eats it up while it is still in his hand.
5 In that day the LORD of hosts will be
For a crown of glory and a diadem of beauty
To the remnant of His people,
6 For a spirit of justice to him who sits in judgment,
And for strength to those who turn back the battle at the gate.
7 But they also have erred through wine,
And through intoxicating drink are out of the way;
The priest and the prophet have erred through intoxicating drink,
They are swallowed up by wine,
They are out of the way through intoxicating drink;
They err in vision, they stumble *in* judgment.
8 For all tables are full of vomit *and* filth;
No place *is clean.*
9 "Whom will he teach knowledge?
And whom will he make to understand the message?
Those *just* weaned from milk?
Those *just* drawn from the breasts?

10 For precept *must be* upon precept, precept upon precept,
Line upon line, line upon line,
Here a little, there a little.”
11 For with stammering lips and another tongue
He will speak to this people,
12 To whom He said, “This *is* the rest *with which*
You may cause the weary to rest,”
And, “This *is* the refreshing”;
Yet they would not hear.
13 But the word of the LORD was to them,
“Precept upon precept, precept upon precept,
Line upon line, line upon line,
Here a little, there a little,”
That they might go and fall backward, and be broken
And snared and caught.
14 Therefore hear the word of the LORD, you scornful men,
Who rule this people who *are* in Jerusalem,
15 Because you have said, “We have made a covenant with death,
And with Sheol we are in agreement.
When the overflowing scourge passes through,
It will not come to us,
For we have made lies our refuge,
And under falsehood we have hidden ourselves.”

## A CORNERSTONE IN ZION

16 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD:

“Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation,
A tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation;
Whoever believes will not act hastily.

17 Also I will make justice the measuring line,
And righteousness the plummet;
The hail will sweep away the refuge of lies,
And the waters will overflow the hiding place.

18 Your covenant with death will be annulled,
And your agreement with Sheol will not stand;
When the overflowing scourge passes through,
Then you will be trampled down by it.
19 As often as it goes out it will take you;
For morning by morning it will pass over,
And by day and by night;
It will be a terror just to understand the report."
20 For the bed is too short to stretch out *on*,
And the covering so narrow that one cannot wrap himself *in it.*
21 For the LORD will rise up as *at* Mount Perazim,
He will be angry as in the Valley of Gibeon-
That He may do His work, His awesome work,
And bring to pass His act, His unusual act.
22 Now therefore, do not be mockers,
Lest your bonds be made strong;
For I have heard from the Lord GOD of hosts,
A destruction determined even upon the whole earth.

**LISTEN TO THE TEACHING OF GOD**

23 Give ear and hear my voice,
Listen and hear my speech.
24 Does the plowman keep plowing all day to sow?
Does he keep turning his soil and breaking the clods?
25 When he has leveled its surface,
Does he not sow the black cummin
And scatter the cummin,
Plant the wheat in rows,
The barley in the appointed place,
And the spelt in its place?
26 For He instructs him in right judgment,
His God teaches him.
27 For the black cummin is not threshed with a threshing sledge,
Nor is a cartwheel rolled over the cummin;

But the black cummin is beaten out with a stick, And the cummin with a rod.

28 Bread *flour* must be ground;
Therefore he does not thresh it forever,
Break *it with* his cartwheel,
Or crush it *with* his horsemen.

29 This also comes from the LORD of hosts,
*Who* is wonderful in counsel *and* excellent in guidance.

**WOE TO JERUSALEM**

**29** “Woe to Ariel,[a] to Ariel, the city *where* David dwelt!
Add year to year;
Let feasts come around.

2 Yet I will distress Ariel;
There shall be heaviness and sorrow,
And it shall be to Me as Ariel.
3 I will encamp against you all around,
I will lay siege against you with a mound,
And I will raise siegeworks against you.
4 You shall be brought down,
You shall speak out of the ground;
Your speech shall be low, out of the dust;
Your voice shall be like a medium’s, out of the ground;
And your speech shall whisper out of the dust.
5 “Moreover the multitude of your foes
Shall be like fine dust,
And the multitude of the terrible ones
Like chaff that passes away;
Yes, it shall be in an instant, suddenly.
6 You will be punished by the LORD of hosts
With thunder and earthquake and great noise,
*With* storm and tempest
And the flame of devouring fire.
7 The multitude of all the nations who fight against Ariel,
Even all who fight against her and her fortress,
And distress her,
Shall be as a dream of a night vision.
8 It shall even be as when a hungry man dreams,
And look-he eats;
But he awakes, and his soul is still empty;
Or as when a thirsty man dreams,
And look-he drinks;

But he awakes, and indeed *he is* faint,
And his soul still craves:
So the multitude of all the nations shall be,
Who fight against Mount Zion.”

**THE BLINDNESS OF DISOBEDIENCE**

9 Pause and wonder!
Blind yourselves and be blind!
They are drunk, but not with wine;
They stagger, but not with intoxicating drink.
10 For the LORD has poured out on you
The spirit of deep sleep,
And has closed your eyes, namely, the prophets;
And He has covered your heads, *namely,* the seers.
11 The whole vision has become to you like the words of a book that is sealed, which *men* deliver to one who is literate, saying, “Read this, please.”

And he says, “I cannot, for it *is* sealed.”

12 Then the book is delivered to one who is illiterate, saying, “Read this, please.”

And he says, “I am not literate.”

13 Therefore the Lord said:

“Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths
And honor Me with their lips,
But have removed their hearts far from Me,
And their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men,

14 Therefore, behold, I will again do a marvelous work
Among this people,
A marvelous work and a wonder;
For the wisdom of their wise *men* shall perish,
And the understanding of their prudent *men* shall be hidden.”
15 Woe to those who seek deep to hide their counsel far from the LORD,
And their works are in the dark;

They say, “Who sees us?” and, “Who knows us?”
16 Surely you have things turned around!
Shall the potter be esteemed as the clay;
For shall the thing made say of him who made it,
“He did not make me”?
Or shall the thing formed say of him who formed it,
“He has no understanding”?

**FUTURE RECOVERY OF WISDOM**

17 *Is* it not yet a very little while
Till Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field,
And the fruitful field be esteemed as a forest?
18 In that day the deaf shall hear the words of the book,
And the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity and out of darkness.
19 The humble also shall increase *their* joy in the LORD,
And the poor among men shall rejoice
In the Holy One of Israel.
20 For the terrible one is brought to nothing,
The scornful one is consumed,
And all who watch for iniquity are cut off-
21 Who make a man an offender by a word,
And lay a snare for him who reproves in the gate,
And turn aside the just by empty words.
22 Therefore thus says the LORD, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob:

“Jacob shall not now be ashamed,
Nor shall his face now grow pale;

23 But when he sees his children,
The work of My hands, in his midst,
They will hallow My name,
And hallow the Holy One of Jacob,
And fear the God of Israel.
24 These also who erred in spirit will come to understanding,

And those who complained will learn doctrine.”

**SOUL NOTE**

**Completely Healed** *(29:18, 19)* Isaiah promised that a day would come when the deaf would hear, the blind would see, and the humble and the poor would “rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.” These promises were initially fulfilled in the healings performed by Jesus, for through Him many were healed from various diseases, and the poor heard the Good News of the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 11:5). Jesus’ ministry and His healings were a sign that He was the promised Messiah. The promises will be fulfilled in heaven when God’s people will be completely healed. **Topic: Healing/Recovery**

## FUTILE CONFIDENCE IN EGYPT

**30** “Woe to the rebellious children,” says the LORD,
“Who take counsel, but not of Me,
And who devise plans, but not of My Spirit,
That they may add sin to sin;

2 Who walk to go down to Egypt,
And have not asked My advice,
To strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh,
And to trust in the shadow of Egypt!
3 Therefore the strength of Pharaoh
Shall be your shame,
And trust in the shadow of Egypt
Shall be *your* humiliation.
4 For his princes were at Zoan,
And his ambassadors came to Hanes.
5 They were all ashamed of a people *who* could not benefit them,
Or be help or benefit,
But a shame and also a reproach.”
6 The burden against the beasts of the South.

Through a land of trouble and anguish,
From which *came* the lioness and lion,
The viper and fiery flying serpent,
They will carry their riches on the backs of young donkeys,
And their treasures on the humps of camels,
To a people *who* shall not profit;

7 For the Egyptians shall help in vain and to no purpose.
Therefore I have called her
Rahab-Hem-Shebeth.[a]

## A REBELLIOUS PEOPLE

8 Now go, write it before them on a tablet,

And note it on a scroll,
That it may be for time to come,
Forever and ever:
9 That this *is* a rebellious people,
Lying children,
Children *who* will not hear the law of the LORD;
10 Who say to the seers, “Do not see,”
And to the prophets, “Do not prophesy to us right things;
Speak to us smooth things, prophesy deceits.
11 Get out of the way,
Turn aside from the path,
Cause the Holy One of Israel
To cease from before us.”
12 Therefore thus says the Holy One of Israel:

“Because you despise this word,
And trust in oppression and perversity,
And rely on them,

13 Therefore this iniquity shall be to you
Like a breach ready to fall,
A bulge in a high wall,
Whose breaking comes suddenly, in an instant.
14 And He shall break it like the breaking of the potter’s vessel,
Which is broken in pieces;
He shall not spare.
So there shall not be found among its fragments
A shard to take fire from the hearth,
Or to take water from the cistern.”
15 For thus says the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel:

“In returning and rest you shall be saved;
In quietness and confidence shall be your strength.”
But you would not,

16 And you said, “No, for we will flee on horses”-

Therefore you shall flee!
And, “We will ride on swift *horses*”-
Therefore those who pursue you shall be swift!
17 One thousand *shall flee* at the threat of one,
At the threat of five you shall flee,
Till you are left as a pole on top of a mountain
And as a banner on a hill.

## GOD WILL BE GRACIOUS

18 Therefore the LORD will wait, that He may be gracious to you;
And therefore He will be exalted, that He may have mercy on you.
For the LORD *is* a God of justice;
Blessed *are* all those who wait for Him.
19 For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem;
You shall weep no more.
He will be very gracious to you at the sound of your cry;
When He hears it, He will answer you.
20 And *though* the Lord gives you
The bread of adversity and the water of affliction,
Yet your teachers will not be moved into a corner anymore,
But your eyes shall see your teachers.
21 Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying,
“This *is* the way, walk in it,”
Whenever you turn to the right hand
Or whenever you turn to the left.
22 You will also defile the covering of your images of silver,
And the ornament of your molded images of gold.
You will throw them away as an unclean thing;
You will say to them, “Get away!”
23 Then He will give the rain for your seed
With which you sow the ground,
And bread of the increase of the earth;
It will be fat and plentiful.
In that day your cattle will feed In large pastures.
24 Likewise the oxen and the young donkeys that work the ground

Will eat cured fodder,
Which has been winnowed with the shovel and fan.
25 There will be on every high mountain
And on every high hill
Rivers *and* streams of waters,
In the day of the great slaughter,
When the towers fall.
26 Moreover the light of the moon will be as the light of the sun,
And the light of the sun will be sevenfold,
As the light of seven days,
In the day that the LORD binds up the bruise of His people
And heals the stroke of their wound.

## JUDGMENT ON ASSYRIA

27 Behold, the name of the LORD comes from afar,
Burning *with* His anger,
And *His* burden *is* heavy;
His lips are full of indignation,
And His tongue like a devouring fire.
28 His breath is like an overflowing stream,
Which reaches up to the neck,
To sift the nations with the sieve of futility;
And *there shall be* a bridle in the jaws of the people,
Causing *them* to err.
29 You shall have a song
As in the night *when* a holy festival is kept,
And gladness of heart as when one goes with a flute,
To come into the mountain of the LORD,
To the Mighty One of Israel.
30 The LORD will cause His glorious voice to be heard,
And show the descent of His arm,
With the indignation of *His* anger
And the flame of a devouring fire,
*With* scattering, tempest, and hailstones.
31 For through the voice of the LORD

Assyria will be beaten down,
As He strikes with the rod.
32 And *in* every place where the staff of punishment passes,
Which the LORD lays on him,
*It* will be with tambourines and harps;
And in battles of brandishing He will fight with it.
33 For Tophet *was* established of old,
Yes, for the king it is prepared.
He has made *it* deep and large;
Its pyre *is* fire with much wood;
The breath of the LORD, like a stream of brimstone,
Kindles it.

## THE FOLLY OF NOT TRUSTING GOD

**31** Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help,
*And* rely on horses,
Who trust in chariots because *they are* many,
And in horsemen because they are very strong,
But who do not look to the Holy One of Israel,
Nor seek the LORD!

2 Yet He also *is* wise and will bring disaster,
And will not call back His words,
But will arise against the house of evildoers,
And against the help of those who work iniquity.
3 Now the Egyptians *are* men, and not God;
And their horses are flesh, and not spirit.
When the LORD stretches out His hand,
Both he who helps will fall,
And he who is helped will fall down;
They all will perish together.

## GOD WILL DELIVER JERUSALEM

4 For thus the LORD has spoken to me:

"As a lion roars,
And a young lion over his prey
(When a multitude of shepherds is summoned against him,
*He* will not be afraid of their voice
Nor be disturbed by their noise),
So the LORD of hosts will come down
To fight for Mount Zion and for its hill.

5 Like birds flying about,
So will the LORD of hosts defend Jerusalem.
Defending, He will also deliver *it;*
Passing over, He will preserve *it.* "
6 Return *to Him* against whom the children of Israel have deeply revolted.

[7]For in that day every man shall throw away his idols of silver and his idols of gold-sin, which your own hands have made for yourselves.

[8] “Then Assyria shall fall by a sword not of man,
And a sword not of mankind shall devour him.
But he shall flee from the sword,
And his young men shall become forced labor.
[9] He shall cross over to his stronghold for fear,
And his princes shall be afraid of the banner,”
Says the LORD,
Whose fire *is* in Zion
And whose furnace *is* in Jerusalem.

## A REIGN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

**32** Behold, a king will reign in righteousness,
And princes will rule with justice.

2 A man will be as a hiding place from the wind,
And a cover from the tempest,
As rivers of water in a dry place,
As the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.

3 The eyes of those who see will not be dim,
And the ears of those who hear will listen.

4 Also the heart of the rash will understand knowledge,
And the tongue of the stammerers will be ready to speak plainly.

5 The foolish person will no longer be called generous,
Nor the miser said *to be* bountiful;

6 For the foolish person will speak foolishness,
And his heart will work iniquity:
To practice ungodliness,
To utter error against the LORD,
To keep the hungry unsatisfied,
And he will cause the drink of the thirsty to fail.

7 Also the schemes of the schemer *are* evil;
He devises wicked plans
To destroy the poor with lying words,
Even when the needy speaks justice.

8 But a generous man devises generous things,
And by generosity he shall stand.

## CONSEQUENCES OF COMPLACENCY

9 Rise up, you women who are at ease,
Hear my voice;
You complacent daughters,
Give ear to my speech.

10 In a year and *some* days
You will be troubled, you complacent women;

For the vintage will fail,
The gathering will not come.
11 Tremble, you *women* who are at ease;
Be troubled, you complacent ones;
Strip yourselves, make yourselves bare,
And gird *sackcloth* on *your* waists.
12 People shall mourn upon their breasts
For the pleasant fields, for the fruitful vine.
13 On the land of my people will come up thorns *and* briers,
Yes, on all the happy homes *in* the joyous city;
14 Because the palaces will be forsaken,
The bustling city will be deserted.
The forts and towers will become lairs forever,
A joy of wild donkeys, a pasture of flocks-
15 Until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high,
And the wilderness becomes a fruitful field,
And the fruitful field is counted as a forest.

**THE PEACE OF GOD'S REIGN**

16 Then justice will dwell in the wilderness,
And righteousness remain in the fruitful field.
17 The work of righteousness will be peace,
And the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever.
18 My people will dwell in a peaceful habitation,
In secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places,
19 Though hail comes down on the forest,
And the city is brought low in humiliation.
20 Blessed *are* you who sow beside all waters,
Who send out freely the feet of the ox and the donkey.

## A PRAYER IN DEEP DISTRESS

**33** Woe to you who plunder, though you *have* not *been* plundered;
And you who deal treacherously, though they have not dealt treacherously with you!
When you cease plundering,
You will be plundered;
When you make an end of dealing treacherously,
They will deal treacherously with you.

2 O LORD, be gracious to us;
We have waited for You.
Be their[a] arm every morning,
Our salvation also in the time of trouble.
3 At the noise of the tumult the people shall flee;
When You lift Yourself up, the nations shall be scattered;
4 And Your plunder shall be gathered
*Like* the gathering of the caterpillar;
As the running to and fro of locusts,
He shall run upon them.
5 The LORD is exalted, for He dwells on high;
He has filled Zion with justice and righteousness.
6 Wisdom and knowledge will be the stability of your times,
*And* the strength of salvation;
The fear of the LORD *is* His treasure.
7 Surely their valiant ones shall cry outside,
The ambassadors of peace shall weep bitterly.
8 The highways lie waste,
The traveling man ceases.
He has broken the covenant,
He has despised the cities,[a]
He regards no man.
9 The earth mourns *and* languishes,
Lebanon is shamed *and* shriveled;
Sharon is like a wilderness,

And Bashan and Carmel shake off *their fruits.*

## IMPENDING JUDGMENT ON ZION

10 "Now I will rise," says the LORD;
"Now I will be exalted,
Now I will lift Myself up.
11 You shall conceive chaff,
You shall bring forth stubble;
Your breath, *as* fire, shall devour you.
12 And the people shall be *like* the burnings of lime;
*Like* thorns cut up they shall be burned in the fire.
13 Hear, you *who are* afar off, what I have done;
And you *who are* near, acknowledge My might."
14 The sinners in Zion are afraid;
Fearfulness has seized the hypocrites:
"Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire?
Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?"
15 He who walks righteously and speaks uprightly,
He who despises the gain of oppressions,
Who gestures with his hands, refusing bribes,
Who stops his ears from hearing of bloodshed,
And shuts his eyes from seeing evil:
16 He will dwell on high;
His place of defense *will be* the fortress of rocks;
Bread will be given him,
His water *will be* sure.

## THE LAND OF THE MAJESTIC KING

17 Your eyes will see the King in His beauty;
They will see the land that is very far off.
18 Your heart will meditate on terror:
"Where *is* the scribe?
Where *is* he who weighs?
Where *is* he who counts the towers?"
19 You will not see a fierce people,

A people of obscure speech, beyond perception,
Of a stammering tongue *that you* cannot understand.
20 Look upon Zion, the city of our appointed feasts;
Your eyes will see Jerusalem, a quiet home,
A tabernacle *that* will not be taken down;
Not one of its stakes will ever be removed,
Nor will any of its cords be broken.
21 But there the majestic LORD *will be* for us
A place of broad rivers *and* streams,
In which no galley with oars will sail,
Nor majestic ships pass by
22 (For the LORD *is* our Judge,
The LORD *is* our Lawgiver,
The LORD *is* our King;
He will save us);
23 Your tackle is loosed,
They could not strengthen their mast,
They could not spread the sail.

Then the prey of great plunder is divided;
The lame take the prey.

24 And the inhabitant will not say, “I am sick”;
The people who dwell in it *will be* forgiven *their* iniquity.

**JUDGMENT ON THE NATIONS**

**34** Come near, you nations, to hear;
And heed, you people!
Let the earth hear, and all that is in it,
The world and all things that come forth from it.

2 For the indignation of the LORD *is* against all nations,
And *His* fury against all their armies;
He has utterly destroyed them,
He has given them over to the slaughter.
3 Also their slain shall be thrown out;
Their stench shall rise from their corpses,
And the mountains shall be melted with their blood.
4 All the host of heaven shall be dissolved,
And the heavens shall be rolled up like a scroll;
All their host shall fall down
As the leaf falls from the vine,
And as *fruit* falling from a fig tree.
5 "For My sword shall be bathed in heaven;
Indeed it shall come down on Edom,
And on the people of My curse, for judgment.
6 The sword of the LORD is filled with blood,
It is made overflowing with fatness,
With the blood of lambs and goats,
With the fat of the kidneys of rams.
For the LORD has a sacrifice in Bozrah,
And a great slaughter in the land of Edom.
7 The wild oxen shall come down with them,
And the young bulls with the mighty bulls;
Their land shall be soaked with blood,
And their dust saturated with fatness."
8 For *it is* the day of the LORD's vengeance,
The year of recompense for the cause of Zion.
9 Its streams shall be turned into pitch,

And its dust into brimstone;
Its land shall become burning pitch.
10 It shall not be quenched night or day;
Its smoke shall ascend forever.
From generation to generation it shall lie waste;
No one shall pass through it forever and ever.
11 But the pelican and the porcupine shall possess it,
Also the owl and the raven shall dwell in it.
And He shall stretch out over it
The line of confusion and the stones of emptiness.
12 They shall call its nobles to the kingdom,
But none *shall be* there, and all its princes shall be nothing.
13 And thorns shall come up in its palaces,
Nettles and brambles in its fortresses;
It shall be a habitation of jackals,
A courtyard for ostriches.
14 The wild beasts of the desert shall also meet with the jackals,
And the wild goat shall bleat to its companion;
Also the night creature shall rest there,
And find for herself a place of rest.
15 There the arrow snake shall make her nest and lay *eggs*
And hatch, and gather *them* under her shadow;
There also shall the hawks be gathered,
Every one with her mate.
16 “Search from the book of the LORD, and read:
Not one of these shall fail;
Not one shall lack her mate.
For My mouth has commanded it, and His Spirit has gathered them.
17 He has cast the lot for them,
And His hand has divided it among them with a measuring line.
They shall possess it forever;
From generation to generation they shall dwell in it.”

## THE FUTURE GLORY OF ZION

**35** The wilderness and the wasteland shall be glad for them,
And the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose;

2 It shall blossom abundantly and rejoice,
Even with joy and singing.
The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it,
The excellence of Carmel and Sharon.
They shall see the glory of the LORD,
The excellency of our God.

3 Strengthen the weak hands,
And make firm the feeble knees.

4 Say to those *who are* fearful-hearted,
"Be strong, do not fear!
Behold, your God will come *with* vengeance,
*With* the recompense of God;
He will come and save you."

5 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
And the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.

6 Then the lame shall leap like a deer,
And the tongue of the dumb sing.
For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness,
And streams in the desert.

7 The parched ground shall become a pool,
And the thirsty land springs of water;
In the habitation of jackals, where each lay,
*There shall be* grass with reeds and rushes.

8 A highway shall be there, and a road,
And it shall be called the Highway of Holiness.
The unclean shall not pass over it,
But it *shall be* for others.
Whoever walks the road, although a fool,
Shall not go astray.

9 No lion shall be there,

Nor shall *any* ravenous beast go up on it;
It shall not be found there.
But the redeemed shall walk *there*,
10 And the ransomed of the LORD shall return,
And come to Zion with singing,
With everlasting joy on their heads.
They shall obtain joy and gladness,
And sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

**KEY PASSAGE**

# PROMISES OF HEALING

**(35:1-6)**

Isaiah 35 contrasts the world that exists with the one that God's people will inherit in the future. The prophet promised that the desert would blossom like a rose, that feeble hands, knees, and hearts would be strengthened, and that the sick would be healed. Further, Isaiah promised that God's compassion would touch the blind, the deaf, the mute, and the lame. These promises were fulfilled both physically and spiritually in Jesus Christ and His earthly ministry. In the age to come, God will bring healing to His people's bodies, and refreshment to their souls. Instead of being discouraged by the physical and genetic limitations of life, we can learn to rejoice in His certain promises of complete healing when we see Him: "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" (1 Cor. 15:53).

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about genetic issues Strength in Weakness. See also the personality profile of The Blind Man: Revealing God's Glory.

## SENNACHERIB BOASTS AGAINST THE LORD

**36** Now it came to pass in the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah *that* Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and took them. 2Then the king of Assyria sent *the* Rabshakeh[a] with a great army from Lachish to King Hezekiah at Jerusalem. And he stood by the aqueduct from the upper pool, on the highway to the Fuller's Field. 3And Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, who was over the household, Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph, the recorder, came out to him.

4Then *the* Rabshakeh said to them, "Say now to Hezekiah, 'Thus says the great king, the king of Assyria: "What confidence is this in which you trust? 5I say you speak of having plans and power for war; but *they are* mere words. Now in whom do you trust, that you rebel against me? 6Look! You are trusting in the staff of this broken reed, Egypt, on which if a man leans, it will go into his hand and pierce it. So *is* Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who trust in him.

7"But if you say to me, 'We trust in the LORD our God,' *is it* not He whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah has taken away, and said to Judah and Jerusalem, 'You shall worship before this altar'?" ' 8Now therefore, I urge you, give a pledge to my master the king of Assyria, and I will give you two thousand horses-if you are able on your part to put riders on them! 9How then will you repel one captain of the least of my master's servants, and put your trust in Egypt for chariots and horsemen? 10Have I now come up without the LORD against this land to destroy it? The LORD said to me, 'Go up against this land, and destroy it.' "

11Then Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah said to *the* Rabshakeh, "Please speak to your servants in Aramaic, for we understand *it;* and do not speak to us in Hebrew[a] in the hearing of the people who *are* on the wall."

12But *the* Rabshakeh said, "Has my master sent me to your master and to you to speak these words, and not to the men who sit on the wall, who will eat and drink their own waste with you?"

13Then *the* Rabshakeh stood and called out with a loud voice in Hebrew, and said, "Hear the words of the great king, the king of Assyria! 14Thus says

the king: ‘Do not let Hezekiah deceive you, for he will not be able to deliver you; [15]nor let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD, saying, “The LORD will surely deliver us; this city will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.” ’ [16]Do not listen to Hezekiah; for thus says the king of Assyria: ‘Make *peace* with me *by a* present and come out to me; and every one of you eat from his own vine and every one from his own fig tree, and every one of you drink the waters of his own cistern; [17]until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards. [18]*Beware* lest Hezekiah persuade you, saying, “The LORD will deliver us.” Has any one of the gods of the nations delivered its land from the hand of the king of Assyria? [19]Where *are* the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where *are* the gods of Sepharvaim? Indeed, have they delivered Samaria from my hand? [20]Who among all the gods of these lands have delivered their countries from my hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem from my hand?’ ”

[21]But they held their peace and answered him not a word; for the king’s commandment was, “Do not answer him.” [22]Then Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, who *was* over the household, Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph, the recorder, came to Hezekiah with *their* clothes torn, and told him the words of *the* Rabshakeh.

## ISAIAH ASSURES DELIVERANCE

**37** And so it was, when King Hezekiah heard *it*, that he tore his clothes, covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the LORD.
2 Then he sent Eliakim, who *was* over the household, Shebna the scribe, and
the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, to Isaiah the prophet, the son
of Amoz. 3 And they said to him, "Thus says Hezekiah: 'This day *is* a day of
trouble and rebuke and blasphemy; for the children have come to birth, but
*there is* no strength to bring them forth. 4 It may be that the LORD your God
will hear the words of *the* Rabshakeh, whom his master the king of Assyria
has sent to reproach the living God, and will rebuke the words which the
LORD your God has heard. Therefore lift up *your* prayer for the remnant that
is left.' "

5 So the servants of King Hezekiah came to Isaiah. 6 And Isaiah said to
them, "Thus you shall say to your master, 'Thus says the LORD: "Do not be
afraid of the words which you have heard, with which the servants of the king
of Assyria have blasphemed Me. 7 Surely I will send a spirit upon him, and he
shall hear a rumor and return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by
the sword in his own land." ' "

## SENNACHERIB'S THREAT AND HEZEKIAH'S PRAYER

8 Then *the* Rabshakeh returned, and found the king of Assyria warring
against Libnah, for he heard that he had departed from Lachish. 9 And the
king heard concerning Tirhakah king of Ethiopia, "He has come out to make
war with you." So when he heard *it*, he sent messengers to Hezekiah, saying,
10 "Thus you shall speak to Hezekiah king of Judah, saying: 'Do not let your
God in whom you trust deceive you, saying, "Jerusalem shall not be given
into the hand of the king of Assyria." 11 Look! You have heard what the kings
of Assyria have done to all lands by utterly destroying them; and shall you be
delivered? 12 Have the gods of the nations delivered those whom my fathers
have destroyed, Gozan and Haran and Rezeph, and the people of Eden who
*were* in Telassar? 13 Where *is* the king of Hamath, the king of Arpad, and the
king of the city of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah?' "

14 And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and
read it; and Hezekiah went up to the house of the LORD, and spread it before
the LORD. 15 Then Hezekiah prayed to the LORD, saying: 16 "O LORD of hosts,
God of Israel, *the One* who dwells *between* the cherubim, You *are* God, You
alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth.
17 Incline Your ear, O LORD, and hear; open Your eyes, O LORD, and see; and
hear all the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to reproach the living
God. 18 Truly, LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations and
their lands, 19 and have cast their gods into the fire; for they *were* not gods,
but the work of men's hands-wood and stone. Therefore they destroyed them.
20 Now therefore, O LORD our God, save us from his hand, that all the
kingdoms of the earth may know that You *are* the LORD, You alone."

**THE WORD OF THE LORD CONCERNING SENNACHERIB**

21 Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah, saying, "Thus says the
LORD God of Israel, 'Because you have prayed to Me against Sennacherib
king of Assyria, 22 this *is* the word which the LORD has spoken concerning
him:

"The virgin, the daughter of Zion,
Has despised you, laughed you to scorn;
The daughter of Jerusalem
Has shaken *her* head behind your back!
23 "Whom have you reproached and blasphemed?
Against whom have you raised *your* voice,
And lifted up your eyes on high?
Against the Holy One of Israel.
24 By your servants you have reproached the Lord,
And said, 'By the multitude of my chariots
I have come up to the height of the mountains,
To the limits of Lebanon;
I will cut down its tall cedars
*And* its choice cypress trees;
I will enter its farthest height,
To its fruitful forest.

25 I have dug and drunk water,
And with the soles of my feet I have dried up
All the brooks of defense.’
26 “Did you not hear long ago
*How* I made it,
From ancient times that I formed it?
Now I have brought it to pass,
That you should be
For crushing fortified cities *into* heaps of ruins.
27 Therefore their inhabitants *had* little power;
They were dismayed and confounded;
They were *as* the grass of the field
And the green herb,
*As* the grass on the housetops
And grain blighted before it is grown.
28 “But I know your dwelling place,
Your going out and your coming in,
And your rage against Me.
29 Because your rage against Me and your tumult
Have come up to My ears,
Therefore I will put My hook in your nose
And My bridle in your lips,
And I will turn you back
By the way which you came.” ’
30 “This *shall be* a sign to you:

You shall eat this year such as grows of itself,
And the second year what springs from the same;
Also in the third year sow and reap,
Plant vineyards and eat the fruit of them.

31 And the remnant who have escaped of the house of Judah
Shall again take root downward,
And bear fruit upward.
32 For out of Jerusalem shall go a remnant,

And those who escape from Mount Zion.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.
33 “Therefore thus says the LORD concerning the king of Assyria:

‘ He shall not come into this city,
Nor shoot an arrow there,
Nor come before it with shield,
Nor build a siege mound against it.

34 By the way that he came,
By the same shall he return;
And he shall not come into this city,’
Says the LORD.
35 ‘For I will defend this city, to save it
For My own sake and for
My servant David’s sake.’ ”

## SENNACHERIB’S DEFEAT AND DEATH

36 Then the angel[a] of the LORD went out, and killed in the camp of the Assyrians one hundred and eighty-five thousand; and when *people* arose early in the morning, there were the corpses-all dead. 37 So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and went away, returned *home,* and remained at Nineveh. 38 Now it came to pass, as he was worshiping in the house of Nisroch his god, that his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer struck him down with the sword; and they escaped into the land of Ararat. Then Esarhaddon his son reigned in his place.

## HEZEKIAH'S LIFE EXTENDED

**38** In those days Hezekiah was sick and near death. And Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, went to him and said to him, "Thus says the LORD: 'Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live.' "

2 Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed to the LORD,
3 and said, "Remember now, O LORD, I pray, how I have walked before You in truth and with a loyal heart, and have done *what is* good in Your sight." And Hezekiah wept bitterly.

4 And the word of the LORD came to Isaiah, saying, 5 "Go and tell Hezekiah, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of David your father: "I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; surely I will add to your days fifteen years. 6 I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria, and I will defend this city." ' 7 And this *is* the sign to you from the LORD, that the LORD will do this thing which He has spoken: 8 Behold, I will bring the shadow on the sundial, which has gone down with the sun on the sundial of Ahaz, ten degrees backward." So the sun returned ten degrees on the dial by which it had gone down.

9 This is the writing of Hezekiah king of Judah, when he had been sick and had recovered from his sickness:

10 I said,
"In the prime of my life
I shall go to the gates of Sheol;
I am deprived of the remainder of my years."
11 I said,
"I shall not see YAH,
The LORD[a] in the land of the living;
I shall observe man no more among the inhabitants of the world.[b]
12 My life span is gone,
Taken from me like a shepherd's tent;
I have cut off my life like a weaver.
He cuts me off from the loom;
From day until night You make an end of me.

13 I have considered until morning-
Like a lion,
So He breaks all my bones;
From day until night You make an end of me.
14 Like a crane *or* a swallow, so I chattered;
I mourned like a dove;
My eyes fail *from looking* upward.
O LORD,[a] I am oppressed;
Undertake for me!
15 "What shall I say?
He has both spoken to me,[a]
And He Himself has done *it.*
I shall walk carefully all my years
In the bitterness of my soul.
16 O Lord, by these *things men* live;
And in all these *things is* the life of my spirit;
So You will restore me and make me live.
17 Indeed *it was* for *my own* peace
*That* I had great bitterness;
But You have lovingly *delivered* my soul from the pit of corruption,
For You have cast all my sins behind Your back.
18 For Sheol cannot thank You,
Death cannot praise You;
Those who go down to the pit cannot hope for Your truth.
19 The living, the living man, he shall praise You,
As I *do* this day;
The father shall make known Your truth to the children.
20 "The LORD *was ready* to save me;
Therefore we will sing my songs with stringed instruments
All the days of our life, in the house of the LORD."

21 Now Isaiah had said, "Let them take a lump of figs, and apply *it* as a poultice on the boil, and he shall recover."

22 And Hezekiah had said, "What *is* the sign that I shall go up to the house of the LORD?"

## SOUL NOTE

**Homemade Remedies** *(38:21)* As he faced death, King Hezekiah cried out to the Lord (38:2, 3). The prophet Isaiah told the king to have his servants take a "lump of figs, and apply it as a poultice on the boil," promising that Hezekiah would recover. While God can heal miraculously, He also will work through medicines to heal people. When we pray for God to heal us, we can trust Him to use all the means available. It shows no lack of faith to utilize the benefit of doctors and hospitals. **Topic: Healing/Recovery** "Prepare the way of the LORD;

## THE BABYLONIAN ENVOYS

**39** At that time Merodach-Baladan[a] the son of Baladan, king of Babylon,
sent letters and a present to Hezekiah, for he heard that he had been sick
and had recovered. 2And Hezekiah was pleased with them, and showed them
the house of his treasures-the silver and gold, the spices and precious
ointment, and all his armory-all that was found among his treasures. There
was nothing in his house or in all his dominion that Hezekiah did not show
them.

3Then Isaiah the prophet went to King Hezekiah, and said to him, "What
did these men say, and from where did they come to you?"

So Hezekiah said, "They came to me from a far country, from Babylon."

4And he said, "What have they seen in your house?"

So Hezekiah answered, "They have seen all that *is* in my house; there is
nothing among my treasures that I have not shown them."

5Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Hear the word of the LORD of hosts:
6'Behold, the days are coming when all that *is* in your house, and what your
fathers have accumulated until this day, shall be carried to Babylon; nothing
shall be left,' says the LORD. 7'And they shall take away *some* of your sons
who will descend from you, whom you will beget; and they shall be eunuchs
in the palace of the king of Babylon.' "

8So Hezekiah said to Isaiah, "The word of the LORD which you have
spoken *is* good!" For he said, "At least there will be peace and truth in my
days."

## GOD'S PEOPLE ARE COMFORTED

**40** "Comfort, yes, comfort My people!"
Says your God.

2 "Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her,
That her warfare is ended,
That her iniquity is pardoned;
For she has received from the LORD's hand
Double for all her sins."
3 The voice of one crying in the wilderness:
"Prepare the way of the LORD;
Make straight in the desert[a]
A highway for our God.
4 Every valley shall be exalted
And every mountain and hill brought low;
The crooked places shall be made straight
And the rough places smooth;
5 The glory of the LORD shall be revealed,
And all flesh shall see *it* together;
For the mouth of the LORD has spoken."
6 The voice said, "Cry out!"
And he[a] said, "What shall I cry?"

"All flesh *is* grass,
And all its loveliness *is* like the flower of the field.

7 The grass withers, the flower fades,
Because the breath of the LORD blows upon it;
Surely the people *are* grass.
8 The grass withers, the flower fades,
But the word of our God stands forever."

"The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever."

## ISAIAH 40:8

9 O Zion,
You who bring good tidings,
Get up into the high mountain;
O Jerusalem,
You who bring good tidings,
Lift up your voice with strength,
Lift *it* up, be not afraid;
Say to the cities of Judah, “Behold your God!”
10 Behold, the Lord GOD shall come with a strong *hand,*
And His arm shall rule for Him;
Behold, His reward *is* with Him,
And His work before Him.
11 He will feed His flock like a shepherd;
He will gather the lambs with His arm,
And carry *them* in His bosom,
*And* gently lead those who are with young.
12 Who has measured the waters[a] in the hollow of His hand,
Measured heaven with a span
And calculated the dust of the earth in a measure?
Weighed the mountains in scales And the hills in a balance?
13 Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD,
Or *as* His counselor has taught Him?
14 With whom did He take counsel, and *who* instructed Him,
And taught Him in the path of justice?
Who taught Him knowledge,
And showed Him the way of understanding?
15 Behold, the nations *are* as a drop in a bucket,
And are counted as the small dust on the scales;
Look, He lifts up the isles as a very little thing.
16 And Lebanon *is* not sufficient to burn,
Nor its beasts sufficient for a burnt offering.
17 All nations before Him *are* as nothing,
And they are counted by Him less than nothing and worthless.

18 To whom then will you liken God?
Or what likeness will you compare to Him?
19 The workman molds an image,
The goldsmith overspreads it with gold,
And the silversmith casts silver chains.
20 Whoever *is* too impoverished for *such* a contribution
Chooses a tree *that* will not rot;
He seeks for himself a skillful workman
To prepare a carved image *that* will not totter.
21 Have you not known?
Have you not heard?
Has it not been told you from the beginning?
Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?
22 *It is* He who sits above the circle of the earth,

And its inhabitants *are* like grasshoppers,
Who stretches out the heavens like a curtain,
And spreads them out like a tent to dwell in.
23 He brings the princes to nothing;
He makes the judges of the earth useless.
24 Scarcely shall they be planted,
Scarcely shall they be sown,
Scarcely shall their stock take root in the earth,
When He will also blow on them,
And they will wither,
And the whirlwind will take them away like stubble.
25 "To whom then will you liken Me,
Or *to whom* shall I be equal?" says the Holy One.
26 Lift up your eyes on high,
And see who has created these *things,*
Who brings out their host by number;
He calls them all by name,
By the greatness of His might
And the strength of *His* power;
Not one is missing.

27 Why do you say, O Jacob,
And speak, O Israel:
"My way is hidden from the LORD,
And my just claim is passed over by my God"?
28 Have you not known?
Have you not heard?
The everlasting God, the LORD,
The Creator of the ends of the earth,
Neither faints nor is weary.
His understanding is unsearchable.
29 He gives power to the weak,
And to *those who have* no might He increases strength.
30 Even the youths shall faint and be weary,
And the young men shall utterly fall,
31 But those who wait on the LORD
Shall renew *their* strength;
They shall mount up with wings like eagles,
They shall run and not be weary,
They shall walk and not faint.

**OVERCOMING BURNOUT**

# H. B. LONDON

## (Isaiah 40:31)

**W**ill a human being ever swim across the ocean? Run a one-minute mile? Go six months without sleeping? Of course not, because of the established fact of human limits. Yet because of the rapidly changing

conditions of modern living-largely due to progress always giving us more and more of everything faster and faster-we are attempting to exceed our limits in scores of areas all at the same time. The pain is palpable. People everywhere are collapsing in exhaustion, wondering what hit them.

What hit them was overload. This can be defined as the point at which our limits are exceeded. “Load” is not the problem. “Over” is the problem. We have all heard about the straw that broke the camel’s back. Once a camel is maximally loaded, a mere straw will cause the break. The problem is not the load-camels love to carry loads. The problem is *over*load.

Stress is such an accepted part of our modern culture that most of us accept it as normal. In reality, stress distorts our physical, mental, and emotional health, and affects our attitudes, marriages, work, and even ministry. We can overload ourselves to the point that we burn out and are no longer effective in God’s work.

**PUSHING OUR LIMITS**

Maximizing everything has, of course, become the American way. We push the limits as far as possible. We spend more than we have-whether it be money, time, or energy. Jesus, however, never seemed to be in a hurry. There is no indication that He worked 24-hour days. He went to sleep each night without having healed every disease in Israel. He followed God’s agenda, and so He was perfectly effective.

Jesus understood what it means to be human-and what it means to have limits. Jesus knew what it meant to prioritize and balance in light of these limits and how to focus on the truly important. Our Lord realized that busyness is not necessarily godliness. He is more concerned with the quality of our lives. He calls us to be fruitful, but He also insists that our fruit should “remain,” not burn out.

By contrast, we are in a hurry. Nearly everyone I know has a full plate, but most of us haven’t completely thought through the

performance implications of our saturated states. We continue to say "Yes," even when "Yes" is no longer an option. Once we cross the threshold of our limits, however, we reach saturation. We can't factor anything more into our lives until we take something away. As basic as this principle seems, it remains largely disregarded.

How do we know when we have reached these limits? If a car overheats, an indicator light goes on alerting us to the danger. Unfortunately, we don't have such a visible system in most cases. Therefore, we have to be more honest with ourselves about our limits.

**AVOIDING BURNOUT**

From the very beginning, rest has had a special significance for God (Gen. 2:3). This rest is not always easy, however. Even Moses had difficulty obeying the call to rest. He experienced unrelieved stress trying to keep two million Israelites happy as they wandered in the wilderness. God called Moses to rest and to delegate some responsibilities. Soon others helped carry Moses' burden and his stress became more manageable (Num. 11:11-17).

God's calling in our lives does not eliminate stress and burnout automatically. Nowhere does the Bible promise to ease all the stress in our lives. It does promise God's peace when we allow Him to control our lives and shape our decisions. He gives us practical ways to limit stress and avoid burnout in the framework of His design for our lives.

• *Accept responsibility.* We must never relinquish control of our schedules to the unpredictable and sometimes ruthless whims of the world or the demands of others. We should be active in self-examination. Nobody is locked into anything. Each of us can accomplish the needed changes if we want them badly enough.

• *Acknowledge limits.* We can schedule our days more sanely, more humanly, and more relationally. We need not apologize for wanting a good night's sleep; we need not believe the lie that "well-rested" is a

synonym for “sluggardly.”

• *Understand God’s will.* God never guides us into an intolerable scramble of overworked feverishness. We will gain more time by properly understanding God’s will for us than by all the time-saving suggestions put together.

• *Consciously slow the pace of life.* The pace of life has become deadly. We simply cannot permit each year to bring an increase in speed and not get caught in the exhausting consequences of such a frenzy.

• *Define and defend boundaries.* Jesus did not minister to everybody in Israel, even though He could have. Remember that it is not necessary to have more compassion than the Almighty.

• *Learn to say no.* It is easy to say no to a root canal or a colonoscopy. It is far more difficult to say no to things that are interesting and enjoyable. Yet even if everything we are doing is enjoyable, if we do not learn to say no, overload will overwhelm us.

• *Get less done, but do the right things.* We would do well to consider doing less, but radically prioritizing. Remember, the multiplying coefficient for our labor is the power of the Holy Spirit. The same God who spoke the universe into existence sees our faithful efforts and instructs the Holy Spirit to expand the benefit to whatever level best glorifies Him.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of burnout include:

- Exodus 23:12
- Psalm 37:7
- Isaiah 41:10
- John 16:33

- Colossians 3:15

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on burnout at Matthew 11:28-30. See also the personality profile of Moses and Jethro: A Friend In Need.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Renewed Strength** *(40:31)* One of the great challenges of the Christian life is dealing with the problem of spiritual burnout. Isaiah reminded God's people of the value of waiting upon the Lord. "Waiting" does not mean inactivity; rather, it is patient service that is not overcommitted and overextended. Many desire to "mount up with wings like eagles," but they assume that the harder they run the more likely they will fly. The prophet says, however, that the harder people run the more likely they will fall. Instead, "those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength." Such "waiting" is the antidote for spiritual burnout. **Topic: Burnout**

**ISRAEL ASSURED OF GOD'S HELP**

**41** "Keep silence before Me, O coastlands,
And let the people renew *their* strength!
Let them come near, then let them speak;
Let us come near together for judgment.

2 "Who raised up one from the east?
Who in righteousness called him to His feet?
Who gave the nations before him,
And made *him* rule over kings?
Who gave *them* as the dust *to* his sword,
As driven stubble to his bow?
3 Who pursued them, *and* passed safely
By the way *that* he had not gone with his feet?
4 Who has performed and done *it*,
Calling the generations from the beginning?
' I, the LORD, am the first;
And with the last I *am* He.' "
5 The coastlands saw *it* and feared,
The ends of the earth were afraid;
They drew near and came.
6 Everyone helped his neighbor,
And said to his brother,
"Be of good courage!"
7 So the craftsman encouraged the goldsmith;
He who smooths *with* the hammer *inspired* him who strikes the anvil,
Saying, "It *is* ready for the soldering";
Then he fastened it with pegs,
*That* it might not totter.
8 "But you, Israel, *are* My servant,
Jacob whom I have chosen,
The descendants of Abraham My friend.
9 *You* whom I have taken from the ends of the earth,
And called from its farthest regions,

And said to you,
‘You *are* My servant,
I have chosen you and have not cast you away:
10 Fear not, for I *am* with you;
Be not dismayed, for I *am* your God.
I will strengthen you,
Yes, I will help you,
I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.’
11 “Behold, all those who were incensed against you
Shall be ashamed and disgraced;
They shall be as nothing,
And those who strive with you shall perish.
12 You shall seek them and not find them-
Those who contended with you.
Those who war against you
Shall be as nothing,
As a nonexistent thing.
13 For I, the LORD your God, will hold your right hand,
Saying to you, ‘Fear not, I will help you.’
14 “Fear not, you worm Jacob,
You men of Israel!
I will help you,” says the LORD
And your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.
15 “Behold, I will make you into a new threshing sledge with sharp teeth;
You shall thresh the mountains and beat *them* small,
And make the hills like chaff.
16 You shall winnow them, the wind shall carry them away,
And the whirlwind shall scatter them;
You shall rejoice in the LORD,
*And* glory in the Holy One of Israel.
17 “The poor and needy seek water, but *there is* none,
Their tongues fail for thirst.
I, the LORD, will hear them;
*I,* the God of Israel, will not forsake them.
18 I will open rivers in desolate heights,

And fountains in the midst of the valleys;
I will make the wilderness a pool of water,
And the dry land springs of water.
19 I will plant in the wilderness the cedar and the acacia tree,
The myrtle and the oil tree;
I will set in the desert the cypress tree *and* the pine
And the box tree together,
20 That they may see and know,
And consider and understand together,
That the hand of the LORD has done this,
And the Holy One of Israel has created it.

## THE FUTILITY OF IDOLS

21 "Present your case," says the LORD.
"Bring forth your strong *reasons,*" says the King of Jacob.
22 "Let them bring forth and show us what will happen;
Let them show the former things, what they *were,*
That we may consider them,
And know the latter end of them;
Or declare to us things to come.
23 Show the things that are to come hereafter,
That we may know that you *are* gods;
Yes, do good or do evil,
That we may be dismayed and see *it* together.
24 Indeed you *are* nothing,
And your work *is* nothing;
*He who* chooses you *is* an abomination.
25 "I have raised up one from the north,
And he shall come;
From the rising of the sun he shall call on My name;
And he shall come against princes as *though* mortar, As the potter treads clay.
26 Who has declared from the beginning, that we may know?
And former times, that we may say, '*He is* righteous'?
Surely *there is* no one who shows,

Surely *there is* no one who declares,
Surely *there is* no one who hears your words.
27 The first time *I said* to Zion,
'Look, there they are!'
And I will give to Jerusalem one who brings good tidings.
28 For I looked, and *there was* no man;
I looked among them, but *there was* no counselor,
Who, when I asked of them, could answer a word.
29 Indeed they *are* all worthless;[a]
Their works *are* nothing;
Their molded images *are* wind and confusion.

**KEY PASSAGE**

# HELD IN HIS ARMS

**(41:10)**

God reminds His people that in their loneliness and inadequacy they need not fear or be dismayed. Why? Because He is their God and because He is with them, holding them in His "righteous right hand." Everyone feels lonely at times. Sometimes, however, loneliness can become so desperate that it causes fearfulness. That fear, then, can draw the lonely person's attention away from God. God promises, however, that He will always hold His people close to Him. He says, "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Heb. 13:5).

Lonely people must remember that Jesus has called them His friends (John 15:15), and that with Jesus they are never alone (John 14:26). Feelings of loneliness can be helped. Lonely people can

attend church (Heb. 10:25), be a friend to someone else (Prov. 18:24), listen to Christian music, and pray for God to work in and through them to take away the lonely feelings.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Loneliness and Personal Growth. See also the personality profile of Jeremiah the Lone Prophet.

**THE SERVANT OF THE LORD**

**42** “Behold! My Servant whom I uphold,
My Elect One *in whom* My soul delights!
I have put My Spirit upon Him;
He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles.

2 He will not cry out, nor raise *His voice*,
Nor cause His voice to be heard in the street.
3 A bruised reed He will not break,
And smoking flax He will not quench;
He will bring forth justice for truth.
4 He will not fail nor be discouraged,
Till He has established justice in the earth;
And the coastlands shall wait for His law.”
5 Thus says God the LORD,
Who created the heavens and stretched them out,
Who spread forth the earth and that which comes from it,
Who gives breath to the people on it,
And spirit to those who walk on it:
6 “I, the LORD, have called You in righteousness,
And will hold Your hand;
I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people,
As a light to the Gentiles,
7 To open blind eyes,
To bring out prisoners from the prison,
Those who sit in darkness from the prison house.
8 I *am* the LORD, that *is* My name;
And My glory I will not give to another,
Nor My praise to carved images.
9 Behold, the former things have come to pass,
And new things I declare;
Before they spring forth I tell you of them.”

**PRAISE TO THE LORD**

10 Sing to the LORD a new song,
*And* His praise from the ends of the earth,
You who go down to the sea, and all that is in it,
You coastlands and you inhabitants of them!
11 Let the wilderness and its cities lift up *their voice*,
The villages *that* Kedar inhabits.
Let the inhabitants of Sela sing,
Let them shout from the top of the mountains.
12 Let them give glory to the LORD,
And declare His praise in the coastlands.
13 The LORD shall go forth like a mighty man;
He shall stir up *His* zeal like a man of war.
He shall cry out, yes, shout aloud;
He shall prevail against His enemies.

**PROMISE OF THE LORD'S HELP**

14 "I have held My peace a long time,
I have been still and restrained Myself.
*Now* I will cry like a woman in labor,
I will pant and gasp at once.
15 I will lay waste the mountains and hills,
And dry up all their vegetation;
I will make the rivers coastlands,
And I will dry up the pools.
16 I will bring the blind by a way they did not know;
I will lead them in paths they have not known.
I will make darkness light before them,
And crooked places straight.
These things I will do for them,
And not forsake them.
17 They shall be turned back,
They shall be greatly ashamed,
Who trust in carved images,
Who say to the molded images,
'You *are* our gods.'
18 "Hear, you deaf;

And look, you blind, that you may see.
19 Who *is* blind but My servant,
Or deaf as My messenger *whom* I send?
Who *is* blind as *he who is* perfect,
And blind as the LORD's servant?
20 Seeing many things, but you do not observe;
Opening the ears, but he does not hear."

## ISRAEL'S OBSTINATE DISOBEDIENCE

21 The LORD is well pleased for His righteousness' sake;
He will exalt the law and make *it* honorable.
22 But this *is* a people robbed and plundered;
All of them are snared in holes,
And they are hidden in prison houses;
They are for prey, and no one delivers;
For plunder, and no one says, "Restore!"
23 Who among you will give ear to this?
*Who* will listen and hear for the time to come?
24 Who gave Jacob for plunder, and Israel to the robbers?
Was it not the LORD,
He against whom we have sinned?
For they would not walk in His ways,
Nor were they obedient to His law.
25 Therefore He has poured on him the fury of His anger
And the strength of battle;
It has set him on fire all around,
Yet he did not know;
And it burned him,
Yet he did not take *it* to heart.

**THE REDEEMER OF ISRAEL**

**43** But now, thus says the LORD, who created you, O Jacob,
And He who formed you, O Israel:
"Fear not, for I have redeemed you;
I have called *you* by your name;
You *are* Mine.

2 When you pass through the waters, I *will be* with you;
And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you.
When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned,
Nor shall the flame scorch you.
3 For I *am* the LORD your God,
The Holy One of Israel, your Savior;
I gave Egypt for your ransom,
Ethiopia and Seba in your place.
4 Since you were precious in My sight,
You have been honored,
And I have loved you;
Therefore I will give men for you,
And people for your life.
5 Fear not, for I *am* with you;
I will bring your descendants from the east,
And gather you from the west;
6 I will say to the north, 'Give them up!'
And to the south, 'Do not keep them back!'
Bring My sons from afar,
And My daughters from the ends of the earth-
7 Everyone who is called by My name,
Whom I have created for My glory;
I have formed him, yes, I have made him."
8 Bring out the blind people who have eyes,
And the deaf who have ears.
9 Let all the nations be gathered together,
And let the people be assembled.

Who among them can declare this,
And show us former things?
Let them bring out their witnesses, that they may be justified;
Or let them hear and say, "*It is* truth."
10 "You *are* My witnesses," says the LORD,
"And My servant whom I have chosen,
That you may know and believe Me,
And understand that I *am* He.
Before Me there was no God formed,
Nor shall there be after Me.
11 I, *even* I, *am* the LORD,
And besides Me *there is* no savior.
12 I have declared and saved,
I have proclaimed,
And *there was* no foreign *god* among you;
Therefore you *are* My witnesses,"
Says the LORD, "that I *am* God.
13 Indeed before the day *was*, I *am* He;
And *there is* no one who can deliver out of My hand;
I work, and who will reverse it?"
14 Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer,
The Holy One of Israel:
"For your sake I will send to Babylon,
And bring them all down as fugitives-
The Chaldeans, who rejoice in their ships.
15 I *am* the LORD, your Holy One,
The Creator of Israel, your King."
16 Thus says the LORD, who makes a way in the sea
And a path through the mighty waters,
17 Who brings forth the chariot and horse,
The army and the power
(They shall lie down together, they shall not rise;
They are extinguished, they are quenched like a wick):
18 "Do not remember the former things,
Nor consider the things of old.

19 Behold, I will do a new thing,
Now it shall spring forth;
Shall you not know it?
I will even make a road in the wilderness
*And* rivers in the desert.
20 The beast of the field will honor Me,
The jackals and the ostriches,
Because I give waters in the wilderness
*And* rivers in the desert,
To give drink to My people, My chosen.
21 This people I have formed for Myself;
They shall declare My praise.

**PLEADING WITH UNFAITHFUL ISRAEL**

22 "But you have not called upon Me, O Jacob;
And you have been weary of Me, O Israel.
23 You have not brought Me the sheep for your burnt offerings,
Nor have you honored Me with your sacrifices.
I have not caused you to serve with grain offerings,
Nor wearied you with incense.
24 You have bought Me no sweet cane with money,
Nor have you satisfied Me with the fat of your sacrifices;
But you have burdened Me with your sins,
You have wearied Me with your iniquities.
25 "I, *even* I, *am* He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake;
And I will not remember your sins.
26 Put Me in remembrance;
Let us contend together;
State your *case*, that you may be acquitted.
27 Your first father sinned,
And your mediators have transgressed against Me.
28 Therefore I will profane the princes of the sanctuary;
I will give Jacob to the curse,
And Israel to reproaches.

## SOUL NOTE

**Who We Are** *(43:1)* Society determines people's importance based on what they do or what they know. God chose Israel to be His covenant people and to display His glory to the nations. God promised: "I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; you are Mine." As a nation, Israel failed to recognize their Messiah, and God established His new covenant with all who would trust Jesus Christ as Savior. God's people know that Christ is their God, Savior, and King. Our self-esteem is not based on what we do, but on who we are in Christ. **Topic: Self-Esteem**

## SOUL NOTE

**Cleansed** *(43:25)* When the guilt of past sins weighs us down, we must remember that when we seek forgiveness, God "blots out" our transgressions and forgets our sins. David prayed that God would "blot out" all of his iniquities (Ps. 51:9); Peter called the people to repent so that their "sins may be blotted out" (Acts 3:19). "Blotting out" sins pictures wiping the slate clean. Whatever sins we have committed, God promises to erase them. He knows what we have done, but He treats us as though we have never sinned. Because God has forgiven us, we must forgive ourselves. **Topic: Forgiveness**

## GOD'S BLESSING ON ISRAEL

**44** "Yet hear me now, O Jacob My servant,
And Israel whom I have chosen.

2 Thus says the LORD who made you
And formed you from the womb, *who* will help you:
'Fear not, O Jacob My servant;
And you, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen.
3 For I will pour water on him who is thirsty,
And floods on the dry ground;
I will pour My Spirit on your descendants,
And My blessing on your offspring;
4 They will spring up among the grass
Like willows by the watercourses.'
5 One will say, 'I *am* the LORD's';
Another will call *himself* by the name of Jacob;
Another will write *with* his hand, 'The LORD's,'
And name *himself* by the name of Israel.

## THERE IS NO OTHER GOD

6 "Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel,
And his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts:
' I *am* the First and I *am* the Last;
Besides Me *there is* no God.
7 And who can proclaim as I do?
Then let him declare it and set it in order for Me,
Since I appointed the ancient people.
And the things that are coming and shall come,
Let them show these to them.
8 Do not fear, nor be afraid;
Have I not told you from that time, and declared *it?*
You *are* My witnesses.
Is there a God besides Me?
Indeed *there is* no other Rock;

I know not *one*.' "

## IDOLATRY IS FOOLISHNESS

9 Those who make an image, all of them *are* useless,
And their precious things shall not profit;
They *are* their own witnesses;
They neither see nor know, that they may be ashamed.
10 Who would form a god or mold an image
*That* profits him nothing?
11 Surely all his companions would be ashamed;
And the workmen, they *are* mere men.
Let them all be gathered together,
Let them stand up;
Yet they shall fear,
They shall be ashamed together.
12 The blacksmith with the tongs works one in the coals,
Fashions it with hammers,
And works it with the strength of his arms.
Even so, he is hungry, and his strength fails;
He drinks no water and is faint.
13 The craftsman stretches out *his* rule,
He marks one out with chalk;
He fashions it with a plane,
He marks it out with the compass,
And makes it like the figure of a man,
According to the beauty of a man, that it may remain in the house.
14 He cuts down cedars for himself,
And takes the cypress and the oak;
He secures *it* for himself among the trees of the forest.
He plants a pine, and the rain nourishes *it.*
15 Then it shall be for a man to burn,
For he will take some of it and warm himself;
Yes, he kindles *it* and bakes bread;
Indeed he makes a god and worships *it;*
He makes it a carved image, and falls down to it.

16 He burns half of it in the fire;
With this half he eats meat;
He roasts a roast, and is satisfied.
He even warms *himself* and says,
"Ah! I am warm,
I have seen the fire."
17 And the rest of it he makes into a god,
His carved image.
He falls down before it and worships *it,*
Prays to it and says,
"Deliver me, for you *are* my god!"
18 They do not know nor understand;
For He has shut their eyes, so that they cannot see,
*And* their hearts, so that they cannot understand.
19 And no one considers in his heart,
Nor *is there* knowledge nor understanding to say,
"I have burned half of it in the fire,
Yes, I have also baked bread on its coals;
I have roasted meat and eaten *it;*
And shall I make the rest of it an abomination?
Shall I fall down before a block of wood?"
20 He feeds on ashes;
A deceived heart has turned him aside;
And he cannot deliver his soul,
Nor say, "*Is there* not a lie in my right hand?"

## ISRAEL IS NOT FORGOTTEN

21 "Remember these, O Jacob,
And Israel, for you *are* My servant;
I have formed you, you *are* My servant;
O Israel, you will not be forgotten by Me!
22 I have blotted out, like a thick cloud, your transgressions,
And like a cloud, your sins.
Return to Me, for I have redeemed you."
23 Sing, O heavens, for the LORD has done *it!*

Shout, you lower parts of the earth;
Break forth into singing, you mountains,
O forest, and every tree in it! For the LORD has redeemed Jacob,
And glorified Himself in Israel.

## JUDAH WILL BE RESTORED

24 Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer,
And He who formed you from the womb:
"I *am* the LORD, who makes all *things*,
Who stretches out the heavens all alone,
Who spreads abroad the earth by Myself;
25 Who frustrates the signs of the babblers,
And drives diviners mad;
Who turns wise men backward,
And makes their knowledge foolishness;
26 Who confirms the word of His servant,
And performs the counsel of His messengers;
Who says to Jerusalem, 'You shall be inhabited,'
To the cities of Judah, 'You shall be built,'
And I will raise up her waste places;
27 Who says to the deep, 'Be dry!
And I will dry up your rivers';
28 Who says of Cyrus, '*He is* My shepherd,
And he shall perform all My pleasure,
Saying to Jerusalem, "You shall be built,"
And to the temple, "Your foundation shall be laid." '

**CYRUS, GOD'S INSTRUMENT**

**45** "Thus says the LORD to His anointed,
To Cyrus, whose right hand I have held-
To subdue nations before him
And loose the armor of kings,
To open before him the double doors,
So that the gates will not be shut:

2 ' I will go before you
And make the crooked places[a] straight;
I will break in pieces the gates of bronze
And cut the bars of iron.
3 I will give you the treasures of darkness
And hidden riches of secret places,
That you may know that I, the LORD,
Who call *you* by your name,
*Am* the God of Israel.
4 For Jacob My servant's sake,
And Israel My elect,
I have even called you by your name;
I have named you, though you have not known Me.
5 I *am* the LORD, and *there is* no other;
*There is* no God besides Me.
I will gird you, though you have not known Me,
6 That they may know from the rising of the sun to its setting
That *there is* none besides Me.
I *am* the LORD, and *there is* no other;
7 I form the light and create darkness,
I make peace and create calamity;
I, the LORD, do all these *things*.'

8 “Rain down, you heavens, from above,
And let the skies pour down
righteousness;
Let the earth open, let them bring forth
salvation,
And let righteousness spring up together.
I, the LORD, have created it.
9 “Woe to him who strives with his Maker!
*Let* the potsherd *strive* with the
potsherds of the earth!
Shall the clay say to him who forms it,
‘What are you making?’
Or shall your handiwork *say*, ‘He has no
hands’?
10 Woe to him who says to *his* father,
‘What are you begetting?’
Or to the woman, ‘What have you
brought forth?’ ”
11 Thus says the LORD,
The Holy One of Israel, and his Maker:
“Ask Me of things to come concerning My
sons;
And concerning the work of My hands,
you command Me.
12 I have made the earth,
And created man on it.
I-My hands-stretched out the
heavens,
And all their host I have commanded.
13 I have raised him up in righteousness,
And I will direct all his ways;
He shall build My city
And let My exiles go free,
Not for price nor reward,”
Says the LORD of hosts.

**THE LORD, THE ONLY SAVIOR**

14 Thus says the LORD:

"The labor of Egypt and merchandise of
Cush
And of the Sabeans, men of stature,
Shall come over to you, and they shall
be yours;
They shall walk behind you,
They shall come over in chains;
And they shall bow down to you.
They will make supplication to you,
*saying*, 'Surely God *is* in you,
And *there is* no other;
*There is* no other God.' "

15 Truly You *are* God, who hide Yourself,
O God of Israel, the Savior!
16 They shall be ashamed
And also disgraced, all of them;
They shall go in confusion together,
*Who are* makers of idols.
17 *But* Israel shall be saved by the LORD
With an everlasting salvation;
You shall not be ashamed or disgraced
Forever and ever.
18 For thus says the LORD,
Who created the heavens,
Who is God,
Who formed the earth and made it,
Who has established it,
Who did not create it in vain,
Who formed it to be inhabited:
"I *am* the LORD, and *there is* no other.
19 I have not spoken in secret,

In a dark place of the earth;
I did not say to the seed of Jacob,
‘Seek Me in vain’;
I, the LORD, speak righteousness,
I declare things that are right.
20 “Assemble yourselves and come;
Draw near together,
You *who have* escaped from the nations.
They have no knowledge,
Who carry the wood of their carved
image,
And pray to a god *that* cannot save.
21 Tell and bring forth *your case;*
Yes, let them take counsel together.
Who has declared this from ancient time?
*Who* has told it from that time?
*Have* not I, the LORD?
And *there is* no other God besides Me,
A just God and a Savior;
*There is* none besides Me.
22 “Look to Me, and be saved,
All you ends of the earth!
For I *am* God, and *there is* no other.
23 I have sworn by Myself;
The word has gone out of My mouth *in*
righteousness,
And shall not return,
That to Me every knee shall bow,
Every tongue shall take an oath.
24 He shall say,
‘Surely in the LORD I have righteousness
and strength.
To Him *men* shall come,
And all shall be ashamed
Who are incensed against Him.

25 In the LORD all the descendants of Israel
Shall be justified, and shall glory.’ ”

## DEAD IDOLS AND THE LIVING GOD

**46** Bel bows down, Nebo stoops;
Their idols were on the beasts and on the cattle.
Your carriages *were* heavily loaded,
A burden to the weary *beast.*

2 They stoop, they bow down together;
They could not deliver the burden,
But have themselves gone into captivity.
3 "Listen to Me, O house of Jacob,
And all the remnant of the house of Israel,
Who have been upheld *by Me* from birth,
Who have been carried from the womb:
4 Even to *your* old age, I *am* He,
And *even* to gray hairs I will carry *you!*
I have made, and I will bear;
Even I will carry, and will deliver *you.*
5 "To whom will you liken Me, and make *Me* equal
And compare Me, that we should be alike?
6 They lavish gold out of the bag,
And weigh silver on the scales;
They hire a goldsmith, and he makes it a god;
They prostrate themselves, yes, they worship.
7 They bear it on the shoulder, they carry it
And set it in its place, and it stands;
From its place it shall not move.
Though *one* cries out to it, yet it cannot

answer
Nor save him out of his trouble.
8 “Remember this, and show yourselves
men;
Recall to mind, O you transgressors.
9 Remember the former things of old,
For I *am* God, and *there is* no other;
*I am* God, and *there is* none like Me,
10 Declaring the end from the beginning,
And from ancient times *things* that are
not *yet* done,
Saying, ‘My counsel shall stand,
And I will do all My pleasure,’
11 Calling a bird of prey from the east,
The man who executes My counsel,
from a far country.
Indeed I have spoken *it;*
I will also bring it to pass.
I have purposed *it;*
I will also do it.
12 “Listen to Me, you stubborn-hearted,
Who *are* far from righteousness:
13 I bring My righteousness near, it shall
not be far off;
My salvation shall not linger.
And I will place salvation in Zion,
For Israel My glory.

## THE HUMILIATION OF BABYLON

**47** “Come down and sit in the dust,
O virgin daughter of Babylon;
Sit on the ground without a throne,
O daughter of the Chaldeans!
For you shall no more be called
Tender and delicate.

2 Take the millstones and grind meal.
Remove your veil,
Take off the skirt,
Uncover the thigh,
Pass through the rivers.
3 Your nakedness shall be uncovered,
Yes, your shame will be seen;
I will take vengeance,
And I will not arbitrate with a man.”
4 *As for* our Redeemer, the LORD of hosts
*is* His name,
The Holy One of Israel.
5 “Sit in silence, and go into darkness,
O daughter of the Chaldeans;
For you shall no longer be called
The Lady of Kingdoms.
6 I was angry with My people;
I have profaned My inheritance,
And given them into your hand.
You showed them no mercy;
On the elderly you laid your yoke very
heavily.
7 And you said, ‘I shall be a lady forever,’
*So* that you did not take these *things* to
heart,
Nor remember the latter end of them.

8 “Therefore hear this now, *you who are*
given to pleasures,
Who dwell securely,
Who say in your heart, ‘I *am,* and *there*
*is* no one else besides me;
I shall not sit *as* a widow,
Nor shall I know the loss of children’;
9 But these two *things* shall come to you
In a moment, in one day:
The loss of children, and widowhood.
They shall come upon you in their
fullness
Because of the multitude of your
sorceries,
For the great abundance of your
enchantments.
10 “For you have trusted in your
wickedness;
You have said, ‘No one sees me’;
Your wisdom and your knowledge have
warped you;
And you have said in your heart,
‘ I *am*, and *there is* no one else besides
me.’
11 Therefore evil shall come upon you;
You shall not know from where it arises.
And trouble shall fall upon you;
You will not be able to put it off.
And desolation shall come upon you
suddenly,
*Which* you shall not know.
12 “Stand now with your enchantments
And the multitude of your sorceries,
In which you have labored from your
youth-

Perhaps you will be able to profit,
Perhaps you will prevail.
13 You are wearied in the multitude of your
counsels;
Let now the astrologers, the stargazers,
*And* the monthly prognosticators
Stand up and save you
From what shall come upon you.
14 Behold, they shall be as stubble,
The fire shall burn them;
They shall not deliver themselves
From the power of the flame;
*It shall* not *be* a coal to be warmed by,
*Nor* a fire to sit before!
15 Thus shall they be to you
With whom you have labored,
Your merchants from your youth;
They shall wander each one to his
quarter.
No one shall save you.

## ISRAEL REFINED FOR GOD'S GLORY

**48** " Hear this, O house of Jacob,
Who are called by the name of
Israel,
And have come forth from the
wellsprings of Judah;
Who swear by the name of the LORD,
And make mention of the God of Israel,
*But* not in truth or in righteousness;

2 For they call themselves after the holy
city,
And lean on the God of Israel;
The LORD of hosts *is* His name:
3 "I have declared the former things from
the beginning;
They went forth from My mouth, and I
caused them to hear it.
Suddenly I did *them,* and they came to
pass.
4 Because I knew that you *were* obstinate,
And your neck *was* an iron sinew,
And your brow bronze,
5 Even from the beginning I have declared
*it* to you;
Before it came to pass I proclaimed *it* to
you,
Lest you should say, 'My idol has done
them,
And my carved image and my molded
image
Have commanded them.'
6 "You have heard;
See all this.
And will you not declare *it?*

I have made you hear new things from
this time,
Even hidden things, and you did not
know them.
7 They are created now and not from the
beginning;
And before this day you have not heard
them,
Lest you should say, ‘Of course I knew
them.’
8 Surely you did not hear,
Surely you did not know;
Surely from long ago your ear was not
opened.
For I knew that you would deal very
treacherously,
And were called a transgressor from the womb.
9 “For My name’s sake I will defer My
anger,
And *for* My praise I will restrain it from
you,
So that I do not cut you off.
10 Behold, I have refined you, but not as
silver;
I have tested you in the furnace of
affliction.
11 For My own sake, for My own sake, I
will do *it;*
For how should *My name* be profaned?
And I will not give My glory to another.

## GOD’S ANCIENT PLAN TO REDEEM ISRAEL

12 “Listen to Me, O Jacob,
And Israel, My called:
I *am* He, I *am* the First,

I *am* also the Last.
13 Indeed My hand has laid the foundation
of the earth,
And My right hand has stretched out the
heavens;
*When* I call to them,
They stand up together.
14 “All of you, assemble yourselves, and
hear!
Who among them has declared these
*things?*
The LORD loves him;
He shall do His pleasure on Babylon,
And His arm *shall be against* the
Chaldeans.
15 I, *even* I, have spoken;
Yes, I have called him,
I have brought him, and his way will
prosper.
16 “Come near to Me, hear this:
I have not spoken in secret from the
beginning;
From the time that it was, I *was* there.
And now the Lord GOD and His Spirit
Have[a] sent Me.”
17 Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer,
The Holy One of Israel:
“I *am* the LORD your God,
Who teaches you to profit,
Who leads you by the way you should
go.
18 Oh, that you had heeded My
commandments!
Then your peace would have been like a
river,

And your righteousness like the waves
of the sea.
19 Your descendants also would have been
like the sand,
And the offspring of your body like the
grains of sand;
His name would not have been cut off
Nor destroyed from before Me.”
20 Go forth from Babylon!
Flee from the Chaldeans!
With a voice of singing,
Declare, proclaim this,
Utter it to the end of the earth;
Say, “The LORD has redeemed
His servant Jacob!”
21 And they did not thirst
When He led them through the
deserts;
He caused the waters to flow from the
rock for them;
He also split the rock, and the waters
gushed out.
22 “*There is* no peace,” says the LORD, “for
the wicked.”

## THE SERVANT, THE LIGHT TO THE GENTILES

**49** “Listen, O coastlands, to Me,
And take heed, you peoples from
afar!
The LORD has called Me from the womb;
From the matrix of My mother He has
made mention of My name.

2 And He has made My mouth like a sharp
sword;
In the shadow of His hand He has
hidden Me,
And made Me a polished shaft;
In His quiver He has hidden Me.”
3 “And He said to me,
‘You *are* My servant, O Israel,
In whom I will be glorified.’
4 Then I said, ‘I have labored in vain,
I have spent my strength for nothing and
in vain;
Yet surely my just reward *is* with the
LORD,
And my work with my God.’ ”
5 “And now the LORD says,
Who formed Me from the womb *to be*
His Servant,
To bring Jacob back to Him,
So that Israel is gathered to Him[a]
(For I shall be glorious in the eyes of the
LORD,
And My God shall be My strength),
6 Indeed He says,
‘It is too small a thing that You should be
My Servant

To raise up the tribes of Jacob,
And to restore the preserved ones of
Israel;
I will also give You as a light to the
Gentiles,
That You should be My salvation to the
ends of the earth.' "
7 Thus says the LORD,
The Redeemer of Israel, their Holy One,
To Him whom man despises,
To Him whom the nation abhors,
To the Servant of rulers:
"Kings shall see and arise,
Princes also shall worship,
Because of the LORD who is faithful,
The Holy One of Israel;
And He has chosen You."
8 Thus says the LORD:

"In an acceptable time I have heard You,
And in the day of salvation I have
helped You;
I will preserve You and give You
As a covenant to the people,
To restore the earth,
To cause them to inherit the desolate heritages;

9 That You may say to the prisoners, 'Go
forth,'
To those who *are* in darkness, 'Show
yourselves.'

"They shall feed along the roads,
And their pastures *shall be* on all
desolate heights.

10 They shall neither hunger nor thirst,
Neither heat nor sun shall strike them;
For He who has mercy on them will lead them,
Even by the springs of water He will guide them.
11 I will make each of My mountains a road,
And My highways shall be elevated.
12 Surely these shall come from afar;
Look! Those from the north and the west,
And these from the land of Sinim."
13 Sing, O heavens!
Be joyful, O earth!
And break out in singing, O mountains!
For the LORD has comforted His people,
And will have mercy on His afflicted.

## GOD WILL REMEMBER ZION

14 But Zion said,
"The LORD has forsaken me,
And my Lord has forgotten me."

> "See, I have inscribed you on
> the palms of My hands; your walls
> are continually before Me."
> ISAIAH 49:16

15 "Can a woman forget her nursing child,
And not have compassion on the son of her womb?
Surely they may forget,
Yet I will not forget you.

16 See, I have inscribed you on the palms *of*
*My hands;*
Your walls *are* continually before Me.
17 Your sons[a] shall make haste;
Your destroyers and those who laid you
waste
Shall go away from you.
18 Lift up your eyes, look around and see;
All these gather together *and* come to
you.
*As* I live," says the LORD,
"You shall surely clothe yourselves with
them all as an ornament,
And bind them *on you* as a bride *does.*
19 "For your waste and desolate places,
And the land of your destruction,
Will even now be too small for the
inhabitants;
And those who swallowed you up will
be far away.
20 The children you will have,
After you have lost the others,
Will say again in your ears,
'The place *is* too small for me;
Give me a place where I may dwell.'
21 Then you will say in your heart,
'Who has begotten these for me,
Since I have lost my children and am
desolate,
A captive, and wandering to and fro?
And who has brought these up?
There I was, left alone;
But these, where *were* they?' "
22 Thus says the Lord GOD:

"Behold, I will lift My hand in an oath to
the nations,
And set up My standard for the peoples;
They shall bring your sons in *their* arms,
And your daughters shall be carried on *their* shoulders;

23 Kings shall be your foster fathers,
And their queens your nursing mothers;
They shall bow down to you with *their*
faces to the earth,
And lick up the dust of your feet.
Then you will know that I *am* the LORD,
For they shall not be ashamed who wait
for Me."
24 Shall the prey be taken from the mighty,
Or the captives of the righteous[a] be delivered?
25 But thus says the LORD:

"Even the captives of the mighty shall be
taken away,
And the prey of the terrible be delivered;
For I will contend with him who
contends with you,
And I will save your children.

26 I will feed those who oppress you with
their own flesh,
And they shall be drunk with their own
blood as with sweet wine.
All flesh shall know
That I, the LORD, *am* your Savior,
And your Redeemer, the Mighty One of
Jacob."

**THE SERVANT, ISRAEL'S HOPE**

**50** Thus says the LORD:
"Where *is* the certificate of your mother's
divorce,
Whom I have put away?
Or which of My creditors *is it* to whom I
have sold you?
For your iniquities you have sold
yourselves,
And for your transgressions your mother
has been put away.

2 Why, when I came, *was there* no man?
*Why*, when I called, *was there* none to
answer?
Is My hand shortened at all that it
cannot redeem?
Or have I no power to deliver?
Indeed with My rebuke I dry up the sea,
I make the rivers a wilderness;
Their fish stink because *there is* no
water, And die of thirst.
3 I clothe the heavens with blackness,
And I make sackcloth their covering."
4 "The Lord GOD has given Me
The tongue of the learned,
That I should know how to speak
A word in season to *him who is* weary.
He awakens Me morning by morning,
He awakens My ear
To hear as the learned.
5 The Lord GOD has opened My ear;
And I was not rebellious,
Nor did I turn away.
6 I gave My back to those who struck *Me*,

And My cheeks to those who plucked
out the beard;
I did not hide My face from shame and
spitting.
7 “For the Lord GOD will help Me;
Therefore I will not be disgraced;
Therefore I have set My face like a flint,
And I know that I will not be ashamed.
8 *He is* near who justifies Me;
Who will contend with Me?
Let us stand together.
Who *is* My adversary?
Let him come near Me.
9 Surely the Lord GOD will help Me;
Who *is* he *who* will condemn Me?
Indeed they will all grow old like a
garment;
The moth will eat them up.
10 “Who among you fears the LORD?
Who obeys the voice of His Servant?
Who walks in darkness
And has no light?
Let him trust in the name of the LORD
And rely upon his God.
11 Look, all you who kindle a fire,
Who encircle *yourselves* with sparks:
Walk in the light of your fire and in the
sparks you have kindled-
This you shall have from My hand:
You shall lie down in torment.

**THE LORD COMFORTS ZION**

**51** “Listen to Me, you who follow after
righteousness,
You who seek the LORD:
Look to the rock *from which* you were
hewn,
And to the hole of the pit *from which*
you were dug.

2 Look to Abraham your father,
And to Sarah *who* bore you;
For I called him alone,
And blessed him and increased him.”
3 For the LORD will comfort Zion,
He will comfort all her waste places;
He will make her wilderness like Eden,
And her desert like the garden of the
LORD;
Joy and gladness will be found in it,
Thanksgiving and the voice of melody.
4 “Listen to Me, My people;
And give ear to Me, O My nation:
For law will proceed from Me,
And I will make My justice rest
As a light of the peoples.
5 My righteousness *is* near,
My salvation has gone forth,
And My arms will judge the peoples;
The coastlands will wait upon Me,
And on My arm they will trust.
6 Lift up your eyes to the heavens,
And look on the earth beneath.
For the heavens will vanish away like
smoke,
The earth will grow old like a garment,

And those who dwell in it will die in like
manner;
But My salvation will be forever,
And My righteousness will not be
abolished.
7 “Listen to Me, you who know
righteousness,
You people in whose heart *is* My law:
Do not fear the reproach of men,
Nor be afraid of their insults.
8 For the moth will eat them up like a
garment,
And the worm will eat them like wool;
But My righteousness will be forever,
And My salvation from generation to
generation.”
9 Awake, awake, put on strength,
O arm of the LORD!
Awake as in the ancient days,
In the generations of old.
*Are* You not *the arm* that cut Rahab apart,
*And* wounded the serpent?
10 *Are* You not *the One* who dried up the
sea,
The waters of the great deep;
That made the depths of the sea a road
For the redeemed to cross over?
11 So the ransomed of the LORD shall
return,
And come to Zion with singing,
With everlasting joy on their heads.
They shall obtain joy and gladness;
Sorrow and sighing shall flee away.
12 “I, *even* I, *am* He who comforts you.
Who *are* you that you should be afraid

Of a man *who* will die,
And of the son of a man *who* will be
made like grass?
13 And you forget the LORD your Maker,
Who stretched out the heavens
And laid the foundations of the earth;
You have feared continually every day
Because of the fury of the oppressor,
When *he has* prepared to destroy.
And where *is* the fury of the oppressor?
14 The captive exile hastens, that he may
be loosed,
That he should not die in the pit,
And that his bread should not fail.
15 But I *am* the LORD your God,
Who divided the sea whose waves roared-
The LORD of hosts *is* His name.
16 And I have put My words in your
mouth;
I have covered you with the shadow of
My hand,
That I may plant the heavens,
Lay the foundations of the earth,
And say to Zion, 'You *are* My people.' "

**GOD'S FURY REMOVED**

17 Awake, awake!
Stand up, O Jerusalem,
You who have drunk at the hand of the
LORD
The cup of His fury;
You have drunk the dregs of the cup of
trembling,
*And* drained *it* out.
18 *There is* no one to guide her

Among all the sons she has brought
forth;
Nor *is there any* who takes her by the
hand
Among all the sons she has brought up.
19 These two *things* have come to you;
Who will be sorry for you?-
Desolation and destruction, famine and sword-
By whom will I comfort you?
20 Your sons have fainted,
They lie at the head of all the streets,
Like an antelope in a net;
They are full of the fury of the LORD,
The rebuke of your God.
21 Therefore please hear this, you
afflicted,
And drunk but not with wine.
22 Thus says your Lord,
The LORD and your God,
*Who* pleads the cause of His people:
"See, I have taken out of your hand
The cup of trembling,
The dregs of the cup of My fury;
You shall no longer drink it.
23 But I will put it into the hand of those
who afflict you,
Who have said to you,[a]
'Lie down, that we may walk over you.'
And you have laid your body like the
ground,
And as the street, for those who walk
over."

**GOD REDEEMS JERUSALEM**

**52** Awake, awake!
Put on your strength, O Zion;
Put on your beautiful garments,
O Jerusalem, the holy city!
For the uncircumcised and the unclean
Shall no longer come to you.

2 Shake yourself from the dust, arise;
Sit down, O Jerusalem!
Loose yourself from the bonds of your neck,
O captive daughter of Zion!
3 For thus says the LORD:

"You have sold yourselves for nothing,
And you shall be redeemed without money."

4 For thus says the Lord GOD:

"My people went down at first
Into Egypt to dwell there;
Then the Assyrian oppressed them without cause.

5 Now therefore, what have I here," says the LORD,
"That My people are taken away for nothing?
Those who rule over them
Make them wail,"[a] says the LORD,
"And My name *is* blasphemed continually every day.
6 Therefore My people shall know My

name;
Therefore *they shall know* in that day
That I *am* He who speaks:
'Behold, *it is* I.' "
7 How beautiful upon the mountains
Are the feet of him who brings good
news,
Who proclaims peace,
Who brings glad tidings of good *things,*
Who proclaims salvation,
Who says to Zion,
"Your God reigns!"
8 Your watchmen shall lift up *their*
voices,
With their voices they shall sing
together;
For they shall see eye to eye
When the LORD brings back Zion.
9 Break forth into joy, sing together,
You waste places of Jerusalem!
For the LORD has comforted His
people,
He has redeemed Jerusalem.
10 The LORD has made bare His holy arm
In the eyes of all the nations;
And all the ends of the earth shall see
The salvation of our God.
11 Depart! Depart! Go out from there,
Touch no unclean *thing;*
Go out from the midst of her,
Be clean,
You who bear the vessels of the
LORD.
12 For you shall not go out with haste,
Nor go by flight;

For the LORD will go before you,
And the God of Israel *will be* your rear guard.

**THE SIN-BEARING SERVANT**

13 Behold, My Servant shall deal prudently;
He shall be exalted and extolled and be very high.
14 Just as many were astonished at you,
So His visage was marred more than any man,
And His form more than the sons of men;
15 So shall He sprinkle[a] many nations.
Kings shall shut their mouths at Him;
For what had not been told them they shall see,
And what they had not heard they shall consider.

**53** Who has believed our report?
And to whom has the arm of the
LORD been revealed?

2 For He shall grow up before Him as a
tender plant,
And as a root out of dry ground.
He has no form or comeliness;
And when we see Him,
*There is* no beauty that we should desire
Him.
3 He is despised and rejected by men,
A Man of sorrows and acquainted with
grief.
And we hid, as it were, *our* faces from
Him;
He was despised, and we did not esteem
Him.
4 Surely He has borne our griefs
And carried our sorrows;
Yet we esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten by God, and afflicted.
5 But He *was* wounded for our
transgressions,
*He was* bruised for our iniquities;
The chastisement for our peace *was*
upon Him,
And by His stripes we are healed.
6 All we like sheep have gone astray;
We have turned, every one, to his own
way;
And the LORD has laid on Him the
iniquity of us all.
7 He was oppressed and He was
afflicted,
Yet He opened not His mouth;

He was led as a lamb to the slaughter,
And as a sheep before its shearers is silent,
So He opened not His mouth.
8 He was taken from prison and from judgment,
And who will declare His generation?
For He was cut off from the land of the living;
For the transgressions of My people He was stricken.
9 And they[a] made His grave with the wicked-
But with the rich at His death,
Because He had done no violence,
Nor *was any* deceit in His mouth.
10 Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him;
He has put *Him* to grief.
When You make His soul an offering for sin,
He shall see *His* seed, He shall prolong *His* days,
And the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand.
11 He shall see the labor of His soul,[a] *and* be satisfied.
By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many,
For He shall bear their iniquities.
12 Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great,
And He shall divide the spoil with the strong,
Because He poured out His soul unto death,

And He was numbered with the
transgressors,
And He bore the sin of many,
And made intercession for the
transgressors.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Borne Our Griefs** *(53:3, 4)* Isaiah's words communicate the suffering of the One who loved us and died for us. Jesus received God's punishment for our sin so that we could have peace with God (Rom. 5:1). We are healed because Jesus was wounded. He carried our sorrows so that we could find hope. No one will ever love us like Christ loves us, because no one has ever done for us what He has done. In our deepest moments of grief and loss, we need only look to Him on the Cross and realize that He understands. He alone can heal the wounded heart. **Topic: Grief/Loss**

**DEALING WITH LOSS AND GRIEF**

H. NORMAN WRIGHT

(Isaiah 53:3, 4)

# EXPERIENCING LOSS

**W**hether it's loss of a job, friends, home, status, a loved one, or a pet, all people experience loss in one way or another, to one degree or another. Loss can make us bitter or better. Unfortunately, no one likes to talk about it very much. People seem to have an unspoken agreement with others not to talk about their losses. At times, they are not even aware of some of their losses, for the effect of the loss is very minor. Other losses, however, are felt very deeply and affect them for a lifetime. How people respond to their losses and how they allow those losses to affect them can make a difference for the rest of their lives.

Whenever loss occurs, it is important to see it in the correct perspective so they can understand the full impact of what has happened. They must identify how the current loss impacts their present lives, as well as its effect on their thoughts about the future. Loss is not the enemy, but avoiding or ignoring a loss is. Trying to avoid a loss by hiding the feelings will only cause problems in other areas-emotionally, spiritually, or physically. Dealing with loss in a healthy manner can be a major avenue to growth and life-transforming change.

With each loss comes the potential for growth, insight, and understanding. Since these results are not immediate, people often fail to see these future blessings. But they must move forward. And the way to move on is to grieve.

## EXPERIENCING GRIEF

*Grief* is defined as "intense emotional suffering caused by loss, disaster, misfortune, etc.; deep sadness." The word is derived from a Latin verb meaning "to burden." *Mourn* is defined as "to feel and express sorrow." Mourning is the expression of grief.

Grieving is like entering the valley of shadows. Grief is not fun. It is painful. It is work. It is a lingering process, often taking one to three years for significant losses. It is necessary, however, in order to

deal with all kinds of loss in a healthy manner. A multitude of emotions are involved in the grief process. Many of these emotions seem to conflict with one another. With loss can come bitterness, emptiness, numbness, apathy, love, guilt, sadness, fear, disorientation, self-pity, and helplessness. When people grieve, they experience their loss psychologically through feelings, thoughts, and attitudes, socially as they interact with others, and physically as it affects their health.

Grief encompasses a number of changes. It appears differently at various times, and it comes and goes in people's lives. It is a normal, predictable, expected, and healthy reaction to a loss. Grief is each individual's personal experience and manner of dealing with any kind of loss-no matter how minor or severe it may appear to others.

Grief is not just an event; it is a process. Grief has several stages, although they are not necessarily experienced in exact order, nor does one stage have to be completed before a person moves on to the next stage. The first stage is *denial* or shock. Intellectually, the bereaved may comprehend what has happened, but their emotions may not experience the pain yet; they may feel numb. The second stage is when they can *release* their emotions, often in the form of anger toward others. They may even get angry with God. Grieving people become preoccupied with memories of what has been lost and they may withdraw for a time. The third stage involves wrestling with feelings of *guilt and anger*. They beat themselves up emotionally as they blame themselves for not somehow preventing the loss. They feel disorganized and don't know how to move on with life. Often some level of depression may set in as they become more apathetic toward life in light of the loss. The fourth stage is *acceptance* of the loss. Reorganizing their lives, filling new roles, and reconnecting with those around them are all healthy and important facets of the healing process. A key part of this process is the ability to learn how to feel and express the pain more truly without denial and avoidance.

It helps for grieving people to have true friends who will stay with them and support them emotionally. It is important for these friends

to allow the grieving person to experience all of the different intense emotions of the grieving process. Such friendships will ultimately help the person who has experienced the loss to reorganize and reconnect with the world.

## BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES

The Bible has much to say about both loss and grief. People who experience loss, as well as those who come alongside them, can gain wisdom to help them through the grieving process.

Psalm 23 tells of God comforting those who walk through the "valley of the shadow of death." During the darkest hours of mourning, God never abandons His people. Isaiah 53 describes the suffering of our Savior. He experienced loss and grief so that He could understand our humanity and die in our place. He was despised and rejected, "a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. . . . He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed" (Is. 53:3, 5).

Although loss and grief are common, no amount of technology or experience can make the grieving process any easier. The hard news is that the only road to true healing is through the grief process. The good news is that God travels that road with us.

## FURTHER MEDITATION:

Other passages to study about the issue of grief/loss include:

- Ruth 1:5-22
- Ecclesiastes 3:4
- Isaiah 61:1-3
- Jeremiah 31:12, 13
- John 14:1; 16:16-22

- 2 Corinthians 1:3-7
- 1 Thessalonians 4:13, 14

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on grief/loss at John 11:35-44. See also the personality profile of Job's Wife: Learning of God and Grief.

## A PERPETUAL COVENANT OF PEACE

**54** "Sing, O barren,
You *who* have not borne!
Break forth into singing, and cry aloud,
You *who* have not labored with child!
For more *are* the children of the desolate
Than the children of the married
woman," says the LORD.

2 "Enlarge the place of your tent,
And let them stretch out the curtains of your dwellings;
Do not spare;
Lengthen your cords,
And strengthen your stakes.
3 For you shall expand to the right and to
the left,
And your descendants will inherit the
nations,
And make the desolate cities inhabited.
4 "Do not fear, for you will not be
ashamed;
Neither be disgraced, for you will not be
put to shame;
For you will forget the shame of your
youth,
And will not remember the reproach of
your widowhood anymore.
5 For your Maker *is* your husband,
The LORD of hosts *is* His name;
And your Redeemer *is* the Holy One of
Israel;
He is called the God of the whole earth.
6 For the LORD has called you
Like a woman forsaken and grieved in
spirit,

Like a youthful wife when you were
refused,”
Says your God.
7 “For a mere moment I have forsaken you,
But with great mercies I will gather you.
8 With a little wrath I hid My face from
you for a moment;
But with everlasting kindness I will have
mercy on you,”
Says the LORD, your Redeemer.
9 “For this *is* like the waters of Noah to Me;
For as I have sworn
That the waters of Noah would no
longer cover the earth,
So have I sworn
That I would not be angry with you, nor
rebuke you.
10 For the mountains shall depart
And the hills be removed,
But My kindness shall not depart from
you,
Nor shall My covenant of peace be
removed,”
Says the LORD, who has mercy on you.
11 “O you afflicted one,
Tossed with tempest, *and* not comforted,
Behold, I will lay your stones with
colorful gems,
And lay your foundations with
sapphires.
12 I will make your pinnacles of rubies,
Your gates of crystal,
And all your walls of precious stones.
13 All your children *shall be* taught by the
LORD,

And great *shall be* the peace of your
children.
14 In righteousness you shall be
established;
You shall be far from oppression, for you
shall not fear;
And from terror, for it shall not come
near you.
15 Indeed they shall surely assemble, *but*
not because of Me.
Whoever assembles against you shall fall
for your sake.
16 “Behold, I have created the blacksmith
Who blows the coals in the fire,
Who brings forth an instrument for his
work;
And I have created the spoiler to destroy.
17 No weapon formed against you shall
prosper,
And every tongue *which* rises against
you in judgment
You shall condemn.
This *is* the heritage of the servants of the
LORD,
And their righteousness *is* from Me,”
Says the LORD.

**AN INVITATION TO ABUNDANT LIFE**

**55** “Ho! Everyone who thirsts,
Come to the waters;
And you who have no money,
Come, buy and eat.
Yes, come, buy wine and milk
Without money and without price.

2 Why do you spend money for *what is*
not bread,
And your wages for *what* does not
satisfy?
Listen carefully to Me, and eat *what is*
good,
And let your soul delight itself in abundance.
3 Incline your ear, and come to Me.
Hear, and your soul shall live;
And I will make an everlasting covenant
with you-
The sure mercies of David.
4 Indeed I have given him *as* a witness to
the people,
A leader and commander for the
people.
5 Surely you shall call a nation you do not
know,
And nations *who* do not know you shall
run to you,
Because of the LORD your God,
And the Holy One of Israel;
For He has glorified you.”
6 Seek the LORD while He may be found,
Call upon Him while He is near.

may be found, call upon Him
while He is near.
ISAIAH 55:6

7 Let the wicked forsake his way,
And the unrighteous man his thoughts;
Let him return to the LORD,
And He will have mercy on him;
And to our God,
For He will abundantly pardon.
8 "For My thoughts *are* not your thoughts,
Nor *are* your ways My ways," says the
LORD.
9 "For *as* the heavens are higher than the
earth,
So are My ways higher than your ways,
And My thoughts than your thoughts.
10 "For as the rain comes down, and the
snow from heaven,
And do not return there,
But water the earth,
And make it bring forth and bud,
That it may give seed to the sower
And bread to the eater,
11 So shall My word be that goes forth from
My mouth;
It shall not return to Me void,
But it shall accomplish what I please,
And it shall prosper *in the thing* for
which I sent it.
12 "For you shall go out with joy,
And be led out with peace;
The mountains and the hills
Shall break forth into singing before
you,

And all the trees of the field shall clap
*their* hands.
13 Instead of the thorn shall come up the
cypress tree,
And instead of the brier shall come up
the myrtle tree;
And it shall be to the LORD for a name,
For an everlasting sign *that* shall not be
cut off.”

## SALVATION FOR THE GENTILES

**56** Thus says the LORD:

“Keep justice, and do righteousness,
For My salvation *is* about to come,
And My righteousness to be revealed.

2 Blessed *is* the man *who* does this,
And the son of man *who* lays hold on it;
Who keeps from defiling the Sabbath,
And keeps his hand from doing any
evil.”
3 Do not let the son of the foreigner
Who has joined himself to the LORD
Speak, saying,
“The LORD has utterly separated me from
His people”;
Nor let the eunuch say,
“Here I am, a dry tree.”
4 For thus says the LORD:
“To the eunuchs who keep My Sabbaths,
And choose what pleases Me,
And hold fast My covenant,
5 Even to them I will give in My house
And within My walls a place and a name
Better than that of sons and daughters;
I will give them[a] an everlasting name
That shall not be cut off.
6 “Also the sons of the foreigner
Who join themselves to the LORD, to
serve Him,
And to love the name of the LORD, to be
His servants-
Everyone who keeps from defiling the

Sabbath,
And holds fast My covenant-
7 Even them I will bring to My holy
mountain, And make them joyful in My house of
prayer.
Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices
*Will be* accepted on My altar;
For My house shall be called a house of
prayer for all nations."
8 The Lord GOD, who gathers the outcasts
of Israel, says,
"Yet I will gather to him
*Others* besides those who are gathered to
him."

**ISRAEL'S IRRESPONSIBLE LEADERS**

9 All you beasts of the field, come to
devour,
All you beasts in the forest.
10 His watchmen *are* blind,
They are all ignorant;
They *are* all dumb dogs,
They cannot bark;
Sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber.
11 Yes, *they are* greedy dogs
*Which* never have enough.
And they *are* shepherds
Who cannot understand;
They all look to their own way,
Every one for his own gain,
From his *own* territory.
12 "Come," *one says,* "I will bring
wine, And we will fill ourselves with
intoxicating drink;
Tomorrow will be as today,

*And* much more abundant.”

**ISRAEL'S FUTILE IDOLATRY**

**57** The righteous perishes,
And no man takes *it* to heart;
Merciful men *are* taken away,
While no one considers
That the righteous is taken away from
evil.

[2] He shall enter into peace;
They shall rest in their beds,
*Each one* walking *in* his uprightness.
[3] "But come here,
You sons of the sorceress,
You offspring of the adulterer and the
harlot!
[4] Whom do you ridicule?
Against whom do you make a wide
mouth
*And* stick out the tongue?
*Are* you not children of transgression,
Offspring of falsehood,
[5] Inflaming yourselves with gods under
every green tree,
Slaying the children in the valleys,
Under the clefts of the rocks?
[6] Among the smooth *stones* of the stream
*Is* your portion;
They, they, *are* your lot!
Even to them you have poured a drink
offering,
You have offered a grain offering.
Should I receive comfort in these?
[7] "On a lofty and high mountain
You have set your bed;

Even there you went up
To offer sacrifice.
8 Also behind the doors and their posts
You have set up your remembrance;
For you have uncovered yourself *to those other* than Me,
And have gone up to them;
You have enlarged your bed
And made *a covenant* with them;
You have loved their bed,
Where you saw *their* nudity.[a]
9 You went to the king with ointment,
And increased your perfumes;
You sent your messengers far off,
And *even* descended to Sheol.
10 You are wearied in the length of your way;
*Yet* you did not say, ‘There is no hope.’
You have found the life of your hand;
Therefore you were not grieved.
11 “And of whom have you been afraid, or feared,
That you have lied
And not remembered Me,
Nor taken *it* to your heart?
Is it not because I have held My peace from of old
That you do not fear Me?
12 I will declare your righteousness
And your works,
For they will not profit you.
13 When you cry out,
Let your collection *of idols* deliver you.
But the wind will carry them all away,

A breath will take *them.*
But he who puts his trust in Me shall
possess the land,
And shall inherit My holy mountain.”

## HEALING FOR THE BACKSLIDER

14 And one shall say,
“Heap it up! Heap it up!
Prepare the way,
Take the stumbling block out of the way
of My people.”
15 For thus says the High and Lofty One
Who inhabits eternity, whose name *is*
Holy:
“I dwell in the high and holy *place,*
With him *who* has a contrite and humble
spirit,
To revive the spirit of the humble,
And to revive the heart of the contrite
ones.
16 For I will not contend forever,
Nor will I always be angry;
For the spirit would fail before Me,
And the souls *which* I have made.
17 For the iniquity of his covetousness
I was angry and struck him;
I hid and was angry,
And he went on backsliding in the way
of his heart.
18 I have seen his ways, and will heal him;
I will also lead him,
And restore comforts to him
And to his mourners.
19 “I create the fruit of the lips:
Peace, peace to *him who is* far off and to

*him who is* near,”
Says the LORD,
“And I will heal him.”
20 But the wicked *are* like the troubled sea,
When it cannot rest,
Whose waters cast up mire and dirt.
21 “*There is* no peace,”
Says my God, “for the wicked.”

## FASTING THAT PLEASES GOD

**58** “Cry aloud, spare not;
Lift up your voice like a trumpet;
Tell My people their transgression,
And the house of Jacob their sins.

2 Yet they seek Me daily,
And delight to know My ways,
As a nation that did righteousness,
And did not forsake the ordinance of
their God.
They ask of Me the ordinances of
justice;
They take delight in approaching God.
3 ‘Why have we fasted,’ *they say,* ‘and You
have not seen?
*Why* have we afflicted our souls, and
You take no notice?’

“In fact, in the day of your fast you find
pleasure,
And exploit all your laborers.

4 Indeed you fast for strife and debate,
And to strike with the fist of
wickedness.
You will not fast as *you do* this day,
To make your voice heard on high.
5 Is it a fast that I have chosen,
A day for a man to afflict his soul?
*Is it* to bow down his head like a
bulrush,
And to spread out sackcloth and ashes?
Would you call this a fast,
And an acceptable day to the LORD?

6 “*Is* this not the fast that I have chosen:
To loose the bonds of wickedness,
To undo the heavy burdens,
To let the oppressed go free,
And that you break every yoke?
7 *Is it* not to share your bread with the
hungry,
And that you bring to your house the
poor who are cast out;
When you see the naked, that you cover
him,
And not hide yourself from your own
flesh?
8 Then your light shall break forth like the
morning,
Your healing shall spring forth speedily,
And your righteousness shall go before
you;
The glory of the LORD shall be your rear
guard.
9 Then you shall call, and the LORD will
answer;
You shall cry, and He will say, ‘Here I
*am.*’

“If you take away the yoke from your midst,
The pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness,

10 *If* you extend your soul to the hungry
And satisfy the afflicted soul,
Then your light shall dawn in the
darkness,
And your darkness shall *be* as the
noonday.
11 The LORD will guide you continually,

And satisfy your soul in drought,
And strengthen your bones;
You shall be like a watered garden,
And like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail.
12 Those from among you
Shall build the old waste places;
You shall raise up the foundations of many generations;
And you shall be called the Repairer of the Breach,
The Restorer of Streets to Dwell In.
13 “If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath,
*From* doing your pleasure on My holy day,
And call the Sabbath a delight,
The holy *day* of the LORD honorable,
And shall honor Him, not doing your own ways,
Nor finding your own pleasure,
Nor speaking *your own* words,
14 Then you shall delight yourself in the LORD;
And I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth,
And feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father.
The mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

**SEPARATED FROM GOD**

**59** Behold, the LORD's hand is not
shortened,
That it cannot save;
Nor His ear heavy,
That it cannot hear.

2 But your iniquities have separated you from your God;
And your sins have hidden *His* face from you,
So that He will not hear.

> Behold, the LORD'S hand is not
> shortened, that it cannot save; nor
> His ear heavy, that it cannot hear.
> ISAIAH 59:1

3 For your hands are defiled with blood,
And your fingers with iniquity;
Your lips have spoken lies,
Your tongue has muttered perversity.
4 No one calls for justice,
Nor does *any* plead for truth.
They trust in empty words and speak
lies;
They conceive evil and bring forth
iniquity.
5 They hatch vipers' eggs and weave the
spider's web;
He who eats of their eggs dies,
And *from* that which is crushed a viper
breaks out.
6 Their webs will not become garments,
Nor will they cover themselves with
their works;
Their works *are* works of iniquity,

And the act of violence *is* in their hands.
7 Their feet run to evil,
And they make haste to shed innocent
blood;
Their thoughts *are* thoughts of iniquity;
Wasting and destruction *are* in their
paths.
8 The way of peace they have not known,
And *there is* no justice in their ways;
They have made themselves crooked
paths;
Whoever takes that way shall not know
peace.

**SIN CONFESSED**

9 Therefore justice is far from us,
Nor does righteousness overtake us;
We look for light, but there is darkness!
For brightness, *but* we walk in
blackness!
10 We grope for the wall like the blind,
And we grope as if *we had* no eyes;
We stumble at noonday as at twilight;
*We are* as dead *men* in desolate places.
11 We all growl like bears,
And moan sadly like doves;
We look for justice, but *there is* none;
For salvation, *but* it is far from us.
12 For our transgressions are multiplied
before You,
And our sins testify against us;
For our transgressions *are* with us,
And *as for* our iniquities, we know them:
13 In transgressing and lying against the
LORD,

And departing from our God,
Speaking oppression and revolt,
Conceiving and uttering from the heart
words of falsehood.
14 Justice is turned back,
And righteousness stands afar off;
For truth is fallen in the street,
And equity cannot enter.
15 So truth fails,
And he *who* departs from evil makes
himself a prey.

**THE REDEEMER OF ZION**

Then the LORD saw *it,* and it displeased Him
That *there was* no justice.
16 He saw that *there was* no man,
And wondered that *there was* no
intercessor;
Therefore His own arm brought
salvation for Him;
And His own righteousness, it sustained
Him.
17 For He put on righteousness as a
breastplate,
And a helmet of salvation on His head;
He put on the garments of vengeance for
clothing,
And was clad with zeal as a cloak.
18 According to *their* deeds, accordingly He
will repay,
Fury to His adversaries,
Recompense to His enemies;
The coastlands He will fully repay.
19 So shall they fear
The name of the LORD from the west,

And His glory from the rising of the sun;
When the enemy comes in like a flood,
The Spirit of the LORD will lift up a
standard against him.
20 “The Redeemer will come to Zion,
And to those who turn from
transgression in Jacob,”
Says the LORD.
21 “As for Me,” says the LORD, “this *is* My covenant with them: My Spirit who *is* upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your descendants, nor from the mouth of your descendants’ descendants,” says the LORD, “from this time and forevermore.”

**THE GENTILES BLESS ZION**

**60** Arise, shine;
For your light has come!
And the glory of the LORD is risen upon you.

2 For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth,
And deep darkness the people;
But the LORD will arise over you,
And His glory will be seen upon you.
3 The Gentiles shall come to your light,
And kings to the brightness of your rising.
4 “Lift up your eyes all around, and see:
They all gather together, they come to you;
Your sons shall come from afar,
And your daughters shall be nursed at *your* side.
5 Then you shall see and become radiant,
And your heart shall swell with joy;
Because the abundance of the sea shall be turned to you,
The wealth of the Gentiles shall come to you.
6 The multitude of camels shall cover your *land*,
The dromedaries of Midian and Ephah;
All those from Sheba shall come;
They shall bring gold and incense,
And they shall proclaim the praises of the LORD.
7 All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered

together to you,
The rams of Nebaioth shall minister to
you;
They shall ascend with acceptance on
My altar,
And I will glorify the house of My glory.
8 “Who *are* these *who* fly like a cloud,
And like doves to their roosts?
9 Surely the coastlands shall wait for Me;
And the ships of Tarshish *will come* first,
To bring your sons from afar,
Their silver and their gold with them,
To the name of the LORD your God,
And to the Holy One of Israel,
Because He has glorified you.
10 “The sons of foreigners shall build up
your walls,
And their kings shall minister to you;
For in My wrath I struck you,
But in My favor I have had mercy on
you.
11 Therefore your gates shall be open
continually;
They shall not be shut day or night,
That *men* may bring to you the wealth
of the Gentiles,
And their kings in procession.
12 For the nation and kingdom which will
not serve you shall perish,
And *those* nations shall be utterly
ruined.
13 “The glory of Lebanon shall come to you,
The cypress, the pine, and the box tree
together,
To beautify the place of My sanctuary;

And I will make the place of My feet
glorious.
14 Also the sons of those who afflicted you
Shall come bowing to you,
And all those who despised you shall fall
prostrate at the soles of your feet;
And they shall call you The City of the
LORD,
Zion of the Holy One of Israel.
15 “Whereas you have been forsaken and
hated,
So that no one went through *you*,
I will make you an eternal excellence,
A joy of many generations.
16 You shall drink the milk of the Gentiles,
And milk the breast of kings;
You shall know that I, the LORD, *am*
your Savior
And your Redeemer, the Mighty One of
Jacob.
17 “Instead of bronze I will bring gold,
Instead of iron I will bring silver,
Instead of wood, bronze,
And instead of stones, iron.
I will also make your officers peace,
And your magistrates righteousness.
18 Violence shall no longer be heard in
your land,
Neither wasting nor destruction within
your borders;
But you shall call your walls
Salvation,
And your gates Praise.

## GOD THE GLORY OF HIS PEOPLE

19 “The sun shall no longer be your light by
day,
Nor for brightness shall the moon give
light to you;
But the LORD will be to you an
everlasting light,
And your God your glory.
20 Your sun shall no longer go down,
Nor shall your moon withdraw itself;
For the LORD will be your everlasting
light,
And the days of your mourning shall be
ended.
21 Also your people *shall* all *be* righteous;
They shall inherit the land forever,
The branch of My planting,
The work of My hands,
That I may be glorified.
22 A little one shall become a thousand,
And a small one a strong nation.
I, the LORD, will hasten it in its time.”

**THE GOOD NEWS OF SALVATION**

**61** “The Spirit of the Lord GOD *is* upon Me,
Because the LORD has anointed Me
To preach good tidings to the poor;
He has sent Me to heal the
brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to the captives,
And the opening of the prison to *those
who are* bound;

2 To proclaim the acceptable year of the
LORD,
And the day of vengeance of our God;
To comfort all who mourn,
3 To console those who mourn in
Zion,
To give them beauty for ashes,
The oil of joy for mourning,
The garment of praise for the spirit of
heaviness;
That they may be called trees of
righteousness,
The planting of the LORD, that He may
be glorified.”
4 And they shall rebuild the old ruins,
They shall raise up the former
desolations,
And they shall repair the ruined cities,
The desolations of many generations.
5 Strangers shall stand and feed your
flocks,
And the sons of the foreigner
*Shall be* your plowmen and your
vinedressers.

6 But you shall be named the priests of
the LORD,
They shall call you the servants of our
God.
You shall eat the riches of the
Gentiles,
And in their glory you shall boast.
7 Instead of your shame *you shall have*
double *honor*,
And *instead of* confusion they shall
rejoice in their portion.
Therefore in their land they shall possess
double;
Everlasting joy shall be theirs.
8 "For I, the LORD, love justice;
I hate robbery for burnt offering;
I will direct their work in truth,
And will make with them an everlasting
covenant.
9 Their descendants shall be known
among the Gentiles,
And their offspring among the people.
All who see them shall acknowledge
them,
That they *are* the posterity *whom* the
LORD has blessed."
10 I will greatly rejoice in the LORD,
My soul shall be joyful in my God;
For He has clothed me with the
garments of salvation,
He has covered me with the robe of
righteousness,
As a bridegroom decks *himself* with
ornaments,
And as a bride adorns *herself* with her

jewels.

11 For as the earth brings forth its bud,
As the garden causes the things that are
sown in it to spring forth,
So the Lord GOD will cause
righteousness and praise to spring
forth before all the nations.

## SOUL NOTE

**Compassion** *(61:1, 2)* Isaiah predicted that the Messiah would heal those with broken hearts and liberate spiritual captives and prisoners. God's chosen One would announce His grace to a desperate humanity as an expression of His compassion. From the beginning of His ministry, Jesus said that His purpose was to seek out lost sinners and restore them to a relationship with the Father (Luke 4:16-21). Jesus quoted Isaiah 61 to substantiate His claim to being the Messiah and to restate the purpose of His life and ministry. Jesus came to heal, teach, minister, and serve. His compassion reveals the character of God.
**Topic: Compassion**

## SOUL NOTE

**Oil of Joy** *(61:3)* God's love and understanding reach out to those who are depressed and discouraged. He promises to give consolation, beauty in place of ashes, oil of joy in place of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of heaviness. The Bible

recognizes the heaviness of depression. God's Word brings hope and encouragement to those who are weighed down, and God's people stand with those who struggle, to bring relief and restoration. God promises that He will bring restoration "that He may be glorified."
**Topic: Depression**

## COMFORT AND COMPASSION

# BARBARA JOHNSON

## (Isaiah 61:2)

**"W**hy me . . . why did this happen to me?" Has anyone gotten all the way through life without asking that question at least once or twice? (For some of us, maybe it's twice a day!)

"Why me? Why us? Why did two young boys get taken from our family?" I asked all those questions quietly in my heart for two years. I even continued to go out to speak and share comfort and hope with other parents. I wanted to believe that life would get better.

Looking back, I can see how Romans 8:28 and other verses that were quoted to me *are* all true. Romans 8:28 says, "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." Yes, it's true. God *is* faithful. God does work all things together for good. Unfortunately, the timing of these reminders was all wrong. Nice little plastic, spiritual phrases do not help people unlock their grief. It is better just to put your arm around a grieving person and say, "I love you. . . .

God loves you." Beyond that, it might be best just to shove a sock in your mouth and keep quiet. When grief is the freshest, words should be the fewest.

## HELPING OURSELVES

There comes a time in each of our lives when trouble and difficulties seem to gang up on us. When this happens-when life gets hard-what is the creative way to handle things?

1. We must not try to do it all ourselves. We must not struggle and fret. Instead, we should do all we can about the situation and then put everything into God's hands, trusting Him. We can depend on God. He will not fail us. We need to "let go and let God."

2. We need to pray for guidance and believe that direction is being given to us. We must believe that this guidance can be trusted. We need to depend on it, because it will not fail us.

3. We need to pray for and practice a calm attitude. Disturbing situations will remain disturbing as long as we are disturbed. But when we become peaceful, conditions will begin to iron themselves out.

4. We need to saturate our lives with faith that the situation will turn out right. We should say aloud, every day, several times, "You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You" (Is. 26:3), and "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength" (Is. 30:15).

5. We need to remind ourselves of one great truth: Hard experiences will pass away. They will yield. They can be changed with God's help.

6. We must always look for the light in the darkness. That light is the love of God. "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Ps. 119:105).

7. We must ask the Lord to release our own creativity, ingenuity, strength, and wisdom, so we can handle the problem successfully.

8. We must never forget that God loves us. He wants to help us. We must turn to Him and gratefully accept His help.

9. We need to remember that all human beings experience troubles similar to our own. We are not alone in our struggles.

10.We must hold on to this great promise: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Ps. 46:1). God will see us through, and a brighter day will dawn for us.

## HELPING OTHERS

As Christians, we are Christ's bride, His church. When we show compassion in His name, we demonstrate His love to others. These kindnesses that we show to others don't have to be daring or costly. An encouraging word-or simply an attitude of joy-can often make all the difference to people who have given up hope. A little smile can brighten their day. And while we are smiling, we might as well go one step further and share a chuckle or two.

C. S. Lewis said that the best argument for Christianity is Christians: their joy, their certainty, and their completeness. Lewis also warned, however, that Christians can also be the strongest argument against Christianity when they are somber and joyless, or self-righteous and smug, or narrow and repressive. Then, said Lewis, Christianity "dies a thousand deaths." Let's resolve to be happy people, angels of joy and missionaries of mercy wherever we go today-and every day!

## OUR GIFT TO OTHERS

One day, we will approach heaven empty-handed, with all our earthly goals littering the roadway behind us. We'll have nothing to

show for our toil on earth except the life we have lived for God and the investment we have made in others by our compassion. While we can take nothing with us to heaven, we can leave a lot of important things behind that will encourage and comfort our friends and loved ones. What we really take with us to heaven is the lives we touched for God. Above all, we can pass on the gift of eternal life in Jesus Christ. It's something we don't deserve and can't buy at any price. It's God's gift to us by faith. And we can share it with others if we have the love and compassion it takes to do so.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of compassion include:

- Psalms 23:4; 145:8
- Isaiah 40:1, 2, 27-31
- Lamentations 3:22, 23
- Micah 6:8
- Matthew 9:36
- 2 Timothy 1:12; 4:18
- Jude 24, 25

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on compassion at 2 Corinthians 1:3-5. See also the personality profile of The Good Samaritan: Above and Beyond.

## ASSURANCE OF ZION'S SALVATION

**62** For Zion's sake I will not hold My
peace,
And for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest,
Until her righteousness goes forth as
brightness,
And her salvation as a lamp *that* burns.

2 The Gentiles shall see your
righteousness,
And all kings your glory.
You shall be called by a new name,
Which the mouth of the LORD will name.
3 You shall also be a crown of glory
In the hand of the LORD,
And a royal diadem
In the hand of your God.
4 You shall no longer be termed Forsaken,
Nor shall your land any more be termed
Desolate;
But you shall be called Hephzibah,[a] and
your land Beulah;[b]
For the LORD delights in you,
And your land shall be married.
5 For *as* a young man marries a virgin,
*So* shall your sons marry you;
And *as* the bridegroom rejoices over the
bride,
*So* shall your God rejoice over you.
6 I have set watchmen on your walls,
O Jerusalem;
They shall never hold their peace day or
night.
You who make mention of the LORD, do

not keep silent,
7 And give Him no rest till He establishes
And till He makes Jerusalem a praise in
the earth.
8 The LORD has sworn by His right hand
And by the arm of His strength:
“Surely I will no longer give your grain
*As* food for your enemies;
And the sons of the foreigner shall not
drink your new wine,
For which you have labored.
9 But those who have gathered it shall eat
it,
And praise the LORD;
Those who have brought it together
shall drink it in My holy courts.”
10 Go through,
Go through the gates!
Prepare the way for the people;
Build up,
Build up the highway!
Take out the stones,
Lift up a banner for the peoples!
11 Indeed the LORD has proclaimed
To the end of the world:
“Say to the daughter of Zion,
‘Surely your salvation is coming;
Behold, His reward *is* with Him,
And His work before Him.’ ”
12 And they shall call them The Holy
People,
The Redeemed of the LORD;
And you shall be called Sought Out,
A City Not Forsaken.

## THE LORD IN JUDGMENT AND SALVATION

**63** Who *is* this who comes from Edom,
With dyed garments from Bozrah,
This *One who is* glorious in His apparel,
Traveling in the greatness of His
strength?-
"I who speak in righteousness, mighty to
save."

2 Why *is* Your apparel red,
And Your garments like one who treads
in the winepress?
3 "I have trodden the winepress alone,
And from the peoples no one *was* with
Me.
For I have trodden them in My anger,
And trampled them in My fury;
Their blood is sprinkled upon My
garments,
And I have stained all My robes.
4 For the day of vengeance *is* in My heart,
And the year of My redeemed has come.
5 I looked, but *there was* no one to help,
And I wondered
That *there was* no one to uphold;
Therefore My own arm brought
salvation for Me;
And My own fury, it sustained Me.
6 I have trodden down the peoples in My
anger,
Made them drunk in My fury,
And brought down their strength to the
earth."

## GOD'S MERCY REMEMBERED

7 I will mention the lovingkindnesses of
the LORD
*And* the praises of the LORD,
According to all that the LORD has
bestowed on us,
And the great goodness toward the
house of Israel,
Which He has bestowed on them
according to His mercies,
According to the multitude of His
lovingkindnesses.
8 For He said, "Surely they *are* My people,
Children *who* will not lie."
So He became their Savior.
9 In all their affliction He was afflicted,
And the Angel of His Presence saved
them;
In His love and in His pity He redeemed
them;
And He bore them and carried them
All the days of old.
10 But they rebelled and grieved His Holy
Spirit;
So He turned Himself against them as an
enemy,
*And* He fought against them.
11 Then he remembered the days of old,
Moses *and* his people, *saying:*
"Where *is* He who brought them up out
of the sea
With the shepherd of His flock?
Where *is* He who put His Holy Spirit
within them,
12 Who led *them* by the right hand of

Moses,
With His glorious arm,
Dividing the water before them
To make for Himself an everlasting name,
13 Who led them through the deep,
As a horse in the wilderness,
*That* they might not stumble?"
14 As a beast goes down into the valley,
*And* the Spirit of the LORD causes him to rest,
So You lead Your people,
To make Yourself a glorious name.

## A PRAYER OF PENITENCE

15 Look down from heaven,
And see from Your habitation, holy and glorious.
Where *are* Your zeal and Your strength,
The yearning of Your heart and Your mercies toward me?
Are they restrained?
16 Doubtless You *are* our Father,
Though Abraham was ignorant of us,
And Israel does not acknowledge us.
You, O LORD, *are* our Father;
Our Redeemer from Everlasting *is* Your name.
17 O LORD, why have You made us stray from Your ways,
*And* hardened our heart from Your fear?
Return for Your servants' sake,
The tribes of Your inheritance.
18 Your holy people have possessed *it* but a little while;
Our adversaries have trodden down Your

sanctuary.
19 We have become *like* those of old, over
whom You never ruled,
Those who were never called by Your name.

## SOUL NOTE

**Source of Help** *(63:10)* Isaiah realized that God's people had suffered greatly because they had "rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit." Therefore, "He turned Himself against them as an enemy." The people refused to repent, and had turned away from the only One who could help them. When people rebel against God, they grieve the Holy Spirit. The New Testament says, "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God" (Eph. 4:30). To grieve the Holy Spirit by sin and rebellion is to turn away from our only source of hope. **Topic: Presence of the Holy Spirit**

**64** Oh, that You would rend the heavens!
That You would come down!
That the mountains might shake at Your presence-

2 As fire burns brushwood,
As fire causes water to boil-
To make Your name known to Your adversaries,
*That* the nations may tremble at Your presence!
3 When You did awesome things *for which* we did not look,
You came down,
The mountains shook at Your presence.
4 For since the beginning of the world
*Men* have not heard nor perceived by the ear,
Nor has the eye seen any God besides You,
Who acts for the one who waits for Him.
5 You meet him who rejoices and does righteousness,
*Who* remembers You in Your ways.
You are indeed angry, for we have sinned-
In these ways we continue;
And we need to be saved.
6 But we are all like an unclean *thing,*
And all our righteousnesses *are* like filthy rags;
We all fade as a leaf,
And our iniquities, like the wind,
Have taken us away.
7 And *there is* no one who calls on Your name,

Who stirs himself up to take hold of You;
For You have hidden Your face from us,
And have consumed us because of our iniquities.
8 But now, O LORD,
You *are* our Father;
We *are* the clay, and You our potter;
And all we *are* the work of Your hand.
9 Do not be furious, O LORD,
Nor remember iniquity forever;
Indeed, please look-we all *are* Your people!
10 Your holy cities are a wilderness,
Zion is a wilderness,
Jerusalem a desolation.
11 Our holy and beautiful temple,
Where our fathers praised You,
Is burned up with fire;
And all our pleasant things are laid waste.
12 Will You restrain Yourself because of these *things*, O LORD?
Will You hold Your peace, and afflict us very severely?

**THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD'S JUDGMENT**

**65** "I was sought by *those who* did not ask
*for Me;*
I was found by *those who* did not seek
Me.
I said, 'Here I am, here I am,'
To a nation *that* was not called by My
name.

2 I have stretched out My hands all day
long to a rebellious people,
Who walk in a way *that is* not good,
According to their own thoughts;
3 A people who provoke Me to anger
continually to My face;
Who sacrifice in gardens,
And burn incense on altars of brick;
4 Who sit among the graves,
And spend the night in the tombs;
Who eat swine's flesh,
And the broth of abominable things is *in*
their vessels;
5 Who say, 'Keep to yourself,
Do not come near me,
For I am holier than you!'
These *are* smoke in My nostrils,
A fire that burns all the day.
6 "Behold, *it is* written before Me:
I will not keep silence, but will repay-
Even repay into their bosom-
7 Your iniquities and the iniquities of your
fathers together,"
Says the LORD,
"Who have burned incense on the

mountains
And blasphemed Me on the hills;
Therefore I will measure their former
work into their bosom."
8 Thus says the LORD:

"As the new wine is found in the cluster,
And *one* says, 'Do not destroy it,
For a blessing *is* in it,'
So will I do for My servants' sake,
That I may not destroy them all.

9 I will bring forth descendants from
Jacob,
And from Judah an heir of My
mountains;
My elect shall inherit it,
And My servants shall dwell there.
10 Sharon shall be a fold of flocks,
And the Valley of Achor a place for herds
to lie down,
For My people who have sought Me.
11 "But you *are* those who forsake the LORD,
Who forget My holy mountain,
Who prepare a table for Gad,[a]
And who furnish a drink offering for Meni.[b]
12 Therefore I will number you for the
sword,
And you shall all bow down to the
slaughter;
Because, when I called, you did not
answer;
When I spoke, you did not hear,
But did evil before My eyes,
And chose *that* in which I do not

delight.”
13 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD:

“Behold, My servants shall eat,
But you shall be hungry;
Behold, My servants shall drink,
But you shall be thirsty;
Behold, My servants shall rejoice,
But you shall be ashamed;

14 Behold, My servants shall sing for joy of heart,
But you shall cry for sorrow of heart,
And wail for grief of spirit.
15 You shall leave your name as a curse to My chosen;
For the Lord GOD will slay you,
And call His servants by another name;
16 So that he who blesses himself in the earth
Shall bless himself in the God of truth;
And he who swears in the earth
Shall swear by the God of truth;
Because the former troubles are forgotten,
And because they are hidden from My eyes.

## THE GLORIOUS NEW CREATION

17 “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth;
And the former shall not be remembered or come to mind.
18 But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create;

For behold, I create Jerusalem *as* a rejoicing,
And her people a joy.
19 I will rejoice in Jerusalem,
And joy in My people;
The voice of weeping shall no longer be heard in her,
Nor the voice of crying.
20 "No more shall an infant from there *live but a few* days,
Nor an old man who has not fulfilled his days;
For the child shall die one hundred years old,
But the sinner *being* one hundred years old shall be accursed.
21 They shall build houses and inhabit *them;*
They shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit.
22 They shall not build and another inhabit;
They shall not plant and another eat;
For as the days of a tree, *so shall be* the days of My people,
And My elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands.
23 They shall not labor in vain,
Nor bring forth children for trouble;
For they *shall be* the descendants of the blessed of the LORD,
And their offspring with them.
24 "It shall come to pass
That before they call, I will answer;
And while they are still speaking, I will

hear.
25 The wolf and the lamb shall feed
together,
The lion shall eat straw like the ox,
And dust *shall be* the serpent's food.
They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My
holy mountain,"
Says the LORD.

## SOUL NOTE

**Brand New World** *(65:17-20)* Isaiah is the only prophet in the Old Testament who saw all the way to the new heavens and new earth. Like the apostle John, the prophet saw a time when tears would be wiped away and God's people would live with Him in a continual state of eternal bliss (Rev. 21:4). Even the best of God's promises for this life cannot compare to His wonderful promises for the life to come. The God who loves us enough to redeem this fallen world will one day express the greatness of His love by creating a brand-new world for His children. **Topic: God's Promises**

**TRUE WORSHIP AND FALSE**

**66** Thus says the LORD:

"Heaven *is* My throne,
And earth *is* My footstool.
Where *is* the house that you will build
Me?
And where *is* the place of My rest?

2 For all those *things* My hand has made,
And all those *things* exist,"
Says the LORD.
"But on this *one* will I look:
On *him who is* poor and of a contrite
spirit,
And who trembles at My word.
3 "He who kills a bull *is as if* he slays a
man;
He who sacrifices a lamb, *as if* he breaks
a dog's neck;
He who offers a grain offering, *as if he*
*offers* swine's blood;
He who burns incense, *as if* he blesses
an idol.
Just as they have chosen their own ways,
And their soul delights in their
abominations,
4 So will I choose their delusions,
And bring their fears on them;
Because, when I called, no one
answered,
When I spoke they did not hear;
But they did evil before My eyes,
And chose *that* in which I do not

delight.”

**THE LORD VINDICATES ZION**

5 Hear the word of the LORD,
You who tremble at His word:
“Your brethren who hated you,
Who cast you out for My name’s sake,
said, ‘
Let the LORD be glorified,
That we may see your joy.’
But they shall be ashamed.”
6 The sound of noise from the city!
A voice from the temple!
The voice of the LORD,
Who fully repays His enemies!
7 “Before she was in labor, she gave birth;
Before her pain came,
She delivered a male child.
8 Who has heard such a thing?
Who has seen such things?
Shall the earth be made to give birth in
one day?
*Or* shall a nation be born at once?
For as soon as Zion was in labor,
She gave birth to her children.
9 Shall I bring to the time of birth, and not
cause delivery?” says the LORD.
“Shall I who cause delivery shut up *the
womb?*” says your God.
10 “Rejoice with Jerusalem,
And be glad with her, all you who love
her;
Rejoice for joy with her, all you who
mourn for her;
11 That you may feed and be satisfied

With the consolation of her bosom,
That you may drink deeply and be
delighted
With the abundance of her glory."
12 For thus says the LORD:

"Behold, I will extend peace to her like a
river,
And the glory of the Gentiles like a
flowing stream.
Then you shall feed;
On *her* sides shall you be carried,
And be dandled on *her* knees.

13 As one whom his mother comforts,
So I will comfort you;
And you shall be comforted in
Jerusalem."

## THE REIGN AND INDIGNATION OF GOD

14 When you see *this,* your heart shall
rejoice,
And your bones shall flourish like grass;
The hand of the LORD shall be known to
His servants,
And *His* indignation to His enemies.
15 For behold, the LORD will come with fire
And with His chariots, like a whirlwind,
To render His anger with fury,
And His rebuke with flames of fire.
16 For by fire and by His sword
The LORD will judge all flesh;
And the slain of the LORD shall be many.
17 "Those who sanctify themselves and
purify themselves,

*To go* to the gardens
After an *idol* in the midst,
Eating swine's flesh and the
abomination and the mouse,
Shall be consumed together," says the
LORD.

18 "For I *know* their works and their thoughts. It shall be that I will gather
all nations and tongues; and they shall come and see My glory. 19 I will set a
sign among them; and those among them who escape I will send to the
nations: *to* Tarshish and Pul[a] and Lud, who draw the bow, and Tubal and
Javan, *to* the coastlands afar off who have not heard My fame nor seen My
glory. And they shall declare My glory among the Gentiles. 20 Then they shall
bring all your brethren for an offering to the LORD out of all nations, on
horses and in chariots and in litters, on mules and on camels, to My holy
mountain Jerusalem," says the LORD, "as the children of Israel bring an
offering in a clean vessel into the house of the LORD. 21 And I will also take
some of them for priests *and* Levites," says the LORD.

22 "For as the new heavens and the new
earth
Which I will make shall remain before
Me," says the LORD,
"So shall your descendants and your
name remain.
23 And it shall come to pass
*That* from one New Moon to another,
And from one Sabbath to another,
All flesh shall come to worship before
Me," says the LORD.
24 "And they shall go forth and look
Upon the corpses of the men
Who have transgressed against Me.
For their worm does not die,
And their fire is not quenched.
They shall be an abhorrence to all
flesh."

# Jeremiah



## Chapter in Jeremiah

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# Jeremiah

It hurts when people don't listen to us. We warn a person against a certain activity, and when he or she refuses to listen, we watch in bewilderment as our warnings become reality. But then, of course, it is too late.

The prophet Jeremiah had warned the people of Judah. His book depicts a man appalled at the sins of injustice, idolatry, and immorality that were rampant in his nation. When God announced judgment, Jeremiah was devastated. With supreme compassion he pleaded with his cold and calloused countrymen to turn back to God. Faithfully, he continued to serve as God's spokesman for forty years, but the people of Judah refused to listen. Thus, because of the hardness of their hearts, God allowed Jerusalem to be ransacked and the people of Judah deported to Babylon.

Despite this bleak turn of events, Jeremiah foresaw a day when God would initiate a new covenant (ch. 31). This promise of hope was grounded in the ministry of a coming Messiah. Indeed, it is Christ's death on the Cross that makes possible this new arrangement of unconditional grace. In place of the old covenant of law written on stone tablets, the new covenant of grace is written on the hearts of all who believe.

Jeremiah had done all that he could do, but no one listened. We must speak the truth to our families, our friends, our culture, even if it seems no one listens. We must do as God says and leave the results to Him.

**SOUL CONCERNS IN**

## JEREMIAH

SELF-ESTEEM (1:5)

RESPONSIBILITY (1:8-10)

ACCOUNTABILITY (3:11)

HOPE (СН. 29)

**1** The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests who *were* in
Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, [2]to whom the word of the LORD came in
the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of
his reign. [3]It came also in the days of Jehoia-kim the son of Josiah, king of
Judah, until the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah the son of Josiah, king
of Judah, until the carrying away of Jerusalem captive in the fifth month.

**THE PROPHET IS CALLED**

[4]Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying:
[5] "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you;
Before you were born I sanctified you;
I ordained you a prophet to the nations."
[6]Then said I:
"Ah, Lord GOD!
Behold, I cannot speak, for I *am* a youth."
[7]But the LORD said to me:
"Do not say, 'I *am* a youth,'
For you shall go to all to whom I send you,
And whatever I command you, you shall speak.
[8] Do not be afraid of their faces,
For I *am* with you to deliver you," says the LORD.
[9]Then the LORD put forth His hand and touched my mouth, and the LORD
said to me:
"Behold, I have put My words in your mouth.
[10] See, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms,
To root out and to pull down,
To destroy and to throw down,
To build and to plant."
[11]Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Jeremiah, what do
you see?"
And I said, "I see a branch of an almond tree."
[12]Then the LORD said to me, "You have seen well, for I am ready to
perform My word."
[13]And the word of the LORD came to me the second time, saying, "What do

you see?”
And I said, “I see a boiling pot, and it is facing away from the north.”
14 Then the LORD said to me:
“Out of the north calamity shall break forth
On all the inhabitants of the land.
15 For behold, I am calling All the families of the kingdoms of the north,”
says the LORD;
“They shall come and each one set his throne
At the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem,
Against all its walls all around,
And against all the cities of Judah.
16 I will utter My judgments Against them concerning all their wickedness,
Because they have forsaken Me,
Burned incense to other gods,
And worshiped the works of their own hands.
17 “Therefore prepare yourself and arise, And speak to them all that I
command you.
Do not be dismayed before their faces, Lest I dismay you before them.
18 For behold, I have made you this day
A fortified city and an iron pillar,
And bronze walls against the whole land-
Against the kings of Judah,
Against its princes,
Against its priests,
And against the people of the land.
19 They will fight against you,
But they shall not prevail against you.
For I *am* with you,” says the LORD, “to deliver you.”

**SOUL NOTE**

**What Might Have Been** *(1:5)* One of the tragic, unanswered questions in cases of abortion is "What might have been?"-not only in the lives of the parents or even the baby, but in the world. God makes it clear that He is well-acquainted with every individual from the time each person is conceived and that He has plans for each one. God knew Jeremiah before he had been formed in his mother's womb, and He planned for Jeremiah to be a prophet. God knows everything, so He knows that some young lives will end all too soon. But how sad that so much potential will never be realized. **Topic: Abortion**

**SCRIPTURE'S VIEW OF SELF-ESTEEM**

# ARCHIBALD D. HART

## (Jeremiah 1:5)

**J**eremiah had a difficult life, but he had high self-esteem, for Jeremiah 1:5 says, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a **J** prophet to the nations." Clearly God had marked Jeremiah's life for great service, and Jeremiah saw himself in relation to God's plan for his life.

God has done the same for each individual (Ps. 139:16). God has each person's life in His hand; He created each person for a purpose. Every believer should stand tall with high self-esteem by understanding who he or she is in Christ.

## THE MYSTERY OF SELF-ESTEEM

Self-esteem has important implications for psychological and spiritual health because it determines how people feel about themselves and what they believe they are capable of becoming. Perhaps one could call it, “the attitude of the self to the self.” Unfortunately, most people feel they do not measure up. These feelings prevent people from becoming what God has in mind for them. The result is what is now labeled “low self-esteem.” Low self-esteem generally describes feelings of self-hate, rejection, and an inability to accept oneself as special and unique. It not only involves self-rejection, but rejection of what God intended the person to be in Him.

## HOW SELF-ESTEEM IS DERIVED

Self-esteem begins with an image or concept of oneself. It is an attitude people develop toward themselves. Therefore, if a person’s self-image is distorted, that person’s self-esteem will be as well. When people grow up seeing themselves as unattractive or incompetent, their self-esteem will be shaped accordingly.

Paul, however, encourages Christians to “think soberly” when it comes to evaluating themselves (Rom. 12:3). This means to think “with absolute honesty.” Why is this important? Because if people cannot be honest about who they are as persons, they cannot relate to others in a healthy way. Honesty includes realizing that most people’s self-image is the opposite of their true worth. Their self-concept does not reflect the indescribable value God places on their lives.

The Bible clearly identifies the problem of our sinful nature and its self-centeredness (Jer. 17:9). It also reminds us of the confusion that results from sinful thinking (Rom. 1:18-32). The human mind is not very reliable when it comes to self-concept because of our sinful nature. It easily rearranges facts and feelings to produce the wrong effect. Despite its wonderful complexity, the mind can do bizarre things. It reacts to the feedback it receives from its earliest years in

such an unrealistic way that very few people reach adulthood with a clear and accurate picture of themselves. In fact, one of the reasons why personal success often cannot fix longstanding feelings of inferiority or low self-esteem is the human filtering system that downplays successes and exaggerates personal failures. Many people either distort their self-image in a negative way ("I am a terrible person") or in an exaggerated positive manner ("I am better than others"). Culture is no help in this matter be cause it, too, distorts realistic views of success. Is it any wonder that many people end up not liking who they are and wishing they were someone else?

## HEALING PEOPLE'S SELF-ESTEEM

Romans 12:3 contains some wise advice for dealing with the consequences of a distorted self-image. The solution is no different whether one has an inflated or deflated image of oneself-both are distortions of reality. The challenge is for people to become more honest regarding how they feel about themselves. This is important not only to their emotional health, but also to their spiritual health. They need to be willing to admit their strengths as well as their weaknesses. People can learn to do this if they follow these guidelines:

*Stop Degrading Oneself*

Many people learn to criticize themselves in childhood, especially if their parents labeled them as inferior. Self-degradation undermines confidence and self-acceptance. They need a clear understanding of humility. Humility is not putting oneself down or denying one's God-given gifts. People really have no right to degrade themselves. When they do, they are criticizing God's handiwork. They must renew their mind by being "sober" with their thoughts.

*Use Positive Reinforcement*

Christians need to be able to value their positive points and

appreciate the gifts God has given them in order to minister in His name. They shouldn't think that their gifts make them better than other people, but gifts are meant to be used. Believers should affirm their gifts and praise God for His work. In that way, they are praising God for making them who He wanted them to be. Positive self-statements are honest and will help reverse years of negative self-esteem.

*Learn to Value True Worth*

In Romans 12:3, Paul encouraged his readers to "think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith." This means God gives His people the power to fulfill His ministries. No one is superior or inferior. Everyone has good and bad points. Believers are to celebrate the good points and ask for God's help in working on their own bad points. True value comes from God, and believers should celebrate it as part of their understanding of God's work in their lives.

*Learn to Value Others*

The more they work at valuing others, the greater freedom people feel to value themselves for who they are in God's sight. Romans 14:13 says, "Therefore let us not judge one another anymore. . . . " Low self-esteem is caused by self-hate. Self-hate leads to hating others. When people conquer their self-rejection, they open the door to be more accepting of both themselves and others.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of self-esteem include:

- Genesis 1:26, 27
- Psalms 8:3-6; 139:1-18
- Galatians 2:20; 3:26-4:7
- Ephesians 2:4-10

- Philippians 2:1-18
- 1 Peter 2:9, 10

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on self-esteem at Matthew 10:29-31. See also the personality profile of Josiah The Difference One Person Can Make.

# RESPONSIBILITY: EQUIPPED AND WILLING

WOODROW KROLL AND DON HAWKINS

(Jeremiah 1:8-10)

**T**he British naval hero Lord Nelson took his responsibilities very seriously. His last words were, "Thank God, I have done my duty." While that is an admirable goal, fulfilling our responsibilities is not always easy. Sometimes the tasks ahead of us seem so overwhelming that we look for excuses rather than face the possibility of failure. Jeremiah's excuse was his youthfulness (Jer. 1:6); Moses' excuse was his lack of eloquence (Ex. 4:10); Isaiah's excuse was a sense of unworthiness (Is. 6:5).

God does not call people to tasks that they can accomplish on their own, however. His ultimate purpose behind every responsibility is to teach people to find in Him the resources to fulfill their duty. When God calls people to a work, He also equips them to perform their responsibility adequately (2 Tim. 3:17). Accepting a responsibility does not guarantee someone that they will become famous; most of

God's servants faithfully minister in the background. Yet with His help, people are able to do all things sufficiently. As God gave Jeremiah the duty to proclaim His message, He also equipped Jeremiah to fulfill that responsibility. In the same way, God equips believers today.

## GOD'S PRESENCE

First, God equips people with His presence (Jer. 1:8). During his ministry, Jeremiah found himself in many difficult circumstances. But through it all, God's presence sustained and preserved the prophet. That same presence is with us today as we face our own responsibilities. God says, "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Heb.13:5). There is no place or situation to which God calls us that His presence will not follow to equip us for responsibility.

In 1858, Scottish missionary John G.Paton and his wife sailed for the New Hebrides (now called Vanuatu). Three months after they arrived on the island of Tanna, his wife died. One week later his infant son also died. Paton was plunged into sorrow. Feeling terribly alone, and surrounded by savage people who showed him no sympathy, he wrote, "Let those who have ever passed through any similar darkness as of midnight feel for me. As for all others, it would be more than vain to try to paint my sorrows. But for Jesus, and [His] fellowship-I [would] have gone mad and died." Any responsibility can be achieved when it is undergirded with the comfort of divine presence.

God's presence, as well, gives people the strength and courage to accomplish their responsibilities in spite of obstacles. A French sergeant in World War I found one of his raw recruits huddled in a foxhole paralyzed with fear. "Come, son," he said, "let's go out together and do great things for France"-and they went. God says to you and me, "Come, let us go together and meet your responsibilities."

## GOD'S WORD

Second, God equips people with His Word (Jer. 1:9). Before Jeremiah accepted his responsibility, God placed His words in the young man's mouth. So, as this prophet fulfilled those responsibilities, he continually spoke forth God's Word. Jeremiah knew that only God-given words were sufficient to empower him to meet God-given responsibilities.

Nothing we have to say carries the power that God's Word does. Though we may speak with great human wisdom, it is the "wisdom that is from above" (James 3:17) that changes people's lives and turns "the world upside down" (Acts 17:6). While we may master persuasive techniques to accomplish our responsibilities, the Bible says that it is God's words that will make a difference (Is. 55:11).

Dwight L. Moody was right when he said, "The Bible wasn't given for our information but for our transformation." It is a book we need to read, study, meditate on, and apply to meet our responsibilities. When we need to know how to accomplish the tasks at hand, it is God's Word that becomes a lamp (Ps. 119:105).

## GOD'S PROMISES

Finally, God equips people with His promises (Jer. 1:10). Before Jeremiah even went to work, God promised that *He* would accomplish great things through Jeremiah. Follow Jeremiah's ministry though his first warnings of imminent danger to the final downfall of Jerusalem and it is evident that God kept His promise. God's faithfulness was key to Jeremiah's ability to fulfill his responsibility.

God is equally faithful to His promises today. Someone has determined that there are 7,487 promises in the Bible. Many of these apply to us. When we are faced with monumental responsibilities, we must draw strength and courage from such precious promises as

"Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand" (Is. 41:10), or "Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh. Is there anything too hard for Me?" (Jer. 32:27).

It is little wonder that the great missionary and founder of the China Inland Mission, Hudson Taylor, said, "The future is as bright as the promises of God." We can accept the most challenging responsibilities because we know that God will never fail to bring to pass every word He has spoken.

When tempted to hide behind excuses, step out in faith instead. Be assured that God has equipped us with His presence, His Word, and His promises so that we can adequately meet every responsibility He gives us.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of responsibility include:

- Ezekiel 3:16-21
- Matthew 28:18-20
- John 20:2
- Galatians 6:1-10
- Ephesians 4:1-6
- Hebrews 3:7-15
- 1 Peter 3:15

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on responsibility at Matthew 25:14-30. See also the personality profile of Esther: The Buck Stops Here.

## GOD'S CASE AGAINST ISRAEL

**2** Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying, [2]"Go and cry in the
hearing of Jerusalem, saying, 'Thus says the LORD:

"I remember you,
The kindness of your youth,
The love of your betrothal,
When you went after Me in the wilderness,
In a land not sown.
[3] Israel *was* holiness to the LORD,
The firstfruits of His increase.
All that devour him will offend;
Disaster will come upon them," says the LORD.' "
[4]Hear the word of the LORD, O house of Jacob and all the families of the
house of Israel.
[5]Thus says the LORD:
"What injustice have your fathers found in Me,
That they have gone far from Me,
Have followed idols,
And have become idolaters?
[6] Neither did they say, 'Where *is* the LORD,
Who brought us up out of the land of Egypt,
Who led us through the wilderness,
Through a land of deserts and pits,
Through a land of drought and the shadow of death,
Through a land that no one crossed
And where no one dwelt?'
[7] I brought you into a bountiful country,
To eat its fruit and its goodness.
But when you entered, you defiled My land
And made My heritage an abomination.
[8] The priests did not say, 'Where *is* the LORD?'
And those who handle the law did not know Me;
The rulers also transgressed against Me;

The prophets prophesied by Baal,
And walked after *things that* do not profit.
9 “Therefore I will yet bring charges against you,” says the LORD,
“And against your children’s children I will bring charges.
10 For pass beyond the coasts of Cyprus[a] and see,
Send to Kedar[b] and consider diligently,
And see if there has been such *a thing.*
11 Has a nation changed *its* gods,
Which *are* not gods?
But My people have changed their Glory
For *what* does not profit.
12 Be astonished, O heavens, at this,
And be horribly afraid;
Be very desolate,” says the LORD.
13 “For My people have committed two evils:
They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters,
*And* hewn themselves cisterns-broken cisterns that can hold no water.
14 “*Is* Israel a servant?
*Is* he a homeborn *slave?*
Why is he plundered?
15 The young lions roared at him, *and* growled;
They made his land waste;
His cities are burned, without inhabitant.
16 Also the people of Noph[a] and Tahpanhes
Have broken the crown of your head.
17 Have you not brought this on yourself,
In that you have forsaken the LORD your God
When He led you in the way?
18 And now why take the road to Egypt,
To drink the waters of Sihor?
Or why take the road to Assyria,
To drink the waters of the River?[a]
19 Your own wickedness will correct you,
And your backslidings will rebuke you.

Know therefore and see that *it is* an evil and bitter *thing*
That you have forsaken the LORD your God,
And the fear of Me *is* not in you,"
Says the Lord GOD of hosts.
20 "For of old I have broken your yoke *and* burst your bonds;
And you said, 'I will not transgress,'
When on every high hill and under every green tree
You lay down, playing the harlot.
21 Yet I had planted you a noble vine, a seed of highest quality.
How then have you turned before Me
Into the degenerate plant of an alien vine?
22 For though you wash yourself with lye, and use much soap, *Yet*
your iniquity is marked before Me," says the Lord GOD.
23 "How can you say, 'I am not polluted,
I have not gone after the Baals'?
See your way in the valley;
Know what you have done:
*You are* a swift dromedary breaking loose in her ways,
24 A wild donkey used to the wilderness,
*That* sniffs at the wind in her desire;
In her time of mating, who can turn her away?
All those who seek her will not weary themselves;
In her month they will find her.
25 Withhold your foot from being unshod, and your throat from thirst.
But you said, 'There is no hope.
No! For I have loved aliens, and after them I will go.'
26 "As the thief is ashamed when he is found out,
So is the house of Israel ashamed;
They and their kings and their princes, and their priests and their
prophets,
27 Saying to a tree, 'You *are* my father,'
And to a stone, 'You gave birth to me.'
For they have turned *their* back to Me, and not *their* face.
But in the time of their trouble
They will say, 'Arise and save us.'

28 But where *are* your gods that you have made for yourselves?
Let them arise,
If they can save you in the time of your trouble;
For *according to* the number of your cities
Are your gods, O Judah.
29 “Why will you plead with Me?
You all have transgressed against Me,” says the LORD.
30 “In vain I have chastened your children;
They received no correction.
Your sword has devoured your prophets
Like a destroying lion.
31 “O generation, see the word of the LORD!
Have I been a wilderness to Israel,
Or a land of darkness?
Why do My people say, ‘We are lords;
We will come no more to You’?
32 Can a virgin forget her ornaments,
*Or* a bride her attire?
Yet My people have forgotten Me days without number.
33 “Why do you beautify your way to seek love?
Therefore you have also taught
The wicked women your ways.
34 Also on your skirts is found
The blood of the lives of the poor innocents.
I have not found it by secret search,
But plainly on all these things.
35 Yet you say, ‘Because I am innocent,
Surely His anger shall turn from me.’
Behold, I will plead My case against you,
Because you say, ‘I have not sinned.’
36 Why do you gad about so much to change your way?
Also you shall be ashamed of Egypt as you were ashamed of Assyria.
37 Indeed you will go forth from him
With your hands on your head;
For the LORD has rejected your trusted allies,

And you will not prosper by them.

## ISRAEL IS SHAMELESS

3 “They say, ‘If a man divorces his wife,
And she goes from him
And becomes another man’s,
May he return to her again?’
Would not that land be greatly polluted?
But you have played the harlot with many lovers;
Yet return to Me,” says the LORD.

2 “Lift up your eyes to the desolate heights and see:
Where have you not lain *with men?*
By the road you have sat for them
Like an Arabian in the wilderness;
And you have polluted the land
With your harlotries and your wickedness.
3 Therefore the showers have been withheld,
And there has been no latter rain.
You have had a harlot’s forehead;
You refuse to be ashamed.
4 Will you not from this time cry to Me,
‘My Father, You *are* the guide of my youth?
5 Will He remain angry forever?
Will He keep it to the end?’
Behold, you have spoken and done evil things,
As you were able.”

## A CALL TO REPENTANCE

6 The LORD said also to me in the days of Josiah the king: “Have you seen what backsliding Israel has done? She has gone up on every high mountain and under every green tree, and there played the harlot. 7 And I said, after she had done all these *things,* ‘Return to Me.’ But she did not return. And her treacherous sister Judah saw it. 8 Then I saw that for all the causes for which backsliding Israel had committed adultery, I had put her away and given her a certificate of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but went

and played the harlot also. [9]So it came to pass, through her casual harlotry, that she defiled the land and committed adultery with stones and trees. [10]And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah has not turned to Me with her whole heart, but in pretense," says the LORD.

[11]Then the LORD said to me, "Backsliding Israel has shown herself more righteous than treacherous Judah. [12]Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say:

'Return, backsliding Israel,' says the LORD;

' I will not cause My anger to fall on you.

For I *am* merciful,' says the LORD;

' I will not remain angry forever.

[13] Only acknowledge your iniquity,
That you have transgressed against the LORD your God,
And have scattered your charms
To alien deities under every green tree,
And you have not obeyed My voice,' says the LORD.

[14]"Return, O backsliding children," says the LORD; "for I am married to you. I will take you, one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion. [15]And I will give you shepherds according to My heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding.

[16]"Then it shall come to pass, when you are multiplied and increased in the land in those days," says the LORD, "that they will say no more, 'The ark of the covenant of the LORD.' It shall not come to mind, nor shall they remember it, nor shall they visit *it*, nor shall it be made anymore.

[17]"At that time Jerusalem shall be called The Throne of the LORD, and all the nations shall be gathered to it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem. No more shall they follow the dictates of their evil hearts.

18 “In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of
Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the
land that I have given as an inheritance to your fathers.

19 “But I said:

‘How can I put you among the children
And give you a pleasant land,
A beautiful heritage of the hosts of nations?’

“And I said:

‘You shall call Me, “My Father,”
And not turn away from Me.’

20 Surely, *as* a wife treacherously departs from her husband,

So have you dealt treacherously with Me,
O house of Israel,” says the LORD.

21 A voice was heard on the desolate heights,
Weeping *and* supplications of the children of Israel.
For they have perverted their way;
They have forgotten the LORD their God.
22 “Return, you backsliding children,
*And* I will heal your backslidings.”
“Indeed we do come to You,
For You are the LORD our God.
23 Truly, in vain *is salvation hoped for* from the hills,
*And from* the multitude of mountains;
Truly, in the LORD our God
*Is* the salvation of Israel.
24 For shame has devoured
The labor of our fathers from our youth-
Their flocks and their herds,
Their sons and their daughters.

25 We lie down in our shame, And our reproach covers us.

For we have sinned against the LORD our God,
We and our fathers,
From our youth even to this day,
And have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God.”

**PERSONAL GROWTH THROUGH PERSONAL ACCOUNTABILITY**

# JESSE DILLINGER

## (Jeremiah 3:11)

**P**eople need someone with whom they can be totally honest, someone with whom they can share their deep feelings and thoughts, someone with whom they can discuss their walk with God. People who have such a friend have learned a powerful secret to success in Christian growth-personal accountability.

Accountability means accounting for personal thoughts and behaviors, which are held up to a standard and evaluated. Another person or a group will hold someone accountable and offer encouragement and support as he or she tries to meet that standard. With voluntary accountability, people choose to place themselves in a relationship where someone else will ask them to account for their thoughts and behaviors.

Everyone, Christian and non-Christian, is accountable to one

ultimate standard: Word of God (Phil. 2:9-11). For Christians, the Bible remains the standard for daily decisions. Personal accountability builds a bridge between the Bible and the practice of its principles. While Christians remain on the earth, their objective is to grow spiritually into Christ's image (Phil. 3:13, 14). Accountability helps one to progress in the spiritual process of maturing.

## PARTNERS IN ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountability requires self-evaluation, pure motives, and the absence of hypocritical judgment. People must not hold someone else accountable to a standard they are not willing to meet themselves. Accountability partners should be maturing Christians who have the desire and the time to invest in relationships with others. They must be able to keep reasonable confidences and be concerned enough with others' personal growth that they can be tough when it is needed.

## TYPES OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Virtually any area of life can be placed in an accountability arrangement. A person may seek accountability to assist in following through with a specific task, like developing a regular pattern of family time. Someone may ask another to help in dealing honestly at work or remaining financially sound. A married couple may wish to meet with another married couple concerning healthy communication and loving treatment of each other. Changing one's attitude at work, developing a pattern of reading the Bible, telling the truth instead of "white lies," or maintaining purity in one's thought life may also represent areas in need of accountability.

Personal accountability is every Christian's privilege and responsibility (2 Cor. 5:10). People may ask God in prayer to show them what needs to be addressed in their lives. Not only will God reveal what they can't see, but He will also use others to reveal their personal weaknesses. At that point, they may desire to take advantage of other types of accountability with an individual or a group. In the

individual arrangement, another person enters in to help a person. In a group setting, two or more individuals hold each other accountable. With a group devoted to living according to Scripture, there will be more praying, more encouraging, and more investment among more people.

## CATEGORIES OF ACCOUNTABILITY

*Restorative accountability* can restore others to a relationship or church membership after they have been involved in sin substantial enough to sever the original tie (Gal. 6:1). Prior to an agreement to accountability, there must be genuine repentance on the part of the offender. Thorough forgiveness must precede accountability (2 Cor. 2:7).

*Preventative accountability* is sought to guard against weakness or sin (Mark 14:38; James 5:16). Examples include sexual thoughts and actions (lust and pornography), sins of indulgence (greed and gluttony), sins of the tongue (lying, gossip, slander) and sins of omission (failure to show compassion, etc.). The length of this type of accountability varies depending on the situation. For example, people traveling on business may set up a system of accountability specifically for the times they are away from their family to guard against temptation.

*Constructive accountability* aims at encouragement and the development of believers' spiritual growth (Heb. 10:23). These groups may meet for six months or more and may be guided by a specific Bible study.

*Task-oriented accountability* includes being held accountable for important activities such as keeping specific promises or meeting specific goals. This accountability ends with the completion of the task.

## ENEMIES OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Enemies of accountability include denial (2 Sam. 12:1-7) and lies (Col. 3:9). If a person is not willing to admit mistakes or failures, there can be no accountability. Although one may be tempted to stretch the truth when meeting with an accountability partner, lying about one's success does not help the process.

Other obstacles to accountability include blame (Gen. 3:11-13) and pride (Rom. 12:16). Humility is a cornerstone of accountability. It is not easy to make oneself vulnerable to another person's scrutiny. However, a partner who reacts with a prideful, haughty attitude toward one's admission of disobedience is not a suitable partner for accountability. Encouragement should be used instead of insult.

However, no accountability relationship can tolerate continued sin on the part of one or both parties (Matt. 5:29, 30). There is no purpose in a group that makes a continuous litany of excuses for undisciplined behavior.

## RESULTS OF ACCOUNTABILITY

When a group meets for accountability, questions are asked that encourage honesty and revelation. "Have you lied to anyone since we last met?" is an example of the type of questions that can provide structure for the meeting. Participants should also request information to monitor the development of desired thoughts and behaviors. "What specific truths have you told while being tempted to lie?"

Accountability brings the body of Christ together in a supportive way to encourage us to grow in Christ. It allows the development and use of our gifts and promotes unity within the body. We grow by doing what is right. Through accountability, our faith is strengthened by the example of others' obedience.

## FURTHER MEDITATION:

Other passages to study about the issue of accountability include:

- Proverbs 12:15; 13:20; 27:6
- Galatians 6:1-5

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on accountability at Romans 14:12. See also the personality profile of Nathan-an Honest Friend.

**4** “If you will return, O Israel,” says the LORD,
“Return to Me;
And if you will put away your abominations out of My sight,
Then you shall not be moved.

2 And you shall swear, ‘The LORD lives,’
In truth, in judgment, and in righteousness;
The nations shall bless themselves in Him, And in Him they shall glory.”
3 For thus says the LORD to the men of Judah and Jerusalem:

“Break up your fallow ground,
And do not sow among thorns.

4 Circumcise yourselves to the LORD,
And take away the foreskins of your hearts,
You men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem,
Lest My fury come forth like fire,
And burn so that no one can quench *it*,
Because of the evil of your doings.”

**AN IMMINENT INVASION**

5 Declare in Judah and proclaim in Jerusalem, and say:

“Blow the trumpet in the land;
Cry, ‘Gather together,’
And say, ‘Assemble yourselves,
And let us go into the fortified cities.’

6 Set up the standard toward Zion.
Take refuge! Do not delay!
For I will bring disaster from the north, And great destruction.”
7 The lion has come up from his thicket,
And the destroyer of nations is on his way.
He has gone forth from his place
To make your land desolate.

Your cities will be laid waste, Without inhabitant.
8 For this, clothe yourself with sackcloth,
Lament and wail.
For the fierce anger of the LORD
Has not turned back from us.
9 "And it shall come to pass in that day," says the LORD,
"*That* the heart of the king shall perish,
And the heart of the princes;
The priests shall be astonished,
And the prophets shall wonder."
10 Then I said, "Ah, Lord GOD!
Surely You have greatly deceived this people and Jerusalem,
Saying, 'You shall have peace,'
Whereas the sword reaches to the heart."
11 At that time it will be said
To this people and to Jerusalem,
"A dry wind of the desolate heights *blows* in the wilderness
Toward the daughter of My people-
Not to fan or to cleanse-
12 A wind too strong for these will come for Me;
Now I will also speak judgment against them."
13 "Behold, he shall come up like clouds,
And his chariots like a whirlwind.
His horses are swifter than eagles.
Woe to us, for we are plundered!"
14 O Jerusalem, wash your heart from wickedness,
That you may be saved.
How long shall your evil thoughts lodge within you?
15 For a voice declares from Dan
And proclaims affliction from Mount Ephraim:
16 "Make mention to the nations,
Yes, proclaim against Jerusalem,
*That* watchers come from a far country
And raise their voice against the cities of Judah.
17 Like keepers of a field they are against her all around,

Because she has been rebellious against Me," says the LORD.
18 "Your ways and your doings
Have procured these *things* for you.
This *is* your wickedness,
Because it is bitter,
Because it reaches to your heart."

## SORROW FOR THE DOOMED NATION

19 O my soul, my soul!
I am pained in my very heart!
My heart makes a noise in me;
I cannot hold my peace,
Because you have heard, O my soul,
The sound of the trumpet,
The alarm of war.
20 Destruction upon destruction is cried,
For the whole land is plundered.
Suddenly my tents are plundered,
*And* my curtains in a moment.
21 How long will I see the standard,
*And* hear the sound of the trumpet?
22 "For My people *are* foolish,
They have not known Me.
They *are* silly children,
And they have no understanding.
They *are* wise to do evil,
But to do good they have no knowledge."
23 I beheld the earth, and indeed *it was* without form, and void;
And the heavens, they *had* no light.
24 I beheld the mountains, and indeed they trembled,
And all the hills moved back and forth.
25 I beheld, and indeed *there was* no man,
And all the birds of the heavens had fled.
26 I beheld, and indeed the fruitful land *was* a wilderness,
And all its cities were broken down

At the presence of the LORD,
By His fierce anger.
27 For thus says the LORD:

"The whole land shall be desolate;
Yet I will not make a full end.

28 For this shall the earth mourn,
And the heavens above be black,
Because I have spoken.
I have purposed and will not relent,
Nor will I turn back from it.
29 The whole city shall flee from the noise of the horsemen and bowmen.
They shall go into thickets and climb up on the rocks.
Every city *shall be* forsaken,
And not a man shall dwell in it.
30 "And *when* you *are* plundered,
What will you do?
Though you clothe yourself with crimson,
Though you adorn *yourself* with ornaments of gold,
Though you enlarge your eyes with paint,
In vain you will make yourself fair;
*Your* lovers will despise you;
They will seek your life.
31 "For I have heard a voice as of a woman in labor,
The anguish as of her who brings forth her first child,
The voice of the daughter of Zion bewailing herself;
She spreads her hands, *saying*,
'Woe *is* me now, for my soul is weary
Because of murderers!'

**THE JUSTICE OF GOD'S JUDGMENT**

5 "Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem;
See now and know;
And seek in her open places
If you can find a man,
If there is *anyone* who executes judgment,
Who seeks the truth,
And I will pardon her.

2 Though they say, '*As* the LORD lives,'
Surely they swear falsely."
3 O LORD, *are* not Your eyes on the truth?
You have stricken them,
But they have not grieved;
You have consumed them,
But they have refused to receive correction.
They have made their faces harder than rock;
They have refused to return.
4 Therefore I said, "Surely these *are* poor.
They are foolish;
For they do not know the way of the LORD,
The judgment of their God.
5 I will go to the great men and speak to them,
For they have known the way of the LORD,
The judgment of their God."

But these have altogether broken the yoke
*And* burst the bonds.

6 Therefore a lion from the forest shall slay them,
A wolf of the deserts shall destroy them;
A leopard will watch over their cities.
Everyone who goes out from there shall be torn in pieces,
Because their transgressions are many;
Their backslidings have increased.

7 “How shall I pardon you for this?
Your children have forsaken Me
And sworn by *those that are* not gods.
When I had fed them to the full,
Then they committed adultery
And assembled themselves by troops in the harlots’ houses.
8 They were *like* well-fed lusty stallions;
Every one neighed after his neighbor’s wife.
9 Shall I not punish *them* for these *things?*” says the LORD.
“And shall I not avenge Myself on such a nation as this?
10 “Go up on her walls and destroy,
But do not make a complete end.
Take away her branches,
For they *are* not the LORD’s.
11 For the house of Israel and the house of Judah
Have dealt very treacherously with Me,”
says the LORD.
12 They have lied about the LORD,
And said, “*It is* not He.
Neither will evil come upon us,
Nor shall we see sword or famine.
13 And the prophets become wind,
For the word *is* not in them.
Thus shall it be done to them.”
14 Therefore thus says the LORD God of hosts:
“
Because you speak this word,
Behold, I will make My words in your mouth fire,
And this people wood,
And it shall devour them.
15 Behold, I will bring a nation against you from afar,
O house of Israel,” says the LORD.
“It *is* a mighty nation,
It *is* an ancient nation, A nation whose language you do not know,
Nor can you understand what they say.

16 Their quiver *is* like an open tomb;
They *are* all mighty men.
17 And they shall eat up your harvest and your bread,
*Which* your sons and daughters should eat.
They shall eat up your flocks and your herds;
They shall eat up your vines and your fig trees;
They shall destroy your fortified cities, In which you trust, with the sword.
18 "Nevertheless in those days," says the LORD, "I will not make a complete end of you. 19 And it will be when you say, 'Why does the LORD our God do all these *things* to us?' then you shall answer them, 'Just as you have forsaken Me and served foreign gods in your land, so you shall serve aliens in a land *that is* not yours.'

20 "Declare this in the house of Jacob
And proclaim it in Judah, saying,
21 'Hear this now, O foolish people,
Without understanding,
Who have eyes and see not,
And who have ears and hear not:
22 Do you not fear Me?' says the LORD.
'Will you not tremble at My presence,
Who have placed the sand as the bound of the sea,
By a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass beyond it?
And though its waves toss to and fro,
Yet they cannot prevail;
Though they roar, yet they cannot pass over it.
23 But this people has a defiant and rebellious heart;
They have revolted and departed.
24 They do not say in their heart,
"Let us now fear the LORD our God,
Who gives rain, both the former and the latter, in its season.
He reserves for us the appointed weeks of the harvest."
25 Your iniquities have turned these *things* away,
And your sins have withheld good from you.

26 ‘For among My people are found wicked *men;*
They lie in wait as one who sets snares;
They set a trap;
They catch men.
27 As a cage is full of birds,
So their houses *are* full of deceit.
Therefore they have become great and grown rich.
28 They have grown fat, they are sleek;
Yes, they surpass the deeds of the wicked;
They do not plead the cause,
The cause of the fatherless;
Yet they prosper, And the right of the needy they do not defend.
29 Shall I not punish *them* for these *things?* ’ says the LORD.
‘ Shall I not avenge Myself on such a nation as this?’
30 “An astonishing and horrible thing
Has been committed in the land:
31 The prophets prophesy falsely,
And the priests rule by their *own* power;
And My people love *to have it* so.
But what will you do in the end?

**IMPENDING DESTRUCTION FROM THE NORTH**

**6** “O you children of Benjamin, Gather yourselves to flee from the midst of Jerusalem!
Blow the trumpet in Tekoa,
And set up a signal-fire in Beth Haccerem;
For disaster appears out of the north,
And great destruction.

2 I have likened the daughter of Zion
To a lovely and delicate woman.
3 The shepherds with their flocks shall come to her.
They shall pitch *their* tents against her all around.
Each one shall pasture in his own place.”
4 “Prepare war against her;
Arise, and let us go up at noon.
Woe to us, for the day goes away,
For the shadows of the evening are lengthening.
5 Arise, and let us go by night,
And let us destroy her palaces.”
6 For thus has the LORD of hosts said:

“Cut down trees,
And build a mound against Jerusalem.
This *is* the city to be punished.
She *is* full of oppression in her midst.

7 As a fountain wells up with water,
So she wells up with her wickedness.
Violence and plundering are heard in her.
Before Me continually *are* grief and wounds.

8 Be instructed, O Jerusalem,
Lest My soul depart from you;
Lest I make you desolate,
A land not inhabited.”

9 Thus says the LORD of hosts:
"They shall thoroughly glean as a vine the remnant of Israel;
As a grape-gatherer, put your hand back into the branches."
10 To whom shall I speak and give warning,
That they may hear?
Indeed their ear *is* uncircumcised,
And they cannot give heed.
Behold, the word of the LORD is a reproach to them;
They have no delight in it.
11 Therefore I am full of the fury of the LORD.
I am weary of holding *it* in.
"I will pour it out on the children outside,
And on the assembly of young men together;
For even the husband shall be taken with the wife,
The aged with *him who is* full of days.
12 And their houses shall be turned over to others,
Fields and wives together;
For I will stretch out My hand
Against the inhabitants of the land," says the LORD.
13 "Because from the least of them even to the greatest of them,
Everyone *is* given to covetousness;
And from the prophet even to the priest,
Everyone deals falsely.
14 They have also healed the hurt of My people slightly,
Saying, 'Peace, peace!'
When *there is* no peace.
15 Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination?
No! They were not at all ashamed;
Nor did they know how to blush.
Therefore they shall fall among those who fall;
At the time I punish them,
They shall be cast down," says the LORD.
16 Thus says the LORD:
"Stand in the ways and see,
And ask for the old paths, where the good way *is,*

And walk in it;
Then you will find rest for your souls.
But they said, ‘We will not walk *in it.* ’
17 Also, I set watchmen over you, *saying,*
‘Listen to the sound of the trumpet!’
But they said, ‘We will not listen.’
18 Therefore hear, you nations,
And know, O congregation, what *is* among them.
19 Hear, O earth!
Behold, I will certainly bring calamity on this people-
The fruit of their thoughts,
Because they have not heeded My words
Nor My law, but rejected it.
20 For what purpose to Me
Comes frankincense from Sheba,
And sweet cane from a far country?
Your burnt offerings *are* not acceptable,
Nor your sacrifices sweet to Me.”

21 Therefore thus says the LORD:

“Behold, I will lay stumbling blocks before this people,
And the fathers and the sons together shall fall on them.
The neighbor and his friend shall perish.”
22 Thus says the LORD:

“Behold, a people comes from the north country,
And a great nation will be raised from the farthest parts of the earth.

23 They will lay hold on bow and spear;
They *are* cruel and have no mercy;
Their voice roars like the sea;
And they ride on horses,
As men of war set in array against you,
O daughter of Zion.”
24 We have heard the report of it;

Our hands grow feeble.
Anguish has taken hold of us,
Pain as of a woman in labor.
25 Do not go out into the field,
Nor walk by the way.
Because of the sword of the enemy,
Fear *is* on every side.
26 O daughter of my people,
Dress in sackcloth
And roll about in ashes!
Make mourning *as for* an only son, most bitter lamentation;
For the plunderer will suddenly come upon us.
27 "I have set you *as* an assayer *and* a fortress among My people,
That you may know and test their way.
28 They *are* all stubborn rebels, walking as slanderers.
*They are* bronze and iron,
They *are* all corrupters;
29 The bellows blow fiercely, The lead is consumed by the fire;
The smelter refines in vain,
For the wicked are not drawn off.
30 *People* will call them rejected silver,
Because the LORD has rejected them."

## TRUSTING IN LYING WORDS

7 The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, 2"Stand in the gate
of the LORD's house, and proclaim there this word, and say, 'Hear the word
of the LORD, all *you of* Judah who enter in at these gates to worship the
LORD!' " 3Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: "Amend your ways
and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place. 4Do not trust in
these lying words, saying, 'The temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD,
the temple of the LORD *are* these.'

5"For if you thoroughly amend your ways and your doings, if you
thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbor, 6*if* you do not
oppress the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and do not shed innocent
blood in this place, or walk after other gods to your hurt, 7then I will cause
you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers forever and
ever.

8"Behold, you trust in lying words that cannot profit. 9Will you steal,
murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, burn incense to Baal, and walk after
other gods whom you do not know, 10and *then* come and stand before Me in
this house which is called by My name, and say, 'We are delivered to do all
these abominations'? 11Has this house, which is called by My name, become
a den of thieves in your eyes? Behold, I, even I, have seen *it*," says the LORD.

12"But go now to My place which *was* in Shiloh, where I set My name at
the first, and see what I did to it because of the wickedness of My people
Israel. 13And now, because you have done all these works," says the LORD,
"and I spoke to you, rising up early and speaking, but you did not hear, and I
called you, but you did not answer, 14therefore I will do to the house which is
called by My name, in which you trust, and to this place which I gave to you
and your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh. 15And I will cast you out of My
sight, as I have cast out all your brethren-the whole posterity of Ephraim.

16"Therefore do not pray for this people, nor lift up a cry or prayer for
them, nor make intercession to Me; for I will not hear you. 17Do you not see
what they do in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? 18The
children gather wood, the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead

dough, to make cakes for the queen of heaven; and *they* pour out drink offerings to other gods, that they may provoke Me to anger. [19]Do they provoke Me to anger?" says the LORD. "*Do they* not *provoke* themselves, to the shame of their own faces?"

[20]Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, My anger and My fury will be poured out on this place-on man and on beast, on the trees of the field and on the fruit of the ground. And it will burn and not be quenched."

[21]Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: "Add your burnt offerings to your sacrifices and eat meat. [22]For I did not speak to your fathers, or command them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices. [23]But this is what I commanded them, saying, 'Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be My people. And walk in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well with you.' [24]Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but followed the counsels *and* the dictates of their evil hearts, and went backward and not forward. [25]Since the day that your fathers came out of the land of Egypt until this day, I have even sent to you all My servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending *them*.[26]Yet they did not obey Me or incline their ear, but stiffened their neck. They did worse than their fathers.

[27]"Therefore you shall speak all these words to them, but they will not obey you. You shall also call to them, but they will not answer you.

## JUDGMENT ON OBSCENE RELIGION

[28]"So you shall say to them, 'This *is* a nation that does not obey the voice of the LORD their God nor receive correction. Truth has perished and has been cut off from their mouth. [29]Cut off your hair and cast *it* away, and take up a lamentation on the desolate heights; for the LORD has rejected and forsaken the generation of His wrath.' [30]For the children of Judah have done evil in My sight," says the LORD. "They have set their abominations in the house which is called by My name, to pollute it. [31]And they have built the high places of Tophet, which *is* in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire, which I did not command, nor did it come into My heart.

32“Therefore behold, the days are coming,” says the LORD, “when it will no
more be called Tophet, or the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, but the Valley of
Slaughter; for they will bury in Tophet until there is no room. 33The corpses
of this people will be food for the birds of the heaven and for the beasts of the
earth. And no one will frighten *them away*. 34Then I will cause to cease from
the cities of Judah and from the streets of Jerusalem the voice of mirth and
the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride.
For the land shall be desolate.

**8** “At that time,” says the LORD, “they shall bring out the bones of the kings
of Judah, and the bones of its princes, and the bones of the priests, and the
bones of the prophets, and the bones of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, out of
their graves. 2They shall spread them before the sun and the moon and all the
host of heaven, which they have loved and which they have served and after
which they have walked, which they have sought and which they have
worshiped. They shall not be gathered nor buried; they shall be like refuse on
the face of the earth. 3Then death shall be chosen rather than life by all the
residue of those who remain of this evil family, who remain in all the places
where I have driven them,” says the LORD of hosts.

## THE PERIL OF FALSE TEACHING

4“Moreover you shall say to them, ‘Thus says the LORD:

“Will they fall and not rise?
Will one turn away and not return?

5 Why has this people slidden back,
Jerusalem, in a perpetual backsliding?
They hold fast to deceit, They refuse to return.
6 I listened and heard,
*But* they do not speak aright.
No man repented of his wickedness,
Saying, ‘What have I done?’
Everyone turned to his own course,
As the horse rushes into the battle.

7 “Even the stork in the heavens
Knows her appointed times;
And the turtledove, the swift, and the swallow
Observe the time of their coming.
But My people do not know the judgment of the LORD.

8 “How can you say, ‘We *are* wise,
And the law of the LORD *is* with us’?

Look, the false pen of the scribe certainly works falsehood.

9 The wise men are ashamed,
They are dismayed and taken.
Behold, they have rejected the word of the LORD;
So what wisdom do they have?

10 Therefore I will give their wives to others,
*And*t heir fields to those who will inherit *them;*
Because from the least even to the greatest
Everyone is given to covetousness;
From the prophet even to the priest
Everyone deals falsely.
11 For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of My people slightly,
Saying, ‘Peace, peace!’
When *there is* no peace.
12 Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination?
No! They were not at all ashamed,
Nor did they know how to blush.
Therefore they shall fall among those who fall;
In the time of their punishment
They shall be cast down,” says the LORD.

13 “I will surely consume them,” says the LORD.
“No grapes *shall be* on the vine,
Nor figs on the fig tree,
And the leaf shall fade;
And *the things* I have given them shall pass away from them.” ’ ”

14 “Why do we sit still?
Assemble yourselves,
And let us enter the fortified cities,
And let us be silent there.
For the LORD our God has put us to silence
And given us water of gall to drink,
Because we have sinned against the LORD.

15 “*We* looked for peace, but no good *came;*
And for a time of health, and there was trouble!
16 The snorting of His horses was heard from Dan.
The whole land trembled at the sound of the neighing of His strong ones;
For they have come and devoured the land and all that is in it,
The city and those who dwell in it.”
17 “For behold, I will send serpents among you,
Vipers which cannot be charmed,
And they shall bite you,” says the LORD.

## THE PROPHET MOURNS FOR THE PEOPLE

18 I would comfort myself in sorrow;
My heart *is* faint in me.
19 Listen! The voice, The cry of the daughter of my people From a far country:
“*Is* not the LORD in Zion?
*Is* not her King in her?”
“Why have they provoked Me to anger
With their carved images-
With foreign idols?”
20 “The harvest is past,
The summer is ended,
And we are not saved!”
21 For the hurt of the daughter of my people I am hurt.
I am mourning;
Astonishment has taken hold of me.
22 *Is there* no balm in Gilead,
*Is there* no physician there?
Why then is there no recovery
For the health of the daughter of my people?

**9** Oh, that my head were waters,
And my eyes a fountain of tears,
That I might weep day and night
For the slain of the daughter of my people!

> Oh, that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!
> JEREMIAH 9:1

2 Oh, that I had in the wilderness
A lodging place for travelers;
That I might leave my people,
And go from them!
For they *are* all adulterers,
An assembly of treacherous men.
3 "And *like* their bow they have bent their tongues *for* lies.
They are not valiant for the truth on the earth.
For they proceed from evil to evil,
And they do not know Me," says the LORD.
4 "Everyone take heed to his neighbor,
And do not trust any brother;
For every brother will utterly supplant,
And every neighbor will walk with slanderers.
5 Everyone will deceive his neighbor,
And will not speak the truth;
They have taught their tongue to speak lies;
They weary themselves to commit iniquity.
6 Your dwelling place *is* in the midst of deceit;
Through deceit they refuse to know Me," says the LORD.
7 Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts:

"Behold, I will refine them and try them;
For how shall I deal with the daughter of My people?

8 Their tongue *is* an arrow shot out;

It speaks deceit;
*One* speaks peaceably to his neighbor with his mouth,
But in his heart he lies in wait.
9 Shall I not punish them for these *things?*" says the LORD.
"Shall I not avenge Myself on such a nation as this?"
10 I will take up a weeping and wailing for the mountains,
And for the dwelling places of the wilderness a lamentation,
Because they are burned up,
So that no one can pass through;
Nor can *men* hear the voice of the cattle.
Both the birds of the heavens and the beasts have fled;
They are gone.
11 "I will make Jerusalem a heap of ruins, a den of jackals.
I will make the cities of Judah desolate, without an inhabitant."
12 Who *is* the wise man who may understand this? And *who is he* to whom the mouth of the LORD has spoken, that he may declare it? Why does the land perish *and* burn up like a wilderness, so that no one can pass through? 13 And the LORD said, "Because they have forsaken My law which I set before them, and have not obeyed My voice, nor walked according to it, 14 but they have walked according to the dictates of their own hearts and after the Baals, which their fathers taught them," 15 therefore thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: "Behold, I will feed them, this people, with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink. 16 I will scatter them also among the Gentiles, whom neither they nor their fathers have known. And I will send a sword after them until I have consumed them."

## THE PEOPLE MOURN IN JUDGMENT

17 Thus says the LORD of hosts:

"Consider and call for the mourning women,
That they may come;
And send for skillful wailing women,
That they may come.

18 Let them make haste

And take up a wailing for us,
That our eyes may run with tears,
And our eyelids gush with water.
19 For a voice of wailing is heard from Zion:
‘How we are plundered!
We are greatly ashamed,
Because we have forsaken the land,
Because we have been cast out of our dwellings.’ ”
20 Yet hear the word of the LORD, O women,
And let your ear receive the word of His mouth;
Teach your daughters wailing,
And everyone her neighbor a lamentation.
21 For death has come through our windows,
Has entered our palaces,
To kill off the children-*no longer to be* outside!
*And* the young men-*no longer* on the streets!
22 Speak, “Thus says the LORD:

‘Even the carcasses of men shall fall as refuse on the open field,
Like cuttings after the harvester,
And no one shall gather *them*.’ ”

23 Thus says the LORD:
“Let not the wise *man* glory in his wisdom,
Let not the mighty *man* glory in his might,
Nor let the rich *man* glory in his riches;
24 But let him who glories glory in this,
That he understands and knows Me,
That I *am* the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and
righteousness in the earth.
For in these I delight,” says the LORD.
25 “Behold, the days are coming,” says the LORD, “that I will punish all *who are* circumcised with the uncircumcised-26 Egypt, Judah, Edom, the people of Ammon, Moab, and all *who are* in the farthest corners, who dwell in the wilderness. For all *these* nations *are* uncircumcised, and all the house of

Israel *are* uncircumcised in the heart."

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# JEREMIAH SHOWS IT'S OK TO CRY

**(JEREMIAH 9)**

In our culture, sons are often told, "Big boys don't cry." Such well-intended advice to toughen boys to face the challenges of life often trains them to perceive their emotions as a sign of weakness and to repress them. The prophet Jeremiah, however, was not afraid to cry. He expressed his feelings loudly and clearly. His words of anger and grief teach us lessons about emotions as well as lessons about the ways in which we can communicate with God. Jeremiah was a big boy who knew when to cry.

Known as the "weeping prophet," Jeremiah cried and mourned for the people of God. He preached a message of judgment through tears that flowed from a heart of compassion. Even God's severest truth is never void of His love. God has not merely directed us to condemn sin, but also to love the sinner. Jeremiah's message offers us a wonderful example about balancing the character of God with the compassion of God.

Jeremiah also offers us an intimate view of his own relationship with God. His prayers were never edited. He did not leave out the raw anger or doubt. The prophet was not afraid that God might somehow be offended by his honest feelings. Jeremiah's awareness of his own feelings made him particularly sensitive to God's deep expressions of

disappointment and sadness. He was open to the heart of God because his own heart was open to God.

Like Jeremiah, we can make it a point to pray when we feel least like praying. We can ask ourselves before we pray, "Does God just expect me to tell Him what He wants to hear; or can I really tell Him what is on my mind and heart?" Such openness allows for a healthy emotional life. The more we learn to communicate fully with God, the more we will find ourselves open to His Spirit, sensitive to His corrections, and growing in compassion for the world.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Emotional Well-being. See also the key passage note at Lamentations 3:22-25.

**SOUL NOTE**

**The Physical and the Spiritual** *(9:25, 26)* Without inward devotion to God, the act of circumcision is about as spiritually meaningful as a haircut. Using outward symbols as evidence of spiritual superiority goes against everything God says in His Word. Anything to which people point with pride to symbolize their spirituality or to set them apart from others is, in reality, a stumbling block to their growth. People may look at the outward appearance, "but the LORD looks at the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7). **Topic: Cults**

**IDOLS AND THE TRUE GOD**

**10** Hear the word which the LORD speaks to you, O house of Israel.
2 Thus says the LORD:

"Do not learn the way of the Gentiles;
Do not be dismayed at the signs of heaven, For the Gentiles are dismayed at them.

3 For the customs of the peoples *are* futile;
For *one* cuts a tree from the forest,
The work of the hands of the workman, with the ax.
4 They decorate it with silver and gold;
They fasten it with nails and hammers
So that it will not topple.
5 They *are* upright, like a palm tree,
And they cannot speak;
They must be carried,
Because they cannot go *by themselves.*
Do not be afraid of them,
For they cannot do evil,
Nor can they do any good."
6 Inasmuch as *there is* none like You, O LORD
(You *are* great, and Your name *is* great in might),

> There is none like You, O LORD (You are great, and Your name is great in might).
> JEREMIAH 10:6

7 Who would not fear You, O King of the nations?
For this is Your rightful due.
For among all the wise *men* of the nations,
And in all their kingdoms,
*There is* none like You.
8 But they are altogether dull-hearted and foolish;

A wooden idol *is* a worthless doctrine.
9 Silver is beaten into plates;
It is brought from Tarshish,
And gold from Uphaz,
The work of the craftsman
And of the hands of the metalsmith;
Blue and purple *are* their clothing;
They *are* all the work of skillful *men.*
10 But the LORD *is* the true God;
He *is* the living God and the everlasting King.
At His wrath the earth will tremble,
And the nations will not be able to endure His indignation.
11 Thus you shall say to them: "The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth shall perish from the earth and from under these heavens."

12 He has made the earth by His power,
He has established the world by His wisdom,
And has stretched out the heavens at His discretion.
13 When He utters His voice,
*There is* a multitude of waters in the heavens:
"And He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth.
He makes lightning for the rain,
He brings the wind out of His treasuries."[a]
14 Everyone is dull-hearted, without knowledge;
Every metalsmith is put to shame by an image;
For his molded image *is* falsehood,
And *there is* no breath in them.
15 They *are* futile, a work of errors;
In the time of their punishment they shall perish.
16 The Portion of Jacob *is* not like them,
For He *is* the Maker of all *things*,
And Israel *is* the tribe of His inheritance;
The LORD of hosts *is* His name.

## THE COMING CAPTIVITY OF JUDAH

17 Gather up your wares from the land,
O inhabitant of the fortress!

18For thus says the LORD:

"Behold, I will throw out at this time
The inhabitants of the land,
And will distress them,
That they may find *it so*."

19 Woe is me for my hurt!
My wound is severe.
But I say, "Truly this *is* an infirmity,
And I must bear it."
20 My tent is plundered,
And all my cords are broken;
My children have gone from me,
And they *are* no more.
*There is* no one to pitch my tent anymore,
Or set up my curtains.
21 For the shepherds have become dull-hearted,
And have not sought the LORD;
Therefore they shall not prosper,
And all their flocks shall be scattered.
22 Behold, the noise of the report has come, And a great commotion out of the north country, To make the cities of Judah desolate, a den of jackals.
23 O LORD, I know the way of man *is* not in himself;
*It is* not in man who walks to direct his own steps.
24 O LORD, correct me, but with justice;
Not in Your anger, lest You bring me to nothing.
25 Pour out Your fury on the Gentiles, who do not know You,
And on the families who do not call on Your name;
For they have eaten up Jacob,
Devoured him and consumed him,
And made his dwelling place desolate.

**THE BROKEN COVENANT**

**11** The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, 2"Hear the
words of this covenant, and speak to the men of Judah and to the
inhabitants of Jerusalem; 3and say to them, 'Thus says the LORD God of
Israel: "Cursed *is* the man who does not obey the words of this covenant
4which I commanded your fathers in the day I brought them out of the land of
Egypt, from the iron furnace, saying, 'Obey My voice, and do according to
all that I command you; so shall you be My people, and I will be your God,'
5that I may establish the oath which I have sworn to your fathers, to give
them 'a land flowing with milk and honey,'[a] as *it is* this day." ' "

And I answered and said, "So be it, LORD." 6Then the LORD said to me,
"Proclaim all these words in the cities of Judah and in the streets of
Jerusalem, saying: 'Hear the words of this covenant and do them. 7For I
earnestly exhorted your fathers in the day I brought them up out of the land of
Egypt, until this day, rising early and exhorting, saying, "Obey My voice."
8Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but everyone followed the dictates
of his evil heart; therefore I will bring upon them all the words of this
covenant, which I commanded *them* to do, but *which* they have not done.' "

9And the LORD said to me, "A conspiracy has been found among the men
of Judah and among the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 10They have turned back to
the iniquities of their forefathers who refused to hear My words, and they
have gone after other gods to serve them; the house of Israel and the house of
Judah have broken My covenant which I made with their fathers."

11Therefore thus says the LORD: "Behold, I will surely bring calamity on
them which they will not be able to escape; and though they cry out to Me, I
will not listen to them. 12Then the cities of Judah and the inhabitants of
Jerusalem will go and cry out to the gods to whom they offer incense, but
they will not save them at all in the time of their trouble. 13For *according to*
the number of your cities were your gods, O Judah; and *according to* the
number of the streets of Jerusalem you have set up altars to *that* shameful
thing, altars to burn incense to Baal.

14"So do not pray for this people, or lift up a cry or prayer for them; for I

will not hear *them* in the time that they cry out to Me because of their trouble.

15 “What has My beloved to do in My house,
Having done lewd deeds with many?
And the holy flesh has passed from you.
When you do evil, then you rejoice.
16 The LORD called your name,
Green Olive Tree, Lovely *and* of Good Fruit.
With the noise of a great tumult
He has kindled fire on it,
And its branches are broken.

17 “For the LORD of hosts, who planted you, has pronounced doom against you for the evil of the house of Israel and of the house of Judah, which they have done against themselves to provoke Me to anger in offering incense to Baal.”

**JEREMIAH’S LIFE THREATENED**

18 Now the LORD gave me knowledge *of it,* and I know *it;* for You showed me their doings. 19 But I *was* like a docile lamb brought to the slaughter; and I did not know that they had devised schemes against me, *saying*, “Let us destroy the tree with its fruit, and let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name may be remembered no more.”

20 But, O LORD of hosts,
You who judge righteously,
Testing the mind and the heart,
Let me see Your vengeance on them,
For to You I have revealed my cause.

21 “Therefore thus says the LORD concerning the men of Anathoth who seek your life, saying, ‘Do not prophesy in the name of the LORD, lest you die by our hand’- 22 therefore thus says the LORD of hosts: ‘Behold, I will punish them. The young men shall die by the sword, their sons and their daughters shall die by famine; 23 and there shall be no remnant of them, for I will bring catastrophe on the men of Anathoth, *even* the year of their punishment.’ ”

## JEREMIAH'S QUESTION

**12** Righteous *are* You, O LORD, when I plead with You;
Yet let me talk with You about *Your* judgments.
Why does the way of the wicked prosper?
*Why* are those happy who deal so treacherously?

2 You have planted them, yes, they have taken root;
They grow, yes, they bear fruit.
You *are* near in their mouth
But far from their mind.
3 But You, O LORD, know me;
You have seen me,
And You have tested my heart toward You.
Pull them out like sheep for the slaughter,
And prepare them for the day of slaughter.
4 How long will the land mourn,
And the herbs of every field wither?
The beasts and birds are consumed,
For the wickedness of those who dwell there,
Because they said, "He will not see our final end."

## THE LORD ANSWERS JEREMIAH

5 "If you have run with the footmen, and they have wearied you,
Then how can you contend with horses?
And *if* in the land of peace,
*In which* you trusted, *they wearied you*,
Then how will you do in the floodplain[a] of the Jordan?
6 For even your brothers, the house of your father,
Even they have dealt treacherously with you;
Yes, they have called a multitude after you.
Do not believe them,
Even though they speak smooth words to you.
7 "I have forsaken My house, I have left My heritage;
I have given the dearly beloved of My soul into the hand of her enemies.

[8] My heritage is to Me like a lion in the forest;
It cries out against Me;
Therefore I have hated it.
[9] My heritage *is* to Me *like* a speckled vulture;
The vultures all around *are* against her.
Come, assemble all the beasts of the field,
Bring them to devour!
[10] "Many rulers[a] have destroyed My vineyard,
They have trodden My portion underfoot;
They have made My pleasant portion a desolate wilderness.
[11] They have made it desolate;
Desolate, it mourns to Me;
The whole land is made desolate, Because no one takes *it* to heart.
[12] The plunderers have come
On all the desolate heights in the wilderness,
For the sword of the LORD shall devour
From *one* end of the land to the *other* end of the land;
No flesh shall have peace.
[13] They have sown wheat but reaped thorns;
They have put themselves to pain *but* do not profit.
But be ashamed of your harvest
Because of the fierce anger of the LORD."

[14]Thus says the LORD: "Against all My evil neighbors who touch the inheritance which I have caused My people Israel to inherit-behold, I will pluck them out of their land and pluck out the house of Judah from among them. [15]Then it shall be, after I have plucked them out, that I will return and have compassion on them and bring them back, everyone to his heritage and everyone to his land. [16]And it shall be, if they will learn carefully the ways of My people, to swear by My name, 'As the LORD lives,' as they taught My people to swear by Baal, then they shall be established in the midst of My people. [17]But if they do not obey, I will utterly pluck up and destroy that nation," says the LORD.

## SYMBOL OF THE LINEN SASH

**13** Thus the LORD said to me: “Go and get yourself a linen sash, and put it around your waist, but do not put it in water.” 2So I got a sash according to the word of the LORD, and put *it* around my waist.

3And the word of the LORD came to me the second time, saying, 4“Take the sash that you acquired, which *is* around your waist, and arise, go to the Euphrates,[a] and hide it there in a hole in the rock.” 5So I went and hid it by the Euphrates, as the LORD commanded me.

6Now it came to pass after many days that the LORD said to me, “Arise, go to the Euphrates, and take from there the sash which I commanded you to hide there.” 7Then I went to the Euphrates and dug, and I took the sash from the place where I had hidden it; and there was the sash, ruined. It was profitable for nothing.

8Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 9“Thus says the LORD: ‘In this manner I will ruin the pride of Judah and the great pride of Jerusalem. 10This evil people, who refuse to hear My words, who follow the dictates of their hearts, and walk after other gods to serve them and worship them, shall be just like this sash which is profitable for nothing. 11For as the sash clings to the waist of a man, so I have caused the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah to cling to Me,’ says the LORD, ‘that they may become My people, for renown, for praise, and for glory; but they would not hear.’

## SYMBOL OF THE WINE BOTTLES

12“Therefore you shall speak to them this word: ‘Thus says the LORD God of Israel: “Every bottle shall be filled with wine.” ’

“And they will say to you, ‘Do we not certainly know that every bottle will be filled with wine?’

13“Then you shall say to them, ‘Thus says the LORD: “Behold, I will fill all the inhabitants of this land-even the kings who sit on David’s throne, the priests, the prophets, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem-with drunkenness! 14And I will dash them one against another, even the fathers and the sons together,” says the LORD. “I will not pity nor spare nor have mercy, but will

destroy them.” ’ ”

**PRIDE PRECEDES CAPTIVITY**

15 Hear and give ear:
Do not be proud,
For the LORD has spoken.
16 Give glory to the LORD your God
Before He causes darkness,
And before your feet stumble
On the dark mountains,
And while you are looking for light,
He turns it into the shadow of death
*And* makes *it* dense darkness.

17 But if you will not hear it,
My soul will weep in secret for *your* pride;
My eyes will weep bitterly
And run down with tears,
Because the LORD’s flock has been taken captive.
18 Say to the king and to the queen mother,
“Humble yourselves;
Sit down,
For your rule shall collapse, the crown of your glory.”
19 The cities of the South shall be shut up,
And no one shall open *them;*
Judah shall be carried away captive, all of it;
It shall be wholly carried away captive.
20 Lift up your eyes and see Those who come from the north.
Where *is* the flock *that* was given to you,
Your beautiful sheep?
21 What will you say when He punishes you?
For you have taught them
*To be*chieftains, to be head over you.
Will not pangs seize you, Like a woman in labor?
22 And if you say in your heart,

"Why have these things come upon me?"
For the greatness of your iniquity
Your skirts have been uncovered,
Your heels made bare.
23 Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots?
*Then* may you also do good who are accustomed to do evil.
24 "Therefore I will scatter them like stubble
That passes away by the wind of the wilderness.
25 This is your lot,
The portion of your measures from Me," says the LORD,
"Because you have forgotten Me
And trusted in falsehood.
26 Therefore I will uncover your skirts over your face,
That your shame may appear.
27 I have seen your adulteries
And your *lustful* neighings,
The lewdness of your harlotry,
Your abominations on the hills in the fields.
Woe to you, O Jerusalem!
Will you still not be made clean?"

## SOUL NOTE

**The Perfect Resource** *(13:15)* Some people think that God's Word is dated and somewhat limited-fine for establishing broad principles but ineffectual in providing specific daily guidance. As a result, when faced with everyday challenges and temptations, they tend to trust their own instincts and hope for the best. Only after they mess things up on their own do they turn to the Lord and His Word for help. This pride prevents them from fully experiencing God's hand in their lives. God says, "Do not be proud, for the LORD has spoken." **Topic: Pride**

**SWORD, FAMINE, AND PESTILENCE**

**14** The word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah concerning the droughts.

2 “Judah mourns,
And her gates languish;
They mourn for the land,
And the cry of Jerusalem has gone up.
3 Their nobles have sent their lads for water;
They went to the cisterns *and* found no water.
They returned with their vessels empty;
They were ashamed and confounded
And covered their heads.
4 Because the ground is parched,
For there was no rain in the land,
The plowmen were ashamed;
They covered their heads.
5 Yes, the deer also gave birth in the field,
But left because there was no grass.
6 And the wild donkeys stood in the desolate heights;
They sniffed at the wind like jackals;
Their eyes failed because *there was* no grass.”
7 O LORD, though our iniquities testify against us,
Do it for Your name’s sake;
For our backslidings are many,
We have sinned against You.
8 O the Hope of Israel, his Savior in time of trouble,
Why should You be like a stranger in the land,
And like a traveler *who* turns aside to tarry for a night?
9 Why should You be like a man astonished,
Like a mighty one *who* cannot save?
Yet You, O LORD, *are* in our midst,
And we are called by Your name;
Do not leave us!
10 Thus says the LORD to this people:

“Thus they have loved to wander;
They have not restrained their feet.
Therefore the LORD does not accept them;
He will remember their iniquity now, And punish their sins.”
11 Then the LORD said to me, “Do not pray for this people, for *their* good.
12 When they fast, I will not hear their cry; and when they offer burnt offering
and grain offering, I will not accept them. But I will consume them by the
sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence.”

13 Then I said, “Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, the prophets say to them, ‘You
shall not see the sword, nor shall you have famine, but I will give you assured
peace in this place.’ ”

14 And the LORD said to me, “The prophets prophesy lies in My name. I
have not sent them, commanded them, nor spoken to them; they prophesy to
you a false vision, divination, a worthless thing, and the deceit of their heart.
15 Therefore thus says the LORD concerning the prophets who prophesy in My
name, whom I did not send, and who say, ‘Sword and famine shall not be in
this land’-‘By sword and famine those prophets shall be consumed! 16 And
the people to whom they prophesy shall be cast out in the streets of Jerusalem
because of the famine and the sword; they will have no one to bury them-
them nor their wives, their sons nor their daughters-for I will pour their
wickedness on them.’

17 “Therefore you shall say this word to them:
‘Let my eyes flow with tears night and day,
And let them not cease;
For the virgin daughter of my people
Has been broken with a mighty stroke, with a very severe blow.
18 If I go out to the field,
Then behold, those slain with the sword!
And if I enter the city,
Then behold, those sick from famine!
Yes, both prophet and priest go about in a land they do not know.’ ”

## THE PEOPLE PLEAD FOR MERCY

19 Have You utterly rejected Judah?

Has Your soul loathed Zion?
Why have You stricken us so that *there is* no healing for us?
We looked for peace, but *there was* no good;
And for the time of healing, and there was trouble.
20 We acknowledge, O LORD, our wickedness
*And* the iniquity of our fathers,
For we have sinned against You.
21 Do not abhor *us*, for Your name's sake;
Do not disgrace the throne of Your glory.
Remember, do not break Your covenant with us.
22 Are there any among the idols of the nations that can cause rain?
Or can the heavens give showers?
*Are* You not He, O LORD our God?
Therefore we will wait for You,
Since You have made all these.

**THE LORD WILL NOT RELENT**

**15** Then the LORD said to me, "*Even* if Moses and Samuel stood before Me,
My mind *would* not *be* favorable toward this people. Cast *them* out of
My sight, and let them go forth. 2 And it shall be, if they say to you, 'Where
should we go?' then you shall tell them, 'Thus says the LORD:

"Such as *are* for death, to death;
And such as *are* for the sword, to the sword;
And such as *are* for the famine, to the famine;
And such as *are* for the captivity, to the captivity." '

3 "And I will appoint over them four forms *of destruction*," says the LORD:
"the sword to slay, the dogs to drag, the birds of the heavens and the beasts of
the earth to devour and destroy. 4 I will hand them over to trouble, to all
kingdoms of the earth, because of Manasseh the son of Hezekiah, king of
Judah, for what he did in Jerusalem.

5 "For who will have pity on you, O Jerusalem?
Or who will bemoan you?
Or who will turn aside to ask how you are doing?
6 You have forsaken Me," says the LORD,
"You have gone backward.
Therefore I will stretch out My hand against you and destroy you;
I am weary of relenting!
7 And I will winnow them with a winnowing fan in the gates of the land;
I will bereave *them* of children;
I will destroy My people,
*Since* they do not return from their ways.
8 Their widows will be increased to Me more than the sand of the seas;
I will bring against them,
Against the mother of the young men,
A plunderer at noonday;
I will cause anguish and terror to fall on them suddenly.
9 "She languishes who has borne seven;
She has breathed her last;

Her sun has gone down While *it was* yet day;
She has been ashamed and confounded.
And the remnant of them I will deliver to the sword
Before their enemies," says the LORD.

## JEREMIAH'S DEJECTION

10 Woe is me, my mother,
That you have borne me,
A man of strife and a man of contention to the whole earth!
I have neither lent for interest,
Nor have men lent to me for interest.
Every one of them curses me.
11 The LORD said:

"Surely it will be well with your remnant;
Surely I will cause the enemy to intercede with you
In the time of adversity and in the time of affliction.

12 Can anyone break iron,
The northern iron and the bronze?
13 Your wealth and your treasures
I will give as plunder without price,
Because of all your sins,
Throughout your territories.
14 And I will make *you* cross over with[a] your enemies
Into a land *which* you do not know;
For a fire is kindled in My anger,
*Which* shall burn upon you."
15 O LORD, You know;
Remember me and visit me,
And take vengeance for me on my persecutors.
In Your enduring patience, do not take me away.
Know that for Your sake I have suffered rebuke.
16 Your words were found, and I ate them,
And Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart;

For I am called by Your name,
O LORD God of hosts.
17 I did not sit in the assembly of the mockers,
Nor did I rejoice;
I sat alone because of Your hand,
For You have filled me with indignation.
18 Why is my pain perpetual
And my wound incurable,
*Which*refuses to be healed?
Will You surely be to me like an unreliable stream,
*As* waters *that* fail?

## THE LORD REASSURES JEREMIAH

19 Therefore thus says the LORD:

"If you return, Then I will bring you back;
You shall stand before Me;
If you take out the precious from the vile,
You shall be as My mouth.
Let them return to you,
But you must not return to them.

20 And I will make you to this people a fortified bronze wall;
And they will fight against you,
But they shall not prevail against you;
For I *am* with you to save you
And deliver you," says the LORD.
21 "I will deliver you from the hand of the wicked,
And I will redeem you from the grip of the terrible."

## JEREMIAH'S LIFESTYLE AND MESSAGE

**16** The word of the LORD also came to me, saying, [2]"You shall not take a wife, nor shall you have sons or daughters in this place." [3]For thus says the LORD concerning the sons and daughters who are born in this place, and concerning their mothers who bore them and their fathers who begot them in this land: [4]"They shall die gruesome deaths; they shall not be lamented nor shall they be buried, *but* they shall be like refuse on the face of the earth. They shall be consumed by the sword and by famine, and their corpses shall be meat for the birds of heaven and for the beasts of the earth."

[5]For thus says the LORD: "Do not enter the house of mourning, nor go to lament or bemoan them; for I have taken away My peace from this people," says the LORD, "loving-kindness and mercies. [6]Both the great and the small shall die in this land. They shall not be buried; neither shall men lament for them, cut themselves, nor make themselves bald for them. [7]Nor shall *men* break *bread* in mourning for them, to comfort them for the dead; nor shall *men* give them the cup of consolation to drink for their father or their mother. [8]Also you shall not go into the house of feasting to sit with them, to eat and drink."

[9]For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: "Behold, I will cause to cease from this place, before your eyes and in your days, the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride.

[10]"And it shall be, when you show this people all these words, and they say to you, 'Why has the LORD pronounced all this great disaster against us? Or what *is* our iniquity? Or what *is* our sin that we have committed against the LORD our God?' [11]then you shall say to them, 'Because your fathers have forsaken Me,' says the LORD; 'they have walked after other gods and have served them and worshiped them, and have forsaken Me and not kept My law. [12]And you have done worse than your fathers, for behold, each one follows the dictates of his own evil heart, so that no one listens to Me. [13]Therefore I will cast you out of this land into a land that you do not know, neither you nor your fathers; and there you shall serve other gods day and

night, where I will not show you favor.’

## GOD WILL RESTORE ISRAEL

14 “Therefore behold, the days are coming,” says the LORD, “that it shall no
more be said, ‘The LORD lives who brought up the children of Israel from the
land of Egypt,’ 15 but, ‘The LORD lives who brought up the children of Israel
from the land of the north and from all the lands where He had driven them.’
For I will bring them back into their land which I gave to their fathers.

16 “Behold, I will send for many fishermen,” says the LORD, “and they shall
fish them; and afterward I will send for many hunters, and they shall hunt
them from every mountain and every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks.
17 For My eyes *are* on all their ways; they are not hidden from My face, nor is
their iniquity hidden from My eyes. 18 And first I will repay double for their
iniquity and their sin, because they have defiled My land; they have filled My
inheritance with the carcasses of their detestable and abominable idols.”

19 O LORD, my strength and my fortress,
My refuge in the day of affliction,
The Gentiles shall come to You
From the ends of the earth and say,
“Surely our fathers have inherited lies,
Worthlessness and unprofitable *things.* ”
20 Will a man make gods for himself,
Which *are* not gods?
21 “Therefore behold,
I will this once cause them to know, I will cause them to know
My hand and My might;
And they shall know that My name *is* the LORD.

**JUDAH'S SIN AND PUNISHMENT**

**17** "The sin of Judah *is* written with a pen of iron;
With the point of a diamond *it is* engraved
On the tablet of their heart, And on the horns of your altars,

2 While their children remember
Their altars and their wooden images[a]
By the green trees on the high hills.
3 O My mountain in the field,
I will give as plunder your wealth, all your treasures,
*And* your high places of sin within all your borders.
4 And you, even yourself,
Shall let go of your heritage which I gave you;
And I will cause you to serve your enemies
In the land which you do not know;
For you have kindled a fire in My anger *which* shall burn forever."
5 Thus says the LORD:
"Cursed *is* the man who trusts in man
And makes flesh his strength,
Whose heart departs from the LORD.
6 For he shall be like a shrub in the desert,
And shall not see when good comes,
But shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness,
*In* a salt land *which is* not inhabited.
7 "Blessed *is* the man who trusts in the LORD,
And whose hope is the LORD.

> "Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, and whose hope is the LORD."
> JEREMIAH 17:7

8 For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters,
Which spreads out its roots by the river,
And will not fear[a] when heat comes;

But its leaf will be green,
And will not be anxious in the year of drought,
Nor will cease from yielding fruit.
9 “The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*,
And desperately wicked;
Who can know it?
10 I, the LORD, search the heart,
*I* test the mind,
Even to give every man according to his ways,
According to the fruit of his doings.
11 “*As* a partridge that broods but does not hatch,
*So is* he who gets riches, but not by right;
It will leave him in the midst of his days,
And at his end he will be a fool.”
12 A glorious high throne from the beginning
*Is* the place of our sanctuary.
13 O LORD, the hope of Israel,
All who forsake You shall be ashamed.

“Those who depart from Me
Shall be written in the earth,
Because they have forsaken the LORD,
The fountain of living waters.”

## JEREMIAH PRAYS FOR DELIVERANCE

14 Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed;
Save me, and I shall be saved,
For You *are* my praise.
15 Indeed they say to me,
“Where *is* the word of the LORD?
Let it come now!”
16 As for me, I have not hurried away from *being* a shepherd *who* follows You,
Nor have I desired the woeful day;
You know what came out of my lips;

It was right there before You.
17 Do not be a terror to me;
You *are* my hope in the day of doom.
18 Let them be ashamed who persecute me,
But do not let me be put to shame;
Let them be dismayed,
But do not let me be dismayed.
Bring on them the day of doom,
And destroy them with double destruction!

**HALLOW THE SABBATH DAY**

19 Thus the LORD said to me: "Go and stand in the gate of the children of the people, by which the kings of Judah come in and by which they go out, and in all the gates of Jerusalem; 20 and say to them, 'Hear the word of the LORD, you kings of Judah, and all Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who enter by these gates. 21 Thus says the LORD: "Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the Sabbath day, nor bring *it* in by the gates of Jerusalem; 22 nor carry a burden out of your houses on the Sabbath day, nor do any work, but hallow the Sabbath day, as I commanded your fathers. 23 But they did not obey nor incline their ear, but made their neck stiff, that they might not hear nor receive instruction.

24 "And it shall be, if you heed Me carefully," says the LORD, "to bring no burden through the gates of this city on the Sabbath day, but hallow the Sabbath day, to do no work in it, 25 then shall enter the gates of this city kings and princes sitting on the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they and their princes, accompanied by the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and this city shall remain forever. 26 And they shall come from the cities of Judah and from the places around Jerusalem, from the land of Benjamin and from the lowland, from the mountains and from the South, bringing burnt offerings and sacrifices, grain offerings and incense, bringing sacrifices of praise to the house of the LORD.

27 "But if you will not heed Me to hallow the Sabbath day, such as not carrying a burden when entering the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day, then I will kindle a fire in its gates, and it shall devour the palaces of

Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched.” ’ ”

**SOUL NOTE**

**Heart Condition** *(17:9, 10)* The masks and false fronts people wear to disguise their real feelings, intentions, or selves may fool the people around them but are useless against God. With a gaze more powerful than any X ray, the Lord peers beyond all facades, straight into the heart, the core of our being. What is there cannot be masked. All of our jealousies, deceitfulness, rage, and ugliness are on display for Him and subject to His judgment. The Lord does more than just *look* at the heart, however; He can transform hearts and renew people from the inside out. **Topic: Accountability**

## THE POTTER AND THE CLAY

**18** The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying: [2]"Arise and
go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause you to hear My
words." [3]Then I went down to the potter's house, and there he was, making
something at the wheel. [4]And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in
the hand of the potter; so he made it again into another vessel, as it seemed
good to the potter to make.

[5]Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying: [6]"O house of Israel, can I
not do with you as this potter?" says the LORD. "Look, as the clay *is* in the
potter's hand, so *are* you in My hand, O house of Israel! [7]The instant I speak
concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down,
and to destroy *it*,[8]if that nation against whom I have spoken turns from its
evil, I will relent of the disaster that I thought to bring upon it. [9]And the
instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to build and to
plant *it*,[10]if it does evil in My sight so that it does not obey My voice, then I
will relent concerning the good with which I said I would benefit it.

[11]"Now therefore, speak to the men of Judah and to the inhabitants of
Jerusalem, saying, 'Thus says the LORD: "Behold, I am fashioning a disaster
and devising a plan against you. Return now every one from his evil way, and
make your ways and your doings good." ' "

## GOD'S WARNING REJECTED

[12]And they said, "That is hopeless! So we will walk according to our own
plans, and we will every one obey the dictates of his evil heart."

[13]Therefore thus says the LORD:

"Ask now among the Gentiles,
Who has heard such things?
The virgin of Israel has done a very horrible thing.

[14] Will *a man* leave the snow water of Lebanon,
*Which comes* from the rock of the field?

Will the cold flowing waters be forsaken for strange waters?
15 “Because My people have forgotten Me,
They have burned incense to worthless idols.
And they have caused themselves to stumble in their ways,
*From* the ancient paths,
To walk in pathways and not on a highway,
16 To make their land desolate *and* a perpetual hissing;
Everyone who passes by it will be astonished
And shake his head.
17 I will scatter them as with an east wind before the enemy;
I will show them[a] the back and not the face
In the day of their calamity.”

## JEREMIAH PERSECUTED

18 Then they said, “Come and let us devise plans against Jeremiah; for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet. Come and let us attack him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words.”

19 Give heed to me, O LORD,
And listen to the voice of those who contend with me!
20 Shall evil be repaid for good?
For they have dug a pit for my life.
Remember that I stood before You
To speak good for them,
To turn away Your wrath from them.
21 Therefore deliver up their children to the famine,
And pour out their *blood* By the force of the sword;
Let their wives *become* widows
And bereaved of their children.
Let their men be put to death,
Their young men *be* slain
By the sword in battle.
22 Let a cry be heard from their houses,
When You bring a troop suddenly upon them;

For they have dug a pit to take me,
And hidden snares for my feet.
23 Yet, LORD, You know all their counsel
Which is against me, to slay *me*.
Provide no atonement for their iniquity,
Nor blot out their sin from Your sight;
But let them be overthrown before You.
Deal *thus* with them
In the time of Your anger.

## THE SIGN OF THE BROKEN FLASK

**19** Thus says the LORD: “Go and get a potter’s earthen flask, and *take* some
of the elders of the people and some of the elders of the priests. 2And go
out to the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, which *is* by the entry of the Potsherd
Gate; and proclaim there the words that I will tell you, 3and say, ‘Hear the
word of the LORD, O kings of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem. Thus says
the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: “Behold, I will bring such a catastrophe
on this place, that whoever hears of it, his ears will tingle.

4“Because they have forsaken Me and made this an alien place, because
they have burned incense in it to other gods whom neither they, their fathers,
nor the kings of Judah have known, and have filled this place with the blood
of the innocents 5(they have also built the high places of Baal, to burn their
sons with fire *for* burnt offerings to Baal, which I did not command or speak,
nor did it come into My mind), 6therefore behold, the days are coming,” says
the LORD, “that this place shall no more be called Tophet or the Valley of the
Son of Hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter. 7And I will make void the
counsel of Judah and Jerusalem in this place, and I will cause them to fall by
the sword before their enemies and by the hands of those who seek their
lives; their corpses I will give as meat for the birds of the heaven and for the
beasts of the earth. 8I will make this city desolate and a hissing; everyone
who passes by it will be astonished and hiss because of all its plagues. 9And I
will cause them to eat the flesh of their sons and the flesh of their daughters,
and everyone shall eat the flesh of his friend in the siege and in the
desperation with which their enemies and those who seek their lives shall
drive them to despair.” ’

10“Then you shall break the flask in the sight of the men who go with you,
11and say to them, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts: “Even so I will break this
people and this city, as *one* breaks a potter’s vessel, which cannot be made
whole again; and they shall bury *them* in Tophet till *there is* no place to bury.
12Thus I will do to this place,” says the LORD, “and to its inhabitants, and
make this city like Tophet. 13And the houses of Jerusalem and the houses of
the kings of Judah shall be defiled like the place of Tophet, because of all the
houses on whose roofs they have burned incense to all the host of heaven,

and poured out drink offerings to other gods.” ’ ”

14 Then Jeremiah came from Tophet, where the LORD had sent him to
prophesy; and he stood in the court of the Lord’s house and said to all the
people, 15 “Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: ‘Behold, I will
bring on this city and on all her towns all the doom that I have pronounced
against it, because they have stiffened their necks that they might not hear
My words.’ ”

## THE WORD OF GOD TO PASHHUR

**20** Now Pashhur the son of Immer, the priest who *was* also chief governor
in the house of the LORD, heard that Jeremiah prophesied these things.
2 Then Pashhur struck Jeremiah the prophet, and put him in the stocks that
*were* in the high gate of Benjamin, which *was* by the house of the LORD.

3 And it happened on the next day that Pashhur brought Jeremiah out of the
stocks. Then Jeremiah said to him, "The LORD has not called your name
Pashhur, but Magor-Missabib.[a] 4 For thus says the LORD: 'Behold, I will make
you a terror to yourself and to all your friends; and they shall fall by the
sword of their enemies, and your eyes shall see *it.* I will give all Judah into
the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall carry them captive to Babylon
and slay them with the sword. 5 Moreover I will deliver all the wealth of this
city, all its produce, and all its precious things; all the treasures of the kings
of Judah I will give into the hand of their enemies, who will plunder them,
seize them, and carry them to Babylon. 6 And you, Pashhur, and all who dwell
in your house, shall go into captivity. You shall go to Babylon, and there you
shall die, and be buried there, you and all your friends, to whom you have
prophesied lies.' "

## JEREMIAH'S UNPOPULAR MINISTRY

7 O LORD, You induced me, and I was persuaded;
You are stronger than I, and have prevailed.
I am in derision daily;
Everyone mocks me.
8 For when I spoke, I cried out;
I shouted, "Violence and plunder!"
Because the word of the LORD was made to me
A reproach and a derision daily.
9 Then I said, "I will not make mention of Him,
Nor speak anymore in His name."
But *His word* was in my heart like a burning fire
Shut up in my bones;
I was weary of holding *it* back, And I could not.

10 For I heard many mocking:
“Fear on every side!”
“Report,” *they say*, “and we will report it!”
All my acquaintances watched for my stumbling, *saying*,
“Perhaps he can be induced;
Then we will prevail against him,
And we will take our revenge on him.”
11 But the LORD *is* with me as a mighty, awesome One.
Therefore my persecutors will stumble, and will not prevail.
They will be greatly ashamed, for they will not prosper.
*Their* everlasting confusion will never be forgotten.
12 But, O LORD of hosts,
You who test the righteous,
*And* see the mind and heart,
Let me see Your vengeance on them;
For I have pleaded my cause before You.
13 Sing to the LORD! Praise the LORD!
For He has delivered the life of the poor
From the hand of evildoers.
14 Cursed *be* the day in which I was born!
Let the day not be blessed in which my
mother bore me!
15 Let the man *be* cursed
Who brought news to my father, saying,
“A male child has been born to you!”
Making him very glad.
16 And let that man be like the cities
Which the LORD overthrew, and did not relent;
Let him hear the cry in the morning
And the shouting at noon,
17 Because he did not kill me from the womb,
That my mother might have been my grave,
And her womb always enlarged *with me*.
18 Why did I come forth from the womb to see labor and sorrow,
That my days should be consumed with shame?

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# JEREMIAH THE LONE PROPHET

# (JEREMIAH 20)

Jeremiah didn't get a ticket to an easy life when God called him to be a prophet. In fact, Jeremiah complained that his life was too difficult. The more he was faithful to speak God's Word to the people of Israel, the more rejection he experienced. At one point Jeremiah was beaten and humiliated by the priest Pashhur and incarcerated in the stocks near the temple (Jer. 20:1, 2). The disappointed prophet found it hard to take comfort in God's earlier promise, "I am with you to deliver you" (Jer. 1:8).

Even though Jeremiah knew that Pashhur and his entire family would die in captivity in Babylon, the prophet cried out that God had deceived him. Jeremiah bemoaned the fact that he was mocked and derided daily because he had taken a stand for God. He felt that he was a solitary voice speaking the truth to a nation that did not want to hear it. He acknowledged, however, that God's Word was like a fire burning within him and it could not be held back (Jer. 20:9).

As we read Jeremiah's prayer journal, we see into the life of an intensely lonely man. His feelings spilled over each other as the prophet prayed. On the pages, anger, resentment, and self-loathing jostle with praise and confidence. But the fact that he continued to communicate with God meant that he knew he wasn't completely alone. The intensity of his feelings did not obliterate the deeper reality of God's presence. As overwhelming as his gripes and

challenges were, he still found comfort in having Someone to whom he could gripe.

One of Jeremiah's most memorable messages from God can be found in Jeremiah 29:11. It provides an encouraging perspective about life: "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope." When we think that we are alone facing the greatest challenges of our lives, the Spirit of God within us will continue to shape us and draw us out to live for God.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Loneliness and Personal Growth. See also the key passage note at Isaiah 41:10.

## JERUSALEM'S DOOM IS SEALED

**21** The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD when King Zedekiah
sent to him Pashhur the son of Melchiah, and Zephaniah the son of
Maaseiah, the priest, saying, 2"Please inquire of the LORD for us, for
Nebuchadnezzar[a] king of Babylon makes war against us. Perhaps the LORD
will deal with us according to all His wonderful works, that *the king* may go
away from us."

3Then Jeremiah said to them, "Thus you shall say to Zedekiah, 4'Thus says
the LORD God of Israel: "Behold, I will turn back the weapons of war that *are*
in your hands, with which you fight against the king of Babylon and the
Chaldeans[a] who besiege you outside the walls; and I will assemble them in
the midst of this city. 5I Myself will fight against you with an outstretched
hand and with a strong arm, even in anger and fury and great wrath. 6I will
strike the inhabitants of this city, both man and beast; they shall die of a great
pestilence. 7And afterward," says the LORD, "I will deliver Zedekiah king of
Judah, his servants and the people, and such as are left in this city from the
pestilence and the sword and the famine, into the hand of Nebuchad-nezzar
king of Babylon, into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of those
who seek their life; and he shall strike them with the edge of the sword. He
shall not spare them, or have pity or mercy." '

8"Now you shall say to this people, 'Thus says the LORD: "Behold, I set
before you the way of life and the way of death. 9He who remains in this city
shall die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence; but he who goes out and
defects to the Chaldeans who besiege you, he shall live, and his life shall be
as a prize to him. 10For I have set My face against this city for adversity and
not for good," says the LORD. "It shall be given into the hand of the king of
Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire." '

## MESSAGE TO THE HOUSE OF DAVID

11"And concerning the house of the king of Judah, *say,* 'Hear the word of
the LORD, 12O house of David! Thus says the LORD:

"Execute judgment in the morning;

And deliver *him who is* plundered
Out of the hand of the oppressor,
Lest My fury go forth like fire
And burn so that no one can quench *it,*
Because of the evil of your doings.
13 “Behold, I *am* against you, O inhabitant of the valley,
*And* rock of the plain,” says the LORD,
“Who say, ‘Who shall come down against us?
Or who shall enter our dwellings?’
14 But I will punish you according to the fruit of your doings,” says the LORD;
“I will kindle a fire in its forest,
And it shall devour all things around it.” ’ ”

**22** Thus says the LORD: “Go down to the house of the king of Judah, and
there speak this word, 2and say, ‘Hear the word of the LORD, O king of
Judah, you who sit on the throne of David, you and your servants and your
people who enter these gates! 3Thus says the LORD: “Execute judgment and
righteousness, and deliver the plundered out of the hand of the oppressor. Do
no wrong and do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, or the widow, nor
shed innocent blood in this place. 4For if you indeed do this thing, then shall
enter the gates of this house, riding on horses and in chariots, accompanied
by servants and people, kings who sit on the throne of David. 5But if you will
not hear these words, I swear by Myself,” says the LORD, “that this house
shall become a desolation.” ’ ”

6For thus says the LORD to the house of the king of Judah:

“You *are* Gilead to Me,
The head of Lebanon;
*Yet* I surely will make you a wilderness,
Cities *which* are not inhabited.
7 I will prepare destroyers against you,
Everyone with his weapons;
They shall cut down your choice cedars
And cast *them* into the fire.
8And many nations will pass by this city; and everyone will say to his
neighbor, ‘Why has the LORD done so to this great city?’ 9Then they will
answer, ‘Because they have forsaken the covenant of the LORD their God, and
worshiped other gods and served them.’ ”

10 Weep not for the dead, nor bemoan him;
Weep bitterly for him who goes away,
For he shall return no more,
Nor see his native country.

## MESSAGE TO THE SONS OF JOSIAH

11For thus says the LORD concerning Shallum[a] the son of Josiah, king of
Judah, who reigned instead of Josiah his father, who went from this place:
“He shall not return here anymore, 12but he shall die in the place where they

have led him captive, and shall see this land no more.

13 “Woe to him who builds his house by unrighteousness
And his chambers by injustice,
*Who* uses his neighbor’s service without wages
And gives him nothing for his work,
14 Who says, ‘I will build myself a wide house with spacious chambers,
And cut out windows for it,
Paneling *it* with cedar
And painting *it* with vermilion.’
15 “Shall you reign because you enclose *yourself* in cedar?
Did not your father eat and drink,
And do justice and righteousness?
Then *it was* well with him.
16 He judged the cause of the poor and needy;
Then *it was* well.
*Was* not this knowing Me?” says the LORD.
17 “Yet your eyes and your heart *are* for nothing but your covetousness,
For shedding innocent blood,
And practicing oppression and violence.”

18 Therefore thus says the LORD concerning Jehoiakim the son of
Josiah, king of Judah:

“They shall not lament for him,
*Saying,* ‘Alas, my brother!’ or ‘Alas, my sister!’
They shall not lament for him,
*Saying,* ‘Alas, master!’ or ‘Alas, his glory!’
19 He shall be buried with the burial of a donkey,
Dragged and cast out beyond the gates of Jerusalem.
20 “Go up to Lebanon, and cry out,
And lift up your voice in Bashan;
Cry from Abarim, For all your lovers are destroyed.
21 I spoke to you in your prosperity,
*But* you said, ‘I will not hear.’
This *has been* your manner from your youth,

That you did not obey My voice.
22 The wind shall eat up all your rulers,
And your lovers shall go into captivity;
Surely then you will be ashamed and humiliated
For all your wickedness.
23 O inhabitant of Lebanon,
Making your nest in the cedars,
How gracious will you be when pangs come upon you,
Like the pain of a woman in labor?

## MESSAGE TO CONIAH

24 "*As* I live," says the LORD, "though Coniah[a] the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, were the signet on My right hand, yet I would pluck you off; 25 and I will give you into the hand of those who seek your life, and into the hand *of those* whose face you fear-the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and the hand of the Chaldeans. 26 So I will cast you out, and your mother who bore you, into another country where you were not born; and there you shall die. 27 But to the land to which they desire to return, there they shall not return.

28 "Is this man Coniah a despised, broken idol-
A vessel in which *is* no pleasure?
Why are they cast out, he and his descendants, And cast into a land
which they do not know?
29 O earth, earth, earth,
Hear the word of the LORD!
30 Thus says the LORD:
'Write this man down as childless,
A man *who* shall not prosper in his days;
For none of his descendants shall prosper,
Sitting on the throne of David,
And ruling anymore in Judah.' "

## THE BRANCH OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

**23** "Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of My
pasture!" says the LORD. 2Therefore thus says the LORD God of Israel
against the shepherds who feed My people: "You have scattered My flock,
driven them away, and not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you for
the evil of your doings," says the LORD. 3"But I will gather the remnant of
My flock out of all countries where I have driven them, and bring them back
to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase. 4I will set up shepherds
over them who will feed them; and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed,
nor shall they be lacking," says the LORD.

5 "Behold, *the* days are coming," says the LORD,
"That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness;
A King shall reign and prosper,
And execute judgment and righteousness in the earth.
6 In His days Judah will be saved,
And Israel will dwell safely;
Now this *is* His name by which He will be called:
THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.[a]

7"Therefore, behold, *the* days are coming,"says the LORD, "that they shall
no longer say, 'As the LORD lives who brought up the children of Israel from
the land of Egypt,' 8but, 'As the LORD lives who brought up and led the
descendants of the house of Israel from the north country and from all the
countries where I had driven them.' And they shall dwell in their own land."

## FALSE PROPHETS AND EMPTY ORACLES

9 My heart within me is broken
Because of the prophets;
All my bones shake.
I am like a drunken man,
And like a man whom wine has overcome,
Because of the LORD,
And because of His holy words.
10 For the land is full of adulterers;

For because of a curse the land mourns.
The pleasant places of the wilderness are dried up.
Their course of life is evil,
And their might *is* not right.
11 “For both prophet and priest are profane;
Yes, in My house I have found their wickedness,” says the LORD.
12 “Therefore their way shall be to them
Like slippery *ways;*
In the darkness they shall be driven on
And fall in them;
For I will bring disaster on them,
The year of their punishment,” says the LORD.
13 “And I have seen folly in the prophets of Samaria:
They prophesied by Baal
And caused My people Israel to err.
14 Also I have seen a horrible thing in the prophets of Jerusalem:
They commit adultery and walk in lies;
They also strengthen the hands of evildoers,
So that no one turns back from his wickedness.
All of them are like Sodom to Me,
And her inhabitants like Gomorrah.
15 “Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts concerning the prophets:
‘Behold, I will feed them with wormwood,
And make them drink the water of gall;
For from the prophets of Jerusalem
Profaneness has gone out into all the land.’ ”
16 Thus says the LORD of hosts:
“Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you.
They make you worthless;
They speak a vision of their own heart,
Not from the mouth of the LORD.
17 They continually say to those who despise Me,
‘The LORD has said, “You shall have peace” ’;
And *to*everyone who walks according to the dictates of his own heart,
they say,

‘No evil shall come upon you.’ ”
18 For who has stood in the counsel of the LORD,
And has perceived and heard His word?
Who has marked His word and heard *it?*
19 Behold, a whirlwind of the LORD has gone forth in fury-
A violent whirlwind!
It will fall violently on the head of the wicked.
20 The anger of the LORD will not turn back
Until He has executed and performed the thoughts of His heart.
In the latter days you will understand it perfectly.
21 “I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran.
I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied.
22 But if they had stood in My counsel,
And had caused My people to hear My words, Then they would have turned them from their evil way And from the evil of their doings.
23 “*Am* I a God near at hand,” says the LORD,
“And not a God afar off?
24 Can anyone hide himself in secret places,
So I shall not see him?” says the LORD;
“Do I not fill heaven and earth?” says the LORD.
25“I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy lies in My name, saying, ‘I have dreamed, I have dreamed!’ 26How long will *this* be in the heart of the prophets who prophesy lies? Indeed *they are* prophets of the deceit of their own heart, 27who try to make My people forget My name by their dreams which everyone tells his neighbor, as their fathers forgot My name for Baal.
28 “The prophet who has a dream, let him tell a dream;
And he who has My word, let him speak My word faithfully.
What *is* the chaff to the wheat?” says the LORD.
29 “*Is* not My word like a fire?” says the LORD,
“And like a hammer *that* breaks the rock in pieces?
30“Therefore behold, I *am* against the prophets,” says the LORD, “who steal My words every one from his neighbor. 31Behold, I *am* against the prophets,” says the LORD, “who use their tongues and say, ‘He says.’ 32Behold, I *am*

against those who prophesy false dreams," says the LORD, "and tell them, and cause My people to err by their lies and by their recklessness. Yet I did not send them or command them; therefore they shall not profit this people at all," says the LORD.

33"So when these people or the prophet or the priest ask you, saying, 'What is the oracle of the LORD?' you shall then say to them, 'What oracle?'[a] I will even forsake you," says the LORD. 34"And *as for* the prophet and the priest and the people who say, 'The oracle of the LORD!' I will even punish that man and his house. 35Thus every one of you shall say to his neighbor, and every one to his brother, 'What has the LORD answered?' and, 'What has the LORD spoken?' 36And the oracle of the LORD you shall mention no more. For every man's word will be his oracle, for you have perverted the words of the living God, the LORD of hosts, our God. 37Thus you shall say to the prophet, 'What has the LORD answered you?' and, 'What has the LORD spoken?' 38But since you say, 'The oracle of the LORD!' therefore thus says the LORD: 'Because you say this word, "The oracle of the LORD!" and I have sent to you, saying, "Do not say, 'The oracle of the LORD!' " 39therefore behold, I, even I, will utterly forget you and forsake you, and the city that I gave you and your fathers, and *will cast you* out of My presence. 40And I will bring an everlasting reproach upon you, and a perpetual shame, which shall not be forgotten.' "

## THE SIGN OF TWO BASKETS OF FIGS

**24** The LORD showed me, and there were two baskets of figs set before the temple of the LORD, after Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had carried away captive Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, and the princes of Judah with the craftsmen and smiths, from Jerusalem, and had brought them to Babylon. [2]One basket *had* very good figs, like the figs *that are* first ripe; and the other basket *had* very bad figs which could not be eaten, they were so bad. [3]Then the LORD said to me, "What do you see, Jeremiah?"

And I said, "Figs, the good figs, very good; and the bad, very bad, which cannot be eaten, they are so bad."

[4]Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying, [5]"Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: 'Like these good figs, so will I acknowledge those who are carried away captive from Judah, whom I have sent out of this place for *their own* good, into the land of the Chaldeans. [6]For I will set My eyes on them for good, and I will bring them back to this land; I will build them and not pull *them* down, and I will plant them and not pluck *them* up. [7]Then I will give them a heart to know Me, that I *am* the LORD; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God, for they shall return to Me with their whole heart.

> "Then I will give them a heart to know Me, that I am the LORD; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God, for they shall return to Me with their whole heart."
> JEREMIAH 24:7

[8]'And as the bad figs which cannot be eaten, they are so bad'-surely thus says the LORD-'so will I give up Zedekiah the king of Judah, his princes, the residue of Jerusalem who remain in this land, and those who dwell in the land of Egypt. [9]I will deliver them to trouble into all the kingdoms of the earth, for *their* harm, *to be* a reproach and a byword, a taunt and a curse, in all places where I shall drive them. [10]And I will send the sword, the famine, and the pestilence among them, till they are consumed from the land that I gave to them and their fathers.' "

## SEVENTY YEARS OF DESOLATION

**25** The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah, in
the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah (which *was*
the first year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon), 2which Jeremiah the
prophet spoke to all the people of Judah and to all the inhabitants of
Jerusalem, saying: 3"From the thirteenth year of Josiah the son of Amon, king
of Judah, even to this day, this *is* the twenty-third year in which the word of
the LORD has come to me; and I have spoken to you, rising early and
speaking, but you have not listened. 4And the LORD has sent to you all His
servants the prophets, rising early and sending *them*, but you have not
listened nor inclined your ear to hear. 5They said, 'Repent now everyone of
his evil way and his evil doings, and dwell in the land that the LORD has
given to you and your fathers forever and ever. 6Do not go after other gods to
serve them and worship them, and do not provoke Me to anger with the
works of your hands; and I will not harm you.' 7Yet you have not listened to
Me," says the LORD, "that you might provoke Me to anger with the works of
your hands to your own hurt.

8"Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts: 'Because you have not heard My
words, 9behold, I will send and take all the families of the north,' says the
LORD, 'and Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, My servant, and will bring
them against this land, against its inhabitants, and against these nations all
around, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, a
hissing, and perpetual desolations. 10Moreover I will take from them the
voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the
voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones and the light of the lamp.
11And this whole land shall be a desolation *and* an astonishment, and these
nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.

12'Then it will come to pass, when seventy years are completed, *that* I will
punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for
their iniquity,' says the LORD; 'and I will make it a perpetual desolation. 13So
I will bring on that land all My words which I have pronounced against it, all
that is written in this book, which Jeremiah has prophesied concerning all the
nations. 14(For many nations and great kings shall be served by them also;

and I will repay them according to their deeds and according to the works of their own hands.)' "

## JUDGMENT ON THE NATIONS

15 For thus says the LORD God of Israel to me: "Take this wine cup of fury
from My hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send you, to drink it.
16 And they will drink and stagger and go mad because of the sword that I will
send among them."

17 Then I took the cup from the LORD's hand, and made all the nations
drink, to whom the LORD had sent me: 18 Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, its
kings and its princes, to make them a desolation, an astonishment, a hissing,
and a curse, as *it is* this day; 19 Pharaoh king of Egypt, his servants, his
princes, and all his people; 20 all the mixed multitude, all the kings of the land
of Uz, all the kings of the land of the Philistines (namely, Ashkelon, Gaza,
Ekron, and the remnant of Ashdod); 21 Edom, Moab, and the people of
Ammon; 22 all the kings of Tyre, all the kings of Sidon, and the kings of the
coastlands which *are* across the sea; 23 Dedan, Tema, Buz, and all *who are* in
the farthest corners; 24 all the kings of Arabia and all the kings of the mixed
multitude who dwell in the desert; 25 all the kings of Zimri, all the kings of
Elam, and all the kings of the Medes; 26 all the kings of the north, far and
near, one with another; and all the kingdoms of the world which *are* on the
face of the earth. Also the king of Sheshach[a] shall drink after them.

27 "Therefore you shall say to them, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God
of Israel: "Drink, be drunk, and vomit! Fall and rise no more, because of the
sword which I will send among you." ' 28 And it shall be, if they refuse to take
the cup from your hand to drink, then you shall say to them, 'Thus says the
LORD of hosts: "You shall certainly drink! 29 For behold, I begin to bring
calamity on the city which is called by My name, and should you be utterly
unpunished? You shall not be unpunished, for I will call for a sword on all
the inhabitants of the earth," says the LORD of hosts.'

30 "Therefore prophesy against them all these words, and say to them:

'The LORD will roar from on high,
And utter His voice from His holy habitation;

He will roar mightily against His fold.
He will give a shout, as those who tread *the grapes,*
Against all the inhabitants of the earth.
31 A noise will come to the ends of the earth-
For the LORD has a controversy with the nations;
He will plead His case with all flesh.
He will give those *who are* wicked to the sword,' says the LORD."
32 Thus says the LORD of hosts:
"Behold, disaster shall go forth
From nation to nation,
And a great whirlwind shall be raised up
From the farthest parts of the earth.
33 "And at that day the slain of the LORD shall be from *one* end of the earth
even to the *other* end of the earth. They shall not be lamented, or
gathered, or buried; they shall become refuse on the ground.

34 "Wail, shepherds, and cry!
Roll about *in the ashes,* You leaders of the flock!
For the days of your slaughter and your dispersions are fulfilled;
You shall fall like a precious vessel.

35 And the shepherds will have no way to flee,
Nor the leaders of the flock to escape.
36 A voice of the cry of the shepherds,
And a wailing of the leaders to the flock *will be heard.*
For the LORD has plundered their pasture,
37 And the peaceful dwellings are cut down
Because of the fierce anger of the LORD.
38 He has left His lair like the lion;
For their land is desolate
Because of the fierceness of the Oppressor,
And because of His fierce anger."

## JEREMIAH SAVED FROM DEATH

**26** In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came from the LORD, saying, 2"Thus says the LORD: 'Stand in the court of the LORD's house, and speak to all the cities of Judah, which come to worship *in* the LORD's house, all the words that I command you to speak to them. Do not diminish a word. 3Perhaps everyone will listen and turn from his evil way, that I may relent concerning the calamity which I purpose to bring on them because of the evil of their doings.' 4And you shall say to them, 'Thus says the LORD: "If you will not listen to Me, to walk in My law which I have set before you, 5to heed the words of My servants the prophets whom I sent to you, both rising up early and sending *them* (but you have not heeded), 6then I will make this house like Shiloh, and will make this city a curse to all the nations of the earth." ' "

7So the priests and the prophets and all the people heard Jeremiah speaking these words in the house of the LORD. 8Now it happened, when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking all that the LORD had commanded *him* to speak to all the people, that the priests and the prophets and all the people seized him, saying, "You will surely die! 9 Why have you prophesied in the name of the LORD, saying, 'This house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate, without an inhabitant'?" And all the people were gathered against Jeremiah in the house of the LORD.

10When the princes of Judah heard these things, they came up from the king's house to the house of the LORD and sat down in the entry of the New Gate of the LORD's *house.*11And the priests and the prophets spoke to the princes and all the people, saying, "This man deserves to die! For he has prophesied against this city, as you have heard with your ears."

12Then Jeremiah spoke to all the princes and all the people, saying: "The LORD sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city with all the words that you have heard. 13Now therefore, amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the LORD your God; then the LORD will relent concerning the doom that He has pronounced against you. 14As for me, here I am, in your hand; do with me as seems good and proper to you. 15But know

for certain that if you put me to death, you will surely bring innocent blood on yourselves, on this city, and on its inhabitants; for truly the LORD has sent me to you to speak all these words in your hearing."

16So the princes and all the people said to the priests and the prophets, "This man does not deserve to die. For he has spoken to us in the name of the LORD our God."

17Then certain of the elders of the land rose up and spoke to all the assembly of the people, saying: 18"Micah of Moresheth prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and spoke to all the people of Judah, saying, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts:

"Zion shall be plowed *like* a field,
Jerusalem shall become heaps of ruins,
And the mountain of the temple[a]
Like the bare hills of the forest." '[b]

19Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah ever put him to death? Did he not fear the LORD and seek the LORD's favor? And the LORD relented concerning the doom which He had pronounced against them. But we are doing great evil against ourselves."

20Now there was also a man who prophesied in the name of the LORD, Urijah the son of Shemaiah of Kirjath Jearim, who prophesied against this city and against this land according to all the words of Jeremiah. 21And when Jehoiakim the king, with all his mighty men and all the princes, heard his words, the king sought to put him to death; but when Urijah heard *it,* he was afraid and fled, and went to Egypt. 22Then Jehoiakim the king sent men to Egypt: Elnathan the son of Achbor, and *other* men *who went* with him to Egypt. 23And they brought Urijah from Egypt and brought him to Jehoiakim the king, who killed him with the sword and cast his dead body into the graves of the common people.

24Nevertheless the hand of Ahikam the son of Shaphan was with Jeremiah, so that they should not give him into the hand of the people to put him to death.

## SYMBOL OF THE BONDS AND YOKES

**27** In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim[a] t he son of Josiah, king of
Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying,[b] 2"Thus says
the LORD to me: 'Make for yourselves bonds and yokes, and put them on
your neck, 3and send them to the king of Edom, the king of Moab, the king of
the Ammonites, the king of Tyre, and the king of Sidon, by the hand of the
messengers who come to Jerusalem to Zedekiah king of Judah. 4And
command them to say to their masters, "Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God
of Israel-thus you shall say to your masters: 5'I have made the earth, the man
and the beast that *are* on the ground, by My great power and by My
outstretched arm, and have given it to whom it seemed proper to Me. 6And
now I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of
Babylon, My servant; and the beasts of the field I have also given him to
serve him. 7So all nations shall serve him and his son and his son's son, until
the time of his land comes; and then many nations and great kings shall make
him serve them. 8And it shall be, *that* the nation and kingdom which will not
serve Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, and which will not put its neck
under the yoke of the king of Babylon, that nation I will punish,' says the
LORD, 'with the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, until I have consumed
them by his hand. 9Therefore do not listen to your prophets, your diviners,
your dreamers, your soothsayers, or your sorcerers, who speak to you, saying,
"You shall not serve the king of Babylon." 10For they prophesy a lie to you,
to remove you far from your land; and I will drive you out, and you will
perish. 11But the nations that bring their necks under the yoke of the king of
Babylon and serve him, I will let them remain in their own land,' says the
LORD, 'and they shall till it and dwell in it.' " ' "

12I also spoke to Zedekiah king of Judah according to all these words,
saying, "Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve
him and his people, and live! 13Why will you die, you and your people, by
the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence, as the LORD has spoken
against the nation that will not serve the king of Babylon? 14Therefore do not
listen to the words of the prophets who speak to you, saying, 'You shall not
serve the king of Babylon,' for they prophesy a lie to you; 15for I have not

sent them," says the LORD, "yet they prophesy a lie in My name, that I may drive you out, and that you may perish, you and the prophets who prophesy to you."

16 Also I spoke to the priests and to all this people, saying, "Thus says the LORD: 'Do not listen to the words of your prophets who prophesy to you, saying, "Behold, the vessels of the LORD's house will now shortly be brought back from Babylon"; for they prophesy a lie to you. 17 Do not listen to them; serve the king of Babylon, and live! Why should this city be laid waste? 18 But if they *are* prophets, and if the word of the LORD is with them, let them now make intercession to the LORD of hosts, that the vessels which are left in the house of the LORD, *in* the house of the king of Judah, and at Jerusalem, do not go to Babylon.'

19 "For thus says the LORD of hosts concerning the pillars, concerning the Sea, concerning the carts, and concerning the remainder of the vessels that remain in this city, 20 which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon did not take, when he carried away captive Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, from Jerusalem to Babylon, and all the nobles of Judah and Jerusalem- 21 yes, thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, concerning the vessels that remain in the house of the LORD, and in the house of the king of Judah and of Jerusalem: 22 'They shall be carried to Babylon, and there they shall be until the day that I visit them,' says the LORD. 'Then I will bring them up and restore them to this place.' "

## HANANIAH'S FALSEHOOD AND DOOM

**28** And it happened in the same year, at the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the fourth year *and* in the fifth month, *that* Hananiah the son of Azur the prophet, who *was* from Gibeon, spoke to me in the house of the LORD in the presence of the priests and of all the people, saying, 2"Thus speaks the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saying: 'I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon. 3Within two full years I will bring back to this place all the vessels of the LORD's house, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took away from this place and carried to Babylon. 4And I will bring back to this place Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, with all the captives of Judah who went to Babylon,' says the LORD, 'for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon.' "

5Then the prophet Jeremiah spoke to the prophet Hananiah in the presence of the priests and in the presence of all the people who stood in the house of the LORD, 6and the prophet Jeremiah said, "Amen! The LORD do so; the LORD perform your words which you have prophesied, to bring back the vessels of the LORD's house and all who were carried away captive, from Babylon to this place. 7Nevertheless hear now this word that I speak in your hearing and in the hearing of all the people: 8The prophets who have been before me and before you of old prophesied against many countries and great kingdoms-of war and disaster and pestilence. 9As for the prophet who prophesies of peace, when the word of the prophet comes to pass, the prophet will be known *as* one whom the LORD has truly sent."

10Then Hananiah the prophet took the yoke off the prophet Jeremiah's neck and broke it. 11And Hananiah spoke in the presence of all the people, saying, "Thus says the LORD: 'Even so I will break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon from the neck of all nations within the space of two full years.' " And the prophet Jeremiah went his way.

12Now the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, after Hananiah the prophet had broken the yoke from the neck of the prophet Jeremiah, saying, 13"Go and tell Hananiah, saying, 'Thus says the LORD: "You have broken the yokes of wood, but you have made in their place yokes of iron." 14For thus says the

LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: “I have put a yoke of iron on the neck of all these nations, that they may serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; and they shall serve him. I have given him the beasts of the field also.” ’ ”

15Then the prophet Jeremiah said to Hananiah the prophet, “Hear now, Hananiah, the LORD has not sent you, but you make this people trust in a lie. 16Therefore thus says the LORD: ‘Behold, I will cast you from the face of the earth. This year you shall die, because you have taught rebellion against the LORD.’ ”

17So Hananiah the prophet died the same year in the seventh month.

## JEREMIAH'S LETTER TO THE CAPTIVES

**29** Now these *are* the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent from
Jerusalem to the remainder of the elders who were carried away captive-
to the priests, the prophets, and all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had
carried away captive from Jerusalem to Babylon. 2(This happened after
Jeconiah the king, the queen mother, the eunuchs, the princes of Judah and
Jerusalem, the craftsmen, and the smiths had departed from Jerusalem.) 3*The
letter was sent* by the hand of Elasah the son of Shaphan, and Gemariah the
son of Hilkiah, whom Zedekiah king of Judah sent to Babylon, to
Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, saying,

4 Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of
Israel, to all who were carried away
captive, whom I have caused to be
carried away from Jerusalem to Babylon:
5 Build houses and dwell *in them;* plant gardens and eat their fruit. 6Take
wives and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons and
give your daughters to husbands, so that they may bear sons and
daughters-that you may be increased there, and not diminished. 7And
seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away
captive, and pray to the LORD for it; for in its peace you will have peace.
8For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let your
prophets and your diviners who are in your midst deceive you, nor listen
to your dreams which you cause to be dreamed. 9For they prophesy
falsely to you in My name; I have not sent them, says the LORD.
10For thus says the LORD: After seventy years are completed at Babylon, I
will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to
return to this place. 11For I know the thoughts that I think toward you,
says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future
and a hope. 12Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I
will listen to you. 13And you will seek Me and find *Me,* when you search
for Me with all your heart. 14I will be found by you, says the LORD, and I
will bring you back from your captivity; I will gather you from all the
nations and from all the places where I have driven you, says the LORD,

and I will bring you to the place from which I cause you to be carried away captive.

15 Because you have said, “The LORD has raised up prophets for us in Babylon”- 16therefore thus says the LORD concerning the king who sits on the throne of David, concerning all the people who dwell in this city, and concerning your brethren who have not gone out with you into captivity- 17thus says the LORD of hosts: Behold, I will send on them the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, and will make them like rotten figs that cannot be eaten, they are so bad. 18And I will pursue them with the sword, with famine, and with pestilence; and I will deliver them to trouble among all the kingdoms of the earth-to be a curse, an astonishment, a hissing, and a reproach among all the nations where I have driven them, 19because they have not heeded My words, says the LORD, which I sent to them by My servants the prophets, rising up early and sending *them;* neither would you heed, says the LORD. 20Therefore hear the word of the LORD, all you of the captivity, whom I have sent from Jerusalem to Babylon.

21 Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, concerning Ahab the son of Kolaiah, and Zedekiah the son of Maaseiah, who prophesy a lie to you in My name: Behold, I will deliver them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and he shall slay them before your eyes. 22And because of them a curse shall be taken up by all the captivity of Judah who *are* in Babylon, saying, “The LORD make you like Zedekiah and Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire”; 23because they have done disgraceful things in Israel, have committed adultery with their neighbors’ wives, and have spoken lying words in My name, which I have not commanded them. Indeed I know, and *am* a witness, says the LORD.

24 You shall also speak to Shemaiah the Nehelamite, saying, 25Thus speaks the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saying: You have sent letters in your name to all the people who *are* at Jerusalem, to Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest, and to all the priests, saying, 26“The LORD has made you priest instead of Jehoiada the priest, so that there should be officers *in* the house of the LORD over every man *who* is demented and considers himself a prophet, that you should put him in prison and in the

stocks. [27]Now therefore, why have you not rebuked Jeremiah of
Anathoth who makes himself a prophet to you? [28]For he has sent to us *in*
Babylon, saying, ‘This *captivity is* long; build houses and dwell *in them,*
and plant gardens and eat their fruit.’ ”
[29] Now Zephaniah the priest read this letter in the hearing of Jeremiah the
prophet. [30]Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying: [31]Send
to all those in captivity, saying, Thus says the LORD concerning
Shemaiah the Nehelamite: Because Shemaiah has prophesied to you,
and I have not sent him, and he has caused you to trust in a lie-
[32]therefore thus says the LORD: Behold, I will punish Shemaiah the
Nehelamite and his family: he shall not have anyone to dwell among this
people, nor shall he see the good that I will do for My people, says the
LORD, because he has taught rebellion against the LORD.

**KEY PASSAGE**

# THE OTHER SIDE OF DESPAIR

# (29:11-13)

The word *hopeless* has no place in a believer’s vocabulary. If the Lord is present, so is hope. God’s Word offers hope:

- Regardless of how dark or desperate a situation seems, hope abides (1 Cor. 13:13). This means that we should hold tightly to our hope.
- Our hope is anchored in Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 3:15, 16); thus it is able to withstand any attack.

•Nothing can separate us from the love of God (Rom. 8:38, 39) and the hope He brings. Any problem, situation, or affliction we face pales in comparison with the power of the Lord who can help us overcome it.

We must learn to look beyond our immediate circumstances, beyond the worry and despair that so easily grip us, and toward the proverbial light at the end of the tunnel. That light is the hope that God gives in His Word. That hope, that confident expectation, can carry us through.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Hope. See also the personality profile of the healed woman Hope for a Woman in Need.

**HOPE**

JOHN TRENT

(Jeremiah 29)

**W**e are never without hope-no matter how we may feel. We are never beyond the reach of God's grace and the touch of His love-no matter how distant these may seem. Even when we are struggling, God brings people into our lives, in divine encounters of His grace. Then God uses us to pass this blessing on to others by tender touches, encouraging words, and expressions of value. We have been given the privilege of passing hope along to others. We pass hope to our children by telling them how much we love them and how special they are to us. We have the ability to project a positive future, giving

them hope and encouragement for life's journey.

God gives hope to His children as well.

## HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

Most of Jeremiah's prophecies were warnings of impending judgment, messages of doom for a nation that had turned its back on God. But Jeremiah also could see beyond the immediate crisis to a day when God would deliver the captives of Judah. He told the people that God would limit their captivity in Babylon to seventy years (Jer. 29:10). He told them God's plans for them after that: They would indeed return to Jerusalem. Despite their present distress, God assured them that He had "thoughts of peace . . . to give [them] a future and a hope" (Jer. 29:11).

Flash forward a few hundred years. Picture the scene. The Lord Jesus has been up all night. He has been shoved through dark alleys and paraded through rocky streets on His way from unjust trials to a hill of crucifixion. If anyone should have been "helpless" in that circumstance, it would have been Him. But read again the crucifixion passages and look at the incredible power and hope that is there: No one *took* Jesus' life. He voluntarily, purposefully, *laid it down*.

Instead of hating, He prayed "Father, forgive them" for the soldiers who nailed Him to the tree (Luke 23:34).

When He could have been concerned only about the terrible agony He was suffering, He looked down at His mother and took care of her well-being (John 19:25-27).

He cried out, "I thirst," not just because of His parched throat, but also in fulfillment of a well-known prophecy in the Psalms of what the suffering-servant Messiah would do (Ps. 69:21; John 19:28).

And finally, He completed His work with the words "It is finished"

(John 19:30)-not “I am finished.”

Where would such confidence come from on this deadly Friday? From the assurance of a hope-filled Sunday three days hence-a day when the Father had promised to raise Him from the dead.

Jesus knew that there was no avoiding the Cross, no covering it up or hanging anything less on it than a sinless offering. But that knowledge did not make Him helpless or hopeless. Rather, He so loved us and was so certain of God’s power to raise Him that He could face Gethsemane and not flinch from completing His purpose.

The Lord Jesus’ hope lay beyond the pain in His immediate future; it was in His place in heaven. Therefore, He could face the crown of thorns, the scorn, the horrible execution, and three days in a borrowed tomb-all because he had “a future and a hope.” And because of Him, so do we.

**HELP FOR TODAY**

The next time something happens that makes us feel hopeless, we need to remember Jesus’ response. His appearance before an unjust court was unfair. His being turned over for execution made escape impossible. His burial in a tomb left His disciples hopeless. But no matter what happens outside us, from defamation of character to an unfair death, we can carry hope inside because we are under the loving care and guidance of the God of Easter morning.

While Jesus was born fully man, He was also fully God, which is a mystery unfathomable this side of heaven, but a reflection of the untold strength He carried within Him to build up and bless others.

And just think-the God of unsurpassed strength finds and invests tremendous value in us. He saved us with His blood, sealed us with His Holy Spirit, and will stand next to us one day when we approach the Father’s throne!

No one can know the full measure of God's family blessing unless they have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Without the blessing that comes directly from our heavenly Father to His children, even an earthly parental blessing can't quite fill our cup. Those who didn't receive the blessing of hope from their parents can get all they need from God-by becoming His children.

Contrary to popular belief, not every person created by God is a member of God's family. The blessing of God is given only to those who believe in His Son. Jesus said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life" (John 5:24).

In addition to His own blessing, God provides us with a spiritual family-other believers who become like brothers and sisters, fathers and mothers. He uses these people to help meet our needs and give us hope. Let Him use us today to touch someone else for God, bringing hope to an all-too-often hopeless world!

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of hope include:

- Psalms 27:1, 14; 42:5; 71:5; 146:5
- Isaiah 58:11
- John 16:33
- Romans 5:3-5
- Colossians 1:27
- 1 Thessalonians 1:3; 4:13-18
- Hebrews 13:5
- 1 Peter 4:12-19; 5:7
- 1 John 4:4

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on hope at Jeremiah 29:11-13.

See also the personality profile of the healed woman Hope for a Woman in Need.

## RESTORATION OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH

**30** The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, 2 “Thus speaks
the LORD God of Israel, saying: ‘Write in a book for yourself all the
words that I have spoken to you. 3 For behold, the days are coming,’ says the
LORD, ‘that I will bring back from captivity My people Israel and Judah,’
says the LORD. ‘And I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their
fathers, and they shall possess it.’ ”

4 Now these *are* the words that the LORD spoke concerning Israel and
Judah.

5 “For thus says the LORD:
‘We have heard a voice of trembling,
Of fear, and not of peace.
6 Ask now, and see, Whether a man is ever in labor with child?
So why do I see every man *with* his hands on his loins
Like a woman in labor,
And all faces turned pale?
7 Alas! For that day *is* great,
So that none *is* like it;
And it *is* the time of Jacob’s trouble,
But he shall be saved out of it.
8 ‘For it shall come to pass in that day,’
Says the LORD of hosts,
‘*That* I will break his yoke from your neck,
And will burst your bonds;
Foreigners shall no more enslave them.
9 But they shall serve the LORD their God,
And David their king,
Whom I will raise up for them.
10 “Therefore do not fear, O My servant Jacob,’ says the LORD,
‘Nor be dismayed, O Israel;
For behold, I will save you from afar,
And your seed from the land of their captivity.
Jacob shall return, have rest and be quiet,

And no one shall make *him* afraid.
11 For I *am* with you,' says the LORD, 'to save you;
Though I make a full end of all nations where I have scattered you,
Yet I will not make a complete end of you.
But I will correct you in justice,
And will not let you go altogether unpunished.'
12"For thus says the LORD:

'Your affliction *is* incurable,
Your wound *is* severe.

13*There is* no one to plead your cause,
That you may be bound up;
You have no healing medicines.
14 All your lovers have forgotten you;
They do not seek you;
For I have wounded you with the wound of an enemy,
With the chastisement of a cruel one,
For the multitude of your iniquities,
*Because* your sins have increased.
15 Why do you cry about your affliction?
Your sorrow *is* incurable.
Because of the multitude of your iniquities,
*Because* your sins have increased,
I have done these things to you.
16 'Therefore all those who devour you shall be devoured;
And all your adversaries, every one of them, shall go into captivity;
Those who plunder you shall become plunder,
And all who prey upon you I will make a prey.
17 For I will restore health to you
And heal you of your wounds,' says the LORD,
'Because they called you an outcast *saying:*
"This *is* Zion;
No one seeks her." '
18"Thus says the LORD:

‘ Behold, I will bring back the captivity of Jacob’s tents,
And have mercy on his dwelling places;
The city shall be built upon its own mound,
And the palace shall remain according to its own plan.
19 Then out of them shall proceed thanksgiving
And the voice of those who make merry;
I will multiply them, and they shall not diminish;
I will also glorify them, and they shall not be small.
20 Their children also shall be as before,
And their congregation shall be established before Me;
And I will punish all who oppress them.
21 Their nobles shall be from among them,
And their governor shall come from their midst;
Then I will cause him to draw near,
And he shall approach Me;
For who *is* this who pledged his heart to approach Me?’ says the LORD.
22 ‘You shall be My people,
And I will be your God.’ ”
23 Behold, the whirlwind of the LORD
Goes forth with fury,
A continuing whirlwind;
It will fall violently on the head of the wicked.
24 The fierce anger of the LORD will not return until He has done it,
And until He has performed the intents of His heart.

In the latter days you will consider it.

**THE REMNANT OF ISRAEL SAVED**

**31** "At the same time," says the LORD, "I will be the God of all the families
of Israel, and they shall be My people." 2Thus says the LORD:

"The people who survived the sword
Found grace in the wilderness-
Israel, when I went to give him rest."

3 The LORD has appeared of old to me, *saying:*
"Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love;
Therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you.
4 Again I will build you, and you shall be rebuilt,
O virgin of Israel!
You shall again be adorned with your tambourines,
And shall go forth in the dances of those who rejoice.
5 You shall yet plant vines on the mountains of Samaria;
The planters shall plant and eat *them* as ordinary food.
6 For there shall be a day
*When*the watchmen will cry on Mount Ephraim,
'Arise, and let us go up *to* Zion,
To the LORD our God.' "
7For thus says the LORD:

"Sing with gladness for Jacob,
And shout among the chief of the nations;
Proclaim, give praise, and say,
'O LORD, save Your people,
The remnant of Israel!'

8 Behold, I will bring them from the north country,
And gather them from the ends of the earth,
*Among* them the blind and the lame,
The woman with child
And the one who labors with child, together;

A great throng shall return there.
9 They shall come with weeping,
And with supplications I will lead them.
I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters,
In a straight way in which they shall not stumble;
For I am a Father to Israel,
And Ephraim *is* My firstborn.
10 “Hear the word of the LORD, O nations,
And declare *it* in the isles afar off, and say,
‘He who scattered Israel will gather him,
And keep him as a shepherd *does* his flock.’
11 For the LORD has redeemed Jacob,
And ransomed him from the hand of one stronger than he.
12 Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion,
Streaming to the goodness of the LORD-
For wheat and new wine and oil,
For the young of the flock and the herd;
Their souls shall be like a well-watered garden,
And they shall sorrow no more at all.
13 “Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance,
And the young men and the old, together;
For I will turn their mourning to joy,
Will comfort them,
And make them rejoice rather than sorrow.
14 I will satiate the soul of the priests with abundance,
And My people shall be satisfied with My goodness, says the LORD.”

**MERCY ON EPHRAIM**

15 Thus says the LORD:

“A voice was heard in Ramah,
Lamentation *and* bitter weeping,
Rachel weeping for her children,
Refusing to be comforted for her children,
Because they *are* no more.”

16 Thus says the LORD:

"Refrain your voice from weeping,
And your eyes from tears;
For your work shall be rewarded, says the LORD,
And they shall come back from the land of the enemy.

17 There is hope in your future, says the LORD,
That *your* children shall come back to their own border.
18 "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself:
'You have chastised me, and I was chastised,
Like an untrained bull;
Restore me, and I will return,
For You *are* the LORD my God.
19 Surely, after my turning, I repented;
And after I was instructed, I struck myself on the thigh;
I was ashamed, yes, even humiliated,
Because I bore the reproach of my youth.'
20 *Is* Ephraim My dear son?
*Is he* a pleasant child?
For though I spoke against him,
I earnestly remember him still;
Therefore My heart yearns for him;
I will surely have mercy on him, says the LORD.
21 "Set up signposts,
Make landmarks;
Set your heart toward the highway,
The way in *which* you went.
Turn back, O virgin of Israel,
Turn back to these your cities.
22 How long will you gad about,
O you backsliding daughter?
For the LORD has created a new thing in the earth-
A woman shall encompass a man."

## FUTURE PROSPERITY OF JUDAH

23 Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: “They shall again use this
speech in the land of Judah and in its cities, when I bring back their captivity:
‘The LORD bless you, O home of justice, *and* mountain of holiness!’ 24 And
there shall dwell in Judah itself, and in all its cities together, farmers and
those going out with flocks. 25 For I have satiated the weary soul, and I have
replenished every sorrowful soul.”

26 After this I awoke and looked around, and my sleep was sweet to me.

27 “Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, that I will sow the house of
Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man and the seed of beast.
28 And it shall come to pass, *that* as I have watched over them to pluck up, to
break down, to throw down, to destroy, and to afflict, so I will watch over
them to build and to plant, says the LORD. 29 In those days they shall say no
more:

‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes,
And the children’s teeth are set on edge.’

30 But every one shall die for his own iniquity; every man who eats the sour
grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge.

## A NEW COVENANT

31 “Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new
covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah-32 not
according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took
them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which
they broke, though I was a husband to them,[a] says the LORD. 33 But this *is* the
covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the
LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will
be their God, and they shall be My people. 34 No more shall every man teach
his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they
all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the
LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no
more.”

[35] Thus says the LORD,
Who gives the sun for a light by day,
The ordinances of the moon and the stars for a light by night,
Who disturbs the sea,
And its waves roar
(The LORD of hosts *is* His name):
[36] "If those ordinances depart
From before Me, says the LORD,
*Then* the seed of Israel shall also cease
From being a nation before Me forever."
[37] Thus says the LORD:
"If heaven above can be measured,
And the foundations of the earth searched out beneath,
I will also cast off all the seed of Israel
For all that they have done, says the LORD.
[38] "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, that the city shall be built for the LORD from the Tower of Hananel to the Corner Gate. [39] The surveyor's line shall again extend straight forward over the hill Gareb; then it shall turn toward Goath. [40] And the whole valley of the dead bodies and of the ashes, and all the fields as far as the Brook Kidron, to the corner of the Horse Gate toward the east, *shall be* holy to the LORD. It shall not be plucked up or thrown down anymore forever."

## JEREMIAH BUYS A FIELD

**32** The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD in the tenth year of
Zedekiah king of Judah, which was the eighteenth year of
Nebuchadnezzar. 2For then the king of Babylon's army besieged Jerusalem,
and Jeremiah the prophet was shut up in the court of the prison, which *was in*
the king of Judah's house. 3For Zedekiah king of Judah had shut him up,
saying, "Why do you prophesy and say, 'Thus says the LORD: "Behold, I will
give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall take it; 4and
Zedekiah king of Judah shall not escape from the hand of the Chaldeans, but
shall surely be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon, and shall speak
with him face to face,[a] and see him eye to eye; 5then he shall lead Zedekiah
to Babylon, and there he shall be until I visit him," says the LORD; "though
you fight with the Chaldeans, you shall not succeed" '?"

6And Jeremiah said, "The word of the LORD came to me, saying, 7'Behold,
Hanamel the son of Shallum your uncle will come to you, saying, "Buy my
field which *is* in Anathoth, for the right of redemption *is* yours to buy *it.* " '
8Then Hanamel my uncle's son came to me in the court of the prison
according to the word of the LORD, and said to me, 'Please buy my field that
*is* in Anathoth, which *is* in the country of Benjamin; for the right of
inheritance *is* yours, and the redemption yours; buy *it* for yourself.' Then I
knew that this was the word of the LORD. 9So I bought the field from
Hanamel, the son of my uncle who *was* in Anathoth, and weighed *out to* him
the money-seventeen shekels of silver. 10And I signed the deed and sealed *it,*
took witnesses, and weighed the money on the scales. 11So I took the
purchase deed, *both* that which was sealed *according* to the law and custom,
and that which was open; 12and I gave the purchase deed to Baruch the son of
Neriah, son of Mahseiah, in the presence of Hanamel my uncle's *son,* and in
the presence of the witnesses who signed the purchase deed, before all the
Jews who sat in the court of the prison.

13"Then I charged Baruch before them, saying, 14'Thus says the LORD of
hosts, the God of Israel: "Take these deeds, both this purchase deed which is
sealed and this deed which is open, and put them in an earthen vessel, that
they may last many days." 15For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of

Israel: “Houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land.” ’

## JEREMIAH PRAYS FOR UNDERSTANDING

16 “Now when I had delivered the purchase deed to Baruch the son of
Neriah, I prayed to the LORD, saying: 17 ‘Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, You have
made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm.
There is nothing too hard for You. 18 *You* show lovingkindness to thousands,
and repay the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after
them-the Great, the Mighty God, whose name *is* the LORD of hosts. 19 *You are*
great in counsel and mighty in work, for Your eyes *are* open to all the ways
of the sons of men, to give everyone according to his ways and according to
the fruit of his doings. 20 You have set signs and wonders in the land of Egypt,
to this day, and in Israel and among *other* men; and You have made Yourself
a name, as it is this day. 21 You have brought Your people Israel out of the
land of Egypt with signs and wonders, with a strong hand and an outstretched
arm, and with great terror; 22 You have given them this land, of which You
swore to their fathers to give them-“a land flowing with milk and honey.” [a]
23 And they came in and took possession of it, but they have not obeyed Your
voice or walked in Your law. They have done nothing of all that You
commanded them to do; therefore You have caused all this calamity to come
upon them.

24 ‘Look, the siege mounds! They have come to the city to take it; and the
city has been given into the hand of the Chaldeans who fight against it,
because of the sword and famine and pestilence. What You have spoken has
happened; there You see *it!* 25 And You have said to me, O Lord GOD, “Buy
the field for money, and take witnesses”!-yet the city has been given into the
hand of the Chaldeans.’ ”

## GOD’S ASSURANCE OF THE PEOPLE’S RETURN

26 Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying, 27 “Behold, I *am*
the LORD, the God of all flesh. Is there anything too hard for Me? 28 Therefore
thus says the LORD: ‘Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the
Chaldeans, into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and he shall

take it. [29]And the Chaldeans who fight against this city shall come and set fire to this city and burn it, with the houses on whose roofs they have offered incense to Baal and poured out drink offerings to other gods, to provoke Me to anger; [30]because the children of Israel and the children of Judah have done only evil before Me from their youth. For the children of Israel have provoked Me only to anger with the work of their hands,' says the LORD. [31]'For this city has been to Me *a provocation of* My anger and My fury from the day that they built it, even to this day; so I will remove it from before My face **32**because of all the evil of the children of Israel and the children of Judah, which they have done to provoke Me to anger-they, their kings, their princes, their priests, their prophets, the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. [33]And they have turned to Me the back, and not the face; though I taught them, rising up early and teaching *them*, yet they have not listened to receive instruction. [34]But they set their abominations in the house which is called by My name, to defile it. [35]And they built the high places of Baal which *are* in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through *the fire* to Molech, which I did not command them, nor did it come into My mind that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin.'

[36]"Now therefore, thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning this city of which you say, 'It shall be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence: [37]Behold, I will gather them out of all countries where I have driven them in My anger, in My fury, and in great wrath; I will bring them back to this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely. [38]They shall be My people, and I will be their God; [39]then I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me forever, for the good of them and their children after them. [40]And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from doing them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts so that they will not depart from Me.[41]Yes, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will assuredly plant them in this land, with all My heart and with all My soul.'

"Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh. Is there anything too hard for Me?"

## JEREMIAH 32:27

42 “For thus says the LORD: ‘Just as I have brought all this great calamity on
this people, so I will bring on them all the good that I have promised them.
43 And fields will be bought in this land of which you say, “*It is* desolate,
without man or beast; it has been given into the hand of the Chaldeans.”
44 Men will buy fields for money, sign deeds and seal *them* and take
witnesses, in the land of Benjamin, in the places around Jerusalem, in the
cities of Judah, in the cities of the mountains, in the cities of the lowland, and
in the cities of the South; for I will cause their captives to return,’ says the
LORD.”

**EXCELLENCE OF THE RESTORED NATION**

**33** Moreover the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah a second time, while he was still shut up in the court of the prison, saying, 2"Thus says the LORD who made it, the LORD who formed it to establish it (the LORD *is* His name): 3'Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.'

> "Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know."
> JEREMIAH 33:3

4"For thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning the houses of this city and the houses of the kings of Judah, which have been pulled down *to fortify*[a] against the siege mounds and the sword: 5'They come to fight with the Chaldeans, but *only* to fill their places[a] with the dead bodies of men whom I will slay in My anger and My fury, all for whose wickedness I have hidden My face from this city. 6Behold, I will bring it health and healing; I will heal them and reveal to them the abundance of peace and truth. 7And I will cause the captives of Judah and the captives of Israel to return, and will rebuild those places as at the first. **8**I will cleanse them from all their iniquity by which they have sinned against Me, and I will pardon all their iniquities by which they have sinned and by which they have transgressed against Me. 9Then it shall be to Me a name of joy, a praise, and an honor before all nations of the earth, who shall hear all the good that I do to them; they shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and all the prosperity that I provide for it.'

10"Thus says the LORD: 'Again there shall be heard in this place-of which you say, "It *is* desolate, without man and without beast"-in the cities of Judah, in the streets of Jerusalem that are desolate, without man and without inhabitant and without beast, 11the voice of joy and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the voice of those who will say:

"Praise the LORD of hosts,

For the LORD *is* good,
For His mercy *endures* forever”-

*and* of those *who will* bring the sacrifice of praise into the house of the LORD. For I will cause the captives of the land to return as at the first,’ says the LORD.

12“Thus says the LORD of hosts: ‘In this place which is desolate, without man and without beast, and in all its cities, there shall again be a dwelling place of shepherds causing *their* flocks to lie down. 13In the cities of the mountains, in the cities of the lowland, in the cities of the South, in the land of Benjamin, in the places around Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, the flocks shall again pass under the hands of him who counts *them,*’ says the LORD.

14‘Behold, the days are coming,’ says the LORD, ‘that I will perform that good thing which I have promised to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah:

15 ‘In those days and at that time
I will cause to grow up to David
A Branch of righteousness;
He shall execute judgment and righteousness in the earth.
16 In those days Judah will be saved,
And Jerusalem will dwell safely.
And this *is the name* by which she will be called:
THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.’[a]

17“For thus says the LORD: ‘David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel; 18nor shall the priests, the Levites, lack a man to offer burnt offerings before Me, to kindle grain offerings, and to sacrifice continually.’ ”

**THE PERMANENCE OF GOD’S COVENANT**

19And the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying, 20“Thus says the LORD: ‘If you can break My covenant with the day and My covenant with the night, so that there will not be day and night in their season, 21then My

covenant may also be broken with David My servant, so that he shall not have a son to reign on his throne, and with the Levites, the priests, My ministers. [22]As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, nor the sand of the sea measured, so will I multiply the descendants of David My servant and the Levites who minister to Me.' "

[23]Moreover the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying, [24]"Have you not considered what these people have spoken, saying, 'The two families which the LORD has chosen, He has also cast them off'? Thus they have despised My people, as if they should no more be a nation before them.

[25]"Thus says the LORD: 'If My covenant *is* not with day and night, *and if* I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth, [26]then I will cast away the descendants of Jacob and David My servant, *so* that I will not take *any* of his descendants *to be* rulers over the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. For I will cause their captives to return, and will have mercy on them.' "

## ZEDEKIAH WARNED BY GOD

**34** The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, when
Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and all his army, all the kingdoms of
the earth under his dominion, and all the people, fought against Jerusalem
and all its cities, saying, 2"Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: 'Go and
speak to Zedekiah king of Judah and tell him, "Thus says the LORD: 'Behold,
I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it
with fire. 3And you shall not escape from his hand, but shall surely be taken
and delivered into his hand; your eyes shall see the eyes of the king of
Babylon, he shall speak with you face to face,[a] and you shall go to Babylon.'
" ' 4Yet hear the word of the LORD, O Zedekiah king of Judah! Thus says the
LORD concerning you: 'You shall not die by the sword. 5You shall die in
peace; as in the ceremonies of your fathers, the former kings who were before
you, so they shall burn incense for you and lament for you, *saying*, "Alas,
lord!" For I have pronounced the word, says the LORD.' "

6Then Jeremiah the prophet spoke all these words to Zedekiah king of
Judah in Jerusalem, 7when the king of Babylon's army fought against
Jerusalem and all the cities of Judah that were left, against Lachish and
Azekah; for *only* these fortified cities remained of the cities of Judah.

## TREACHEROUS TREATMENT OF SLAVES

8*This is* the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, after King
Zedekiah had made a covenant with all the people who *were* at Jerusalem to
proclaim liberty to them: 9that every man should set free his male and female
slave-a Hebrew man or woman-that no one should keep a Jewish brother in
bondage. 10Now when all the princes and all the people, who had entered into
the covenant, heard that everyone should set free his male and female slaves,
that no one should keep them in bondage anymore, they obeyed and let *them*
go. 11But afterward they changed their minds and made the male and female
slaves return, whom they had set free, and brought them into subjection as
male and female slaves.

12Therefore the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying,

13 “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: ‘I made a covenant with your
fathers in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, out of the
house of bondage, saying, 14 “At the end of seven years let every man set free
his Hebrew brother, who has been sold to him; and when he has served you
six years, you shall let him go free from you.” But your fathers did not obey
Me nor incline their ear. 15 Then you recently turned and did what was right in
My sight-every man proclaiming liberty to his neighbor; and you made a
covenant before Me in the house which is called by My name. 16 Then you
turned around and profaned My name, and every one of you brought back his
male and female slaves, whom you had set at liberty, at their pleasure, and
brought them back into subjection, to be your male and female slaves.’

17 “Therefore thus says the LORD: ‘You have not obeyed Me in proclaiming
liberty, every one to his brother and every one to his neighbor. Behold, I
proclaim liberty to you,’ says the LORD-‘to the sword, to pestilence, and to
famine! And I will deliver you to trouble among all the kingdoms of the
earth. 18 And I will give the men who have transgressed My covenant, who
have not performed the words of the covenant which they made before Me,
when they cut the calf in two and passed between the parts of it- 19 the princes
of Judah, the princes of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, the priests, and all the people
of the land who passed between the parts of the calf- 20 I will give them into
the hand of their enemies and into the hand of those who seek their life. Their
dead bodies shall be for meat for the birds of the heaven and the beasts of the
earth. 21 And I will give Zedekiah king of Judah and his princes into the hand
of their enemies, into the hand of those who seek their life, and into the hand
of the king of Babylon’s army which has gone back from you. 22 Behold, I
will command,’ says the LORD, ‘and cause them to return to this city. They
will fight against it and take it and burn it with fire; and I will make the cities
of Judah a desolation without inhabitant.’ ”

## THE OBEDIENT RECHABITES

**35** The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, saying, 2"Go to the house of the Rechabites, speak to them, and bring them into the house of the LORD, into one of the chambers, and give them wine to drink."

3Then I took Jaazaniah the son of Jeremiah, the son of Habazziniah, his brothers and all his sons, and the whole house of the Rechabites, 4and I brought them into the house of the LORD, into the chamber of the sons of Hanan the son of Igdaliah, a man of God, which *was* by the chamber of the princes, above the chamber of Maaseiah the son of Shallum, the keeper of the door. 5Then I set before the sons of the house of the Rechabites bowls full of wine, and cups; and I said to them, "Drink wine."

6But they said, "We will drink no wine, for Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, commanded us, saying, 'You shall drink no wine, you nor your sons, forever. 7You shall not build a house, sow seed, plant a vineyard, nor have *any of these;* but all your days you shall dwell in tents, that you may live many days in the land where you are sojourners.' 8Thus we have obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, in all that he charged us, to drink no wine all our days, we, our wives, our sons, or our daughters, 9nor to build ourselves houses to dwell in; nor do we have vineyard, field, or seed. 10But we have dwelt in tents, and have obeyed and done according to all that Jonadab our father commanded us. 11But it came to pass, when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up into the land, that we said, 'Come, let us go to Jerusalem for fear of the army of the Chaldeans and for fear of the army of the Syrians.' So we dwell at Jerusalem."

12Then came the word of the LORD to Jeremiah, saying, 13"Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: 'Go and tell the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, "Will you not receive instruction to obey My words?" says the LORD. 14"The words of Jonadab the son of Rechab, which he commanded his sons, not to drink wine, are performed; for to this day they drink none, and obey their father's commandment. But although I have spoken to you, rising early and speaking, you did not obey Me. 15I have also

sent to you all My servants the prophets, rising up early and sending *them*, saying, ‘Turn now everyone from his evil way, amend your doings, and do not go after other gods to serve them; then you will dwell in the land which I have given you and your fathers.’ But you have not inclined your ear, nor obeyed Me. [16]Surely the sons of Jonadab the son of Rechab have performed the commandment of their father, which he commanded them, but this people has not obeyed Me.” ’

[17]“Therefore thus says the LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel: ‘Behold, I will bring on Judah and on all the inhabitants of Jerusalem all the doom that I have pronounced against them; because I have spoken to them but they have not heard, and I have called to them but they have not answered.’ ”

[18]And Jeremiah said to the house of the Rechabites, “Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: ‘Because you have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts and done according to all that he commanded you, [19]therefore thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: “Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not lack a man to stand before Me forever.” ’ ”

## THE SCROLL READ IN THE TEMPLE

**36** Now it came to pass in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah,
king of Judah, *that* this word came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying:
2 "Take a scroll of a book and write on it all the words that I have spoken to
you against Israel, against Judah, and against all the nations, from the day I
spoke to you, from the days of Josiah even to this day. 3 It may be that the
house of Judah will hear all the adversities which I purpose to bring upon
them, that everyone may turn from his evil way, that I may forgive their
iniquity and their sin."

4 Then Jeremiah called Baruch the son of Neriah; and Baruch wrote on a
scroll of a book, at the instruction of Jeremiah,[a] all the words of the LORD
which He had spoken to him. 5 And Jeremiah commanded Baruch, saying, "I
*am* confined, I cannot go into the house of the LORD. 6 You go, therefore, and
read from the scroll which you have written at my instruction,[a] the words of
the LORD, in the hearing of the people in the LORD's house on the day of
fasting. And you shall also read them in the hearing of all Judah who come
from their cities. 7 It may be that they will present their supplication before the
LORD, and everyone will turn from his evil way. For great *is* the anger and the
fury that the LORD has pronounced against this people." 8 And Baruch the son
of Neriah did according to all that Jeremiah the prophet commanded him,
reading from the book the words of the LORD in the LORD's house.

9 Now it came to pass in the fifth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king
of Judah, in the ninth month, *that* they proclaimed a fast before the LORD to
all the people in Jerusalem, and to all the people who came from the cities of
Judah to Jerusalem. 10 Then Baruch read from the book the words of Jeremiah
in the house of the LORD, in the chamber of Gemariah the son of Shaphan the
scribe, in the upper court at the entry of the New Gate of the LORD's house, in
the hearing of all the people.

## THE SCROLL READ IN THE PALACE

11 When Michaiah the son of Gemariah, the son of Shaphan, heard all the
words of the LORD from the book, 12 he then went down to the king's house,

into the scribe’s chamber; and there all the princes were sitting-Elisha-ma the scribe, Delaiah the son of Shemaiah, Elnathan the son of Achbor, Gemariah the son of Shaphan, Zedekiah the son of Hananiah, and all the princes. 13Then Michaiah declared to them all the words that he had heard when Baruch read the book in the hearing of the people. 14Therefore all the princes sent Jehudi the son of Nethaniah, the son of Shelemiah, the son of Cushi, to Baruch, saying, “Take in your hand the scroll from which you have read in the hearing of the people, and come.” So Baruch the son of Neriah took the scroll in his hand and came to them. 15And they said to him, “Sit down now, and read it in our hearing.” So Baruch read *it* in their hearing.

16Now it happened, when they had heard all the words, that they looked in fear from one to another, and said to Baruch, “We will surely tell the king of all these words.” 17And they asked Baruch, saying, “Tell us now, how did you write all these words-at his instruction?” ***a***

18So Baruch answered them, “He proclaimed with his mouth all these words to me, and I wrote *them* with ink in the book.”

19Then the princes said to Baruch, “Go and hide, you and Jeremiah; and let no one know where you are.”

**THE KING DESTROYS JEREMIAH’S SCROLL**

20And they went to the king, into the court; but they stored the scroll in the chamber of Elishama the scribe, and told all the words in the hearing of the king. 21So the king sent Jehudi to bring the scroll, and he took it from Elishama the scribe’s chamber. And Jehudi read it in the hearing of the king and in the hearing of all the princes who stood beside the king. 22Now the king was sitting in the winter house in the ninth month, with *a fire* burning on the hearth before him. 23And it happened, when Jehudi had read three or four columns, *that the king* cut it with the scribe’s knife and cast *it* into the fire that *was* on the hearth, until all the scroll was consumed in the fire that *was* on the hearth. 24Yet they were not afraid, nor did they tear their garments, the king nor any of his servants who heard all these words. 25Nevertheless Elnathan, Delaiah, and Gemariah implored the king not to burn the scroll; but he would not listen to them. 26And the king commanded Jerahmeel the

king's[a] son, Seraiah the son of Azriel, and Shelemiah the son of Abdeel, to seize Baruch the scribe and Jeremiah the prophet, but the LORD hid them.

## JEREMIAH REWRITES THE SCROLL

[27]Now after the king had burned the scroll with the words which Baruch had written at the instruction of Jeremiah,[a] the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying: [28]"Take yet another scroll, and write on it all the former words that were in the first scroll which Jehoiakim the king of Judah has burned. [29]And you shall say to Jehoiakim king of Judah, 'Thus says the LORD: "You have burned this scroll, saying, 'Why have you written in it that the king of Babylon will certainly come and destroy this land, and cause man and beast to cease from here?' " [30]Therefore thus says the LORD concerning Jehoiakim king of Judah: "He shall have no one to sit on the throne of David, and his dead body shall be cast out to the heat of the day and the frost of the night. [31]I will punish him, his family, and his servants for their iniquity; and I will bring on them, on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and on the men of Judah all the doom that I have pronounced against them; but they did not heed." ' "

[32]Then Jeremiah took another scroll and gave it to Baruch the scribe, the son of Neriah, who wrote on it at the instruction of Jeremiah[a] all the words of the book which Jehoia-kim king of Judah had burned in the fire. And besides, there were added to them many similar words.

## ZEDEKIAH'S VAIN HOPE

**37** Now King Zedekiah the son of Josiah reigned instead of Coniah the son
of Jehoiakim, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon made king in the
land of Judah. 2But neither he nor his servants nor the people of the land gave
heed to the words of the LORD which He spoke by the prophet Jeremiah.

3And Zedekiah the king sent Jehucal the son of Shelemiah, and Zephaniah
the son of Maaseiah, the priest, to the prophet Jeremiah, saying, "Pray now to
the LORD our God for us." 4Now Jeremiah was coming and going among the
people, for they had not *yet* put him in prison. 5Then Pharaoh's army came up
from Egypt; and when the Chaldeans who were besieging Jerusalem heard
news of them, they departed from Jerusalem.

6Then the word of the LORD came to the prophet Jeremiah, saying, 7"Thus
says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Thus you shall say to the king of Judah,
who sent you to Me to inquire of Me: "Behold, Pharaoh's army which has
come up to help you will return to Egypt, to their own land. 8And the
Chaldeans shall come back and fight against this city, and take it and burn it
with fire." ' 9Thus says the LORD: 'Do not deceive yourselves, saying, "The
Chaldeans will surely depart from us," for they will not depart. 10For though
you had defeated the whole army of the Chaldeans who fight against you, and
there remained *only* wounded men among them, they would rise up, every
man in his tent, and burn the city with fire.' "

## JEREMIAH IMPRISONED

11And it happened, when the army of the Chaldeans left *the siege* of
Jerusalem for fear of Pharaoh's army, 12 that Jeremiah went out of Jerusalem
to go into the land of Benjamin to claim his property there among the people.
13And when he was in the Gate of Benjamin, a captain of the guard *was* there
whose name *was* Irijah the son of Shelemiah, the son of Hananiah; and he
seized Jeremiah the prophet, saying, "You are defecting to the Chaldeans!"

14Then Jeremiah said, "False! I am not defecting to the Chaldeans." But he
did not listen to him.

So Irijah seized Jeremiah and brought him to the princes. 15Therefore the

princes were angry with Jeremiah, and they struck him and put him in prison in the house of Jonathan the scribe. For they had made that the prison.

16When Jeremiah entered the dungeon and the cells, and Jeremiah had remained there many days, 17then Zedekiah the king sent and took him *out.* The king asked him secretly in his house, and said, “Is there *any* word from the LORD?”

And Jeremiah said, “There is.” Then he said, “You shall be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon!”

18Moreover Jeremiah said to King Zedekiah, “What offense have I committed against you, against your servants, or against this people, that you have put me in prison? 19Where now *are* your prophets who prophesied to you, saying, ‘The king of Babylon will not come against you or against this land?’ 20Therefore please hear now, O my lord the king. Please, let my petition be accepted before you, and do not make me return to the house of Jonathan the scribe, lest I die there.”

21Then Zedekiah the king commanded that they should commit Jeremiah to the court of the prison, and that they should give him daily a piece of bread from the bakers’ street, until all the bread in the city was gone. Thus Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Wherever and Whatever** *(37:15)* Jeremiah teaches that circumstances are irrelevant where the Lord’s work is concerned. After being thrown into prison, Jeremiah continued to minister (37:16, 17), to fulfill God’s role for him. Our responsibilities as the Lord’s followers do not change with our circumstances. God does not call us to serve Him only when the conditions are right. The apostle Paul said, “I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound,” but he concluded, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens

me” (Phil. 4:13). **Topic: Trials**

## JEREMIAH IN THE DUNGEON

**38** Now Shephatiah the son of Mattan, Gedaliah the son of Pashhur, Jucal[a] the son of Shelemiah, and Pashhur the son of Malchiah heard the words that Jeremiah had spoken to all the people, saying, 2"Thus says the LORD: 'He who remains in this city shall die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence; but he who goes over to the Chaldeans shall live; his life shall be as a prize to him, and he shall live.'[a] 3Thus says the LORD: 'This city shall surely be given into the hand of the king of Babylon's army, which shall take it.' "

4Therefore the princes said to the king, "Please, let this man be put to death, for thus he weakens the hands of the men of war who remain in this city, and the hands of all the people, by speaking such words to them. For this man does not seek the welfare of this people, but their harm."

5Then Zedekiah the king said, "Look, he *is* in your hand. For the king can *do* nothing against you." 6So they took Jeremiah and cast him into the dungeon of Malchiah the king's[a] son, which *was* in the court of the prison, and they let Jeremiah down with ropes. And in the dungeon *there was* no water, but mire. So Jeremiah sank in the mire.

7Now EbedMelech the Ethiopian, one of the eunuchs, who was in the king's house, heard that they had put Jeremiah in the dungeon. When the king was sitting at the Gate of Benjamin, 8EbedMelech went out of the king's house and spoke to the king, saying:

9"My lord the king, these men have done evil in all that they have done to Jeremiah the prophet, whom they have cast into the dungeon, and he is likely to die from hunger in the place where he is. For *there is* no more bread in the city." 10Then the king commanded EbedMelech the Ethiopian, saying, "Take from here thirty men with you, and lift Jeremiah the prophet out of the dungeon before he dies." 11So Ebed-Melech took the men with him and went into the house of the king under the treasury, and took from there old clothes and old rags, and let them down by ropes into the dungeon to Jeremiah. 12Then Ebed-Melech the Ethiopian said to Jeremiah, "Please put these old clothes and rags under your armpits, under the ropes." And Jeremiah did so. 13So they pulled Jeremiah up with ropes and lifted him out of the dungeon.

And Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison.

## ZEDEKIAH'S FEARS AND JEREMIAH'S ADVICE

14 Then Zedekiah the king sent and had Jeremiah the prophet brought to
him at the third entrance of the house of the LORD. And the king said to
Jeremiah, "I will ask you something. Hide nothing from me."

15 Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, "If I declare *it* to you, will you not surely put
me to death? And if I give you advice, you will not listen to me."

16 So Zedekiah the king swore secretly to Jeremiah, saying, "*As* the LORD
lives, who made our very souls, I will not put you to death, nor will I give
you into the hand of these men who seek your life."

17 Then Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, "Thus says the LORD, the God of hosts,
the God of Israel: 'If you surely surrender to the king of Babylon's princes,
then your soul shall live; this city shall not be burned with fire, and you and
your house shall live. 18 But if you do not surrender to the king of Babylon's
princes, then this city shall be given into the hand of the Chaldeans; they shall
burn it with fire, and you shall not escape from their hand.' "

19 And Zedekiah the king said to Jeremiah, "I am afraid of the Jews who
have defected to the Chaldeans, lest they deliver me into their hand, and they
abuse me."

20 But Jeremiah said, "They shall not deliver *you*. Please, obey the voice of
the LORD which I speak to you. So it shall be well with you, and your soul
shall live. 21 But if you refuse to surrender, this *is* the word that the LORD has
shown me: 22 'Now behold, all the women who are left in the king of Judah's
house *shall be* surrendered to the king of Babylon's princes, and those *women*
shall say:

> "Your close friends have set upon you
> And prevailed against you;
> Your feet have sunk in the mire,
> *And* they have turned away again."

23 'So they shall surrender all your wives and children to the Chaldeans.

You shall not escape from their hand, but shall be taken by the hand of the king of Babylon. And you shall cause this city to be burned with fire.' "

[24]Then Zedekiah said to Jeremiah, "Let no one know of these words, and you shall not die. [25]But if the princes hear that I have talked with you, and they come to you and say to you, 'Declare to us now what you have said to the king, and also what the king said to you; do not hide *it* from us, and we will not put you to death,' [26]then you shall say to them, 'I presented my request before the king, that he would not make me return to Jonathan's house to die there.' "

[27]Then all the princes came to Jeremiah and asked him. And he told them according to all these words that the king had commanded. So they stopped speaking with him, for the conversation had not been heard. [28]Now Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison until the day that Jerusalem was taken. And he was *there* when Jerusalem was taken.

## THE FALL OF JERUSALEM

**39** In the ninth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the tenth month,
Nebuchad-nezzar king of Babylon and all his army came against
Jerusalem, and besieged it. 2In the eleventh year of Zedekiah, in the fourth
month, on the ninth *day* of the month, the city was penetrated.

3Then all the princes of the king of Babylon came in and sat in the Middle
Gate: Nergal-Sharezer, Samgar-Nebo, Sarsechim, Rabsaris,[a] Nergal-Sarezer,
Rabmag,[b] with the rest of the princes of the king of Babylon.

4So it was, when Zedekiah the king of Judah and all the men of war saw
them, that they fled and went out of the city by night, by way of the king's
garden, by the gate between the two walls. And he went out by way of the
plain.[a] 5But the Chaldean army pursued them and overtook Zedekiah in the
plains of Jericho. And when they had captured him, they brought him up to
Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, to Riblah in the land of Hamath, where he
pronounced judgment on him. 6Then the king of Babylon killed the sons of
Zedekiah before his eyes in Riblah; the king of Babylon also killed all the
nobles of Judah. 7Moreover he put out Zedekiah's eyes, and bound him with
bronze fetters to carry him off to Babylon. 8And the Chaldeans burned the
king's house and the houses of the people with fire, and broke down the walls
of Jerusalem. 9Then Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried away
captive to Babylon the remnant of the people who remained in the city and
those who defected to him, with the rest of the people who remained. 10But
Nebu-zaradan the captain of the guard left in the land of Judah the poor
people, who had nothing, and gave them vineyards and fields at the same
time.

## JEREMIAH GOES FREE

11Now Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon gave charge concerning Jeremiah
to Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard, saying, 12"Take him and look after
him, and do him no harm; but do to him just as he says to you." 13So Nebu-
zaradan the captain of the guard sent Nebushasban, Rabsaris, Nergal-
Sharezer, Rabmag, and all the king of Babylon's chief officers; 14then they

sent *someone* to take Jeremiah from the court of the prison, and committed him to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, that he should take him home. So he dwelt among the people.

15 Meanwhile the word of the LORD had come to Jeremiah while he was shut up in the court of the prison, saying, 16 "Go and speak to Ebed-Melech the Ethiopian, saying, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: "Behold, I will bring My words upon this city for adversity and not for good, and they shall be *performed* in that day before you. 17 But I will deliver you in that day," says the LORD, "and you shall not be given into the hand of the men of whom you *are* afraid. 18 For I will surely deliver you, and you shall not fall by the sword; but your life shall be as a prize to you, because you have put your trust in Me," says the LORD.' "

## JEREMIAH WITH GEDALIAH THE GOVERNOR

**40** The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD after Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard had let him go from Ramah, when he had taken him bound in chains among all who were carried away captive from Jerusalem and Judah, who were carried away captive to Babylon.

2 And the captain of the guard took Jeremiah and said to him: "The LORD your God has pronounced this doom on this place. 3 Now the LORD has brought *it,* and has done just as He said. Because you *people* have sinned against the LORD, and not obeyed His voice, therefore this thing has come upon you. 4 And now look, I free you this day from the chains that *were* on your hand. If it seems good to you to come with me to Babylon, come, and I will look after you. But if it seems wrong for you to come with me to Babylon, remain here. See, all the land *is* before you; wherever it seems good and convenient for you to go, go there."

5 Now while Jeremiah had not yet gone back, *Nebuzaradan said,* "Go back to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, whom the king of Babylon has made governor over the cities of Judah, and dwell with him among the people. Or go wherever it seems convenient for you to go." So the captain of the guard gave him rations and a gift and let him go. 6 Then Jeremiah went to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, to Mizpah, and dwelt with him among the people who were left in the land.

7 And when all the captains of the armies who *were* in the fields, they and their men, heard that the king of Babylon had made Gedaliah the son of Ahikam governor in the land, and had committed to him men, women, children, and the poorest of the land who had not been carried away captive to Babylon, 8 then they came to Gedaliah at Mizpah-Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, Johanan and Jonathan the sons of Kareah, Seraiah the son of Tanhumeth, the sons of Ephai the Netophathite, and Jezaniah[a] the son of a Maachathite, they and their men. 9 And Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, took an oath before them and their men, saying, "Do not be afraid to serve the Chaldeans. Dwell in the land and serve the king of Babylon, and it shall be well with you. 10 As for me, I will indeed dwell at Mizpah and serve the Chaldeans who come to us. But you, gather wine and

summer fruit and oil, put *them* in your vessels, and dwell in your cities that you have taken.” [11]Likewise, when all the Jews who *were* in Moab, among the Ammonites, in Edom, and who *were* in all the countries, heard that the king of Babylon had left a remnant of Judah, and that he had set over them Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, [12]then all the Jews returned out of all places where they had been driven, and came to the land of Judah, to Gedaliah at Mizpah, and gathered wine and summer fruit in abundance.

[13]Moreover Johanan the son of Kareah and all the captains of the forces that *were* in the fields came to Gedaliah at Mizpah, [14]and said to him, “Do you certainly know that Baalis the king of the Ammonites has sent Ishmael the son of Nethaniah to murder you?” But Gedaliah the son of Ahikam did not believe them.

[15]Then Johanan the son of Kareah spoke secretly to Gedaliah in Mizpah, saying, “Let me go, please, and I will kill Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and no one will know *it.* Why should he murder you, so that all the Jews who are gathered to you would be scattered, and the remnant in Judah perish?”

[16]But Gedaliah the son of Ahikam said to Johanan the son of Kareah, “You shall not do this thing, for you speak falsely concerning Ishmael.”

## INSURRECTION AGAINST GEDALIAH

**41** Now it came to pass in the seventh month *that* Ishmael the son of
Nethaniah, the son of Elishama, of the royal family and of the officers of
the king, came with ten men to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, at Miz-pah. And
there they ate bread together in Mizpah. 2Then Ishmael the son of Nethaniah,
and the ten men who were with him, arose and struck Gedaliah the son of
Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, with the sword, and killed him whom the king
of Babylon had made governor over the land. 3Ishmael also struck down all
the Jews who were with him, *that is,* with Gedaliah at Mizpah, and the
Chaldeans who were found there, the men of war.

4And it happened, on the second day after he had killed Gedaliah, when as
yet no one knew *it,* 5that certain men came from She-chem, from Shiloh, and
from Samaria, eighty men with their beards shaved and their clothes torn,
having cut themselves, with offerings and incense in their hand, to bring *them*
to the house of the LORD. 6Now Ishmael the son of Nethaniah went out from
Mizpah to meet them, weeping as he went along; and it happened as he met
them that he said to them, "Come to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam!" 7So it
was, when they came into the midst of the city, that Ishmael the son of
Nethaniah killed them *and cast them* into the midst of a pit, he and the men
who were with him. 8But ten men were found among them who said to
Ishmael, "Do not kill us, for we have treasures of wheat, barley, oil, and
honey in the field." So he desisted and did not kill them among their brethren.
9Now the pit into which Ishmael had cast all the dead bodies of the men
whom he had slain, because of Gedaliah, *was* the same one Asa the king had
made for fear of Baasha king of Israel. Ishmael the son of Nethaniah filled it
with *the* slain. 10Then Ishmael carried away captive all the rest of the people
who *were* in Mizpah, the king's daughters and all the people who remained in
Mizpah, whom Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard had committed to
Gedaliah the son of Ahikam. And Ishmael the son of Nethaniah carried them
away captive and departed to go over to the Ammonites.

11But when Johanan the son of Kareah and all the captains of the forces
that *were* with him heard of all the evil that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah had
done, 12they took all the men and went to fight with Ishmael the son of

Nethaniah; and they found him by the great pool that *is* in Gibeon. [13]So it was, when all the people who *were* with Ishmael saw Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces who *were* with him, that they were glad. [14]Then all the people whom Ishmael had carried away captive from Mizpah turned around and came back, and went to Johanan the son of Kareah. [15]But Ishmael the son of Nethaniah escaped from Johanan with eight men and went to the Ammonites.

[16]Then Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that were with him, took from Mizpah all the rest of the people whom he had recovered from Ishmael the son of Nethaniah after he had murdered Gedaliah the son of Ahikam-the mighty men of war and the women and the children and the eunuchs, whom he had brought back from Gibe-on. [17]And they departed and dwelt in the habitation of Chimham, which is near Bethlehem, as they went on their way to Egypt, [18]because of the Chaldeans; for they were afraid of them, because Ishmael the son of Nethaniah had murdered Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, whom the king of Babylon had made governor in the land.

## THE FLIGHT TO EGYPT FORBIDDEN

**42** Now all the captains of the forces, Johanan the son of Kareah, Jezaniah
the son of Hoshaiah, and all the people, from the least to the greatest,
came near [2]and said to Jeremiah the prophet, “Please, let our petition be
acceptable to you, and pray for us to the LORD your God, for all this remnant
(since we are left *but* a few of many, as you can see), [3]that the LORD your
God may show us the way in which we should walk and the thing we should
do.”

[4]Then Jeremiah the prophet said to them, “I have heard. Indeed, I will pray
to the LORD your God according to your words, and it shall be, *that* whatever
the LORD answers you, I will declare *it* to you. I will keep nothing back from
you.”

[5]So they said to Jeremiah, “Let the LORD be a true and faithful witness
between us, if we do not do according to everything which the LORD your
God sends us by you. [6]Whether *it is* pleasing or displeasing, we will obey the
voice of the LORD our God to whom we send you, that it may be well with us
when we obey the voice of the LORD our God.”

[7]And it happened after ten days that the word of the LORD came to
Jeremiah. [8]Then he called Johanan the son of Kareah, all the captains of the
forces which *were* with him, and all the people from the least even to the
greatest, [9]and said to them, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, to whom
you sent me to present your petition before Him: [10]‘If you will still remain in
this land, then I will build you and not pull *you* down, and I will plant you
and not pluck *you* up. For I relent concerning the disaster that I have brought
upon you. [11]Do not be afraid of the king of Babylon, of whom you are afraid;
do not be afraid of him,’ says the LORD, ‘for I *am* with you, to save you and
deliver you from his hand. [12]And I will show you mercy, that he may have
mercy on you and cause you to return to your own land.’

[13]“But if you say, ‘We will not dwell in this land,’ disobeying the voice of
the LORD your God, [14]saying, ‘No, but we will go to the land of Egypt where
we shall see no war, nor hear the sound of the trumpet, nor be hungry for
bread, and there we will dwell’- [15]Then hear now the word of the LORD, O

remnant of Judah! Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: ‘If you wholly set your faces to enter Egypt, and go to dwell there, [16]then it shall be *that* the sword which you feared shall overtake you there in the land of Egypt; the famine of which you were afraid shall follow close after you there *in* Egypt; and there you shall die. [17]So shall it be with all the men who set their faces to go to Egypt to dwell there. They shall die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence. And none of them shall remain or escape from the disaster that I will bring upon them.’

[18]“For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: ‘As My anger and My fury have been poured out on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so will My fury be poured out on you when you enter Egypt. And you shall be an oath, an astonishment, a curse, and a reproach; and you shall see this place no more.’

[19]“The LORD has said concerning you, O remnant of Judah, ‘Do not go to Egypt!’ Know certainly that I have admonished you this day. [20]For you were hypocrites in your hearts when you sent me to the LORD your God, saying, ‘Pray for us to the LORD our God, and according to all that the LORD your God says, so declare to us and we will do *it.*’ [21]And I have this day declared *it* to you, but you have not obeyed the voice of the LORD your God, or anything which He has sent you by me. [22]Now therefore, know certainly that you shall die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence in the place where you desire to go to dwell.”

## JEREMIAH TAKEN TO EGYPT

**43** Now it happened, when Jeremiah had stopped speaking to all the people
all the words of the LORD their God, for which the LORD their God had
sent him to them, all these words, 2 that Azariah the son of Hoshaiah, Johanan
the son of Kareah, and all the proud men spoke, saying to Jeremiah, "You
speak falsely! The LORD our God has not sent you to say, 'Do not go to Egypt
to dwell there.' 3 But Baruch the son of Neriah has set you against us, to
deliver us into the hand of the Chaldeans, that they may put us to death or
carry us away captive to Babylon." 4 So Johanan the son of Kareah, all the
captains of the forces, and all the people would not obey the voice of the
LORD, to remain in the land of Judah. 5 But Johanan the son of Kareah and all
the captains of the forces took all the remnant of Judah who had returned to
dwell in the land of Judah, from all nations where they had been driven-
6 men, women, children, the king's daughters, and every person whom
Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard had left with Gedaliah the son of
Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, and Jeremiah the prophet and Baruch the son of
Neriah. 7 So they went to the land of Egypt, for they did not obey the voice of
the LORD. And they went as far as Tahpanhes.

8 Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah in Tahpanhes, saying,
9 "Take large stones in your hand, and hide them in the sight of the men of
Judah, in the clay in the brick courtyard which *is* at the entrance to Pharaoh's
house in Tahpanhes; 10 and say to them, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, the
God of Israel: "Behold, I will send and bring Nebuchadnezzar the king of
Babylon, My servant, and will set his throne above these stones that I have
hidden. And he will spread his royal pavilion over them. 11 When he comes,
he shall strike the land of Egypt *and deliver* to death *those appointed* for
death, and to captivity *those appointed* for captivity, and to the sword *those
appointed* for the sword. 12 I[a] will kindle a fire in the houses of the gods of
Egypt, and he shall burn them and carry them away captive. And he shall
array himself with the land of Egypt, as a shepherd puts on his garment, and
he shall go out from there in peace. 13 He shall also break the *sacred* pillars of
Beth Shemesh[a] that *are* in the land of Egypt; and the houses of the gods of
the Egyptians he shall burn with fire." ' "

## ISRAELITES WILL BE PUNISHED IN EGYPT

**44** The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the Jews who dwell in the land of Egypt, who dwell at Migdol, at Tahpanhes, at Noph,[a] and in the country of Pathros, saying, 2"Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: 'You have seen all the calamity that I have brought on Jerusalem and on all the cities of Judah; and behold, this day they *are* a desolation, and no one dwells in them, 3because of their wickedness which they have committed to provoke Me to anger, in that they went to burn incense *and* to serve other gods whom they did not know, they nor you nor your fathers. 4However I have sent to you all My servants the prophets, rising early and sending *them*, saying, "Oh, do not do this abominable thing that I hate!" 5But they did not listen or incline their ear to turn from their wickedness, to burn no incense to other gods. 6So My fury and My anger were poured out and kindled in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem; and they are wasted *and* desolate, as it is this day.'

7"Now therefore, thus says the LORD, the God of hosts, the God of Israel: 'Why do you commit *this* great evil against yourselves, to cut off from you man and woman, child and infant, out of Judah, leaving none to remain, 8in that you provoke Me to wrath with the works of your hands, burning incense to other gods in the land of Egypt where you have gone to dwell, that you may cut yourselves off and be a curse and a reproach among all the nations of the earth? 9Have you forgotten the wickedness of your fathers, the wickedness of the kings of Judah, the wickedness of their wives, your own wickedness, and the wickedness of your wives, which they committed in the land of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? 10They have not been humbled, to this day, nor have they feared; they have not walked in My law or in My statutes that I set before you and your fathers.'

11"Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: 'Behold, I will set My face against you for catastrophe and for cutting off all Judah. 12And I will take the remnant of Judah who have set their faces to go into the land of Egypt to dwell there, and they shall all be consumed *and* fall in the land of Egypt. They shall be consumed by the sword *and* by famine. They shall die, from the least to the greatest, by the sword and by famine; and they shall be

an oath, an astonishment, a curse and a reproach! [13]For I will punish those who dwell in the land of Egypt, as I have punished Jerusalem, by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence, [14]so that none of the remnant of Judah who have gone into the land of Egypt to dwell there shall escape or survive, lest they return to the land of Judah, to which they desire to return and dwell. For none shall return except those who escape.' "

[15]Then all the men who knew that their wives had burned incense to other gods, with all the women who stood by, a great multitude, and all the people who dwelt in the land of Egypt, in Pathros, answered Jeremiah, saying: [16]"*As for* the word that you have spoken to us in the name of the LORD, we will not listen to you! [17]But we will certainly do whatever has gone out of our own mouth, to burn incense to the queen of heaven and pour out drink offerings to her, as we have done, we and our fathers, our kings and our princes, in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem. For *then* we had plenty of food, were well-off, and saw no trouble. [18]But since we stopped burning incense to the queen of heaven and pouring out drink offerings to her, we have lacked everything and have been consumed by the sword and by famine."

[19]*The women also said,* "And when we burned incense to the queen of heaven and poured out drink offerings to her, did we make cakes for her, to worship her, and pour out drink offerings to her without our husbands' *permission?* "

[20]Then Jeremiah spoke to all the people-the men, the women, and all the people who had given him *that* answer-saying: [21]"The incense that you burned in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem, you and your fathers, your kings and your princes, and the people of the land, did not the LORD remember them, and did it *not* come into His mind? [22]So the LORD could no longer bear *it,* because of the evil of your doings *and* because of the abominations which you committed. Therefore your land is a desolation, an astonishment, a curse, and without an inhabitant, as *it is* this day. [23]Because you have burned incense and because you have sinned against the LORD, and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD or walked in His law, in His statutes or in His testimonies, therefore this calamity has happened to you, as *at* this day."

[24]Moreover Jeremiah said to all the people and to all the women, “Hear the word of the LORD, all Judah who *are* in the land of Egypt! [25]Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saying: ‘You and your wives have spoken with your mouths and fulfilled with your hands, saying, “We will surely keep our vows that we have made, to burn incense to the queen of heaven and pour out drink offerings to her.” You will surely keep your vows and perform your vows!’ [26]Therefore hear the word of the LORD, all Judah who dwell in the land of Egypt: ‘Behold, I have sworn by My great name,’ says the LORD, ‘that My name shall no more be named in the mouth of any man of Judah in all the land of Egypt, saying, “The Lord GOD lives.” [27]Behold, I will watch over them for adversity and not for good. And all the men of Judah who *are* in the land of Egypt shall be consumed by the sword and by famine, until there is an end to them. [28]Yet a small number who escape the sword shall return from the land of Egypt to the land of Judah; and all the remnant of Judah, who have gone to the land of Egypt to dwell there, shall know whose words will stand, Mine or theirs. [29]And this *shall be* a sign to you,’ says the LORD, ‘that I will punish you in this place, that you may know that My words will surely stand against you for adversity.’

[30]“Thus says the LORD: ‘Behold, I will give Pharaoh Hophra king of Egypt into the hand of his enemies and into the hand of those who seek his life, as I gave Zedekiah king of Judah into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, his enemy who sought his life.’ ”

## ASSURANCE TO BARUCH

**45** The word that Jeremiah the prophet spoke to Baruch the son of Neriah,
when he had written these words in a book at the instruction of
Jeremiah,[a] in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah,
saying, [2]"Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, to you, O Baruch: [3]'You
said, "Woe is me now! For the LORD has added grief to my sorrow. I fainted
in my sighing, and I find no rest." '

[4]"Thus you shall say to him, 'Thus says the LORD: "Behold, what I have
built I will break down, and what I have planted I will pluck up, that is, this
whole land. [5]And do you seek great things for yourself? Do not seek *them;*
for behold, I will bring adversity on all flesh," says the LORD. "But I will give
your life to you as a prize in all places, wherever you go." ' "

## JUDGMENT ON EGYPT

**46** The word of the LORD which came to Jeremiah the prophet against the
nations. 2 Against Egypt.

Concerning the army of Pharaoh Necho, king of Egypt, which was by the River Euphrates in Carchemish, and which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon defeated in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah:

3 "Order the buckler and shield,
And draw near to battle!
4 Harness the horses,
And mount up, you horsemen!
Stand forth with *your* helmets,
Polish the spears,
Put on the armor!
5 Why have I seen them dismayed *and* turned back?
Their mighty ones are beaten down;
They have speedily fled,
And did not look back,
*For* fear *was* all around," says the LORD.
6 "Do not let the swift flee away,
Nor the mighty man escape;
They will stumble and fall
Toward the north, by the River Euphrates.
7 "Who *is* this coming up like a flood,
Whose waters move like the rivers?
8 Egypt rises up like a flood,
And *its* waters move like the rivers;
And he says, 'I will go up *and* cover the earth,
I will destroy the city and its inhabitants.'
9 Come up, O horses, and rage,
O chariots!
And let the mighty men come forth:
The Ethiopians and the Libyans who handle the shield,
And the Lydians who handle *and* bend the bow.

10 For this *is* the day of the Lord GOD of hosts,
A day of vengeance,
That He may avenge Himself on His adversaries.
The sword shall devour;
It shall be satiated and made drunk with their blood;
For the Lord GOD of hosts has a sacrifice
In the north country by the River Euphrates.
11 "Go up to Gilead and take balm,
O virgin, the daughter of Egypt;
In vain you will use many medicines;
You shall not be cured.
12 The nations have heard of your shame,
And your cry has filled the land;
For the mighty man has stumbled against the mighty;
They both have fallen together."

## BABYLONIA WILL STRIKE EGYPT

13 The word that the LORD spoke to Jeremiah the prophet, how Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon would come *and* strike the land of Egypt.

14 "Declare in Egypt, and proclaim in Migdol;
Proclaim in Noph[a] and in Tahpanhes;
Say, 'Stand fast and prepare yourselves,
For the sword devours all around you.'
15 Why are your valiant *men* swept away?
They did not stand
Because the LORD drove them away.
16 He made many fall;
Yes, one fell upon another.
And they said, 'Arise!
Let us go back to our own people
And to the land of our nativity
From the oppressing sword.'
17 They cried there,
'Pharaoh, king of Egypt, *is but* a noise.

He has passed by the appointed time!’
18 “*As* I live,” says the King,
Whose name *is* the LORD of hosts,
“Surely as Tabor *is* among the mountains
And as Carmel by the sea, *so* he shall come.
19 O you daughter dwelling in Egypt,
Prepare yourself to go into captivity!
For Noph[a] shall be waste and desolate, without inhabitant.
20 “Egypt *is* a very pretty heifer,
*But* destruction comes, it comes from the north.
21 Also her mercenaries are in her midst like fat bulls,
For they also are turned back,
They have fled away together.
They did not stand,
For the day of their calamity had come upon them,
The time of their punishment.
22 Her noise shall go like a serpent,
For they shall march with an army
And come against her with axes,
Like those who chop wood.
23 “They shall cut down her forest,” says the LORD,
“Though it cannot be searched,
Because they *are* innumerable,
And more numerous than grasshoppers.
24 The daughter of Egypt shall be ashamed;
She shall be delivered into the hand
Of the people of the north.”

25 The LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, says: “Behold, I will bring punishment on Amon[a] of No,[b] and Pharaoh and Egypt, with their gods and their kings-Pharaoh and those who trust in him. 26 And I will deliver them into the hand of those who seek their lives, into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and the hand of his servants. Afterward it shall be inhabited as in the days of old,” says the LORD.

## GOD WILL PRESERVE ISRAEL

27 “But do not fear, O My servant Jacob,
And do not be dismayed, O Israel!
For behold, I will save you from afar,
And your offspring from the land of their captivity;
Jacob shall return, have rest and be at ease;
No one shall make *him* afraid.
28 Do not fear, O Jacob My servant,” says the LORD,
“For I *am* with you; For I will make a complete end of all the nations
To which I have driven you,
But I will not make a complete end of you.
I will rightly correct you,
For I will not leave you wholly unpunished.”

**JUDGMENT ON PHILISTIA**

**47** The word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah the prophet against the
Philistines, before Pharaoh attacked Gaza. 2Thus says the LORD:

"Behold, waters rise out of the north,
And shall be an overflowing flood;
They shall overflow the land and all that is in it,
The city and those who dwell within;
Then the men shall cry,
And all the inhabitants of the land shall wail.
3 At the noise of the stamping hooves of his strong horses,
At the rushing of his chariots,
*At* the rumbling of his wheels,
The fathers will not look back for *their* children,
Lacking courage,
4 Because of the day that comes to plunder all the Philistines,
To cut off from Tyre and Sidon every helper who remains;
For the LORD shall plunder the Philistines,
The remnant of the country of Caphtor.
5 Baldness has come upon Gaza,
Ashkelon is cut off
*With* the remnant of their valley.
How long will you cut yourself?
6 "O you sword of the LORD,
How long until you are quiet?
Put yourself up into your scabbard,
Rest and be still!
7 How can it be quiet,
Seeing the LORD has given it a charge
Against Ashkelon and against the seashore?
There He has appointed it."

**JUDGMENT ON MOAB**

**48** Against Moab. Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel:

"Woe to Nebo!
For it is plundered,
Kirjathaim is shamed *and* taken;
The high stronghold[a] is shamed and dismayed-

2 No more praise of Moab.
In Heshbon they have devised evil against her:
'Come, and let us cut her off as a nation.'
You also shall be cut down, O Madmen![a]
The sword shall pursue you;
3 A voice of crying *shall be* from Horonaim:
'Plundering and great destruction!'
4 "Moab is destroyed; Her little ones have caused a cry to be heard;[a]
5 For in the Ascent of Luhith they ascend with continual weeping;
For in the descent of Horonaim the enemies have heard a cry of destruction.
6 "Flee, save your lives!
And be like the juniper[a] in the wilderness.
7 For because you have trusted in your works and your treasures,
You also shall be taken.
And Chemosh shall go forth into captivity,
His priests and his princes together.
8 And the plunderer shall come against every city;
No one shall escape.
The valley also shall perish,
And the plain shall be destroyed,
As the LORD has spoken.
9 "Give wings to Moab,
That she may flee and get away;
For her cities shall be desolate,
Without any to dwell in them.

10 Cursed *is* he who does the work of the LORD deceitfully,
And cursed *is* he who keeps back his sword from blood.
11 “Moab has been at ease from his[a] youth;
He has settled on his dregs,
And has not been emptied from vessel to vessel,
Nor has he gone into captivity.
Therefore his taste remained in him,
And his scent has not changed.
12 “Therefore behold, the days are coming,” says the LORD,
“That I shall send him wine-workers
Who will tip him over
And empty his vessels
And break the bottles.
13 Moab shall be ashamed of Chemosh,
As the house of Israel was ashamed of Bethel, their confidence.
14 “How can you say, ‘We *are* mighty
And strong men for the war’?
15 Moab is plundered and gone up *from* her cities;
Her chosen young men have gone down to the slaughter,” says the King,
Whose name *is* the LORD of hosts.
16 “The calamity of Moab *is* near at hand,
And his affliction comes quickly.
17 Bemoan him, all you who are around him;
And all you who know his name,
Say, ‘How the strong staff is broken,
The beautiful rod!’
18 “O daughter inhabiting Dibon,
Come down from *your* glory,
And sit in thirst;
For the plunderer of Moab has come against you,
He has destroyed your strongholds.
19 O inhabitant of Aroer,
Stand by the way and watch;
Ask him who flees
And her who escapes;

Say, ‘What has happened?’
20 Moab is shamed, for he is broken down.
Wail and cry!
Tell it in Arnon, that Moab is plundered.
21 “And judgment has come on the plain country:
On Holon and Jahzah and Mephaath,
22 On Dibon and Nebo and Beth Diblathaim,
23 On Kirjathaim and Beth Gamul and Beth Meon,
24 On Kerioth and Bozrah,
On all the cities of the land of Moab,
Far or near.
25 The horn of Moab is cut off,
And his arm is broken,” says the LORD.
26 “Make him drunk,
Because he exalted *himself* against the LORD.
Moab shall wallow in his vomit,
And he shall also be in derision.
27 For was not Israel a derision to you?
Was he found among thieves?
For whenever you speak of him,
You shake *your head in scorn.*
28 You who dwell in Moab,
Leave the cities and dwell in the rock,
And be like the dove *which* makes her nest
In the sides of the cave’s mouth.

29 “We have heard the pride of Moab
(He *is* exceedingly proud),
Of his loftiness and arrogance and pride,
And of the haughtiness of his heart.”

30 “I know his wrath,” says the LORD,
“But it *is* not right;
His lies have made nothing right.
31 Therefore I will wail for Moab,

And I will cry out for all Moab;
I[a] will mourn for the men of Kir Heres.
32 O vine of Sibmah! I will weep for you with the weeping of Jazer.
Your plants have gone over the sea,
They reach to the sea of Jazer.
The plunderer has fallen on your summer fruit and your vintage.
33 Joy and gladness are taken
From the plentiful field
And from the land of Moab;
I have caused wine to fail from the winepresses;
No one will tread with joyous shouting-
Not joyous shouting!
34 "From the cry of Heshbon to Elealeh and to Jahaz
They have uttered their voice,
From Zoar to Horonaim,
*Like* a three-year-old heifer;[a]
For the waters of Nimrim also shall be desolate.
35 "Moreover," says the LORD,
"I will cause to cease in Moab
The one who offers *sacrifices* in the high places
And burns incense to his gods.
36 Therefore My heart shall wail like flutes for Moab,
And like flutes My heart shall wail
For the men of Kir Heres.
Therefore the riches they have acquired have perished.
37 "For every head *shall be* bald, and every beard clipped;
On all the hands *shall be* cuts, and on the loins sackcloth-
38 A general lamentation
On all the housetops of Moab,
And in its streets;
For I have broken Moab like a vessel in which *is* no pleasure," says the LORD.
39 "They shall wail:
'How she is broken down!
How Moab has turned her back with shame!'

So Moab shall be a derision
And a dismay to all those about her.”
40 For thus says the LORD:

“Behold, one shall fly like an eagle,
And spread his wings over Moab.

41 Kerioth is taken,
And the strongholds are surprised;
The mighty men’s hearts in Moab on that day shall be
Like the heart of a woman in birth pangs.
42 And Moab shall be destroyed as a people,
Because he exalted *himself* against the LORD.
43 Fear and the pit and the snare *shall be* upon you,
O inhabitant of Moab,” says the LORD.
44 “He who flees from the fear shall fall into the pit,
And he who gets out of the pit shall be caught in the snare.
For upon Moab, upon it I will bring
The year of their punishment,” says the LORD.
45 “Those who fled stood under the shadow of Heshbon
Because of exhaustion.
But a fire shall come out of Heshbon,
A flame from the midst of Sihon,
And shall devour the brow of Moab,
The crown of the head of the sons of tumult.
46 Woe to you, O Moab!
The people of Chemosh perish;
For your sons have been taken captive,
And your daughters captive.
47 “Yet I will bring back the captives of Moab
In the latter days,” says the LORD.
Thus far *is* the judgment of Moab.

## JUDGMENT ON AMMON

**49** Against the Ammonites. Thus says the LORD: “Has Israel no sons? Has
he no heir? Why *then* does Milcom[a] inherit Gad, And his people dwell
in its cities?

2 Therefore behold, the days are coming,” says the LORD,
“That I will cause to be heard an alarm of war
In Rabbah of the Ammonites;
It shall be a desolate mound,
And her villages shall be burned with fire.
Then Israel shall take possession of his inheritance,” says the LORD.
3 “Wail, O Heshbon, for Ai is plundered!
Cry, you daughters of Rabbah,
Gird yourselves with sackcloth!
Lament and run to and fro by the walls;
For Milcom shall go into captivity
With his priests and his princes together.
4 Why do you boast in the valleys,
Your flowing valley, O backsliding daughter?
Who trusted in her treasures, *saying*,
‘Who will come against me?’
5 Behold, I will bring fear upon you,”
Says the Lord GOD of hosts,
“From all those who are around you;
You shall be driven out, everyone headlong,
And no one will gather those who wander off.
6 But afterward I will bring back
The captives of the people of Ammon,”
says the LORD.

## JUDGMENT ON EDOM

7 Against Edom.
Thus says the LORD of hosts:

"*Is* wisdom no more in Teman?
Has counsel perished from the prudent?
Has their wisdom vanished?

8 Flee, turn back, dwell in the depths, O inhabitants of Dedan!
For I will bring the calamity of Esau upon him,
The time *that* I will punish him.
9 If grape-gatherers came to you,
Would they not leave *some* gleaning grapes?
If thieves by night,
Would they not destroy until they have enough?
10 But I have made Esau bare;
I have uncovered his secret places,[a]
And he shall not be able to hide himself.
His descendants are plundered,
His brethren and his neighbors,
And he *is* no more.
11 Leave your fatherless children,
I will preserve *them* alive;
And let your widows trust in Me."
12For thus says the LORD: "Behold, those whose judgment *was* not to drink of the cup have assuredly drunk. And *are* you the one who will altogether go unpunished? You shall not go unpunished, but you shall surely drink *of it.* 13For I have sworn by Myself," says the LORD, "that Bozrah shall become a desolation, a reproach, a waste, and a curse. And all its cities shall be perpetual wastes."

14 I have heard a message from the LORD,
And an ambassador has been sent to the nations:
"Gather together, come against her,
And rise up to battle!
15 "For indeed, I will make you small among nations,
Despised among men.
16 Your fierceness has deceived you,
The pride of your heart,
O you who dwell in the clefts of the rock,

Who hold the height of the hill!
Though you make your nest as high as the eagle,
I will bring you down from there," says the LORD.[a]
17 "Edom also shall be an astonishment;
Everyone who goes by it will be astonished
And will hiss at all its plagues.
18 As in the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah
And their neighbors," says the LORD,
"No one shall remain there,
Nor shall a son of man dwell in it.
19 "Behold, he shall come up like a lion from the floodplain[a] of the Jordan
Against the dwelling place of the strong;
But I will suddenly make him run away from her.
And who *is* a chosen *man that* I may appoint over her?
For who *is* like Me?
Who will arraign Me?
And who *is* that shepherd
Who will withstand Me?"
20 Therefore hear the counsel of the LORD that He has taken against Edom,
And His purposes that He has proposed against the inhabitants of
Teman:
Surely the least of the flock shall draw them out;
Surely He shall make their dwelling places desolate with them.
21 The earth shakes at the noise of their fall;
At the cry its noise is heard at the Red Sea.
22 Behold, He shall come up and fly like the eagle,
And spread His wings over Bozrah;
The heart of the mighty men of Edom in that day shall be
Like the heart of a woman in birth pangs.

## JUDGMENT ON DAMASCUS

23 Against Damascus.

"Hamath and Arpad are shamed,

For they have heard bad news.
They are fainthearted;
*There is* trouble on the sea;
It cannot be quiet.
24 Damascus has grown feeble;
She turns to flee,
And fear has seized *her*.
Anguish and sorrows have taken her like a woman in labor.
25 Why is the city of praise not deserted, the city of My joy?
26 Therefore her young men shall fall in her streets,
And all the men of war shall be cut off in that day," says the LORD of hosts.
27 "I will kindle a fire in the wall of Damascus,
And it shall consume the palaces of Ben-Hadad."[a]

**JUDGMENT ON KEDAR AND HAZOR**

28 Against Kedar and against the kingdoms of Hazor, which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon shall strike.

Thus says the LORD:

"Arise, go up to Kedar,
And devastate the men of the East!

29 Their tents and their flocks they shall take away.
They shall take for themselves their curtains,
All their vessels and their camels;
And they shall cry out to them,
'Fear *is* on every side!'
30 "Flee, get far away! Dwell in the depths,
O inhabitants of Hazor!" says the LORD.
"For Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon has taken counsel against you,
And has conceived a plan against you.
31 "Arise, go up to the wealthy nation that dwells securely," says the LORD,
"Which has neither gates nor bars,
Dwelling alone.

32 Their camels shall be for booty,
And the multitude of their cattle for plunder.
I will scatter to all winds those in the farthest corners,
And I will bring their calamity from all its sides," says the LORD.

33 "Hazor shall be a dwelling for jackals, a desolation forever;
No one shall reside there,
Nor son of man dwell in it."

**JUDGMENT ON ELAM**

34 The word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah the prophet against Elam, in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, saying, 35 "Thus says the LORD of hosts:

' Behold, I will break the bow of Elam,
The foremost of their might.

36 Against Elam I will bring the four winds
From the four quarters of heaven,
And scatter them toward all those winds;
There shall be no nations where the outcasts of Elam will not go.
37 For I will cause Elam to be dismayed before their enemies
And before those who seek their life.
I will bring disaster upon them,
My fierce anger,' says the LORD;
'And I will send the sword after them
Until I have consumed them.
38 I will set My throne in Elam,
And will destroy from there the king and the princes,' says the LORD.
39 "But it shall come to pass in the latter days:
I will bring back the captives of Elam,' says the LORD."

## JUDGMENT ON BABYLON AND BABYLONIA

**50** The word that the LORD spoke against Babylon *and* against the land of the Chaldeans by Jeremiah the prophet.

2 “Declare among the nations,
Proclaim, and set up a standard;
Proclaim-do not conceal *it*-
Say, ‘Babylon is taken, Bel is shamed.
Merodach[a] is broken in pieces;
Her idols are humiliated,
Her images are broken in pieces.’
3 For out of the north a nation comes up against her,
Which shall make her land desolate,
And no one shall dwell therein.
They shall move, they shall depart,
Both man and beast.
4 “In those days and in that time,” says the LORD,
“The children of Israel shall come,
They and the children of Judah together;
With continual weeping they shall come,
And seek the LORD their God.
5 They shall ask the way to Zion,
With their faces toward it, *saying*,
‘Come and let us join ourselves to the LORD
*In* a perpetual covenant
*That* will not be forgotten.’
6 “My people have been lost sheep.
Their shepherds have led them astray;
They have turned them away *on* the mountains.
They have gone from mountain to hill;
They have forgotten their resting place.
7 All who found them have devoured them;
And their adversaries said, ‘We have not offended,
Because they have sinned against the LORD, the habitation of justice,

The LORD, the hope of their fathers.’
8 “Move from the midst of Babylon,
Go out of the land of the Chaldeans;
And be like the rams before the flocks.
9 For behold, I will raise and cause to come up against Babylon
An assembly of great nations from the north country,
And they shall array themselves against her;
From there she shall be captured.
Their arrows *shall be* like *those* of an expert warrior;[a]
None shall return in vain.
10 And Chaldea shall become plunder;
All who plunder her shall be satisfied,” says the LORD.
11 “Because you were glad, because you rejoiced,
You destroyers of My heritage,
Because you have grown fat like a heifer threshing grain,
And you bellow like bulls,
12 Your mother shall be deeply ashamed;
She who bore you shall be ashamed.
Behold, the least of the nations *shall be* a wilderness, A dry land and a desert.
13 Because of the wrath of the LORD
She shall not be inhabited,
But she shall be wholly desolate.
Everyone who goes by Babylon shall be horrified
And hiss at all her plagues.
14 “Put yourselves in array against Babylon all around,
All you who bend the bow;
Shoot at her, spare no arrows,
For she has sinned against the LORD.
15 Shout against her all around;
She has given her hand,
Her foundations have fallen,
Her walls are thrown down;
For it *is* the vengeance of the LORD.
Take vengeance on her.

As she has done, so do to her.
16 Cut off the sower from Babylon,
And him who handles the sickle at harvest time.
For fear of the oppressing sword
Everyone shall turn to his own people,
And everyone shall flee to his own land.

17 “Israel *is* like scattered sheep;
The lions have driven *him* away.
First the king of Assyria devoured him;
Now at last this Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon has broken his bones.”

18 Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel:

“Behold, I will punish the king of
Babylon and his land, As I have punished the king of Assyria.

19 But I will bring back Israel to his home,
And he shall feed on Carmel and Bashan;
His soul shall be satisfied on Mount Ephraim and Gilead.
20 In those days and in that time,” says the LORD,
“The iniquity of Israel shall be sought, but *there shall be* none;
And the sins of Judah, but they shall not be found;
For I will pardon those whom I preserve.
21 “Go up against the land of Merathaim, against it,
And against the inhabitants of Pekod.
Waste and utterly destroy them,” says the LORD,
“And do according to all that I have commanded you.
22 A sound of battle *is* in the land,
And of great destruction.
23 How the hammer of the whole earth has been cut apart and broken!
How Babylon has become a desolation among the nations!
I have laid a snare for you;
24 You have indeed been trapped, O Babylon,

And you were not aware;
You have been found and also caught,
Because you have contended against the LORD.
25 The LORD has opened His armory,
And has brought out the weapons of His indignation;
For this *is* the work of the Lord GOD of hosts
In the land of the Chaldeans.
26 Come against her from the farthest border;
Open her storehouses;
Cast her up as heaps of ruins,
And destroy her utterly;
Let nothing of her be left.
27 Slay all her bulls,
Let them go down to the slaughter.
Woe to them!
For their day has come, the time of their punishment.
28 The voice of those who flee and escape from the land of Babylon
Declares in Zion the vengeance of the LORD our God,
The vengeance of His temple.
29 "Call together the archers against Babylon.
All you who bend the bow, encamp against it all around;
Let none of them escape.[a]
Repay her according to her work;
According to all she has done, do to her;
For she has been proud against the LORD,
Against the Holy One of Israel.
30 Therefore her young men shall fall in the streets,
And all her men of war shall be cut off in that day," says the LORD.
31 "Behold, I *am* against you,
O most haughty one!" says the Lord GOD of hosts;
"For your day has come,
The time *that* I will punish you.[a]
32 The most proud shall stumble and fall,
And no one will raise him up;
I will kindle a fire in his cities,

And it will devour all around him.”
33 Thus says the LORD of hosts:

“The children of Israel *were* oppressed,
Along with the children of Judah;
All who took them captive have held them fast;
They have refused to let them go.

34 Their Redeemer *is* strong;
The LORD of hosts *is* His name.
He will thoroughly plead their case,
That He may give rest to the land,
And disquiet the inhabitants of Babylon.
35 “A sword *is* against the Chaldeans,” says the LORD,
“Against the inhabitants of Babylon,
And against her princes and her wise men.
36 A sword *is* against the soothsayers, and they will be fools.
A sword *is* against her mighty men, and they will be dismayed.
37 A sword *is* against their horses,
Against their chariots,
And against all the mixed peoples who *are* in her midst;
And they will become like women.
A sword *is* against her treasures, and they will be robbed.
38 A drought[a] *is* against her waters, and they will be dried up.
For it *is* the land of carved images,
And they are insane with *their* idols.
39 “Therefore the wild desert beasts shall dwell *there* with the jackals,
And the ostriches shall dwell in it.
It shall be inhabited no more forever,
Nor shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation.
40 As God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah
And their neighbors,” says the LORD,
“*So* no one shall reside there,
Nor son of man dwell in it.
41 “Behold, a people shall come from the north,

And a great nation and many kings
Shall be raised up from the ends of the earth.
42 They shall hold the bow and the lance;
They *are* cruel and shall not show mercy.
Their voice shall roar like the sea;
They shall ride on horses,
Set in array, like a man for the battle,
Against you, O daughter of Babylon.
43 "The king of Babylon has heard the report about them,
And his hands grow feeble;
Anguish has taken hold of him,
Pangs as of a woman in childbirth.
44 "Behold, he shall come up like a lion from the floodplain[a] of the Jordan
Against the dwelling place of the strong;
But I will make them suddenly run away from her.
And who *is* a chosen *man that* I may appoint over her?
For who *is* like Me?
Who will arraign Me?
And who *is* that shepherd
Who will withstand Me?"
45 Therefore hear the counsel of the LORD that He has taken against Babylon,
And His purposes that He has proposed against the land of the Chaldeans:
Surely the least of the flock shall draw them out;
Surely He will make their dwelling place desolate with them.
46 At the noise of the taking of Babylon
The earth trembles,
And the cry is heard among the nations.

## THE UTTER DESTRUCTION OF BABYLON

**51** Thus says the LORD:

"Behold, I will raise up against Babylon,
Against those who dwell in Leb Kamai,[a]
A destroying wind.

2 And I will send winnowers to Babylon,
Who shall winnow her and empty her land.
For in the day of doom
They shall be against her all around.
3 Against *her* let the archer bend his bow,
And lift himself up against *her* in his armor.
Do not spare her young men;
Utterly destroy all her army.
4 Thus the slain shall fall in the land of the Chaldeans,
And *those* thrust through in her streets.
5 For Israel is not forsaken, nor Judah,
By his God, the LORD of hosts,
Though their land was filled with sin against the Holy One of Israel."
6 Flee from the midst of Babylon,
And every one save his life!
Do not be cut off in her iniquity,
For this *is* the time of the LORD's vengeance;
He shall recompense her.
7 Babylon *was* a golden cup in the LORD's hand,
That made all the earth drunk.
The nations drank her wine;
Therefore the nations are deranged.
8 Babylon has suddenly fallen and been destroyed.
Wail for her!
Take balm for her pain;
Perhaps she may be healed.
9 We would have healed Babylon,
But she is not healed.

Forsake her, and let us go everyone to his own country;
For her judgment reaches to heaven and is lifted up to the skies.
10 The LORD has revealed our righteousness.
Come and let us declare in Zion the work of the LORD our God.
11 Make the arrows bright!
Gather the shields!
The LORD has raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes.
For His plan *is* against Babylon to destroy it,
Because it *is* the vengeance of the LORD, The vengeance for His temple.
12 Set up the standard on the walls of Babylon;
Make the guard strong,
Set up the watchmen,
Prepare the ambushes.
For the LORD has both devised and done
What He spoke against the inhabitants of Babylon.
13 O you who dwell by many waters,
Abundant in treasures,
Your end has come,
The measure of your covetousness.
14 The LORD of hosts has sworn by Himself:
"Surely I will fill you with men, as with locusts,
And they shall lift up a shout against you."
15 He has made the earth by His power;
He has established the world by His wisdom,
And stretched out the heaven by His understanding.
16 When He utters *His* voice-
*There is* a multitude of waters in the heavens:
"He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth;
He makes lightnings for the rain;
He brings the wind out of His treasuries."[a]
17 Everyone is dull-hearted, without knowledge;
Every metalsmith is put to shame by the carved image;
For his molded image *is* falsehood, And *there is* no breath in them.
18 They *are* futile, a work of errors;
In the time of their punishment they shall perish.

19 The Portion of Jacob *is* not like them,
For He *is* the Maker of all things;
And *Israel is* the tribe of His inheritance.
The LORD of hosts *is* His name.
20 "You *are* My battle-ax *and* weapons of war:
For with you I will break the nation in pieces;
With you I will destroy kingdoms;
21 With you I will break in pieces the horse and its rider;
With you I will break in pieces the chariot and its rider;
22 With you also I will break in pieces man and woman;
With you I will break in pieces old and young;
With you I will break in pieces the young man and the maiden;
23 With you also I will break in pieces the shepherd and his flock;
With you I will break in pieces the farmer and his yoke of oxen;
And with you I will break in pieces governors and rulers.
24 "And I will repay Babylon
And all the inhabitants of Chaldea
For all the evil they have done
In Zion in your sight," says the LORD.
25 "Behold, I *am* against you, O destroying mountain,
Who destroys all the earth," says the LORD.
"And I will stretch out My hand against you,
Roll you down from the rocks,
And make you a burnt mountain.
26 They shall not take from you a stone for a corner
Nor a stone for a foundation,
But you shall be desolate forever," says the LORD.
27 Set up a banner in the land,
Blow the trumpet among the nations!
Prepare the nations against her,
Call the kingdoms together against her:
Ararat, Minni, and Ashkenaz.
Appoint a general against her;
Cause the horses to come up like the bristling locusts.
28 Prepare against her the nations,

With the kings of the Medes,
Its governors and all its rulers,
All the land of his dominion.
29 And the land will tremble and sorrow;
For every purpose of the LORD shall be performed against Babylon,
To make the land of Babylon a desolation without inhabitant.
30 The mighty men of Babylon have ceased fighting,
They have remained in their strongholds;
Their might has failed,
They became *like* women;
They have burned her dwelling places,
The bars of her *gate* are broken.
31 One runner will run to meet another,
And one messenger to meet another,
To show the king of Babylon that his city is taken on *all* sides;
32 The passages are blocked,
The reeds they have burned with fire,
And the men of war are terrified.
33For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel:

"The daughter of Babylon *is* like a threshing floor
*When it is* time to thresh her; Yet a little while
And the time of her harvest will come."

34 "Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon
Has devoured me, he has crushed me;
He has made me an empty vessel,
He has swallowed me up like a monster;
He has filled his stomach with my delicacies,
He has spit me out.
35 Let the violence *done* to me and my flesh *be* upon Babylon,"
The inhabitant of Zion will say;
"And my blood be upon the inhabitants of Chaldea!"
Jerusalem will say.
36Therefore thus says the LORD:

“Behold, I will plead your case and take vengeance for you.
I will dry up her sea and make her springs dry.
37 Babylon shall become a heap,
A dwelling place for jackals,
An astonishment and a hissing,
Without an inhabitant.
38 They shall roar together like lions,
They shall growl like lions’ whelps.
39 In their excitement I will prepare their feasts;
I will make them drunk,
That they may rejoice,
And sleep a perpetual sleep
And not awake,” says the LORD.
40 “I will bring them down
Like lambs to the slaughter,
Like rams with male goats.
41 “Oh, how Sheshach[a] is taken!
Oh, how the praise of the whole earth is seized!
How Babylon has become desolate among the nations!
42 The sea has come up over Babylon;
She is covered with the multitude of its waves.
43 Her cities are a desolation,
A dry land and a wilderness,
A land where no one dwells,
Through which no son of man passes.
44 I will punish Bel in Babylon,
And I will bring out of his mouth what he has swallowed;
And the nations shall not stream to him anymore.
Yes, the wall of Babylon shall fall.
45 “My people, go out of the midst of her!
And let everyone deliver himself from the fierce anger of the LORD.
46 And lest your heart faint,
And you fear for the rumor that *will be* heard in the land
(A rumor will come *one* year,
And after that, in *another* year

A rumor *will come,*
And violence in the land,
Ruler against ruler),
47 Therefore behold, the days are coming
That I will bring judgment on the carved images of Babylon;
Her whole land shall be ashamed,
And all her slain shall fall in her midst.
48 Then the heavens and the earth and all that *is* in them
Shall sing joyously over Babylon;
For the plunderers shall come to her from the north," says the LORD.
49 As Babylon *has caused* the slain of Israel to fall,
So at Babylon the slain of all the earth shall fall.
50 You who have escaped the sword,
Get away! Do not stand still!
Remember the LORD afar off,
And let Jerusalem come to your mind.
51 We are ashamed because we have heard reproach.
Shame has covered our faces,
For strangers have come into the sanctuaries of the LORD's house.
52 "Therefore behold, the days are coming," says the LORD,
"That I will bring judgment on her carved images,
And throughout all her land the wounded shall groan.
53 Though Babylon were to mount up to heaven,
And though she were to fortify the height of her strength,
*Yet* from Me plunderers would come to her," says the LORD.
54 The sound of a cry *comes* from Babylon,
And great destruction from the land of the Chaldeans,
55 Because the LORD is plundering Babylon
And silencing her loud voice,
Though her waves roar like great waters,
And the noise of their voice is uttered,
56 Because the plunderer comes against her, against Babylon,
And her mighty men are taken.
Every one of their bows is broken;
For the LORD *is* the God of recompense,

He will surely repay.
57 “And I will make drunk
Her princes and wise men,
Her governors, her deputies, and her mighty men.
And they shall sleep a perpetual sleep
And not awake,” says the King,
Whose name *is* the LORD of hosts.
58 Thus says the LORD of hosts:
“The broad walls of Babylon shall be utterly broken,
And her high gates shall be burned with fire;
The people will labor in vain,
And the nations, because of the fire;
And they shall be weary.”

## JEREMIAH’S COMMAND TO SERAIAH

59 The word which Jeremiah the prophet commanded Seraiah the son of Neriah, the son of Mahseiah, when he went with Zedekiah the king of Judah to Babylon in the fourth year of his reign. And Seraiah *was* the quartermaster. 60 So Jeremiah wrote in a book all the evil that would come upon Babylon, all these words that are written against Babylon. 61 And Jeremiah said to Seraiah, “When you arrive in Babylon and see it, and read all these words, 62 then you shall say, ‘O LORD, You have spoken against this place to cut it off, so that none shall remain in it, neither man nor beast, but it shall be desolate forever.’ 63 Now it shall be, when you have finished reading this book, *that* you shall tie a stone to it and throw it out into the Euphrates. 64 Then you shall say, ‘Thus Babylon shall sink and not rise from the catastrophe that I will bring upon her. And they shall be weary.’ ”

Thus far *are* the words of Jeremiah.

## THE FALL OF JERUSALEM REVIEWED

**52** Zedekiah *was* twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. His mother's name *was* Hamutal the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. 2He also did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that Jehoiakim had done. 3For because of the anger of the LORD *this* happened in Jerusalem and Judah, till He finally cast them out from His presence. Then Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.

4Now it came to pass in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, on the tenth *day* of the month, *that* Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and all his army came against Jerusalem and encamped against it; and *they* built a siege wall against it all around. 5So the city was besieged until the eleventh year of King Zedekiah. 6By the fourth month, on the ninth day of the month, the famine had become so severe in the city that there was no food for the people of the land. 7Then the city wall was broken through, and all the men of war fled and went out of the city at night by way of the gate between the two walls, which *was* by the king's garden, even though the Chaldeans *were* near the city all around. And they went by way of the plain.[a]

8But the army of the Chaldeans pursued the king, and they overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho. All his army was scattered from him. 9So they took the king and brought him up to the king of Babylon at Riblah in the land of Hamath, and he pronounced judgment on him. 10Then the king of Babylon killed the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes. And he killed all the princes of Judah in Riblah. 11He also put out the eyes of Zedekiah; and the king of Babylon bound him in bronze fetters, took him to Babylon, and put him in prison till the day of his death.

## THE TEMPLE AND CITY PLUNDERED AND BURNED

12Now in the fifth month, on the tenth *day* of the month (which *was* the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon), Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard, *who* served the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem. 13He burned the house of the LORD and the king's house; all the houses of Jerusalem, that is, all the houses of the great, he burned with fire. 14And all

the army of the Chaldeans who *were* with the captain of the guard broke down all the walls of Jerusalem all around. [15]Then Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried away captive *some* of the poor people, the rest of the people who remained in the city, the defectors who had deserted to the king of Babylon, and the rest of the craftsmen.[16] But Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard left *some* of the poor of the land as vine-dressers and farmers.

[17]The bronze pillars that *were* in the house of the LORD, and the carts and the bronze Sea that *were* in the house of the LORD, the Chaldeans broke in pieces, and carried all their bronze to Babylon. [18]They also took away the pots, the shovels, the trimmers, the bowls, the spoons, and all the bronze utensils with which the priests ministered. [19]The basins, the firepans, the bowls, the pots, the lamp-stands, the spoons, and the cups, whatever *was* solid gold and whatever *was* solid silver, the captain of the guard took away. [20]The two pillars, one Sea, the twelve bronze bulls which *were* under *it, and* the carts, which King Solomon had made for the house of the LORD-the bronze of all these articles was beyond measure. [21]Now *concerning* the pillars: the height of one pillar *was* eighteen cubits, a measuring line of twelve cubits could measure its circumference, and its thickness *was* four fingers; *it was* hollow. [22]A capital of bronze *was* on it; and the height of one capital *was* five cubits, with a network and pomegranates all around the capital, all of bronze. The second pillar, with pomegranates was the same. [23]There were ninety-six pomegranates on the sides; all the pomegranates, all around on the network, *were* one hundred.

## THE PEOPLE TAKEN CAPTIVE TO BABYLONIA

[24]The captain of the guard took Seraiah the chief priest, Zephaniah the second priest, and the three doorkeepers. [25]He also took out of the city an officer who had charge of the men of war, seven men of the king’s close associates who were found in the city, the principal scribe of the army who mustered the people of the land, and sixty men of the people of the land who were found in the midst of the city. [26]And Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard took these and brought them to the king of Babylon at Riblah. [27]Then the king of Babylon struck them and put them to death at Riblah in the land of Hamath. Thus Judah was carried away captive from its own land.

[28]These *are* the people whom Nebuchad-nezzar carried away captive: in the seventh year, three thousand and twenty-three Jews; [29]in the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar he carried away captive from Jerusalem eight hundred and thirty-two persons; [30]in the twenty-third year of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebu-zaradan the captain of the guard carried away captive of the Jews seven hundred and forty-five persons. All the persons *were* four thousand six hundred.

## JEHOIACHIN RELEASED FROM PRISON

[31]Now it came to pass in the thirty-seventh year of the captivity of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the twenty-fifth *day* of the month, *that* Evil-Merodach[a] king of Babylon, in the first *year* of his reign, lifted up the head of Jehoiachin king of Judah and brought him out of prison. [32]And he spoke kindly to him and gave him a more prominent seat than those of the kings who *were* with him in Babylon. [33]So Jehoiachin changed from his prison garments, and he ate bread regularly before the king all the days of his life. [34]And as for his provisions, there was a regular ration given him by the king of Babylon, a portion for each day until the day of his death, all the days of his life.

**SOUL NOTE**

**A Ray of Hope** *(52:32)* If the Book of Jeremiah were a movie, the last four verses would be the scene that leaves the door open for a sequel-one with a happy ending. The compassion that Evil-Merodach, king of Babylon, showed to Jehoiachin (52:31, 32) symbolizes God's compassion for His people. Just as Jehoiachin was restored to a position of power and cared for, the nations of Israel and Judah would be restored to their homeland and cared for by the Lord. God's holiness and justice should never be underestimated, but thankfully, neither should His compassion. God's compassion never fails. **Topic:**

## Compassion

# Lamentations



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# Lamentations

What causes us to weep, to cry, to shed great tears of sadness? We do well to pay attention whenever we find our eyes filling with tears, for those emotional moments reveal much about what we value, what's important to us.

Lamentations is one such case in point. Written by the prophet Jeremiah, this book is essentially a funeral dirge mourning the fall of Jerusalem. Its five, short, tear-stained chapters depict the regrettable demise of God's rebellious people.

As a prophet, Jeremiah had predicted the fall of Jerusalem, but he wept at the fulfillment of his own prophecy. After witnessing the devastation, darkness, and despair all around him (3:1-18), Jeremiah turned his eyes heavenward. He found comfort in remembering that God keeps His covenants; He is filled with mercy, love, and goodness (3:22-24).

God's modern-day children can also find hope in God's unfailing mercy. No matter what, we are the recipients of perfect love and grace. Even divine discipline is nothing more than God's merciful attempt to draw us back to Himself! His compassion is continually extended to us and nothing can ever separate us from His love (Rom. 8:31-39).

If your heart is heavy today, listen to the tender voice of God speaking through the ancient book of Lamentations. Know that "the Lord will not cast off forever. Though He causes grief, yet He will show compassion according to the multitude of His mercies" (Lam. 3:31, 32). Through your tears, look to God.

**SOUL CONCERN IN**

## LAMENTATIONS

## JERUSALEM IN AFFLICTION

1 How lonely sits the city
*That was* full of people!
*How* like a widow is she,
Who *was* great among the nations!
The princess among the provinces
Has become a slave!

2 She weeps bitterly in the night,
Her tears *are* on her cheeks;
Among all her lovers
She has none to comfort *her*.
All her friends have dealt treacherously
with her;
They have become her enemies.
3 Judah has gone into captivity,
Under affliction and hard servitude;
She dwells among the nations,
She finds no rest;
All her persecutors overtake her in dire
straits.
4 The roads to Zion mourn
Because no one comes to the set
feasts.
All her gates are desolate;
Her priests sigh,
Her virgins are afflicted,
And she *is* in bitterness.
5 Her adversaries have become the master,
Her enemies prosper;
For the LORD has afflicted her
Because of the multitude of her
transgressions.
Her children have gone into captivity
before the enemy.

6 And from the daughter of Zion
All her splendor has departed.
Her princes have become like deer
*That* find no pasture,
That flee without strength
Before the pursuer.
7 In the days of her affliction and roaming,
Jerusalem remembers all her pleasant
things
That she had in the days of old.
When her people fell into the hand of
the enemy,
With no one to help her,
The adversaries saw her
*And* mocked at her downfall.[a]
8 Jerusalem has sinned gravely, Therefore she has become vile.[a]
All who honored her despise her
Because they have seen her nakedness;
Yes, she sighs and turns away.
9 Her uncleanness *is* in her skirts;
She did not consider her destiny;
Therefore her collapse was awesome;
She had no comforter.
"O LORD, behold my affliction,
For *the* enemy is exalted!"
10 The adversary has spread his hand
Over all her pleasant things;
For she has seen the nations enter her
sanctuary,
Those whom You commanded
Not to enter Your assembly.
11 All her people sigh,
They seek bread;
They have given their valuables for food
to restore life.

"See, O LORD, and consider,
For I am scorned."
12 "*Is it* nothing to you, all you who pass by?
Behold and see
If there is any sorrow like my sorrow,
Which has been brought on me,
Which the LORD has inflicted
In the day of His fierce anger.
13 "From above He has sent fire into my bones,
And it overpowered them;
He has spread a net for my feet
And turned me back;
He has made me desolate
*And* faint all the day.
14 "The yoke of my transgressions was bound;[a]
They were woven together by His hands,
*And* thrust upon my neck.
He made my strength fail;
The Lord delivered me into the hands of *those whom* I am not able to withstand.
15 "The Lord has trampled underfoot all my mighty *men* in my midst;
He has called an assembly against me
To crush my young men;
The Lord trampled *as* in a winepress
The virgin daughter of Judah.
16 "For these *things* I weep;
My eye, my eye overflows with water;
Because the comforter, who should restore my life,

Is far from me.
My children are desolate
Because the enemy prevailed.”
17 Zion spreads out her hands,
*But* no one comforts her;
The LORD has commanded concerning Jacob
*That* those around him *become* his adversaries;
Jerusalem has become an unclean thing among them.
18 “The LORD is righteous,
For I rebelled against His commandment.
Hear now, all peoples,
And behold my sorrow;
My virgins and my young men
Have gone into captivity.
19 “I called for my lovers,
*But* they deceived me;
My priests and my elders
Breathed their last in the city,
While they sought food
To restore their life.
20 “See, O LORD, that I *am* in distress;
My soul is troubled;
My heart is overturned within me,
For I have been very rebellious.
Outside the sword bereaves,
At home *it is* like death.
21 “They have heard that I sigh,
*But* no one comforts me.
All my enemies have heard of my trouble;
They are glad that You have done *it.*

Bring on the day You have announced,
That they may become like me.
22 “Let all their wickedness come before You,
And do to them as You have done to me
For all my transgressions;
For my sighs *are* many,
And my heart *is* faint.”

**KEY PASSAGE**

# INTO THE VALLEY

## (1:10-21)

Being a Christian does not guarantee a pain-free existence. In fact, our faith exposes us to difficulties and struggles that we may not otherwise have experienced. Here’s what believers need to know about life’s traumas:

- Suffering is not always punishment. God does allow people to face the miserable consequences of their sinful choices, but it doesn’t mean that every suffering person in the world is being punished. Sometimes God allows people to suffer in order to strengthen their resolve, to shake them out of their complacency, or to help them empathize with other suffering people.
- God does not leave our side when we suffer (Ps. 23:4-6).
- God will reward us for the suffering we endure for His sake (Matt. 5:10).

> When we trust in God, we can change our perspective on life's traumas from "Why me?" to "How can I grow from this?"

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about trauma Healing the Wounds That Bind You. See also the personality profile of Jonah: Running From God.

## GOD’S ANGER WITH JERUSALEM

**2** How the Lord has covered the daughter
of Zion
With a cloud in His anger!
He cast down from heaven to the earth
The beauty of Israel,
And did not remember His footstool
In the day of His anger.

[2] The Lord has swallowed up and has not
pitied
All the dwelling places of Jacob.
He has thrown down in His wrath
The strongholds of the daughter of
Judah;
He has brought *them* down to the
ground;
He has profaned the kingdom and its
princes.
[3] He has cut off in fierce anger
Every horn of Israel;
He has drawn back His right hand
From before the enemy.
He has blazed against Jacob like a
flaming fire
Devouring all around.
[4] Standing like an enemy, He has bent His
bow;
With His right hand, like an adversary,
He has slain all *who were* pleasing to His
eye;
On the tent of the daughter of Zion,
He has poured out His fury like fire.
[5] The Lord was like an enemy.
He has swallowed up Israel,

He has swallowed up all her palaces;
He has destroyed her strongholds,
And has increased mourning and
lamentation
In the daughter of Judah.
6 He has done violence to His tabernacle,
*As if it were* a garden;
He has destroyed His place of assembly;
The LORD has caused
The appointed feasts and Sabbaths to be
forgotten in Zion.
In His burning indignation He has
spurned the king and the priest.
7 The Lord has spurned His altar,
He has abandoned His sanctuary;
He has given up the walls of her palaces
Into the hand of the enemy.
They have made a noise in the house of
the LORD
As on the day of a set feast.
8 The LORD has purposed to destroy
The wall of the daughter of Zion.
He has stretched out a line;
He has not withdrawn His hand from
destroying;
Therefore He has caused the rampart
and wall to lament;
They languished together.
9 Her gates have sunk into the ground;
He has destroyed and broken her bars.
Her king and her princes *are* among the
nations;
The Law *is* no *more,*
And her prophets find no vision from
the LORD.

10 The elders of the daughter of Zion
Sit on the ground *and* keep silence;
They throw dust on their heads
And gird themselves with sackcloth.
The virgins of Jerusalem
Bow their heads to the ground.
11 My eyes fail with tears,
My heart is troubled;
My bile is poured on the ground
Because of the destruction of the
daughter of my people,
Because the children and the infants
Faint in the streets of the city.
12 They say to their mothers,
"Where *is* grain and wine?"
As they swoon like the wounded
In the streets of the city,
As their life is poured out
In their mothers' bosom.
13 How shall I console you?
To what shall I liken you,
O daughter of Jerusalem?
What shall I compare with you, that I
may comfort you,
O virgin daughter of Zion?
For your ruin *is* spread wide as the sea;
Who can heal you?
14 Your prophets have seen for you
False and deceptive visions;
They have not uncovered your iniquity,
To bring back your captives,
But have envisioned for you false
prophecies and delusions.
15 All who pass by clap *their* hands at you;
They hiss and shake their heads

At the daughter of Jerusalem:
"*Is* this the city that is called
'The perfection of beauty,
The joy of the whole earth'?"
16 All your enemies have opened their
mouth against you;
They hiss and gnash *their* teeth.
They say, "We have swallowed *her* up!
Surely this *is* the day we have waited for;
We have found *it*, we have seen *it!*"
17 The LORD has done what He purposed;
He has fulfilled His word
Which He commanded in days of old.
He has thrown down and has not pitied,
And He has caused an enemy to rejoice
over you;
He has exalted the horn of your
adversaries.
18 Their heart cried out to the Lord,
"O wall of the daughter of Zion,
Let tears run down like a river day and
night;
Give yourself no relief;
Give your eyes no rest.
19 "Arise, cry out in the night,
At the beginning of the watches;
Pour out your heart like water before the
face of the Lord.
Lift your hands toward Him
For the life of your young children,
Who faint from hunger at the head of
every street."
20 "See, O LORD, and consider!
To whom have You done this?
Should the women eat their offspring,

The children they have cuddled?[a]
Should the priest and prophet be slain
In the sanctuary of the Lord?
21 "Young and old lie
On the ground in the streets;
My virgins and my young men
Have fallen by the sword;
You have slain *them* in the day of Your anger,
You have slaughtered *and* not pitied.
22 "You have invited as to a feast day
The terrors that surround me.
In the day of the LORD's anger
There was no refugee or survivor.
Those whom I have borne and brought up
My enemies have destroyed."

**SOUL NOTE**

**A Perfect Anger** *(2:1)* Jerusalem was Israel's capital city. Israel was God's chosen nation. But when the people of Jerusalem turned their backs on God to pursue idols, their favored status did nothing to protect them from being punished. They had to endure God's anger, just like anyone who disobeys His commands. Unlike human anger, which is often the product of insecurity or a deficient temperament, God's anger flows from His perfect justice and holiness. But after this judgment occurred, Jeremiah wrote, "The Lord will not cast off forever. Though He causes grief, yet He will show compassion" (3:31, 32). **Topic: Anger**

## THE PROPHET'S ANGUISH AND HOPE

**3** I *am* the man *who* has seen affliction by
the rod of His wrath.

2 He has led me and made *me* walk
*In* darkness and not *in* light.
3 Surely He has turned His hand against me
Time and time again throughout the day.
4 He has aged my flesh and my skin,
And broken my bones.
5 He has besieged me
And surrounded *me* with bitterness and
woe.
6 He has set me in dark places
Like the dead of long ago.
7 He has hedged me in so that I cannot get
out;
He has made my chain heavy.
8 Even when I cry and shout,
He shuts out my prayer.
9 He has blocked my ways with hewn
stone;
He has made my paths crooked.
10 He *has been* to me a bear lying in wait,
*Like* a lion in ambush.
11 He has turned aside my ways and torn
me in pieces;
He has made me desolate.
12 He has bent His bow
And set me up as a target for the arrow.
13 He has caused the arrows of His quiver
To pierce my loins.[a]
14 I have become the ridicule of all my
people-

Their taunting song all the day.
15 He has filled me with bitterness,
He has made me drink wormwood.
16 He has also broken my teeth with
gravel,
And covered me with ashes.
17 You have moved my soul far from
peace;
I have forgotten prosperity.
18 And I said, “My strength and my hope
Have perished from the LORD.”
19 Remember my affliction and roaming,
The wormwood and the gall.
20 My soul still remembers
And sinks within me.
21 This I recall to my mind,
Therefore I have hope.
22 *Through* the LORD’s mercies we are not
consumed,
Because His compassions fail not.
23 *They are* new every morning;
Great *is* Your faithfulness.
24 “The LORD *is* my portion,” says my soul,
“Therefore I hope in Him!”
25 The LORD *is* good to those who wait for
Him,
To the soul *who* seeks Him.
26 *It is* good that *one* should hope and wait
quietly
For the salvation of the LORD.
27 *It is* good for a man to bear
The yoke in his youth.
28 Let him sit alone and keep silent,
Because *God* has laid *it* on him;

29 Let him put his mouth in the dust-
There may yet be hope.
30 Let him give *his* cheek to the one who
strikes him,
*And* be full of reproach.
31 For the Lord will not cast off forever.
32 Though He causes grief,
Yet He will show compassion
According to the multitude of His
mercies.
33 For He does not afflict willingly,
Nor grieve the children of men.
34 To crush under one's feet
All the prisoners of the earth,
35 To turn aside the justice *due* a man
Before the face of the Most High,
36 Or subvert a man in his cause-
The Lord does not approve.
37 Who *is* he *who* speaks and it comes to
pass,
*When* the Lord has not commanded *it?*
38 *Is it* not from the mouth of the Most High
That woe and well-being proceed?
39 Why should a living man complain,
A man for the punishment of his sins?
40 Let us search out and examine our ways,
And turn back to the LORD;
41 Let us lift our hearts and hands
To God in heaven.
42 We have transgressed and rebelled;
You have not pardoned.
43 You have covered *Yourself* with anger
And pursued us;
You have slain *and* not pitied.

44 You have covered Yourself with a cloud,
That prayer should not pass through.
45 You have made us an offscouring and
refuse
In the midst of the peoples.
46 All our enemies
Have opened their mouths against us.
47 Fear and a snare have come upon us,
Desolation and destruction.
48 My eyes overflow with rivers of water
For the destruction of the daughter of
my people.
49 My eyes flow and do not cease,
Without interruption,
50 Till the LORD from heaven
Looks down and sees.
51 My eyes bring suffering to my soul
Because of all the daughters of my city.
52 My enemies without cause
Hunted me down like a bird.
53 They silenced[a] my life in the pit And threw stones at me.
54 The waters flowed over my head;
I said, “I am cut off!”
55 I called on Your name, O LORD,
From the lowest pit.
56 You have heard my voice:
“Do not hide Your ear
From my sighing, from my cry for help.”
57 You drew near on the day I called on
You,
And said, “Do not fear!”
58 O Lord, You have pleaded the case for
my soul;
You have redeemed my life.

59 O LORD, You have seen *how* I am
wronged;
Judge my case.
60 You have seen all their vengeance,
All their schemes against me.
61 You have heard their reproach, O LORD,
All their schemes against me,
62 The lips of my enemies
And their whispering against me all the
day.
63 Look at their sitting down and their
rising up;
I *am* their taunting song.
64 Repay them, O LORD,
According to the work of their hands.
65 Give them a veiled[a] heart;
Your curse *be* upon them!
66 In Your anger,
Pursue and destroy them
From under the heavens of the LORD.

**KEY PASSAGE**

# NEW EVERY MORNING

## (3:22-25)

Emotions are strange: Feelings come and go. At times, we feel as

though we can conquer the world; at other times, we feel as though the world has conquered us. How can we deal with these surging emotions? How can we maintain our faith in God despite these ups and downs? God's people can trust in Him for every part of their lives-even their emotions.

- •God knows our limits. He never gives us more than we-with His help-can handle (1 Cor. 10:13).
- •No matter what happens today, tomorrow will be new. A fresh batch of God's mercies awaits us (Lam. 3:22, 23).
- •The best response when circumstances threaten to overwhelm is to wait quietly for the Lord's help (3:25, 26).

One of the keys to maintaining a healthy emotional outlook is to leave the circumstances and challenges of everyday life in God's hands and to trust Him to do what's best.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Emotional Well-being. See also the personality profile of Jeremiah Shows It's Ok to Cry.

## EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

# RICHARD DOBBINS

# (Lamentations 3)

**C**olumbine. Road rage. Workplace shootings. Parental advisory warnings. Abortion rights. Gay rights. The mere mention of a word or phrase can conjure up universal images of a rapidly changing culture.

The unsettling issues of modern culture impact people. As they filter all of their life experiences through their thoughts and feelings, they arrive at personal interpretations of those experiences. These interpretations of life events may be positive or negative-healthy or unhealthy-and will affect their emotional life. A healthy emotional life is essential-but how can people maintain it in this evil world?

## GAINING EMOTIONAL HEALTH

God's Word promises that His children can have peace, joy, and a "sound mind" (2 Tim. 1:7). The foundation of such healthy emotions, however, must be a healthy faith. Consider the following suggestions for gaining and maintaining emotional well-being in today's trying culture.

*Healthy Faith Fosters Self-Worth*

Even after confessing their sins and receiving God's forgiveness, many believers still have trouble finding peace and joy. Christ paid the price of human redemption. Each person is valuable, lovable, forgivable, and changeable in His sight. Emotionally healthy people see themselves as God sees them.

*Healthy Faith Meets Reality*

There is no earthly life without storms. *What* happens to people in life, however, is not nearly as important as *how* they choose to react to it. Emotionally healthy people can keep a correct perspective on their difficulties and react appropriately.

*Healthy Faith Resists Future Shock*

Healthy faith lessens one's fear of the inevitable: change. To live is to grow. To grow is to change. To resist change in life is to resist growth. Emotionally healthy people are not afraid to grow and change.

*Healthy Faith Moderates Stress and Tension*

A certain amount of stress and tension are essential for excitement, motivation, and growth in life. When people have healthy faith, they can trust more and worry less. Material possessions will perish with the passing of time, so people ought not spend much time or energy worrying about them. Emotionally healthy people spend time on endeavors of eternal significance that are also stress-relievers-such as enjoying close relationships.

*Healthy Faith Finds Joy in Giving*

Giving is contrary to human nature, but it is an essential element in Christianity. In fact, giving generously should be second nature to the developing disciple. When people give generously from the heart, they discover blessings from God (Mal. 3:10). Emotionally healthy people recognize the joy in generosity.

*Healthy Faith Is Affirmed in Fellowship*

Isolating oneself from other believers or adopting religious beliefs or practices that are without biblical support are harmful to healthy faith. Peter warns that, “no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation” (2 Pet. 1:20). Paul advised believers to discern what is true by using sound biblical interpretation (2 Tim. 3:14, 15). Emotionally healthy people identify not only with Christ but also with at least one established group of Christians.

*Healthy Faith Sees God as Love*

Sometimes people are limited in their understanding of God. For example, those with an overly strict earthly father may attribute an imbalanced strictness to God’s character. To see Him only as the God who presided over the flood and the destruction of wickedness in Sodom and Gomorrah is to see only an angry God. While God is strict and angry at times, the Bible also says that God is love (1 John 4:16). Emotionally healthy people understand and experience God as

love.

*Healthy Faith Manages Anger Constructively*

Properly directed, the energy anger creates can be very constructive. Anger makes a poor master, but an excellent servant. Emotionally healthy people direct the energy created by anger into constructive activities. They go for a walk and cool down instead of saying what can never be retracted or doing things that can never be undone. They put anger to work *for* them.

*Healthy Faith Balances Work and Play*

God gave people work in Genesis 2:15. He also gave them play, for He designated one day in seven for rest and worship (Gen. 2:2; Ex. 20:8-11). By keeping this balance, emotionally healthy people learn to work hard and rest well.

## RESTORING EMOTIONAL HEALTH

People who feel emotionally unhealthy may be internalizing the pain of past or present situations. It is possible to help heal these unhealthy thoughts and feelings. There are four steps for them to follow to help "pray through" the process.

1. They need to talk honestly with God about what hurts them.

2. As they talk to God, they can let the feelings associated with the hurts come to the surface-fear, tears, anger, pain. Then they can give those feelings to God in prayer.

3. They can ask God for a new, constructive way to feel and think about the hurtful situations.

4. They can praise God for the new meaning He gives to life as they learn to see their hurts in a less painful way.

Of course, these suggestions are a process. Repeating the steps over a period of weeks or months helps bring healing and assurance. People will not find overnight relief from emotional hurts that may have lasted a lifetime. However, starting the process is a healthy beginning to gaining emotional well-being.

Even in our emotionally taxing world, Christians can enjoy the best of emotional health. A healthy faith is a helpful support in the unavoidable storms of life. It helps to remember Jeremiah's words about God: "His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness" (Lam. 3:22, 23).

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of emotional life include:

- Joshua 1:5-9
- Psalms 4:7; 23
- Proverbs 3:31-33; 14:30
- John 16:20
- 2 Corinthians 7:10
- Philippians 4:9
- Colossians 3:12-17

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on emotional life at Lamentations 3:22-25. See also the personality profile of Jeremiah Shows It's Ok to Cry.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Wait Watcher** *(3:26)* "The LORD is good to those who wait for

Him," wrote Jeremiah (3:25). In this world of direct access, instant credit, and immediate gratification, the idea of waiting for something seems quaint, almost outdated. Yet waiting quietly for God's blessings is a discipline that yields tremendous rewards. One can see God work in his or her life and be recharged. "Those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength" (Is. 40:31). A time of waiting can be a time of renewal. **Topic: Hope**

## SOUL NOTE

**In the Trenches** *(3:55-57)* Soldiers speak reverently of the relationships that are forged in the heat of battle. People who struggle together through dire circumstances form a lifelong bond deeper and more intense than that of other relationships. This same kind of bond is created when we turn to God during the battles of our lives. The next time you find yourself "in the trenches," don't lose sight of the One standing right beside you. Jeremiah didn't: "I called on Your name, O LORD, from the lowest pit. . . . You drew near . . . and said, 'Do not fear!'" **Topic: Trauma**

## THE DEGRADATION OF ZION

**4** How the gold has become dim!
*How* changed the fine gold!
The stones of the sanctuary are
scattered
At the head of every street.

2 The precious sons of Zion,
Valuable as fine gold,
How they are regarded as clay pots,
The work of the hands of the potter!
3 Even the jackals present their breasts
To nurse their young;
*But* the daughter of my people *is* cruel,
Like ostriches in the wilderness.
4 The tongue of the infant clings
To the roof of its mouth for thirst;
The young children ask for bread,
*But* no one breaks *it* for them.
5 Those who ate delicacies
Are desolate in the streets;
Those who were brought up in scarlet
Embrace ash heaps.
6 The punishment of the iniquity of the
daughter of my people
Is greater than the punishment of the sin
of Sodom,
Which was overthrown in a moment,
With no hand to help her!
7 Her Nazirites[a] were brighter than snow
And whiter than milk;
They were more ruddy in body than
rubies,
*Like* sapphire in their appearance.

[8]*Now* their appearance is blacker than
soot;
They go unrecognized in the streets;
Their skin clings to their bones,
It has become as dry as wood.
[9]*Those* slain by the sword are better off
Than *those* who die of hunger;
For these pine away,
Stricken *for lack* of the fruits of the
field.
[10] The hands of the compassionate women
Have cooked their own children;
They became food for them
In the destruction of the daughter of my
people.
[11] The LORD has fulfilled His fury,
He has poured out His fierce anger.
He kindled a fire in Zion,
And it has devoured its foundations.
[12] The kings of the earth,
And all inhabitants of the world,
Would not have believed
That the adversary and the enemy
Could enter the gates of Jerusalem-
[13] Because of the sins of her prophets
*And* the iniquities of her priests,
Who shed in her midst
The blood of the just.
[14] They wandered blind in the streets;
They have defiled themselves with
blood,
So that no one would touch their
garments.
[15] They cried out to them,
“Go away, unclean!

Go away, go away,
Do not touch us!”
When they fled and wandered,
*Those* among the nations said,
“They shall no longer dwell *here*.”
16 The face[a] of the LORD scattered them;
He no longer regards them.
*The people* do not respect the priests
Nor show favor to the elders.
17 Still our eyes failed us,
*Watching* vainly for our help;
In our watching we watched
For a nation *that* could not save *us.*
18 They tracked our steps
So that we could not walk in our streets.
Our end was near;
Our days were over,
For our end had come.
19 Our pursuers were swifter
Than the eagles of the heavens.
They pursued us on the mountains
And lay in wait for us in the wilderness.
20 The breath of our nostrils, the anointed
of the LORD,
Was caught in their pits,
Of whom we said, “Under his shadow
We shall live among the nations.”
21 Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom,
*You* who dwell in the land of Uz!
The cup shall also pass over to you And you
shall become drunk and make yourself naked.
22 *The punishment of* your iniquity is
accomplished,
O daughter of Zion;
He will no longer send you into

captivity.
He will punish your iniquity,
O daughter of Edom;
He will uncover your sins!

## A PRAYER FOR RESTORATION

5 Remember, O LORD, what has come
upon us;
Look, and behold our reproach!

2 Our inheritance has been turned over to
aliens,
And our houses to foreigners.
3 We have become orphans and waifs,
Our mothers *are* like widows.
4 We pay for the water we drink,
And our wood comes at a price.
5 *They* pursue at our heels;[a]
We labor *and* have no rest.
6 We have given our hand *to* the Egyptians
*And* the Assyrians, to be satisfied with
bread.
7 Our fathers sinned *and are* no more,
But we bear their iniquities.
8 Servants rule over us;
*There is* none to deliver *us* from their
hand.
9 We get our bread *at the risk* of our lives,
Because of the sword in the wilderness.
10 Our skin is hot as an oven,
Because of the fever of famine.
11 They ravished the women in Zion,
The maidens in the cities of Judah.
12 Princes were hung up by their hands,
And elders were not respected.
13 Young men ground at the millstones;
Boys staggered under *loads of* wood.
14 The elders have ceased *gathering at* the gate,
And the young men from their music.

You, O LORD, remain forever;
Your throne from generation to generation.
LAMENTATIONS 5:19

15 The joy of our
heart has ceased;
Our dance has turned into mourning.
16 The crown has fallen *from* our head.
Woe to us, for we have sinned!
17 Because of this our heart is faint;
Because of these *things* our eyes grow
dim;
18 Because of Mount Zion which is
desolate,
With foxes walking about on it.
19 You, O LORD,
remain forever;
Your throne from generation to generation.
20 Why do You forget us forever,
*And* forsake us for so long a time?
21 Turn us back to You, O LORD, and we
will be restored;
Renew our days as of old,
22 Unless You have utterly rejected us,
*And* are very angry with us!

# Ezekiel



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# Ezekiel

Disillusioned, demoralized. Bright hopes and dreams shattered. Great ideas ripped to shreds. Potential wasted. These feelings cause us to step back in defeat, immobilized. Such was the case for the disillusioned and demoralized Jewish people who had been deported to Babylon.

Ezekiel was the priest-in-training called to reveal God's Word to this exile community. In this book, Ezekiel describes how God revealed His glory to him (1:28; 3:12, 23). Ezekiel recorded God's messages condemning the terrible idolatry of the Jews and predicted the desecration of the temple which would cause His glory to depart (ch. 8-11). Ezekiel told the exiles that God's judgment was far from over and that Jerusalem would be totally destroyed.

Ezekiel also faced disillusionment. He found little reception for his sobering message. The same spiritual hardness that led to Judah's captivity continued afterwards as well. Steeped in tradition and resolute in their cynicism, the exiles resented Ezekiel's message and rejected both it and him.

Like most of the prophetic books, the promise of redemption follows judgment. Ezekiel predicted the restoration of the Jewish people and the rebuilding of the temple. The glory would return in a future messianic age (ch. 40-48).

The people had sinned and been punished. In their demoralized state, Ezekiel brought them God's message of hope. It was time to reassess, to learn from their mistakes, and to move on. God can do the same for us. He is with us always-even when we feel defeated. If we look, we will find the light in the darkness.

## EZEKIEL'S VISION OF GOD

**1** Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth *month*, on the fifth *day* of the month, as I *was* among the captives by the River Chebar, *that* the heavens were opened and I saw visions[a] of God. 2On the fifth *day* of the month, which *was* in the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's captivity, 3the word of the LORD came expressly to Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans[a] by the River Chebar; and the hand of the LORD was upon him there.

4Then I looked, and behold, a whirlwind was coming out of the north, a great cloud with raging fire engulfing itself; and brightness *was* all around it and radiating out of its midst like the color of amber, out of the midst of the fire. 5Also from within it *came* the likeness of four living creatures. And this *was* their appearance: they had the likeness of a man. 6Each one had four faces, and each one had four wings. 7Their legs *were* straight, and the soles of their feet *were* like the soles of calves' feet. They sparkled like the color of burnished bronze. 8The hands of a man *were* under their wings on their four sides; and each of the four had faces and wings. 9Their wings touched one another. *The creatures* did not turn when they went, but each one went straight forward.

10As for the likeness of their faces, *each* had the face of a man; each of the four had the face of a lion on the right side, each of the four had the face of an ox on the left side, and each of the four had the face of an eagle. 11Thus *were* their faces. Their wings stretched upward; two *wings* of each one touched one another, and two covered their bodies. 12And each one went straight forward; they went wherever the spirit wanted to go, and they did not turn when they went.

13As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance *was* like burning coals of fire, like the appearance of torches going back and forth among the living creatures. The fire was bright, and out of the fire went lightning. 14And the living creatures ran back and forth, in appearance like a flash of lightning.

15Now as I looked at the living creatures, behold, a wheel *was* on the earth

beside each living creature with its four faces. [16]The appearance of the wheels and their workings *was* like the color of beryl, and all four had the same likeness. The appearance of their workings *was*, as it were, a wheel in the middle of a wheel. [17]When they moved, they went toward any one of four directions; they did not turn aside when they went. [18]As for their rims, they were so high they were awesome; and their rims *were* full of eyes, all around the four of them. [19]When the living creatures went, the wheels went beside them; and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up. [20]Wherever the spirit wanted to go, they went, *because* there the spirit went; and the wheels were lifted together with them, for the spirit of the living creatures[a] *was* in the wheels. [21]When those went, *these* went; when those stood, *these* stood; and when those were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up together with them, for the spirit of the living creatures[a] *was* in the wheels.

[22]The likeness of the firmament above the heads of the living creatures[a] *was* like the color of an awesome crystal, stretched out over their heads. [23]And under the firmament their wings *spread out* straight, one toward another. Each one had two which covered one side, and each one had two which covered the other side of the body. [24]When they went, I heard the noise of their wings, like the noise of many waters, like the voice of the Almighty, a tumult like the noise of an army; and when they stood still, they let down their wings. [25]A voice came from above the firmament that *was* over their heads; whenever they stood, they let down their wings.

[26]And above the firmament over their heads *was* the likeness of a throne, in appearance like a sapphire stone; on the likeness of the throne *was* a likeness with the appearance of a man high above it. [27]Also from the appearance of His waist and upward I saw, as it were, the color of amber with the appearance of fire all around within it; and from the appearance of His waist and downward I saw, as it were, the appearance of fire with brightness all around. [28]Like the appearance of a rainbow in a cloud on a rainy day, so *was* the appearance of the brightness all around it. This *was* the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD.

## EZEKIEL SENT TO REBELLIOUS ISRAEL

So when I saw *it*, I fell on my face, and I heard a voice of One speaking.

**2** And He said to me, “Son of man, stand on your feet, and I will speak to
you.” [2]Then the Spirit entered me when He spoke to me, and set me on my
feet; and I heard Him who spoke to me. [3]And He said to me: “Son of man, I
am sending you to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that has
rebelled against Me; they and their fathers have transgressed against Me to
this very day. [4]For *they are* impudent and stubborn children. I am sending
you to them, and you shall say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD.’ [5]As for
them, whether they hear or whether they refuse-for they *are* a rebellious
house-yet they will know that a prophet has been among them.

[6]“And you, son of man, do not be afraid of them nor be afraid of their
words, though briers and thorns *are* with you and you dwell among
scorpions; do not be afraid of their words or dismayed by their looks, though
they *are* a rebellious house. [7]You shall speak My words to them, whether
they hear or whether they refuse, for they *are* rebellious. [8]But you, son of
man, hear what I say to you. Do not be rebellious like that rebellious house;
open your mouth and eat what I give you.”

[9]Now when I looked, there was a hand stretched out to me; and behold, a
scroll of a book *was* in it. [10]Then He spread it before me; and *there was*
writing on the inside and on the outside, and written on it *were* lamentations
and mourning and woe.

**3** Moreover He said to me, “Son of man, eat what you find; eat this scroll,
and go, speak to the house of Israel.” [2]So I opened my mouth, and He
caused me to eat that scroll.

[3]And He said to me, “Son of man, feed your belly, and fill your stomach with this scroll that I give you.” So I ate, and it was in my mouth like honey in sweetness.

[4]Then He said to me: “Son of man, go to the house of Israel and speak with My words to them. [5]For you *are* not sent to a people of unfamiliar speech and of hard language, *but* to the house of Israel, [6]not to many people of unfamiliar speech and of hard language, whose words you cannot understand. Surely, had I sent you to them, they would have listened to you. [7]But the house of Israel will not listen to you, because they will not listen to Me; for all the house of Israel *are* impudent and hardhearted. [8]Behold, I have made your face strong against their faces, and your forehead strong against their foreheads. [9]Like adamant stone, harder than flint, I have made your forehead; do not be afraid of them, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they *are* a rebellious house.”

[10]Moreover He said to me: “Son of man, receive into your heart all My words that I speak to you, and hear with your ears. [11]And go, get to the captives, to the children of your people, and speak to them and tell them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD,’ whether they hear, or whether they refuse.”

[12]Then the Spirit lifted me up, and I heard behind me a great thunderous voice: “Blessed *is* the glory of the LORD from His place!” [13]*I* also *heard* the noise of the wings of the living creatures that touched one another, and the noise of the wheels beside them, and a great thunderous noise. [14]So the Spirit lifted me up and took me away, and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of the LORD was strong upon me. [15]Then I came to the captives at Tel Abib, who dwelt by the River Chebar; and I sat where they sat, and remained there astonished among them seven days.

### EZEKIEL IS A WATCHMAN

[16]Now it came to pass at the end of seven days that the word of the LORD came to me, saying, [17]“Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the

house of Israel; therefore hear a word from My mouth, and give them warning from Me: [18]When I say to the wicked, ‘You shall surely die,’ and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, that same wicked *man* shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand. [19]Yet, if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul.

[20]“Again, when a righteous *man* turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and I lay a stumbling block before him, he shall die; because you did not give him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; but his blood I will require at your hand. [21]Nevertheless if you warn the righteous *man* that the righteous should not sin, and he does not sin, he shall surely live because he took warning; also you will have delivered your soul.”

[22]Then the hand of the LORD was upon me there, and He said to me, “Arise, go out into the plain, and there I shall talk with you.”

[23]So I arose and went out into the plain, and behold, the glory of the LORD stood there, like the glory which I saw by the River Chebar; and I fell on my face. [24]Then the Spirit entered me and set me on my feet, and spoke with me and said to me: “Go, shut yourself inside your house. [25]And you, O son of man, surely they will put ropes on you and bind you with them, so that you cannot go out among them. [26]I will make your tongue cling to the roof of your mouth, so that you shall be mute and not be one to rebuke them, for they *are* a rebellious house. [27]But when I speak with you, I will open your mouth, and you shall say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD.’ He who hears, let him hear; and he who refuses, let him refuse; for they *are* a rebellious house.

## THE SIEGE OF JERUSALEM PORTRAYED

**4** “You also, son of man, take a clay tablet and lay it before you, and portray
on it a city, Jerusalem. 2Lay siege against it, build a siege wall against it,
and heap up a mound against it; set camps against it also, and place battering
rams against it all around. 3Moreover take for yourself an iron plate, and set it
*as* an iron wall between you and the city. Set your face against it, and it shall
be besieged, and you shall lay siege against it. This *will be* a sign to the house
of Israel.

4“Lie also on your left side, and lay the iniquity of the house of Israel upon
it. *According* to the number of the days that you lie on it, you shall bear their
iniquity. 5For I have laid on you the years of their iniquity, according to the
number of the days, three hundred and ninety days; so you shall bear the
iniquity of the house of Israel. 6And when you have completed them, lie
again on your right side; then you shall bear the iniquity of the house of
Judah forty days. I have laid on you a day for each year.

7“Therefore you shall set your face toward the siege of Jerusalem; your
arm *shall be* uncovered, and you shall prophesy against it. 8And surely I will
restrain you so that you cannot turn from one side to another till you have
ended the days of your siege.

9“Also take for yourself wheat, barley, beans, lentils, millet, and spelt; put
them into one vessel, and make bread of them for yourself. *During* the
number of days that you lie on your side, three hundred and ninety days, you
shall eat it. 10And your food which you eat *shall be* by weight, twenty shekels
a day; from time to time you shall eat it. 11You shall also drink water by
measure, one-sixth of a hin; from time to time you shall drink. 12And you
shall eat it *as* barley cakes; and bake it using fuel of human waste in their
sight.”

13Then the LORD said, “So shall the children of Israel eat their defiled
bread among the Gentiles, where I will drive them.”

14So I said, “Ah, Lord GOD! Indeed I have never defiled myself from my
youth till now; I have never eaten what died of itself or was torn by beasts,
nor has abominable flesh ever come into my mouth.”

15 Then He said to me, “See, I am giving you cow dung instead of human
waste, and you shall prepare your bread over it.”

16 Moreover He said to me, “Son of man, surely I will cut off the supply of
bread in Jerusalem; they shall eat bread by weight and with anxiety, and shall
drink water by measure and with dread, 17 that they may lack bread and water,
and be dismayed with one another, and waste away because of their iniquity.

## A SWORD AGAINST JERUSALEM

**5** “And you, son of man, take a sharp sword, take it as a barber’s razor, and
pass *it* over your head and your beard; then take scales to weigh and divide
the hair. 2You shall burn with fire one-third in the midst of the city, when the
days of the siege are finished; then you shall take one-third and strike around
*it* with the sword, and one-third you shall scatter in the wind: I will draw out
a sword after them. 3You shall also take a small number of them and bind
them in the edge of your *garment.* 4Then take some of them again and throw
them into the midst of the fire, and burn them in the fire. From there a fire
will go out into all the house of Israel.

5“Thus says the Lord GOD: ‘This *is* Jerusalem; I have set her in the midst
of the nations and the countries all around her. 6She has rebelled against My
judgments by doing wickedness more than the nations, and against My
statutes more than the countries that *are* all around her; for they have refused
My judgments, and they have not walked in My statutes.’ 7Therefore thus
says the Lord GOD: ‘Because you have multiplied *disobedience* more than
the nations that *are* all around you, have not walked in My statutes nor kept
My judgments, nor even done[a] according to the judgments of the nations that
*are* all around you’-8therefore thus says the Lord GOD: ‘Indeed I, even I, *am*
against you and will execute judgments in your midst in the sight of the
nations. 9And I will do among you what I have never done, and the like of
which I will never do again, because of all your abominations. 10Therefore
fathers shall eat *their* sons in your midst, and sons shall eat their fathers; and I
will execute judgments among you, and all of you who remain I will scatter
to all the winds.

11‘Therefore, *as* I live,’ says the Lord GOD, ‘surely, because you have
defiled My sanctuary with all your detestable things and with all your
abominations, therefore I will also diminish *you;* My eye will not spare, nor
will I have any pity. 12One-third of you shall die of the pestilence, and be
consumed with famine in your midst; and one-third shall fall by the sword all
around you; and I will scatter another third to all the winds, and I will draw
out a sword after them.

13 ‘Thus shall My anger be spent, and I will cause My fury to rest upon
them, and I will be avenged; and they shall know that I, the LORD, have
spoken *it* in My zeal, when I have spent My fury upon them. 14 Moreover I
will make you a waste and a reproach among the nations that *are* all around
you, in the sight of all who pass by.

15 ‘So it[a] shall be a reproach, a taunt, a lesson, and an astonishment to the
nations that *are* all around you, when I execute judgments among you in
anger and in fury and in furious rebukes. I, the LORD, have spoken. 16 When I
send against them the terrible arrows of famine which shall be for
destruction, which I will send to destroy you, I will increase the famine upon
you and cut off your supply of bread. 17 So I will send against you famine and
wild beasts, and they will bereave you. Pestilence and blood shall pass
through you, and I will bring the sword against you. I, the LORD, have
spoken.’ ”

## JUDGMENT ON IDOLATROUS ISRAEL

**6** Now the word of the LORD came to me, saying: [2]"Son of man, set your face toward the mountains of Israel, and prophesy against them, [3]and say, 'O mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord GOD! Thus says the Lord GOD to the mountains, to the hills, to the ravines, and to the valleys: "Indeed I, *even* I, will bring a sword against you, and I will destroy your high places. [4]Then your altars shall be desolate, your incense altars shall be broken, and I will cast down your slain *men* before your idols. [5]And I will lay the corpses of the children of Israel before their idols, and I will scatter your bones all around your altars. [6]In all your dwelling places the cities shall be laid waste, and the high places shall be desolate, so that your altars may be laid waste and made desolate, your idols may be broken and made to cease, your incense altars may be cut down, and your works may be abolished. [7]The slain shall fall in your midst, and you shall know that I *am* the LORD.

[8]"Yet I will leave a remnant, so that you may have *some* who escape the sword among the nations, when you are scattered through the countries. [9]Then those of you who escape will remember Me among the nations where they are carried captive, because I was crushed by their adulterous heart which has departed from Me, and by their eyes which play the harlot after their idols; they will loathe themselves for the evils which they committed in all their abominations. [10]And they shall know that I *am* the LORD; I have not said in vain that I would bring this calamity upon them."

[11]'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Pound your fists and stamp your feet, and say, 'Alas, for all the evil abominations of the house of Israel! For they shall fall by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence. [12]He who is far off shall die by the pestilence, he who is near shall fall by the sword, and he who remains and is besieged shall die by the famine. Thus will I spend My fury upon them. [13]Then you shall know that I *am* the LORD, when their slain are among their idols all around their altars, on every high hill, on all the mountaintops, under every green tree, and under every thick oak, wherever they offered sweet incense to all their idols. [14]So I will stretch out My hand against them and make the land desolate, yes, more desolate than the wilderness toward Diblah, in all their dwelling places. Then they shall know that I *am* the

LORD.’ ” ’ ”

**JUDGMENT ON ISRAEL IS NEAR**

**7** Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 2"And you, son of
man, thus says the Lord GOD to the land of Israel:

'An end! The end has come upon the four corners of the land.
3 Now the end *has come* upon you,
And I will send My anger against you;
I will judge you according to your ways,
And I will repay you for all your abominations.
4 My eye will not spare you,
Nor will I have pity;
But I will repay your ways,
And your abominations will be in your midst;
Then you shall know that I *am* the LORD!'
5"Thus says the Lord GOD:
'A disaster, a singular disaster;
Behold, it has come!
6 An end has come,
The end has come;
It has dawned for you;
Behold, it has come!
7 Doom has come to you,
you who dwell in the land;
The time has come,
A day of trouble *is* near,
And not of rejoicing in the mountains.
8 Now upon you I will soon pour out My fury,
And spend My anger upon you;
I will judge you according to your ways,
And I will repay you for all your abominations.
9 'My eye will not spare,
Nor will I have pity;
I will repay you according to your ways,
And your abominations will be in your midst.

Then you shall know that I *am* the LORD who strikes.
10 ‘Behold,
the day! Behold,
it has come!
Doom has gone out;
The rod has blossomed, Pride has budded.
11 Violence has risen up into a rod of wickedness;
None of them *shall remain,*
None of their multitude,
None of them;
Nor *shall there be* wailing for them.
12 The time has come,
The day draws near.
‘Let not the buyer rejoice,
Nor the seller mourn,
For wrath *is* on their whole multitude.
13 For the seller shall not return to what has been sold,
Though he may still be alive;
For the vision concerns the whole multitude,
And it shall not turn back;
No one will strengthen himself Who lives in iniquity.
14 ‘They have blown the trumpet and made everyone ready,
But no one goes to battle;
For My wrath *is* on all their multitude.
15 The sword *is* outside,
And the pestilence and famine within.
Whoever *is* in the field Will die by the sword;
And whoever *is* in the city,
Famine and pestilence will devour him.
16 ‘Those who survive will escape and be on the mountains
Like doves of the valleys,
All of them mourning,
Each for his iniquity.
17 Every hand will be feeble,
And every knee will be *as* weak *as* water.

18 They will also be girded with sackcloth;
Horror will cover them;
Shame *will be* on every face,
Baldness on all their heads.
19 ‘They will throw their silver into the streets,
And their gold will be like refuse;
Their silver and their gold will not be
able to deliver them In the day of the wrath of the LORD;
They will not satisfy their souls,
Nor fill their stomachs,
Because it became their stumbling block of iniquity.
20 ‘As for the beauty of his ornaments,
He set it in majesty;
But they made from it The images of their abominations-
Their detestable things;
Therefore I have made it
Like refuse to them.
21 I will give it as plunder
Into the hands of strangers,
And to the wicked of the earth as spoil;
And they shall defile it.
22 I will turn My face from them,
And they will defile My secret place;
For robbers shall enter it and defile it.
23 ‘Make a chain,
For the land is filled with crimes of blood,
And the city is full of violence.
24 Therefore I will bring the worst of the Gentiles,
And they will possess their houses;
I will cause the pomp of the strong to cease,
And their holy places shall be defiled.
25 Destruction comes;
They will seek peace,
but *there shall be* none.
26 Disaster will come upon disaster,

And rumor will be upon rumor.
Then they will seek a vision from a prophet;
But the law will perish from the priest,
And counsel from the elders.
27 ‘The king will mourn,
The prince will be clothed with desolation,
And the hands of the common people will tremble.
I will do to them according to their way,
And according to what they deserve I will judge them;
Then they shall know that I *am* the LORD!’ ”

## ABOMINATIONS IN THE TEMPLE

**8** And it came to pass in the sixth year, in the sixth *month*, on the fifth *day* of
the month, as I sat in my house with the elders of Judah sitting before me,
that the hand of the Lord GOD fell upon me there. 2Then I looked, and there
was a likeness, like the appearance of fire-from the appearance of His waist
and downward, fire; and from His waist and upward, like the appearance of
brightness, like the color of amber. 3He stretched out the form of a hand, and
took me by a lock of my hair; and the Spirit lifted me up between earth and
heaven, and brought me in visions of God to Jerusalem, to the door of the
north gate of the inner *court*, where the seat of the image of jealousy *was*,
which provokes to jealousy. 4And behold, the glory of the God of Israel *was*
there, like the vision that I saw in the plain.

5Then He said to me, "Son of man, lift your eyes now toward the north."
So I lifted my eyes toward the north, and there, north of the altar gate, was
this image of jealousy in the entrance.

6Furthermore He said to me, "Son of man, do you see what they are doing,
the great abominations that the house of Israel commits here, to make Me go
far away from My sanctuary? Now turn again, you will see greater
abominations." 7So He brought me to the door of the court; and when I
looked, there was a hole in the wall. 8Then He said to me, "Son of man, dig
into the wall"; and when I dug into the wall, there was a door.

9And He said to me, "Go in, and see the wicked abominations which they
are doing there." 10So I went in and saw, and there-every sort of creeping
thing, abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, portrayed all
around on the walls. 11And there stood before them seventy men of the elders
of the house of Israel, and in their midst stood Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan.
Each man had a censer in his hand, and a thick cloud of incense went up.
12Then He said to me, "Son of man, have you seen what the elders of the
house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the room of his idols? For they
say, 'The LORD does not see us, the LORD has forsaken the land.' "

13And He said to me, "Turn again, *and* you will see greater abominations
that they are doing." 14So He brought me to the door of the north gate of the

LORD's house; and to my dismay, women were sitting there weeping for Tammuz.

15Then He said to me, "Have you seen *this,* O son of man? Turn again, you will see greater abominations than these." 16So He brought me into the inner court of the LORD's house; and there, at the door of the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, *were* about twenty-five men with their backs toward the temple of the LORD and their faces toward the east, and they were worshiping the sun toward the east.

17And He said to me, "Have you seen *this,* O son of man? Is it a trivial thing to the house of Judah to commit the abominations which they commit here? For they have filled the land with violence; then they have returned to provoke Me to anger. Indeed they put the branch to their nose. 18Therefore I also will act in fury. My eye will not spare nor will I have pity; and though they cry in My ears with a loud voice, I will not hear them."

**SOUL NOTE**

**Healthy Fear** *(8:17)* By filling God's sanctuary with idols and other abominations, the Israelites demonstrated a dangerous lack of fear of the Lord. Evidently they felt that they could get away with it. This false security is often caused by an errant view of the Almighty. Many people claim that God is love and then stop there, as though that were His only attribute. They forget that He is also holy and just, and demands punishment for sin. Until people learn to respect God's holiness, they are as vulnerable as the ancient Israelites. **Topic: Fear/Fear of God**

## THE WICKED ARE SLAIN

**9** Then He called out in my hearing with a loud voice, saying, “Let those who have charge over the city draw near, each *with* a deadly weapon in his hand.” 2And suddenly six men came from the direction of the upper gate, which faces north, each with his battle-ax in his hand. One man among them *was* clothed with linen and had a writer’s inkhorn at his side. They went in and stood beside the bronze altar.

3Now the glory of the God of Israel had gone up from the cherub, where it had been, to the threshold of the temple.[a] And He called to the man clothed with linen, who *had* the writer’s inkhorn at his side; 4and the LORD said to him, “Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it.”

5To the others He said in my hearing, “Go after him through the city and kill; do not let your eye spare, nor have any pity. 6Utterly slay old *and* young men, maidens and little children and women; but do not come near anyone on whom *is* the mark; and begin at My sanctuary.” So they began with the elders who *were* before the temple. 7Then He said to them, “Defile the temple, and fill the courts with the slain. Go out!” And they went out and killed in the city.

8So it was, that while they were killing them, I was left *alone;* and I fell on my face and cried out, and said, “Ah, Lord GOD! Will You destroy all the remnant of Israel in pouring out Your fury on Jerusalem?”

9Then He said to me, “The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah *is* exceedingly great, and the land is full of bloodshed, and the city full of perversity; for they say, ‘The LORD has forsaken the land, and the LORD does not see!’ 10And as for Me also, My eye will neither spare, nor will I have pity, *but* I will recompense their deeds on their own head.”

11Just then, the man clothed with linen, who *had* the inkhorn at his side, reported back and said, “I have done as You commanded me.”

## THE GLORY DEPARTS FROM THE TEMPLE

**10** And I looked, and there in the firmament that was above the head of the cherubim, there appeared something like a sapphire stone, having the appearance of the likeness of a throne. 2Then He spoke to the man clothed with linen, and said, “Go in among the wheels, under the cherub, fill your hands with coals of fire from among the cherubim, and scatter *them* over the city.” And he went in as I watched.

3Now the cherubim were standing on the south side of the temple[a] when the man went in, and the cloud filled the inner court. 4Then the glory of the LORD went up from the cherub, *and paused* over the threshold of the temple; and the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the brightness of the LORD’s glory. 5And the sound of the wings of the cherubim was heard *even* in the outer court, like the voice of Almighty God when He speaks.

6Then it happened, when He commanded the man clothed in linen, saying, “Take fire from among the wheels, from among the cherubim,” that he went in and stood beside the wheels. 7And the cherub stretched out his hand from among the cherubim to the fire that *was* among the cherubim, and took *some of it* and put *it* into the hands of the *man* clothed with linen, who took *it* and went out. 8The cherubim appeared to have the form of a man’s hand under their wings.

9And when I looked, there were four wheels by the cherubim, one wheel by one cherub and another wheel by each other cherub; the wheels appeared *to have* the color of a beryl stone. 10*As for* their appearance, all four looked alike-as it were, a wheel in the middle of a wheel. 11When they went, they went toward *any of* their four directions; they did not turn aside when they went, but followed in the direction the head was facing. They did not turn aside when they went. 12And their whole body, with their back, their hands, their wings, and the wheels that the four had, *were* full of eyes all around. 13As for the wheels, they were called in my hearing, “Wheel.”

14Each one had four faces: the first face *was* the face of a cherub, the second face the face of a man, the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the

face of an eagle. [15]And the cherubim were lifted up. This *was* the living creature I saw by the River Chebar. [16]When the cherubim went, the wheels went beside them; and when the cherubim lifted their wings to mount up from the earth, the same wheels also did not turn from beside them. [17]When *the cherubim*[a] stood still, *the wheels* stood still, and when *one*[b] was lifted up, *the other*[c] lifted itself up, for the spirit of the living creature *was* in them.

[18]Then the glory of the LORD departed from the threshold of the temple and stood over the cherubim. [19]And the cherubim lifted their wings and mounted up from the earth in my sight. When they went out, the wheels *were* beside them; and they stood at the door of the east gate of the LORD's house, and the glory of the God of Israel *was* above them.

[20]This *is* the living creature I saw under the God of Israel by the River Chebar, and I knew they *were* cherubim. [21]Each one had four faces and each one four wings, and the likeness of the hands of a man *was* under their wings.

[22]And the likeness of their faces *was* the same *as* the faces which I had seen by the River Chebar, their appearance and their persons. They each went straight forward.

## JUDGMENT ON WICKED COUNSELORS

**11** Then the Spirit lifted me up and brought me to the East Gate of the LORD's house, which faces eastward; and there at the door of the gate were twenty-five men, among whom I saw Jaazaniah the son of Azzur, and Pelatiah the son of Benaiah, princes of the people. 2And He said to me: "Son of man, these *are* the men who devise iniquity and give wicked counsel in this city, 3who say, '*The time is* not near to build houses; this *city is* the caldron, and we *are* the meat.' 4Therefore prophesy against them, prophesy, O son of man!"

5Then the Spirit of the LORD fell upon me, and said to me, "Speak! 'Thus says the LORD: "Thus you have said, O house of Israel; for I know the things that come into your mind. 6You have multiplied your slain in this city, and you have filled its streets with the slain." 7Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: "Your slain whom you have laid in its midst, they *are* the meat, and this *city is* the caldron; but I shall bring you out of the midst of it. 8You have feared the sword; and I will bring a sword upon you," says the Lord GOD. 9"And I will bring you out of its midst, and deliver you into the hands of strangers, and execute judgments on you. 10You shall fall by the sword. I will judge you at the border of Israel. Then you shall know that I *am* the LORD. 11This *city* shall not be your caldron, nor shall you be the meat in its midst. I will judge you at the border of Israel. 12And you shall know that I *am* the LORD; for you have not walked in My statutes nor executed My judgments, but have done according to the customs of the Gentiles which *are* all around you." ' "

13Now it happened, while I was prophesying, that Pelatiah the son of Benaiah died. Then I fell on my face and cried with a loud voice, and said, "Ah, Lord GOD! Will You make a complete end of the remnant of Israel?"

## GOD WILL RESTORE ISRAEL

14Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 15"Son of man, your brethren, your relatives, your countrymen, and all the house of Israel in its entirety, *are* those about whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said, 'Get far away from the LORD; this land has been given to us as a possession.'

16 Therefore say, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: “Although I have cast them far
off among the Gentiles, and although I have scattered them among the
countries, yet I shall be a little sanctuary for them in the countries where they
have gone.” ’ 17 Therefore say, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: “I will gather you
from the peoples, assemble you from the countries where you have been
scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.” ’ 18 And they will go there,
and they will take away all its detestable things and all its abominations from
there. 19 Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within
them,[a] and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of
flesh, 20 that they may walk in My statutes and keep My judgments and do
them; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God. 21 But *as for those*
whose hearts follow the desire for their detestable things and their
abominations, I will recompense their deeds on their own heads,” says the
Lord GOD.

> “Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes and keep My judgments and do them; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God.”
> EZEKIEL 11:19, 20

22 So the cherubim lifted up their wings, with the wheels beside them, and
the glory of the God of Israel *was* high above them. 23 And the glory of the
LORD went up from the midst of the city and stood on the mountain, which *is*
on the east side of the city.

24 Then the Spirit took me up and brought me in a vision by the Spirit of
God into Chaldea,[a] to those in captivity. And the vision that I had seen went
up from me. 25 So I spoke to those in captivity of all the things the LORD had
shown me.

## JUDAH'S CAPTIVITY PORTRAYED

**12** Now the word of the LORD came to me, saying: [2]"Son of man, you dwell in the midst of a rebellious house, which has eyes to see but does not see, and ears to hear but does not hear; for they *are* a rebellious house.

[3]"Therefore, son of man, prepare your belongings for captivity, and go into captivity by day in their sight. You shall go from your place into captivity to another place in their sight. It may be that they will consider, though they *are* a rebellious house. [4]By day you shall bring out your belongings in their sight, as though going into captivity; and at evening you shall go in their sight, like those who go into captivity. [5]Dig through the wall in their sight, and carry your belongings out through it. [6]In their sight you shall bear *them* on *your* shoulders *and* carry *them* out at twilight; you shall cover your face, so that you cannot see the ground, for I have made you a sign to the house of Israel."

[7]So I did as I was commanded. I brought out my belongings by day, as though going into captivity, and at evening I dug through the wall with my hand. I brought *them* out at twilight, *and* I bore *them* on *my* shoulder in their sight.

[8]And in the morning the word of the LORD came to me, saying, [9]"Son of man, has not the house of Israel, the rebellious house, said to you, 'What are you doing?' [10]Say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "This burden *concerns* the prince in Jerusalem and all the house of Israel who are among them." ' [11]Say, 'I *am* a sign to you. As I have done, so shall it be done to them; they shall be carried away into captivity.' [12]And the prince who *is* among them shall bear *his belongings* on *his* shoulder at twilight and go out. They shall dig through the wall to carry *them* out through it. He shall cover his face, so that he cannot see the ground with *his* eyes. [13]I will also spread My net over him, and he shall be caught in My snare. I will bring him to Babylon, *to* the land of the Chaldeans; yet he shall not see it, though he shall die there. [14]I will scatter to every wind all who *are* around him to help him, and all his troops; and I will draw out the sword after them.

[15]"Then they shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I scatter them among the nations and disperse them throughout the countries. [16]But I will spare a

few of their men from the sword, from famine, and from pestilence, that they may declare all their abominations among the Gentiles wherever they go. Then they shall know that I *am* the LORD."

**JUDGMENT NOT POSTPONED**

17 Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 18 "Son of man, eat your bread with quaking, and drink your water with trembling and anxiety. 19 And say to the people of the land, 'Thus says the Lord GOD to the inhabitants of Jerusalem *and* to the land of Israel: "They shall eat their bread with anxiety, and drink their water with dread, so that her land may be emptied of all who are in it, because of the violence of all those who dwell in it. 20 Then the cities that are inhabited shall be laid waste, and the land shall become desolate; and you shall know that I *am* the LORD." ' "

21 And the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 22 "Son of man, what *is* this proverb *that* you *people* have about the land of Israel, which says, 'The days are prolonged, and every vision fails'? 23 Tell them therefore, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "I will lay this proverb to rest, and they shall no more use it as a proverb in Israel." But say to them, "The days are at hand, and the fulfillment of every vision. 24 For no more shall there be any false vision or flattering divination within the house of Israel. 25 For I *am* the LORD. I speak, and the word which I speak will come to pass; it will no more be postponed; for in your days, O rebellious house, I will say the word and perform it," says the Lord GOD.' "

26 Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 27 "Son of man, look, the house of Israel is saying, 'The vision that he sees *is* for many days *from now,* and he prophesies of times far off.' 28 Therefore say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "None of My words will be postponed any more, but the word which I speak will be done," says the Lord GOD.' "

## WOE TO FOOLISH PROPHETS

**13** And the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 2"Son of man, prophesy
against the prophets of Israel who prophesy, and say to those who
prophesy out of their own heart, 'Hear the word of the LORD!' "

3Thus says the Lord GOD: "Woe to the foolish prophets, who follow their
own spirit and have seen nothing! 4O Israel, your prophets are like foxes in
the deserts. 5You have not gone up into the gaps to build a wall for the house
of Israel to stand in battle on the day of the LORD. 6They have envisioned
futility and false divination, saying, 'Thus says the LORD!' But the LORD has
not sent them; yet they hope that the word may be confirmed. 7Have you not
seen a futile vision, and have you not spoken false divination? You say, 'The
LORD says,' but I have not spoken."

8Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: "Because you have spoken nonsense
and envisioned lies, therefore I *am* indeed against you," says the Lord GOD.
9"My hand will be against the prophets who envision futility and who divine
lies; they shall not be in the assembly of My people, nor be written in the
record of the house of Israel, nor shall they enter into the land of Israel. Then
you shall know that I *am* the Lord GOD.

10"Because, indeed, because they have seduced My people, saying,
'Peace!' when *there is* no peace-and one builds a wall, and they plaster it
with untempered *mortar*-11say to those who plaster *it* with untempered
*mortar*, that it will fall. There will be flooding rain, and you, O great
hailstones, shall fall; and a stormy wind shall tear *it* down. 12Surely, when the
wall has fallen, will it not be said to you, 'Where *is* the mortar with which
you plastered *it?*' "

13Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: "I will cause a stormy wind to break
forth in My fury; and there shall be a flooding rain in My anger, and great
hailstones in fury to consume *it.* 14So I will break down the wall you have
plastered with untempered *mortar*, and bring it down to the ground, so that its
foundation will be uncovered; it will fall, and you shall be consumed in the
midst of it. Then you shall know that I *am* the LORD.

15"Thus will I accomplish My wrath on the wall and on those who have

plastered it with untempered *mortar;* and I will say to you, ‘The wall *is* no *more,* nor those who plastered it, [16]*that is,* the prophets of Israel who prophesy concerning Jerusalem, and who see visions of peace for her when *there is* no peace,’ ” says the Lord GOD.

[17]“Likewise, son of man, set your face against the daughters of your people, who prophesy out of their own heart; prophesy against them, [18]and say, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: “Woe to the *women* who sew *magic* charms on their sleeves[a] and make veils for the heads of people of every height to hunt souls! Will you hunt the souls of My people, and keep yourselves alive? [19]And will you profane Me among My people for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread, killing people who should not die, and keeping people alive who should not live, by your lying to My people who listen to lies?”

[20]‘Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: “Behold, I *am* against your *magic* charms by which you hunt souls there like birds. I will tear them from your arms, and let the souls go, the souls you hunt like birds. [21]I will also tear off your veils and deliver My people out of your hand, and they shall no longer be as prey in your hand. Then you shall know that I *am* the LORD.

[22]“Because with lies you have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and you have strengthened the hands of the wicked, so that he does not turn from his wicked way to save his life. [23]Therefore you shall no longer envision futility nor practice divination; for I will deliver My people out of your hand, and you shall know that I *am* the LORD.” ’ ”

## IDOLATRY WILL BE PUNISHED

**14** Now some of the elders of Israel came to me and sat before me. [2]And the
word of the LORD came to me, saying, [3]"Son of man, these men have set
up their idols in their hearts, and put before them that which causes them to
stumble into iniquity. Should I let Myself be inquired of at all by them?

[4]"Therefore speak to them, and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD:
"Everyone of the house of Israel who sets up his idols in his heart, and puts
before him what causes him to stumble into iniquity, and then comes to the
prophet, I the LORD will answer him who comes, according to the multitude
of his idols, [5]that I may seize the house of Israel by their heart, because they
are all estranged from Me by their idols." '

[6]"Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Repent,
turn away from your idols, and turn your faces away from all your
abominations. [7]For anyone of the house of Israel, or of the strangers who
dwell in Israel, who separates himself from Me and sets up his idols in his
heart and puts before him what causes him to stumble into iniquity, then
comes to a prophet to inquire of him concerning Me, I the LORD will answer
him by Myself. [8]I will set My face against that man and make him a sign and
a proverb, and I will cut him off from the midst of My people. Then you shall
know that I *am* the LORD.

[9]"And if the prophet is induced to speak anything, I the LORD have induced
that prophet, and I will stretch out My hand against him and destroy him from
among My people Israel. [10]And they shall bear their iniquity; the punishment
of the prophet shall be the same as the punishment of the one who inquired,
[11]that the house of Israel may no longer stray from Me, nor be profaned
anymore with all their transgressions, but that they may be My people and I
may be their God," says the Lord GOD.' "

## JUDGMENT ON PERSISTENT UNFAITHFULNESS

[12]The word of the LORD came again to me, saying: [13]"Son of man, when a
land sins against Me by persistent unfaithfulness, I will stretch out My hand
against it; I will cut off its supply of bread, send famine on it, and cut off man

and beast from it. [14]Even *if* these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they would deliver *only* themselves by their righteousness," says the Lord GOD.

[15]"If I cause wild beasts to pass through the land, and they empty it, and make it so desolate that no man may pass through because of the beasts, [16]*even though* these three men *were* in it, *as* I live," says the Lord GOD, "they would deliver neither sons nor daughters; only they would be delivered, and the land would be desolate.

[17]"Or *if* I bring a sword on that land, and say, 'Sword, go through the land,' and I cut off man and beast from it, [18]even *though* these three men *were* in it, *as* I live," says the Lord GOD, "they would deliver neither sons nor daughters, but only they themselves would be delivered.

[19]"Or *if* I send a pestilence into that land and pour out My fury on it in blood, and cut off from it man and beast, [20]even *though* Noah, Daniel, and Job *were* in it, *as* I live," says the Lord GOD, "they would deliver neither son nor daughter; they would deliver *only* themselves by their righteousness."

[21]For thus says the Lord GOD: "How much more it shall be when I send My four severe judgments on Jerusalem-the sword and famine and wild beasts and pestilence-to cut off man and beast from it? [22]Yet behold, there shall be left in it a remnant who will be brought out, *both* sons and daughters; surely they will come out to you, and you will see their ways and their doings. Then you will be comforted concerning the disaster that I have brought upon Jerusalem, all that I have brought upon it. [23]And they will comfort you, when you see their ways and their doings; and you shall know that I have done nothing without cause that I have done in it," says the Lord GOD.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Beyond Sorry** *(14:6)* God told the Israelites to repent of their idolatry. Repentance is more than saying, “I’m sorry”; it’s a complete change of direction in one’s life. The first step of true repentance is to recognize that we are moving away from God, pursuing an activity or lifestyle that opposes what He desires. The second step is to admit the sin to Him and ask for His forgiveness. The third step is to “turn away” from the sin and back to God. There is no true repentance without a change in behavior. **Topic: Repentance**

**THE OUTCAST VINE**

**15** Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying: 2"Son of man, how is
the wood of the vine *better* than any other wood, the vine branch which
is among the trees of the forest? 3Is wood taken from it to make any object?
Or can *men* make a peg from it to hang any vessel on? 4Instead, it is thrown
into the fire for fuel; the fire devours both ends of it, and its middle is burned.
Is it useful for *any* work? 5Indeed, when it was whole, no object could be
made from it. How much less will it be useful for *any* work when the fire has
devoured it, and it is burned?

6"Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: 'Like the wood of the vine among
the trees of the forest, which I have given to the fire for fuel, so I will give up
the inhabitants of Jerusalem; 7and I will set My face against them. They will
go out from *one* fire, but *another* fire shall devour them. Then you shall know
that I *am* the LORD, when I set My face against them. 8Thus I will make the
land desolate, because they have persisted in unfaithfulness,' says the Lord
GOD."

## GOD'S LOVE FOR JERUSALEM

**16** Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 2"Son of man, cause
Jerusalem to know her abominations, 3and say, 'Thus says the Lord
GOD to Jerusalem: "Your birth and your nativity *are* from the land of
Canaan; your father *was* an Amorite and your mother a Hittite. 4*As for* your
nativity, on the day you were born your navel cord was not cut, nor were you
washed in water to cleanse *you;* you were not rubbed with salt nor wrapped
in swaddling cloths. 5No eye pitied you, to do any of these things for you, to
have compassion on you; but you were thrown out into the open field, when
you yourself were loathed on the day you were born.

6"And when I passed by you and saw you struggling in your own blood, I
said to you in your blood, 'Live!' Yes, I said to you in your blood, 'Live!' 7I
made you thrive like a plant in the field; and you grew, matured, and became
very beautiful. *Your* breasts were formed, your hair grew, but you *were* naked
and bare.

8"When I passed by you again and looked upon you, indeed your time *was*
the time of love; so I spread My wing over you and covered your nakedness.
Yes, I swore an oath to you and entered into a covenant with you, and you
became Mine," says the Lord GOD.

9"Then I washed you in water; yes, I thoroughly washed off your blood,
and I anointed you with oil. 10I clothed you in embroidered cloth and gave
you sandals of badger skin; I clothed you with fine linen and covered you
with silk. 11I adorned you with ornaments, put bracelets on your wrists, and a
chain on your neck. 12And I put a jewel in your nose, earrings in your ears,
and a beautiful crown on your head. 13Thus you were adorned with gold and
silver, and your clothing *was of* fine linen, silk, and embroidered cloth. You
ate *pastry of* fine flour, honey, and oil. You were exceedingly beautiful, and
succeeded to royalty. 14Your fame went out among the nations because of
your beauty, for it *was* perfect through My splendor which I had bestowed on
you," says the Lord GOD.

## JERUSALEM'S HARLOTRY

15“But you trusted in your own beauty, played the harlot because of your
fame, and poured out your harlotry on everyone passing by who *would have*
it. 16You took some of your garments and adorned multicolored high places
for yourself, and played the harlot on them. *Such* things should not happen,
nor be. 17You have also taken your beautiful jewelry from My gold and My
silver, which I had given you, and made for yourself male images and played
the harlot with them. 18You took your embroidered garments and covered
them, and you set My oil and My incense before them. 19Also My food which
I gave you-the pastry of fine flour, oil, and honey *which* I fed you-you set it
before them as sweet incense; and *so* it was,” says the Lord GOD.

20“Moreover you took your sons and your daughters, whom you bore to
Me, and these you sacrificed to them to be devoured. *Were* your *acts* of
harlotry a small matter, 21that you have slain My children and offered them
up to them by causing them to pass through *the fire?* 22And in all your
abominations and acts of harlotry you did not remember the days of your
youth, when you were naked and bare, struggling in your blood.

23“Then it was so, after all your wickedness-‘Woe, woe to you!’ says the
Lord GOD-24*that* you also built for yourself a shrine, and made a high place
for yourself in every street. 25You built your high places at the head of every
road, and made your beauty to be abhorred. You offered yourself to everyone
who passed by, and multiplied your acts of harlotry. 26You also committed
harlotry with the Egyptians, your very fleshly neighbors, and increased your
acts of harlotry to provoke Me to anger.

27“Behold, therefore, I stretched out My hand against you, diminished your
allotment, and gave you up to the will of those who hate you, the daughters of
the Philistines, who were ashamed of your lewd behavior. 28You also played
the harlot with the Assyrians, because you were insatiable; indeed you played
the harlot with them and still were not satisfied. 29Moreover you multiplied
your acts of harlotry as far as the land of the trader, Chaldea; and even then
you were not satisfied.

30“How degenerate is your heart!” says the Lord GOD, “seeing you do all
these *things,* the deeds of a brazen harlot.

## JERUSALEM'S ADULTERY

31 "You erected your shrine at the head of every road, and built your high
place in every street. Yet you were not like a harlot, because you scorned
payment. 32 *You are* an adulterous wife, *who* takes strangers instead of her
husband. 33 Men make payment to all harlots, but you made your payments to
all your lovers, and hired them to come to you from all around for your
harlotry. 34 You are the opposite of *other* women in your harlotry, because no
one solicited you to be a harlot. In that you gave payment but no payment
was given you, therefore you are the opposite."

## JERUSALEM'S LOVERS WILL ABUSE HER

35 'Now then, O harlot, hear the word of the LORD! 36 Thus says the Lord
GOD: "Because your filthiness was poured out and your nakedness
uncovered in your harlotry with your lovers, and with all your abominable
idols, and because of the blood of your children which you gave to them,
37 surely, therefore, I will gather all your lovers with whom you took pleasure,
all those you loved, *and* all those you hated; I will gather them from all
around against you and will uncover your nakedness to them, that they may
see all your nakedness. 38 And I will judge you as women who break wedlock
or shed blood are judged; I will bring blood upon you in fury and jealousy.
39 I will also give you into their hand, and they shall throw down your shrines
and break down your high places. They shall also strip you of your clothes,
take your beautiful jewelry, and leave you naked and bare.

40 "They shall also bring up an assembly against you, and they shall stone
you with stones and thrust you through with their swords. 41 They shall burn
your houses with fire, and execute judgments on you in the sight of many
women; and I will make you cease playing the harlot, and you shall no longer
hire lovers. 42 So I will lay to rest My fury toward you, and My jealousy shall
depart from you. I will be quiet, and be angry no more. 43 Because you did not
remember the days of your youth, but agitated Me[a] with all these *things*,
surely I will also recompense your deeds on *your own* head," says the Lord
GOD. "And you shall not commit lewdness in addition to all your
abominations.

## MORE WICKED THAN SAMARIA AND SODOM

44 “Indeed everyone who quotes proverbs will use *this* proverb against you:
‘Like mother, like daughter!’ 45 You *are* your mother’s daughter, loathing
husband and children; and you *are* the sister of your sisters, who loathed their
husbands and children; your mother *was* a Hittite and your father an Amorite.

46 “Your elder sister *is* Samaria, who dwells with her daughters to the north
of you; and your younger sister, who dwells to the south of you, *is* Sodom
and her daughters. 47 You did not walk in their ways nor act according to their
abominations; but, as *if that were* too little, you became more corrupt than
they in all your ways.

48 “*As* I live,” says the Lord GOD, “neither your sister Sodom nor her
daughters have done as you and your daughters have done. 49 Look, this was
the iniquity of your sister Sodom: She and her daughter had pride, fullness of
food, and abundance of idleness; neither did she strengthen the hand of the
poor and needy. 50 And they were haughty and committed abomination before
Me; therefore I took them away as I saw *fit.*[a]

51 “Samaria did not commit half of your sins; but you have multiplied your
abominations more than they, and have justified your sisters by all the
abominations which you have done. 52 You who judged your sisters, bear
your own shame also, because the sins which you committed were more
abominable than theirs; they are more righteous than you. Yes, be disgraced
also, and bear your own shame, because you justified your sisters.

53 “When I bring back their captives, the captives of Sodom and her
daughters, and the captives of Samaria and her daughters, then *I will also
bring back* the captives of your captivity among them, 54 that you may bear
your own shame and be disgraced by all that you did when you comforted
them. 55 When your sisters, Sodom and her daughters, return to their former
state, and Samaria and her daughters return to their former state, then you and
your daughters will return to your former state. 56 For your sister Sodom was
not a byword in your mouth in the days of your pride, 57 before your
wickedness was uncovered. It was like the time of the reproach of the
daughters of Syria[a] and all *those* around her, and of the daughters of the
Philistines, who despise you everywhere. 58 You have paid for your lewdness

and your abominations," says the LORD. [59]For thus says the Lord GOD: "I will deal with you as you have done, who despised the oath by breaking the covenant.

**AN EVERLASTING COVENANT**

[60]"Nevertheless I will remember My covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish an everlasting covenant with you. [61]Then you will remember your ways and be ashamed, when you receive your older and your younger sisters; for I will give them to you for daughters, but not because of My covenant with you. [62]And I will establish My covenant with you. Then you shall know that I *am* the LORD, [63]that you may remember and be ashamed, and never open your mouth anymore because of your shame, when I provide you an atonement for all you have done," says the Lord GOD.' "

**SOUL NOTE**

**God the Jilted Groom** *(16:8-14)* This passage about God's love for Jerusalem despite the nation's idolatry pictures God as a jilted groom reminding His bride of all that He has done. If it seems strange to think of God as a scorned lover, it shouldn't. How often do we reject Him to follow our own desires and impulses, only to return later begging for forgiveness? We can find great comfort in the fact that our heavenly Father can empathize with the pain of someone who has been betrayed by a loved one. Knowing that He understands can help us trust Him in our own hurt and pain. **Topic: Adultery**

## SOUL NOTE

**The Beauty Myth** *(16:15)* Though "harlot" refers to Jerusalem, and the "harlotry" to spiritual idolatry, the passage also teaches about trusting in the wrong things. The city trusted in its beauty and fame; so do many people. Trusting in one's own beauty or sex appeal can lead to all kinds of problems, including sexual sin. Devastated relationships, poor self-image, and life-altering diseases are just a few of the lingering effects of sexual sin. God did not give us rules regarding our sexuality to spoil our fun; He did it to *enhance* our pleasure, to provide a guilt-free, worry-free way to express physical love. **Topic: Sexual Sin**

## THE EAGLES AND THE VINE

**17** And the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 2"Son of man, pose a
riddle, and speak a parable to the house of Israel, 3and say, 'Thus says
the Lord GOD:

"A great eagle with large wings and long pinions,
Full of feathers of various colors,
Came to Lebanon And took from the cedar the highest branch.
4 He cropped off its topmost young twig
And carried it to a land of trade;
He set it in a city of merchants.
5 Then he took some of the seed of the land
And planted it in a fertile field;
He placed *it* by abundant waters
*And* set it like a willow tree.
6 And it grew and became a spreading vine of low stature;
Its branches turned toward him,
But its roots were under it.
So it became a vine,
Brought forth branches,
And put forth shoots.
7 "But there was another[a] great eagle with
large wings and many feathers;
And behold, this vine bent its roots toward him,
And stretched its branches toward him,
From the garden terrace where it had been planted,
That he might water it.
8 It was planted in good soil by many waters,
To bring forth branches,
bear fruit, *And* become a majestic vine." '
9"Say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD:
"Will it thrive?
Will he not pull up its roots,
Cut off its fruit,

And leave it to wither?
All of its spring leaves will wither,
And no great power or many people
Will be needed to pluck it up by its roots.
10 Behold, *it is* planted,
Will it thrive?
Will it not utterly wither when the east wind touches it?
It will wither in the garden terrace where it grew.” ’ ”

11 Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 12 “Say now to the rebellious house: ‘Do you not know what these *things mean?* ’ Tell *them,* ‘Indeed the king of Babylon went to Jerusalem and took its king and princes, and led them with him to Babylon. 13 And he took the king’s offspring, made a covenant with him, and put him under oath. He also took away the mighty of the land, 14 that the kingdom might be brought low and not lift itself up, *but* that by keeping his covenant it might stand. 15 But he rebelled against him by sending his ambassadors to Egypt, that they might give him horses and many people. Will he prosper? Will he who does such *things* escape? Can he break a covenant and still be delivered?

16 ‘*As* I live,’ says the Lord GOD, ‘surely in the place *where* the king *dwells* who made him king, whose oath he despised and whose covenant he broke- with him in the midst of Babylon he shall die. 17 Nor will Pharaoh with *his* mighty army and great company do anything in the war, when they heap up a siege mound and build a wall to cut off many persons. 18 Since he despised the oath by breaking the covenant, and in fact gave his hand and still did all these *things,* he shall not escape.’ ”

19 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: “*As* I live, surely My oath which he despised, and My covenant which he broke, I will recompense on his own head. 20 I will spread My net over him, and he shall be taken in My snare. I will bring him to Babylon and try him there for the treason which he committed against Me. 21 All his fugitives[a] with all his troops shall fall by the sword, and those who remain shall be scattered to every wind; and you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken.”

## ISRAEL EXALTED AT LAST

[22]Thus says the Lord GOD: “I will take also *one* of the highest branches of the high cedar and set *it* out. I will crop off from the topmost of its young twigs a tender one, and will plant *it* on a high and prominent mountain. [23]On the mountain height of Israel I will plant it; and it will bring forth boughs, and bear fruit, and be a majestic cedar. Under it will dwell birds of every sort; in the shadow of its branches they will dwell. [24]And all the trees of the field shall know that I, the LORD, have brought down the high tree and exalted the low tree, dried up the green tree and made the dry tree flourish; I, the LORD, have spoken and have done *it.* ”

## A FALSE PROVERB REFUTED

**18** The word of the LORD came to me again, saying, 2"What do you mean
when you use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying:

'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, And the children's teeth are set on
edge'?

3"*As* I live," says the Lord GOD, "you shall no longer use this proverb in
Israel.

4 "Behold,
all souls are Mine;
The soul of the father
As well as the soul of the son is Mine;
The soul who sins shall die.

5 But if a man is just
And does what is lawful and right;

6 If he has not eaten on the mountains,
Nor lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel,
Nor defiled his neighbor's wife,
Nor approached a woman during her impurity;

7 If he has not oppressed anyone,
*But* has restored to the debtor his pledge;
Has robbed no one by violence,
*But* has given his bread to the hungry
And covered the naked with clothing;

8 If he has not exacted
usury Nor taken any increase,
*But* has withdrawn his hand from iniquity
*And* executed true judgment between
man and man;

9*If* he has walked in My statutes
And kept My judgments faithfully-
He *is* just;
He shall surely live!"
Says the Lord GOD.

10 “If he begets a son *who is* a robber
Or a shedder of blood,
*Who* does any of these *things*
11 And does none of those *duties*,
But has eaten on the mountains
Or defiled his neighbor’s wife;
12 If he has oppressed the poor and needy,
Robbed by violence,
Not restored the pledge,
Lifted his eyes to the idols,
*Or* committed abomination;
13 If he has exacted usury
Or taken increase-
Shall he then live?
He shall not live!
If he has done any of these abominations,
He shall surely die;
His blood shall be upon him.
14 “*If,* however, he begets a son
Who sees all the sins which his father has done,
And considers but does not do likewise;
15 *Who* has not eaten on the mountains,
Nor lifted his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel,
Nor defiled his neighbor’s wife;
16 Has not oppressed anyone,
Nor withheld a pledge,
Nor robbed by violence,
*But* has given his bread to the hungry
And covered the naked with clothing;
17 *Who* has withdrawn his hand from the poor[a]
*And* not received usury or increase,
But has executed My judgments
And walked in My statutes-
He shall not die for the iniquity of his father;
He shall surely live!

18 “*As for* his father,
Because he cruelly oppressed,
Robbed his brother by violence,
And did what *is* not good among his people,
Behold, he shall die for his iniquity.

**TURN AND LIVE**

19 “Yet you say, ‘Why should the son not bear the guilt of the father?’ Because the son has done what is lawful and right, and has kept all My statutes and observed them, he shall surely live. 20 The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself.

21 “But if a wicked man turns from all his sins which he has committed, keeps all My statutes, and does what is lawful and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die. 22 None of the transgressions which he has committed shall be remembered against him; because of the righteousness which he has done, he shall live. 23 Do I have any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?” says the Lord GOD, “*and* not that he should turn from his ways and live?

24 “But when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and does according to all the abominations that the wicked *man* does, shall he live? All the righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; because of the unfaithfulness of which he is guilty and the sin which he has committed, because of them he shall die.

25 “Yet you say, ‘The way of the Lord is not fair.’ Hear now, O house of Israel, is it not My way which is fair, and your ways which are not fair? 26 When a righteous *man* turns away from his righteousness, commits iniquity, and dies in it, it is because of the iniquity which he has done that he dies. 27 Again, when a wicked *man* turns away from the wickedness which he committed, and does what is lawful and right, he preserves himself alive. 28 Because he considers and turns away from all the transgressions which he committed, he shall surely live; he shall not die. 29 Yet the house of Israel says, ‘The way of the Lord is not fair.’ O house of Israel, is it not My ways

which are fair, and your ways which are not fair?

30 "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways," says the Lord GOD. "Repent, and turn from all your transgressions, so that iniquity will not be your ruin. 31 Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O house of Israel? 32 For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies," says the Lord GOD. "Therefore turn and live!"

**SOUL NOTE**

**The Verdict** *(18:1-22)* This passage describes how God would not punish children for their parents' sins, but instead would hold individuals responsible for their own sins. He promised to punish the wicked, but those who turn away from all their sins and obey God will be forgiven. In fact, "none of the transgressions which he has committed shall be remembered against him," says God (18:22). God does not judge according to the extenuating circumstances of our lives. He asks but one question: "Did you turn from sin and obey Me?" Being able to answer "Yes" is the life's work of every believer.
**Topic: Accountability**

**ISRAEL DEGRADED**

**19** “Moreover take up a lamentation for the princes of Israel, 2and say:

‘What *is* your mother? A lioness:
She lay down among the lions;
Among the young lions she nourished her cubs.
3 She brought up one of her cubs,
And he became a young lion;
He learned to catch prey,
And he devoured men.
4 The nations also heard of him;
He was trapped in their pit,
And they brought him with chains to the land of Egypt.
5 ‘When she saw that she waited,
*that* her hope was lost,
She took another of her cubs *and* made him a young lion.
6 He roved among the lions,
And became a young lion;
He learned to catch prey;
He devoured men.
7 He knew their desolate places,[a]
And laid waste their cities;
The land with its fullness was desolated
By the noise of his roaring.
8 Then the nations set against him from the provinces on every side,
And spread their net over him;
He was trapped in their pit.
9 They put him in a cage with chains,
And brought him to the king of Babylon;
They brought him in nets, That his voice should no longer be heard on the mountains of Israel.
10 ‘Your mother *was* like a vine in your bloodline,[a]
Planted by the waters,
Fruitful and full of branches

Because of many waters.
11 She had strong branches for scepters of rulers.
She towered in stature above the thick branches,
And was seen in her height amid the dense foliage.
12 But she was plucked up in fury,
She was cast down to the ground,
And the east wind dried her fruit.
Her strong branches were broken and withered;
The fire consumed them.
13 And now she *is* planted in the wilderness,
In a dry and thirsty land.
14 Fire has come out from a rod of her branches
*And* devoured her fruit,
So that she has no strong branch-a scepter for ruling.’ ”
This *is* a lamentation, and has become a lamentation.

## THE REBELLIONS OF ISRAEL

**20** It came to pass in the seventh year, in the fifth *month,* on the tenth *day* of
the month, *that* certain of the elders of Israel came to inquire of the
LORD, and sat before me. 2Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying,
3"Son of man, speak to the elders of Israel, and say to them, 'Thus says the
Lord GOD: "Have you come to inquire of Me? *As* I live," says the Lord
GOD, "I will not be inquired of by you." ' 4Will you judge them, son of man,
will you judge *them?* Then make known to them the abominations of their
fathers.

5"Say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "On the day when I chose Israel
and raised My hand in an oath to the descendants of the house of Jacob, and
made Myself known to them in the land of Egypt, I raised My hand in an oath
to them, saying, 'I *am* the LORD your God.' 6On that day I raised My hand in
an oath to them, to bring them out of the land of Egypt into a land that I had
searched out for them, 'flowing with milk and honey,'[a] the glory of all lands.
7Then I said to them, 'Each of you, throw away the abominations which are
before his eyes, and do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt. I *am* the
LORD your God.' 8But they rebelled against Me and would not obey Me.
They did not all cast away the abominations which were before their eyes,
nor did they forsake the idols of Egypt. Then I said, 'I will pour out My fury
on them and fulfill My anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt.'
9But I acted for My name's sake, that it should not be profaned before the
Gentiles among whom they *were,* in whose sight I had made Myself known
to them, to bring them out of the land of Egypt.

10"Therefore I made them go out of the land of Egypt and brought them
into the wilderness. 11And I gave them My statutes and showed them My
judgments, 'which, *if* a man does, he shall live by them.'[a] 12Moreover I also
gave them My Sabbaths, to be a sign between them and Me, that they might
know that I *am* the LORD who sanctifies them. 13Yet the house of Israel
rebelled against Me in the wilderness; they did not walk in My statutes; they
despised My judgments, 'which, *if* a man does, he shall live by them';[a] and
they greatly defiled My Sabbaths. Then I said I would pour out My fury on

them in the wilderness, to consume them. [14]But I acted for My name's sake, that it should not be profaned before the Gentiles, in whose sight I had brought them out. [15]So I also raised My hand in an oath to them in the wilderness, that I would not bring them into the land which I had given *them*, 'flowing with milk and honey,'[a] the glory of all lands, [16]because they despised My judgments and did not walk in My statutes, but profaned My Sabbaths; for their heart went after their idols. [17]Nevertheless My eye spared them from destruction. I did not make an end of them in the wilderness.

[18]"But I said to their children in the wilderness, 'Do not walk in the statutes of your fathers, nor observe their judgments, nor defile yourselves with their idols. [19]I *am* the LORD your God: Walk in My statutes, keep My judgments, and do them; [20]hallow My Sabbaths, and they will be a sign between Me and you, that you may know that I *am* the LORD your God.'

[21]"Notwithstanding, the children rebelled against Me; they did not walk in My statutes, and were not careful to observe My judgments, 'which, *if* a man does, he shall live by them';[a] but they profaned My Sabbaths. Then I said I would pour out My fury on them and fulfill My anger against them in the wilderness. [22]Nevertheless I withdrew My hand and acted for My name's sake, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the Gentiles, in whose sight I had brought them out. [23]Also I raised My hand in an oath to those in the wilderness, that I would scatter them among the Gentiles and disperse them throughout the countries, [24]because they had not executed My judgments, but had despised My statutes, profaned My Sabbaths, and their eyes were fixed on their fathers' idols.

[25]"Therefore I also gave them up to statutes *that were* not good, and judgments by which they could not live; [26]and I pronounced them unclean because of their ritual gifts, in that they caused all their firstborn to pass through *the fire*, that I might make them desolate and that they might know that I am the LORD." '

[27]"Therefore, son of man, speak to the house of Israel, and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "In this too your fathers have blasphemed Me, by being unfaithful to Me. [28]When I brought them into the land *concerning* which I had raised My hand in an oath to give them, and they saw all the high

hills and all the thick trees, there they offered their sacrifices and provoked Me with their offerings. There they also sent up their sweet aroma and poured out their drink offerings. [29]Then I said to them, ‘What *is* this high place to which you go?’ So its name is called Bamah[a] to this day.” ’ [30]Therefore say to the house of Israel, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: “Are you defiling yourselves in the manner of your fathers, and committing harlotry according to their abominations? [31]For when you offer your gifts and make your sons pass through the fire, you defile yourselves with all your idols, even to this day. So shall I be inquired of by you, O house of Israel? *As* I live,” says the Lord GOD, “I will not be inquired of by you. [32]What you have in your mind shall never be, when you say, ‘We will be like the Gentiles, like the families in other countries, serving wood and stone.’

## GOD WILL RESTORE ISRAEL

[33]“*As* I live,” says the Lord GOD, “surely with a mighty hand, with an outstretched arm, and with fury poured out, I will rule over you. [34]I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the countries where you are scattered, with a mighty hand, with an outstretched arm, and with fury poured out. [35]And I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I will plead My case with you face to face. [36]Just as I pleaded My case with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will plead My case with you,” says the Lord GOD.

[37]“I will make you pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant; [38]I will purge the rebels from among you, and those who transgress against Me; I will bring them out of the country where they dwell, but they shall not enter the land of Israel. Then you will know that I *am* the LORD.

[39]“As for you, O house of Israel,” thus says the Lord GOD: “Go, serve every one of you his idols-and hereafter-if you will not obey Me; but profane My holy name no more with your gifts and your idols. [40]For on My holy mountain, on the mountain height of Israel,” says the Lord GOD, “there all the house of Israel, all of them in the land, shall serve Me; there I will accept them, and there I will require your offerings and the firstfruits of your sacrifices, together with all your holy things. [41]I will accept you as a sweet

aroma when I bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the countries where you have been scattered; and I will be hallowed in you before the Gentiles. [42]Then you shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I bring you into the land of Israel, into the country *for* which I raised My hand in an oath to give to your fathers. [43]And there you shall remember your ways and all your doings with which you were defiled; and you shall loathe yourselves in your own sight because of all the evils that you have committed. [44]Then you shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I have dealt with you for My name's sake, not according to your wicked ways nor according to your corrupt doings, O house of Israel," says the Lord GOD.' "

**FIRE IN THE FOREST**

[45]Furthermore the word of the LORD came to me, saying, [46]"Son of man, set your face toward the south; preach against the south and prophesy against the forest land, the South,[a] [47]and say to the forest of the South, 'Hear the word of the LORD! Thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, I will kindle a fire in you, and it shall devour every green tree and every dry tree in you; the blazing flame shall not be quenched, and all faces from the south to the north shall be scorched by it. [48]All flesh shall see that I, the LORD, have kindled it; it shall not be quenched." ' "

[49]Then I said, "Ah, Lord GOD! They say of me, 'Does he not speak parables?' "

**BABYLON, THE SWORD OF GOD**

**21** And the word of the LORD came to me, saying, [2]"Son of man, set your face toward Jerusalem, preach against the holy places, and prophesy against the land of Israel; [3]and say to the land of Israel, 'Thus says the LORD: "Behold, I *am* against you, and I will draw My sword out of its sheath and cut off both righteous and wicked from you. [4]Because I will cut off both righteous and wicked from you, therefore My sword shall go out of its sheath against all flesh from south *to* north, [5]that all flesh may know that I, the LORD, have drawn My sword out of its sheath; it shall not return anymore." ' [6]Sigh therefore, son of man, with a breaking heart, and sigh with bitterness before their eyes. [7]And it shall be when they say to you, 'Why are you sighing?' that you shall answer, 'Because of the news; when it comes, every heart will melt, all hands will be feeble, every spirit will faint, and all knees will be weak *as* water. Behold, it is coming and shall be brought to pass,' says the Lord GOD."

[8]Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying, [9]"Son of man, prophesy and say, 'Thus says the LORD!' Say:

'A sword, a sword is sharpened
And also polished!
[10] Sharpened to make a dreadful slaughter,
Polished to flash like lightning!
Should we then make mirth?
It despises the scepter of My son,
*As it does* all wood.
[11] And He has given it to be polished,
That it may be handled;
This sword is sharpened,
and it is polished To be given into the hand of the slayer.'
[12] "Cry and wail, son of man;
For it will be against My people,
Against all the princes of Israel.
Terrors including the sword will be against My people;
Therefore strike *your* thigh.

13 “Because *it is* a testing,
And what if *the sword* despises even the scepter?
*The scepter* shall be no *more,*
” says the Lord GOD.
14 “You therefore, son of man, prophesy,
And strike *your* hands together.
The third time let the sword do double *damage.*
It *is* the sword *that* slays,
The sword that slays the great *men,*
That enters their private chambers.
15 I have set the point of the sword against all their gates,
That the heart may melt and many may stumble.
Ah! *It is* made bright;
*It is* grasped for slaughter:
16 “Swords at the ready!
Thrust right!
Set your blade!
Thrust left-
Wherever your edge is ordered!
17 “I also will beat My fists together,
And I will cause My fury to rest;
I, the LORD, have spoken.”

18The word of the LORD came to me again, saying: 19“And son of man, appoint for yourself two ways for the sword of the king of Babylon to go; both of them shall go from the same land. Make a sign; put *it* at the head of the road to the city. 20Appoint a road for the sword to go to Rabbah of the Ammonites, and to Judah, into fortified Jerusalem. 21For the king of Babylon stands at the parting of the road, at the fork of the two roads, to use divination: he shakes the arrows, he consults the images, he looks at the liver. 22In his right hand is the divination for Jerusalem: to set up battering rams, to call for a slaughter, to lift the voice with shouting, to set battering rams against the gates, to heap up a *siege* mound, and to build a wall. 23And it will be to them like a false divination in the eyes of those who have sworn oaths with them; but he will bring their iniquity to remembrance, that they may be taken.

24 “Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: ‘Because you have made your
iniquity to be remembered, in that your transgressions are uncovered, so that
in all your doings your sins appear-because you have come to remembrance,
you shall be taken in hand.

25 ‘Now to you, O profane, wicked prince of Israel, whose day has come,
whose iniquity *shall* end, 26 thus says the Lord GOD:

“Remove the turban,
and take off the crown;
Nothing *shall remain* the same.
Exalt the humble, and humble the exalted.
27 Overthrown, overthrown,
I will make it overthrown!
It shall be no *longer,*
Until He comes whose right it is,
And I will give it *to Him.*” ’

## A SWORD AGAINST THE AMMONITES

28 “And you, son of man, prophesy and say, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD
concerning the Ammonites and concerning their reproach,’ and say:

‘A sword, a sword *is* drawn,
Polished for slaughter,
For consuming, for flashing-

29 While they see false visions for you,
While they divine a lie to you,
To bring you on the necks of the wicked,
the slain Whose day has come,
Whose iniquity *shall* end.
30 ‘Return *it* to its sheath.
I will judge you In the place where you were created,
In the land of your nativity.
31 I will pour out My indignation on you;
I will blow against you with the fire of My wrath,

And deliver you into the hands of brutal men *who are* skillful to destroy.
32 You shall be fuel for the fire;
Your blood shall be in the midst of the land.
You shall not be remembered,
For I the LORD have spoken.’ ”

## SINS OF JERUSALEM

**22** Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 2"Now, son of man,
will you judge, will you judge the bloody city? Yes, show her all her
abominations! 3Then say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "The city sheds blood in
her own midst, that her time may come; and she makes idols within herself to
defile herself. 4You have become guilty by the blood which you have shed,
and have defiled yourself with the idols which you have made. You have
caused your days to draw near, and have come to *the end of* your years;
therefore I have made you a reproach to the nations, and a mockery to all
countries. 5*Those* near and *those* far from you will mock you as infamous *and*
full of tumult.

6"Look, the princes of Israel: each one has used his power to shed blood in
you. 7In you they have made light of father and mother; in your midst they
have oppressed the stranger; in you they have mistreated the fatherless and
the widow. 8You have despised My holy things and profaned My Sabbaths.
9In you are men who slander to cause bloodshed; in you are those who eat on
the mountains; in your midst they commit lewdness. 10In you men uncover
their fathers' nakedness; in you they violate women who are set apart during
their impurity. 11One commits abomination with his neighbor's wife; another
lewdly defiles his daughter-in-law; and another in you violates his sister, his
father's daughter. 12In you they take bribes to shed blood; you take usury and
increase; you have made profit from your neighbors by extortion, and have
forgotten Me," says the Lord GOD.

13"Behold, therefore, I beat My fists at the dishonest profit which you have
made, and at the bloodshed which has been in your midst. 14Can your heart
endure, or can your hands remain strong, in the days when I shall deal with
you? I, the LORD, have spoken, and will do *it.* 15I will scatter you among the
nations, disperse you throughout the countries, and remove your filthiness
completely from you. 16You shall defile yourself in the sight of the nations;
then you shall know that I *am* the LORD." ' "

## ISRAEL IN THE FURNACE

[17]The word of the LORD came to me, saying, [18]"Son of man, the house of Israel has become dross to Me; they *are* all bronze, tin, iron, and lead, in the midst of a furnace; they have become dross from silver. [19]Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: 'Because you have all become dross, therefore behold, I will gather you into the midst of Jerusalem. [20]*As men* gather silver, bronze, iron, lead, and tin into the midst of a furnace, to blow fire on it, to melt *it;* so I will gather *you* in My anger and in My fury, and I will leave *you there* and melt you. [21]Yes, I will gather you and blow on you with the fire of My wrath, and you shall be melted in its midst. [22]As silver is melted in the midst of a furnace, so shall you be melted in its midst; then you shall know that I, the LORD, have poured out My fury on you.' "

## ISRAEL'S WICKED LEADERS

[23]And the word of the LORD came to me, saying, [24]"Son of man, say to her: 'You *are* a land that is not cleansed[a] or rained on in the day of indignation.' [25]The conspiracy of her prophets[a] in her midst is like a roaring lion tearing the prey; they have devoured people; they have taken treasure and precious things; they have made many widows in her midst. [26]Her priests have violated My law and profaned My holy things; they have not distinguished between the holy and unholy, nor have they made known *the difference* between the unclean and the clean; and they have hidden their eyes from My Sabbaths, so that I am profaned among them. [27]Her princes in her midst *are* like wolves tearing the prey, to shed blood, to destroy people, and to get dishonest gain. [28]Her prophets plastered them with untempered *mortar,* seeing false visions, and divining lies for them, saying, 'Thus says the Lord GOD,' when the LORD had not spoken. [29]The people of the land have used oppressions, committed robbery, and mistreated the poor and needy; and they wrongfully oppress the stranger. [30]So I sought for a man among them who would make a wall, and stand in the gap before Me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one. [31]Therefore I have poured out My indignation on them; I have consumed them with the fire of My wrath; and I have recompensed their deeds on their own heads," says the Lord GOD.

## SOUL NOTE

**Standing in the Gap** *(22:30)* Israel's leaders had become completely corrupt. Jeremiah spoke of how God had "sought for a man among them who would . . . stand in the gap . . . on behalf of the land" so that God would not have to destroy it for its sins. But God "found no one." One man with great faith in God could have saved the nation, but no one could be found. God needs men to be spiritual leaders-in their homes, families, churches, and nations. To be an effective spiritual leader, a man must trust in God and be willing to be used by Him. **Topic: Men's Issues**

## TWO HARLOT SISTERS

**23** The word of the LORD came again to me, saying:
2 “Son of man, there were two women,
The daughters of one mother.
3 They committed harlotry in Egypt,
They committed harlotry in their youth;
Their breasts were there embraced,
Their virgin bosom was there pressed.
4 Their names: Oholah[a] the elder and Oholibah[b] her sister;
They were Mine,
And they bore sons and daughters.
*As for* their names,
Samaria *is* Oholah, and Jerusalem *is* Oholibah.

## THE OLDER SISTER, SAMARIA

5 “Oholah played the harlot even though she was Mine;
And she lusted for her lovers, the neighboring Assyrians,
6 *Who were* clothed in purple,
Captains and rulers,
All of them desirable young men,
Horsemen riding on horses.
7 Thus she committed her harlotry with them,
All of them choice men of Assyria;
And with all for whom she lusted,
With all their idols,
she defiled herself.
8 She has never given up her harlotry *brought* from Egypt,
For in her youth they had lain with her,
Pressed her virgin bosom,
And poured out their immorality upon her.
9 “Therefore I have delivered her Into the hand of her lovers,
Into the hand of the Assyrians,
For whom she lusted.

10 They uncovered her nakedness,
Took away her sons and daughters,
And slew her with the sword;
She became a byword among women,
For they had executed judgment on her.

**THE YOUNGER SISTER, JERUSALEM**

11 "Now although her sister Oholibah saw *this,* she became more corrupt in her lust than she, and in her harlotry more corrupt than her sister's harlotry.

12 "She lusted for the neighboring Assyrians,
Captains and rulers,
Clothed most gorgeously,
Horsemen riding on horses,
All of them desirable young men.
13 Then I saw that she was defiled;
Both *took* the same way.
14 But she increased her harlotry;
She looked at men portrayed on the wall,
Images of Chaldeans portrayed in vermilion,
15 Girded with belts around their waists,
Flowing turbans on their heads,
All of them looking like captains, In the manner of the Babylonians of Chaldea,
The land of their nativity.
16 As soon as her eyes saw them,
She lusted for them And sent messengers to them in Chaldea.
17 "Then the Babylonians came to her, into the bed of love,
And they defiled her with their immorality; So she was defiled by them, and alienated herself from them.

18 She revealed her harlotry and uncovered her nakedness. Then I alienated Myself from her,
As I had alienated Myself from her sister.

19 “Yet she multiplied her harlotry In calling to remembrance the days of her youth,
When she had played the harlot in the land of Egypt.
20 For she lusted for her paramours,
Whose flesh *is like* the flesh of donkeys,
And whose issue *is like* the issue of horses.
21 Thus you called to remembrance the lewdness of your youth,
When the Egyptians pressed your bosom Because of your youthful breasts.

## JUDGMENT ON JERUSALEM

22 “Therefore, Oholibah, thus says the Lord GOD:

‘ Behold, I will stir up your lovers against you,
From whom you have alienated yourself,
And I will bring them against you from every side:
23 The Babylonians,
All the Chaldeans,
Pekod, Shoa, Koa,
All the Assyrians with them,
All of them desirable young men,
Governors and rulers,
Captains and men of renown,
All of them riding on horses.
24 And they shall come against you
With chariots, wagons, and war-horses,
With a horde of people.
They shall array against you
Buckler, shield, and helmet all around.
‘ I will delegate judgment to them,
And they shall judge you according to their judgments.
25 I will set My jealousy against you,
And they shall deal furiously with you;
They shall remove your nose and your ears,
And your remnant shall fall by the sword;

They shall take your sons and your daughters,
And your remnant shall be devoured by fire.
26 They shall also strip you of your clothes
And take away your beautiful jewelry.
27 ‘Thus I will make you cease your lewdness and your harlotry
*Brought* from the land of Egypt,
So that you will not lift your eyes to them,
Nor remember Egypt anymore.’
28“For thus says the Lord GOD: ‘Surely I will deliver you into the hand of those you hate, into the hand *of those* from whom you alienated yourself. 29They will deal hatefully with you, take away all you have worked for, and leave you naked and bare. The nakedness of your harlotry shall be uncovered, both your lewdness and your harlotry. 30I will do these *things* to you because you have gone as a harlot after the Gentiles, because you have become defiled by their idols. 31You have walked in the way of your sister; therefore I will put her cup in your hand.’

32“Thus says the Lord GOD:
‘You shall drink of your sister’s cup,
The deep and wide one;
You shall be laughed to scorn And held in derision;
It contains much.
33 You will be filled with drunkenness and sorrow,
The cup of horror and desolation,
The cup of your sister Samaria.
34 You shall drink and drain it,
You shall break its shards,
And tear at your own breasts;
For I have spoken,’
Says the Lord GOD.
35“Therefore thus says the Lord GOD:
‘Because you have forgotten Me and cast Me behind your back,
Therefore you shall bear the *penalty Of* your lewdness and your harlotry.’ ”

**BOTH SISTERS JUDGED**

[36]The LORD also said to me: “Son of man, will you judge Oholah and Oholibah? Then declare to them their abominations. [37]For they have committed adultery, and blood *is* on their hands. They have committed adultery with their idols, and even sacrificed their sons whom they bore to Me, passing them through *the fire*, to devour *them.* [38]Moreover they have done this to Me: They have defiled My sanctuary on the same day and profaned My Sabbaths. [39]For after they had slain their children for their idols, on the same day they came into My sanctuary to profane it; and indeed thus they have done in the midst of My house.

[40]“Furthermore you sent for men to come from afar, to whom a messenger *was* sent; and there they came. And you washed yourself for them, painted your eyes, and adorned yourself with ornaments. [41]You sat on a stately couch, with a table prepared before it, on which you had set My incense and My oil. [42]The sound of a carefree multitude *was* with her, and Sabeans *were* brought from the wilderness with men of the common sort, who put bracelets on their wrists and beautiful crowns on their heads. [43]Then I said concerning *her who had grown* old in adulteries, ‘Will they commit harlotry with her now, and she *with them?* ’ [44]Yet they went in to her, as men go in to a woman who plays the harlot; thus they went in to Oholah and Oholibah, the lewd women. [45]But righteous men will judge them after the manner of adulteresses, and after the manner of women who shed blood, because they *are* adulteresses, and blood *is* on their hands.

[46]“For thus says the Lord GOD: ‘Bring up an assembly against them, give them up to trouble and plunder. [47]The assembly shall stone them with stones and execute them with their swords; they shall slay their sons and their daughters, and burn their houses with fire. [48]Thus I will cause lewdness to cease from the land, that all women may be taught not to practice your lewdness. [49]They shall repay you for your lewdness, and you shall pay for your idolatrous sins. Then you shall know that I *am* the Lord GOD.’ ”

**SYMBOL OF THE COOKING POT**

**24** Again, in the ninth year, in the tenth month, on the tenth *day* of the
month, the word of the LORD came to me, saying, [2]"Son of man, write
down the name of the day, this very day-the king of Babylon started his siege
against Jerusalem this very day. [3]And utter a parable to the rebellious house,
and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD:

"Put on a pot, set *it* on,
And also pour water into it.
[4] Gather pieces *of meat* in it,
Every good piece,
The thigh and the shoulder.
Fill *it* with choice cuts;
[5] Take the choice of the flock.
Also pile *fuel* bones under it,
Make it boil well,
And let the cuts simmer in it."
[6]'Therefore thus says the Lord GOD:
"Woe to the bloody city,
To the pot whose scum *is* in it,
And whose scum is not gone from it!
Bring it out piece by piece,
On which no lot has fallen.
[7] For her blood is in her midst;
She set it on top of a rock;
She did not pour it on the ground,
To cover it with dust.
[8] That it may raise up fury and take vengeance,
I have set her blood on top of a rock,
That it may not be covered."
[9]'Therefore thus says the Lord GOD:
"Woe to the bloody city!
I too will make the pyre great.
[10] Heap on the wood,

Kindle the fire;
Cook the meat well,
Mix in the spices,
And let the cuts be burned up.
11 “Then set the pot empty on the coals,
That it may become hot and its bronze may burn,
*That* its filthiness may be melted in it,
*That* its scum may be consumed.
12 She has grown weary with lies,
And her great scum has not gone from her.
*Let* her scum *be* in the fire!
13 In your filthiness *is* lewdness.
Because I have cleansed you,
and you were not cleansed,
You will not be cleansed of your filthiness anymore,
Till I have caused My fury to rest upon you.
14 I, the LORD, have spoken *it;*
It shall come to pass,
and I will do *it;* I will not hold back, Nor will I spare,
Nor will I relent;
According to your ways And according to your deeds They[a] will judge you,”
Says the Lord GOD.’ ”

**THE PROPHET’S WIFE DIES**

15 Also the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 16 “Son of man, behold, I take away from you the desire of your eyes with one stroke; yet you shall neither mourn nor weep, nor shall your tears run down. 17 Sigh in silence, make no mourning for the dead; bind your turban on your head, and put your sandals on your feet; do not cover *your* lips, and do not eat man’s bread *of sorrow*.”

18 So I spoke to the people in the morning, and at evening my wife died; and the next morning I did as I was commanded.

19 And the people said to me, “Will you not tell us what these *things signify*

to us, that you behave so?”

20Then I answered them, “The word of the LORD came to me, saying,
21‘Speak to the house of Israel, “Thus says the Lord GOD: ‘Behold, I will profane My sanctuary, your arrogant boast, the desire of your eyes, the delight of your soul; and your sons and daughters whom you left behind shall fall by the sword. 22And you shall do as I have done; you shall not cover *your* lips nor eat man’s bread *of sorrow*. 23Your turbans shall be on your heads and your sandals on your feet; you shall neither mourn nor weep, but you shall pine away in your iniquities and mourn with one another. 24Thus Ezekiel is a sign to you; according to all that he has done you shall do; and when this comes, you shall know that I *am* the Lord GOD.’ ”

25‘And you, son of man-*will it* not *be* in the day when I take from them their stronghold, their joy and their glory, the desire of their eyes, and that on which they set their minds, their sons and their daughters: 26*that* on that day one who escapes will come to you to let *you* hear *it* with *your* ears? 27On that day your mouth will be opened to him who has escaped; you shall speak and no longer be mute. Thus you will be a sign to them, and they shall know that I *am* the LORD.’ ”

**SOUL NOTE**

**That Which Lasts** *(24:16)* God chose to tell His message to Israel through Ezekiel by causing Ezekiel’s wife (“the desire of your eyes”) to die suddenly. This would show the people how suddenly they would lose their temple, the desire of *their* eyes (24:21). As Ezekiel’s heart was broken, so would the hearts of the people be broken. God told Ezekiel not to mourn publicly, also as a sign to the people of what was to come. Ezekiel obeyed (24:18). Such radical obedience can come only from a heart that trusts completely in God and His ultimate goodness in the face of heartbreak. **Topic: Obedience**

## PROCLAMATION AGAINST AMMON

**25** The word of the LORD came to me, saying, [2]"Son of man, set your face
against the Ammonites, and prophesy against them. [3]Say to the
Ammonites, 'Hear the word of the Lord GOD! Thus says the Lord GOD:
"Because you said, 'Aha!' against My sanctuary when it was profaned, and
against the land of Israel when it was desolate, and against the house of Judah
when they went into captivity, [4]indeed, therefore, I will deliver you as a
possession to the men of the East, and they shall set their encampments
among you and make their dwellings among you; they shall eat your fruit,
and they shall drink your milk. [5]And I will make Rabbah a stable for camels
and Ammon a resting place for flocks. Then you shall know that I *am* the
LORD."

[6]'For thus says the Lord GOD: "Because you clapped *your* hands, stamped
your feet, and rejoiced in heart with all your disdain for the land of Israel,
[7]indeed, therefore, I will stretch out My hand against you, and give you as
plunder to the nations; I will cut you off from the peoples, and I will cause
you to perish from the countries; I will destroy you, and you shall know that I
*am* the LORD."

## PROCLAMATION AGAINST MOAB

[8]'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Because Moab and Seir say, 'Look! The
house of Judah *is* like all the nations,' [9]therefore, behold, I will clear the
territory of Moab of cities, of the cities on its frontier, the glory of the
country, Beth Jeshimoth, Baal Meon, and Kirjathaim. [10]To the men of the
East I will give it as a possession, together with the Ammonites, that the
Ammonites may not be remembered among the nations. [11]And I will execute
judgments upon Moab, and they shall know that I *am* the LORD."

## PROCLAMATION AGAINST EDOM

[12]'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Because of what Edom did against the house
of Judah by taking vengeance, and has greatly offended by avenging itself on
them," [13]therefore thus says the Lord GOD: "I will also stretch out My hand

against Edom, cut off man and beast from it, and make it desolate from Teman; Dedan shall fall by the sword. [14]I will lay My vengeance on Edom by the hand of My people Israel, that they may do in Edom according to My anger and according to My fury; and they shall know My vengeance," says the Lord GOD.

**PROCLAMATION AGAINST PHILISTIA**

[15]'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Because the Philistines dealt vengefully and took vengeance with a spiteful heart, to destroy because of the old hatred," [16]therefore thus says the Lord GOD: "I will stretch out My hand against the Philistines, and I will cut off the Cherethites and destroy the remnant of the seacoast. [17]I will execute great vengeance on them with furious rebukes; and they shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I lay My vengeance upon them." ' "

**PROCLAMATION AGAINST TYRE**

**26** And it came to pass in the eleventh year, on the first *day* of the month,
*that* the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 2"Son of man, because
Tyre has said against Jerusalem, 'Aha! She is broken who *was* the gateway of
the peoples; now she is turned over to me; I shall be filled; she is laid waste.'

3"Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: 'Behold, I *am* against you, O Tyre,
and will cause many nations to come up against you, as the sea causes its
waves to come up. 4And they shall destroy the walls of Tyre and break down
her towers; I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a
rock. 5It shall be *a place for* spreading nets in the midst of the sea, for I have
spoken,' says the Lord GOD; 'it shall become plunder for the nations. 6Also
her daughter *villages* which *are* in the fields shall be slain by the sword. Then
they shall know that I am the LORD.'

7"For thus says the Lord GOD: 'Behold, I will bring against Tyre from the
north Nebuchadnezzar[a] king of Babylon, king of kings, with horses, with
chariots, and with horsemen, and an army with many people. 8He will slay
with the sword your daughter *villages* in the fields; he will heap up a siege
mound against you, build a wall against you, and raise a defense against you.
9He will direct his battering rams against your walls, and with his axes he
will break down your towers. 10Because of the abundance of his horses, their
dust will cover you; your walls will shake at the noise of the horsemen, the
wagons, and the chariots, when he enters your gates, as men enter a city that
has been breached. 11With the hooves of his horses he will trample all your
streets; he will slay your people by the sword, and your strong pillars will fall
to the ground. 12They will plunder your riches and pillage your merchandise;
they will break down your walls and destroy your pleasant houses; they will
lay your stones, your timber, and your soil in the midst of the water. 13I will
put an end to the sound of your songs, and the sound of your harps shall be
heard no more. 14I will make you like the top of a rock; you shall be *a place
for* spreading nets, and you shall never be rebuilt, for I the LORD have
spoken,' says the Lord GOD.

15"Thus says the Lord GOD to Tyre: 'Will the coastlands not shake at the

sound of your fall, when the wounded cry, when slaughter is made in the midst of you? [16]Then all the princes of the sea will come down from their thrones, lay aside their robes, and take off their embroidered garments; they will clothe themselves with trembling; they will sit on the ground, tremble *every* moment, and be astonished at you. [17]And they will take up a lamentation for you, and say to you:

"How you have perished, O one inhabited by seafaring men, O renowned city, Who was strong at sea, She and her inhabitants, Who caused their terror *to be* on all her inhabitants!

[18] Now the coastlands tremble on the day of your fall; Yes, the coastlands by the sea are troubled at your departure." '

[19]"For thus says the Lord GOD: 'When I make you a desolate city, like cities that are not inhabited, when I bring the deep upon you, and great waters cover you, [20]then I will bring you down with those who descend into the Pit, to the people of old, and I will make you dwell in the lowest part of the earth, in places desolate from antiquity, with those who go down to the Pit, so that you may never be inhabited; and I shall establish glory in the land of the living. [21]I will make you a terror, and you *shall be* no *more;* though you are sought for, you will never be found again,' says the Lord GOD."

**LAMENTATION FOR TYRE**

**27** The word of the LORD came again to me, saying, 2"Now, son of man,
take up a lamentation for Tyre, 3and say to Tyre, 'You who are situated
at the entrance of the sea, merchant of the peoples on many coast-lands, thus
says the Lord GOD:

"O Tyre, you have said, ' I *am* perfect in beauty.'
4 Your borders *are* in the midst of the seas.
Your builders have perfected your beauty.
5 They made all *your* planks of fir trees from Senir;
They took a cedar from Lebanon to make you a mast.
6*Of* oaks from Bashan they made your oars;
The company of Ashurites have inlaid your planks *With* ivory from the
coasts of Cyprus.[a]
7 Fine embroidered linen from Egypt was what you spread for your sail;
Blue and purple from the coasts of Elishah was what covered you.
8 "Inhabitants of Sidon and Arvad were your oarsmen;
Your wise men, O Tyre, were in you;
They became your pilots.
9 Elders of Gebal and its wise men
Were in you to caulk your seams;
All the ships of the sea
And their oarsmen were in you
To market your merchandise.
10 "Those from Persia, Lydia,[a] and Libya[b]
Were in your army as men of war;
They hung shield and helmet in you;
They gave splendor to you.
11 Men of Arvad with your army *were* on your walls *all* around,
And the men of Gammad were in your towers;
They hung their shields on your walls *all* around;
They made your beauty perfect.
12"Tarshish *was* your merchant because of your many luxury goods. They
gave you silver, iron, tin, and lead for your goods. 13Javan, Tubal, and

Meshech *were* your traders. They bartered human lives and vessels of bronze
for your merchandise. [14]Those from the house of Togarmah traded for your
wares with horses, steeds, and mules. [15]The men of Dedan *were* your traders;
many isles *were* the market of your hand. They brought you ivory tusks and
ebony as payment. [16]Syria *was* your merchant because of the abundance of
goods you made. They gave you for your wares emeralds, purple,
embroidery, fine linen, corals, and rubies. [17]Judah and the land of Israel *were*
your traders. They traded for your merchandise wheat of Minnith, millet,
honey, oil, and balm. [18]Damascus *was* your merchant because of the
abundance of goods you made, because of your many luxury items, with the
wine of Helbon and with white wool. [19]Dan and Javan paid for your wares,
traversing back and forth. Wrought iron, cassia, and cane were among your
merchandise. [20]Dedan *was* your merchant in saddlecloths for riding. [21]Arabia
and all the princes of Kedar *were* your regular merchants. They traded with
you in lambs, rams, and goats. [22]The merchants of Sheba and Raamah *were*
your merchants. They traded for your wares the choicest spices, all kinds of
precious stones, and gold. [23]Haran, Canneh, Eden, the merchants of Sheba,
Assyria, *and* Chilmad *were* your merchants. [24]These *were* your merchants in
choice items-in purple clothes, in embroidered garments, in chests of
multicolored apparel, in sturdy woven cords, which were in your
marketplace.

[25] “The ships of Tarshish were carriers of your merchandise.
You were filled and very glorious in the midst of the seas.
[26] Your oarsmen brought you into many waters,
But the east wind broke you in the midst of the seas.
[27] “Your riches, wares, and merchandise,
Your mariners and pilots,
Your caulkers and merchandisers,
All your men of war who *are* in you,
And the entire company which *is* in your midst,
Will fall into the midst of the seas on the day of your ruin.
[28] The common-land will shake at the sound of the cry of your pilots.
[29] “All who handle the oar,
The mariners,

All the pilots of the sea
Will come down from their ships *and* stand on the shore.
30 They will make their voice heard because of you;
They will cry bitterly and cast dust on their heads;
They will roll about in ashes;
31 They will shave themselves completely bald because of you,
Gird themselves with sackcloth,
And weep for you
With bitterness of heart *and* bitter wailing.
32 In their wailing for you They will take up a lamentation, And lament for you: ‘What *city is* like Tyre, Destroyed in the midst of the sea?
33 ‘When your wares went out by sea,
You satisfied many people;
You enriched the kings of the earth
With your many luxury goods and your merchandise.
34 But you are broken by the seas in the depths of the waters;
Your merchandise and the entire company will fall in your midst.
35 All the inhabitants of the isles will be astonished at you;
Their kings will be greatly afraid,
And *their* countenance will be troubled.
36 The merchants among the peoples will hiss at you;
You will become a horror,
and *be* no more forever.’ ” ’ ”

**PROCLAMATION AGAINST THE KING OF TYRE**

**28** The word of the LORD came to me again, saying, 2"Son of man, say to
the prince of Tyre, 'Thus says the Lord GOD:

"Because your heart *is* lifted up,
And you say,
'I *am* a god,
I sit *in* the seat of gods,
In the midst of the seas,'
Yet you *are* a man, and not a god,
Though you set your heart as the heart of a god
3 (Behold, you *are* wiser than Daniel!
There is no secret that can be hidden from you!
4 With your wisdom and your understanding
You have gained riches for yourself,
And gathered gold and silver into your treasuries;
5 By your great wisdom in trade you have increased your riches,
And your heart is lifted up because of your riches),"
6'Therefore thus says the Lord GOD:
"Because you have set your heart as the heart of a god,
7 Behold, therefore, I will bring strangers against you,
The most terrible of the nations;
And they shall draw their swords against the beauty of your wisdom,
And defile your splendor.
8 They shall throw you down into the Pit,
And you shall die the death of the slain In the midst of the seas.
9 "Will you still say before him who slays you,
' I *am* a god'?
But you *shall be* a man, and not a god,
In the hand of him who slays you.
10 You shall die the death of the uncircumcised
By the hand of aliens;
For I have spoken," says the Lord GOD.' "

## LAMENTATION FOR THE KING OF TYRE

[11]Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying, [12]“Son of man, take up a lamentation for the king of Tyre, and say to him, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD:

“You *were* the seal of perfection,
Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.
[13] You were in Eden, the garden of God;
Every precious stone *was* your covering:
The sardius, topaz, and diamond,
Beryl, onyx, and jasper, Sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold.
The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes
Was prepared for you on the day you were created.
[14] “You *were* the anointed cherub who covers;
I established you;
You were on the holy mountain of God;
You walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones.
[15] You *were* perfect in your ways from the day you were created,
Till iniquity was found in you.
[16] “By the abundance of your trading
You became filled with violence within,
And you sinned;
Therefore I cast you as a profane thing
Out of the mountain of God;
And I destroyed you,
O covering cherub,
From the midst of the fiery stones.
[17] “Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty;
You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor;
I cast you to the ground,
I laid you before kings,
That they might gaze at you.
[18] “You defiled your sanctuaries By the multitude of your iniquities,
By the iniquity of your trading;
Therefore I brought fire from your midst;
It devoured you,

And I turned you to ashes upon the earth In the sight of all who saw you.
19 All who knew you among the peoples are astonished at you;
You have become a horror,
And *shall be* no more forever.” ’ ”

## PROCLAMATION AGAINST SIDON

20 Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 21 “Son of man, set your face toward Sidon, and prophesy against her, 22 and say, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD:

“Behold, I *am* against you, O Sidon;
I will be glorified in your midst;
And they shall know that I *am* the LORD,
When I execute judgments in her and am hallowed in her.
23 For I will send pestilence upon her, And blood in her streets; The wounded shall be judged in her midst By the sword against her on every side; Then they shall know that I *am* the LORD.

24 “And there shall no longer be a pricking brier or a painful thorn for the house of Israel from among all *who are* around them, who despise them. Then they shall know that I *am* the Lord GOD.”

## ISRAEL’S FUTURE BLESSING

25 ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: “When I have gathered the house of Israel from the peoples among whom they are scattered, and am hallowed in them in the sight of the Gentiles, then they will dwell in their own land which I gave to My servant Jacob. 26 And they will dwell safely there, build houses, and plant vineyards; yes, they will dwell securely, when I execute judgments on all those around them who despise them. Then they shall know that I *am* the LORD their God.” ’ ”

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# THE PRIDE OF THE KING OF TYRE

## (EZEKIEL 28:11-19)

Tyre was one of the great cities of the ancient world and the capital of the Phoenician Empire. God instructed the prophet Ezekiel to issue a "lamentation for the king of Tyre" (28:11). The language and imagery of the prophecy indicate that both the king and his great city were simply contemporary examples of the great struggle between God and a rebellion led by Satan. The pride of the king of Tyre illustrates the pride of Satan himself. In spite of being the "anointed cherub" (28:14) who served in the very presence of God, Satan fell because his pride caused him to be lifted up against God Himself. The king's fall and the destruction of the city provide a shocking picture of the results of God's judgment on that location as well as on Satan.

The reputation of the city serves as a reminder that greatness and "wisdom" come from God, and can be taken by Him. The "iniquity" (28:15) that leads to destruction refers to the pride that caused Tyre and her king, like Satan long ago, to forget their Maker. Ezekiel described the results as a "horror" (28:19). The city would be "no more forever" (28:19). Ezekiel's prophecy came true in the humiliation and displacement of Tyre as a great city. The words of Proverbs apply equally to Tyre and Satan, "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall" (Prov. 16:18).

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Pride Problems See also the key passage note at James 4:6-10.

**PROCLAMATION AGAINST EGYPT**

**29** In the tenth year, in the tenth *month*, on the twelfth *day* of the month, the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 2"Son of man, set your face against Pharaoh king of Egypt, and prophesy against him, and against all Egypt. 3Speak, and say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD:

"Behold, I *am* against you,
O Pharaoh king of Egypt,
O great monster who lies in the midst of his rivers,
Who has said, 'My River[a] *is* my own;
I have made *it* for myself.'
4 But I will put hooks in your jaws,
And cause the fish of your rivers to stick to your scales;
I will bring you up out of the midst of your rivers,
And all the fish in your rivers will stick to your scales.
5 I will leave you in the wilderness,
You and all the fish of your rivers;
You shall fall on the open field;
You shall not be picked up or gathered.[a]
I have given you as food
To the beasts of the field
And to the birds of the heavens.
6 "Then all the inhabitants of Egypt
Shall know that I *am* the LORD,
Because they have been a staff of reed to the house of Israel.
7 When they took hold of you with the hand,
You broke and tore all their shoulders;[a]
When they leaned on you,
You broke and made all their backs quiver."

8'Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: "Surely I will bring a sword upon you and cut off from you man and beast. 9And the land of Egypt shall become desolate and waste; then they will know that I *am* the LORD, because he said, 'The River *is* mine, and I have made *it.*' 10Indeed, therefore, I *am* against you and against your rivers, and I will make the land of Egypt utterly

waste and desolate, from Migdol[a] *to* Syene, as far as the border of Ethiopia.
11 Neither foot of man shall pass through it nor foot of beast pass through it,
and it shall be uninhabited forty years. 12 I will make the land of Egypt
desolate in the midst of the countries *that are* desolate; and among the cities
*that are* laid waste, her cities shall be desolate forty years; and I will scatter
the Egyptians among the nations and disperse them throughout the
countries."

13 'Yet, thus says the Lord GOD: "At the end of forty years I will gather the
Egyptians from the peoples among whom they were scattered. 14 I will bring
back the captives of Egypt and cause them to return to the land of Pathros, to
the land of their origin, and there they shall be a lowly kingdom. 15 It shall be
the lowliest of kingdoms; it shall never again exalt itself above the nations,
for I will diminish them so that they will not rule over the nations anymore.
16 No longer shall it be the confidence of the house of Israel, but will remind
them of *their* iniquity when they turned to follow them. Then they shall know
that I *am* the Lord GOD." ' "

## BABYLONIA WILL PLUNDER EGYPT

17 And it came to pass in the twenty-seventh year, in the first *month,* on the
first *day* of the month, *that* the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 18 "Son
of man, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon caused his army to labor
strenuously against Tyre; every head *was* made bald, and every shoulder
rubbed raw; yet neither he nor his army received wages from Tyre, for the
labor which they expended on it. 19 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD:
'Surely I will give the land of Egypt to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; he
shall take away her wealth, carry off her spoil, and remove her pillage; and
that will be the wages for his army. 20 I have given him the land of Egypt *for*
his labor, because they worked for Me,' says the Lord GOD.

21 'In that day I will cause the horn of the house of Israel to spring forth,
and I will open your mouth to speak in their midst. Then they shall know that
I *am* the LORD.' "

## EGYPT AND HER ALLIES WILL FALL

**30** The word of the LORD came to me again, saying, 2"Son of man, prophesy and say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD:

"Wail, 'Woe to the day!'
3 For the day *is* near,
Even the day of the LORD *is* near;
It will be a day of clouds, the time of the Gentiles.
4 The sword shall come upon Egypt,
And great anguish shall be in Ethiopia,
When the slain fall in Egypt,
And they take away her wealth,
And her foundations are broken down.
5"Ethiopia, Libya,[a] Lydia,[b] all the mingled people, Chub, and the men of the lands who are allied, shall fall with them by the sword."

6'Thus says the LORD:

"Those who uphold Egypt shall fall,
And the pride of her power shall come down.
From Migdol *to* Syene Those within her shall fall by the sword,"
Says the Lord GOD.
7 "They shall be desolate in the midst of the desolate countries,
And her cities shall be in the midst of the cities *that are* laid waste.
8 Then they will know that I *am* the LORD,
When I have set a fire in Egypt
And all her helpers are destroyed.
9 On that day messengers shall go forth from Me in ships To make the careless Ethiopians afraid,
And great anguish shall come upon them,
As on the day of Egypt;
For indeed it is coming!"
10'Thus says the Lord GOD:
"I will also make a multitude of Egypt to cease
By the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon.
11 He and his people with him, the most terrible of the nations,

Shall be brought to destroy the land;
They shall draw their swords against Egypt,
And fill the land with the slain.
12 I will make the rivers dry,
And sell the land into the hand of the wicked;
I will make the land waste,
and all that is in it,
By the hand of aliens.
I, the LORD, have spoken.”
13 ‘Thus says the Lord GOD:
“I will also destroy the idols, And cause the images to cease from Noph;[a]
There shall no longer be princes from the land of Egypt;
I will put fear in the land of Egypt.
14 I will make Pathros desolate,
Set fire to Zoan,
And execute judgments in No.[a]
15 I will pour My fury on Sin,[a] the strength of Egypt;
I will cut off the multitude of No,
16 And set a fire in Egypt;
Sin shall have great pain,
No shall be split open,
And Noph *shall be in* distress daily.
17 The young men of Aven[a] and Pi Beseth shall fall by the sword,
And these *cities* shall go into captivity.
18 At Tehaphnehes[a] the day shall also be darkened,[b]
When I break the yokes of Egypt there.
And her arrogant strength shall cease in her;
As for her, a cloud shall cover her,
And her daughters shall go into captivity.
19 Thus I will execute judgments on Egypt,
Then they shall know that I *am* the LORD.” ’ ”

## PROCLAMATION AGAINST PHARAOH

20 And it came to pass in the eleventh year, in the first *month,* on the

seventh *day* of the month, *that* the word of the LORD came to me, saying, [21]"Son of man, I have broken the arm of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and see, it has not been bandaged for healing, nor a splint put on to bind it, to make it strong enough to hold a sword. [22]Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: 'Surely I *am* against Pharaoh king of Egypt, and will break his arms, both the strong one and the one that was broken; and I will make the sword fall out of his hand. [23]I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and disperse them throughout the countries. [24]I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon and put My sword in his hand; but I will break Pharaoh's arms, and he will groan before him with the groanings of a mortally wounded *man.* [25]Thus I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon, but the arms of Pharaoh shall fall down; they shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I put My sword into the hand of the king of Babylon and he stretches it out against the land of Egypt. [26]I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations and disperse them throughout the countries. Then they shall know that I *am* the LORD.' "

## EGYPT CUT DOWN LIKE A GREAT TREE

**31** Now it came to pass in the eleventh year, in the third *month*, on the first
*day* of the month, *that* the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 2"Son
of man, say to Pharaoh king of Egypt and to his multitude:

'Whom are you like in your greatness?
3 Indeed Assyria *was* a cedar in Lebanon,
With fine branches that shaded the forest,
And of high stature;
And its top was among the thick boughs.
4 The waters made it grow;
Underground waters gave it height,
With their rivers running around the place where it was planted,
And sent out rivulets to all the trees of the field.
5 'Therefore its height was exalted above all the trees of the field;
Its boughs were multiplied,
And its branches became long because of the abundance of water,
As it sent them out.
6 All the birds of the heavens made their nests in its boughs;
Under its branches all the beasts of the field brought forth their young;
And in its shadow all great nations made their home.
7 'Thus it was beautiful in greatness and in the length of its branches,
Because its roots reached to abundant waters.
8 The cedars in the garden of God could not hide it;
The fir trees were not like its boughs,
And the chestnut[a] trees were not like its branches;
No tree in the garden of God was like it in beauty.
9 I made it beautiful with a multitude of branches,
So that all the trees of Eden envied it,
That *were* in the garden of God.'

10"Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: 'Because you have increased in height, and it set its top among the thick boughs, and its heart was lifted up in its height, 11therefore I will deliver it into the hand of the mighty one of the nations, and he shall surely deal with it; I have driven it out for its

wickedness. [12]And aliens, the most terrible of the nations, have cut it down and left it; its branches have fallen on the mountains and in all the valleys; its boughs lie broken by all the rivers of the land; and all the peoples of the earth have gone from under its shadow and left it.

[13] ‘ On its ruin will remain all the birds of the heavens,
And all the beasts of the field will come to its branches-
[14]‘So that no trees by the waters may ever again exalt themselves for their height, nor set their tops among the thick boughs, that no tree which drinks water may ever be high enough to reach up to them.

‘For they have all been delivered to death,
To the depths of the earth,
Among the children of men who go down to the Pit.’
[15]“Thus says the Lord GOD: ‘In the day when it went down to hell, I caused mourning. I covered the deep because of it. I restrained its rivers, and the great waters were held back. I caused Lebanon to mourn for it, and all the trees of the field wilted because of it. [16]I made the nations shake at the sound of its fall, when I cast it down to hell together with those who descend into the Pit; and all the trees of Eden, the choice and best of Lebanon, all that drink water, were comforted in the depths of the earth. [17]They also went down to hell with it, with those *slain* by the sword; and *those who were* its *strong* arm dwelt in its shadows among the nations.

[18]‘To which of the trees in Eden will you then be likened in glory and greatness? Yet you shall be brought down with the trees of Eden to the depths of the earth; you shall lie in the midst of the uncircumcised, with *those* slain by the sword. This *is* Pharaoh and all his multitude,’ says the Lord GOD.”

## LAMENTATION FOR PHARAOH AND EGYPT

**32** And it came to pass in the twelfth year, in the twelfth *month*, on the first *day* of the month, *that* the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 2"Son of man, take up a lamentation for Pharaoh king of Egypt, and say to him:

'You are like a young lion among the
nations,
And you *are* like a monster in the seas,
Bursting forth in your rivers,
Troubling the waters with your feet,
And fouling their rivers.'

3"Thus says the Lord GOD:

' I will therefore spread My net over you
with a company of many people,
And they will draw you up in My net.

4 Then I will leave you on the land;
I will cast you out on the open fields,
And cause to settle on you all the birds
of the heavens.
And with you I will fill the beasts of the
whole earth.

5 I will lay your flesh on the mountains,
And fill the valleys with your carcass.

6 ' I will also water the land with the flow
of your blood,
*Even* to the mountains;
And the riverbeds will be full of you.

7 When *I* put out your light,
I will cover the heavens, and make its
stars dark;
I will cover the sun with a cloud,
And the moon shall not give her light.

8 All the bright lights of the heavens I will
make dark over you,

And bring darkness upon your land,’
Says the Lord GOD.
9 ‘I will also trouble the hearts of many peoples, when I bring your
destruction among the nations, into the countries which you have not known.
10 Yes, I will make many peoples astonished at you, and their kings shall be
horribly afraid of you when I brandish My sword before them; and they shall
tremble *every* moment, every man for his own life, in the day of your fall.’

11 “For thus says the Lord GOD: ‘The sword of the king of Babylon shall
come upon you. 12 By the swords of the mighty warriors, all of them the most
terrible of the nations, I will cause your multitude to fall.

‘They shall plunder the pomp of Egypt,
And all its multitude shall be destroyed.
13 Also I will destroy all its animals
From beside its great waters;
The foot of man shall muddy them no
more,
Nor shall the hooves of animals muddy
them.
14 Then I will make their waters clear,
And make their rivers run like oil,’
Says the Lord GOD.
15 ‘When I make the land of Egypt
desolate,
And the country is destitute of all that
once filled it,
When I strike all who dwell in it,
Then they shall know that I *am* the
LORD.
16 ‘ This *is* the lamentation
With which they shall lament her;
The daughters of the nations shall
lament her;
They shall lament for her, for Egypt,
And for all her multitude,’

Says the Lord GOD.”

## EGYPT AND OTHERS CONSIGNED TO THE PIT

17 It came to pass also in the twelfth year, on the fifteenth *day* of the month,
*that* the word of the LORD came to me, saying:

18 “Son of man, wail over the multitude of
Egypt,
And cast them down to the depths of the
earth,
Her and the daughters of the famous
nations,
With those who go down to the Pit:
19 ‘Whom do you surpass in beauty?
Go down, be placed with the
uncircumcised.’
20 “They shall fall in the midst of *those* slain
by the sword;
She is delivered to the sword,
Drawing her and all her multitudes.
21 The strong among the mighty
Shall speak to him out of the midst of
hell
With those who help him:
‘They have gone down,
They lie with the uncircumcised, slain
by the sword.’
22 “Assyria *is* there, and all her company,
With their graves all around her,
All of them slain, fallen by the sword.
23 Her graves are set in the recesses of the
Pit,
And her company is all around her
grave,
All of them slain, fallen by the sword,

Who caused terror in the land of the
living.
24 “There *is* Elam and all her multitude,
All around her grave,
All of them slain, fallen by the sword,
Who have gone down uncircumcised to
the lower parts of the earth,
Who caused their terror in the land of
the living;
Now they bear their shame with those
who go down to the Pit.
25 They have set her bed in the midst of
the slain,
With all her multitude,
With her graves all around it,
All of them uncircumcised, slain by the
sword;
Though their terror was caused
In the land of the living,
Yet they bear their shame
With those who go down to the Pit;
It was put in the midst of the slain.
26 “There *are* Meshech and Tubal and all
their multitudes,
With all their graves around it,
All of them uncircumcised, slain by the
sword,
Though they caused their terror in the
land of the living.
27 They do not lie with the mighty
*Who are* fallen of the uncircumcised,
Who have gone down to hell with their
weapons of war;
They have laid their swords under their
heads,

But their iniquities will be on their bones,
Because of the terror of the mighty in
the land of the living.
28 Yes, you shall be broken in the midst of
the uncircumcised,
And lie with *those* slain by the sword.
29 “There *is* Edom,
Her kings and all her princes,
Who despite their might
Are laid beside *those* slain by the sword;
They shall lie with the uncircumcised,
And with those who go down to the Pit.
30 There *are* the princes of the north,
All of them, and all the Sidonians,
Who have gone down with the slain
In shame at the terror which they caused
by their might;
They lie uncircumcised with *those* slain
by the sword,
And bear their shame with those who go
down to the Pit.
31 “Pharaoh will see them
And be comforted over all his multitude,
Pharaoh and all his army,
Slain by the sword,”
Says the Lord GOD.
32 “For I have caused My terror in the land
of the living;
And he shall be placed in the midst of
the uncircumcised
With *those* slain by the sword,
Pharaoh and all his multitude,”
Says the Lord GOD.

## THE WATCHMAN AND HIS MESSAGE

**33** Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying, [2]"Son of man, speak to the children of your people, and say to them: 'When I bring the sword upon a land, and the people of the land take a man from their territory and make him their watchman, [3]when he sees the sword coming upon the land, if he blows the trumpet and warns the people, [4]then whoever hears the sound of the trumpet and does not take warning, if the sword comes and takes him away, his blood shall be on his *own* head. [5]He heard the sound of the trumpet, but did not take warning; his blood shall be upon himself. But he who takes warning will save his life. [6]But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, and the people are not warned, and the sword comes and takes *any* person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at the watchman's hand.'

[7]"So you, son of man: I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore you shall hear a word from My mouth and warn them for Me. [8]When I say to the wicked, 'O wicked *man,* you shall surely die!' and you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked *man* shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand. [9]Nevertheless if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul.

[10]"Therefore you, O son of man, say to the house of Israel: 'Thus you say, "If our transgressions and our sins *lie* upon us, and we pine away in them, how can we then live?" ' [11]Say to them: '*As* I live,' says the Lord GOD, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?'

## THE FAIRNESS OF GOD'S JUDGMENT

[12]"Therefore you, O son of man, say to the children of your people: 'The righteousness of the righteous man shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression; as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall because of it in the day that he turns from his wickedness; nor shall the righteous be

able to live because of *his righteousness* in the day that he sins.’ [13]When I say to the righteous *that* he shall surely live, but he trusts in his own righteousness and commits iniquity, none of his righteous works shall be remembered; but because of the iniquity that he has committed, he shall die. [14]Again, when I say to the wicked, ‘You shall surely die,’ if he turns from his sin and does what is lawful and right, [15]*if* the wicked restores the pledge, gives back what he has stolen, and walks in the statutes of life without committing iniquity, he shall surely live; he shall not die. [16]None of his sins which he has committed shall be remembered against him; he has done what is lawful and right; he shall surely live.

> “None of his sins which he has committed shall be remembered against him; he has done what is lawful and right; he shall surely live.”
> EZEKIEL 33:16

[17]“Yet the children of your people say, ‘The way of the LORD is not fair.’ But it is their way which is not fair! [18]When the righteous turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, he shall die because of it. [19]But when the wicked turns from his wickedness and does what is lawful and right, he shall live because of it. [20]Yet you say, ‘The way of the LORD is not fair.’ O house of Israel, I will judge every one of you according to his own ways.”

## THE FALL OF JERUSALEM

[21]And it came to pass in the twelfth year of our captivity, in the tenth *month*, on the fifth *day* of the month, *that* one who had escaped from Jerusalem came to me and said, “The city has been captured!”

[22]Now the hand of the LORD had been upon me the evening before the man came who had escaped. And He had opened my mouth; so when he came to me in the morning, my mouth was opened, and I was no longer mute.

## THE CAUSE OF JUDAH’S RUIN

[23]Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying: [24]“Son of man, they who inhabit those ruins in the land of Israel are saying, ‘Abraham was only one,

and he inherited the land. But we *are* many; the land has been given to us as a possession.'

25"Therefore say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "You eat *meat* with blood, you lift up your eyes toward your idols, and shed blood. Should you then possess the land? 26You rely on your sword, you commit abominations, and you defile one another's wives. Should you then possess the land?" '

27"Say thus to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "*As* I live, surely those who *are* in the ruins shall fall by the sword, and the one who *is* in the open field I will give to the beasts to be devoured, and those who *are* in the strongholds and caves shall die of the pestilence. 28For I will make the land most desolate, her arrogant strength shall cease, and the mountains of Israel shall be so desolate that no one will pass through. 29Then they shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I have made the land most desolate because of all their abominations which they have committed." '

**HEARING AND NOT DOING**

30"As for you, son of man, the children of your people are talking about you beside the walls and in the doors of the houses; and they speak to one another, everyone saying to his brother, 'Please come and hear what the word is that comes from the LORD.' 31So they come to you as people do, they sit before you *as* My people, and they hear your words, but they do not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, *but* their hearts pursue their *own* gain. 32Indeed you *are* to them as a very lovely song of one who has a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument; for they hear your words, but they do not do them. 33And when this comes to pass-surely it will come-then they will know that a prophet has been among them."

## IRRESPONSIBLE SHEPHERDS

**34** And the word of the LORD came to me, saying, [2]"Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD to the shepherds: "Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? [3]You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool; you slaughter the fatlings, *but* you do not feed the flock. [4]The weak you have not strengthened, nor have you healed those who were sick, nor bound up the broken, nor brought back what was driven away, nor sought what was lost; but with force and cruelty you have ruled them. [5]So they were scattered because *there was* no shepherd; and they became food for all the beasts of the field when they were scattered. [6]My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and on every high hill; yes, My flock was scattered over the whole face of the earth, and no one was seeking or searching *for them.*"

[7]'Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: [8]"*As* I live," says the Lord GOD, "surely because My flock became a prey, and My flock became food for every beast of the field, because *there was* no shepherd, nor did My shepherds search for My flock, but the shepherds fed themselves and did not feed My flock"- [9]therefore, O shepherds, hear the word of the LORD! [10]Thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, I *am* against the shepherds, and I will require My flock at their hand; I will cause them to cease feeding the sheep, and the shepherds shall feed themselves no more; for I will deliver My flock from their mouths, that they may no longer be food for them."

## GOD, THE TRUE SHEPHERD

[11]'For thus says the Lord GOD: "Indeed I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out. [12]As a shepherd seeks out his flock on the day he is among his scattered sheep, so will I seek out My sheep and deliver them from all the places where they were scattered on a cloudy and dark day. [13]And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land; I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, in the valleys and in all the inhabited places of the country. [14]I will feed them in good pasture, and their fold shall be on the high mountains of Israel. There

they shall lie down in a good fold and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. [15]I will feed My flock, and I will make them lie down," says the Lord GOD. [16]"I will seek what was lost and bring back what was driven away, bind up the broken and strengthen what was sick; but I will destroy the fat and the strong, and feed them in judgment."

[17]'And *as for* you, O My flock, thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, I shall judge between sheep and sheep, between rams and goats. [18]*Is it* too little for you to have eaten up the good pasture, that you must tread down with your feet the residue of your pasture-and to have drunk of the clear waters, that you must foul the residue with your feet? [19]And *as for* My flock, they eat what you have trampled with your feet, and they drink what you have fouled with your feet."

[20]'Therefore thus says the Lord GOD to them: "Behold, I Myself will judge between the fat and the lean sheep. [21]Because you have pushed with side and shoulder, butted all the weak ones with your horns, and scattered them abroad, [22]therefore I will save My flock, and they shall no longer be a prey; and I will judge between sheep and sheep. [23]I will establish one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them-My servant David. He shall feed them and be their shepherd. [24]And I, the LORD, will be their God, and My servant David a prince among them; I, the LORD, have spoken.

[25]"I will make a covenant of peace with them, and cause wild beasts to cease from the land; and they will dwell safely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods. [26]I will make them and the places all around My hill a blessing; and I will cause showers to come down in their season; there shall be showers of blessing. [27]Then the trees of the field shall yield their fruit, and the earth shall yield her increase. They shall be safe in their land; and they shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I have broken the bands of their yoke and delivered them from the hand of those who enslaved them. [28]And they shall no longer be a prey for the nations, nor shall beasts of the land devour them; but they shall dwell safely, and no one shall make *them* afraid. [29]I will raise up for them a garden of renown, and they shall no longer be consumed with hunger in the land, nor bear the shame of the Gentiles anymore. [30]Thus they shall know that I, the LORD their God, *am* with them, and they, the house of Israel,

*are* My people," says the Lord GOD.' "

"I will seek what was lost and bring back what was driven away, bind up the broken and strengthen what was sick."
EZEKIEL 34:16

31"You are My flock, the flock of My pasture; you *are* men, *and* I *am* your God," says the Lord GOD.

**JUDGMENT ON MOUNT SEIR**

**35** Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying, [2]"Son of man, set
your face against Mount Seir and prophesy against it, [3]and say to it,
'Thus says the Lord GOD:

"Behold, O Mount Seir, I *am* against you;
I will stretch out My hand against you,
And make you most desolate;
[4] I shall lay your cities waste,
And you shall be desolate.
Then you shall know that I *am* the LORD.

[5]"Because you have had an ancient hatred, and have shed *the blood of* the children of Israel by the power of the sword at the time of their calamity, *when* their iniquity *came to an* end, [6]therefore, *as* I live," says the Lord GOD, "I will prepare you for blood, and blood shall pursue you; since you have not hated blood, therefore blood shall pursue you. [7]Thus I will make Mount Seir most desolate, and cut off from it the one who leaves and the one who returns. [8]And I will fill its mountains with the slain; on your hills and in your valleys and in all your ravines those who are slain by the sword shall fall. [9]I will make you perpetually desolate, and your cities shall be uninhabited; then you shall know that I *am* the LORD.

[10]"Because you have said, 'These two nations and these two countries shall be mine, and we will possess them,' although the LORD was there, [11]therefore, *as* I live," says the Lord GOD, "I will do according to your anger and according to the envy which you showed in your hatred against them; and I will make Myself known among them when I judge you. [12]Then you shall know that I *am* the LORD. I have heard all your blasphemies which you have spoken against the mountains of Israel, saying, 'They are desolate; they are given to us to consume.' [13]Thus with your mouth you have boasted against Me and multiplied your words against Me; I have heard *them.* "

[14]'Thus says the Lord GOD: "The whole earth will rejoice when I make you desolate. [15]As you rejoiced because the inheritance of the house of Israel was desolate, so I will do to you; you shall be desolate, O Mount Seir, as well

as all of Edom-all of it! Then they shall know that I *am* the LORD.” ’

**BLESSING ON ISRAEL**

**36** “And you, son of man, prophesy to the mountains of Israel, and say, ‘O
mountains of Israel, hear the word of the LORD! 2Thus says the Lord
GOD: “Because the enemy has said of you, ‘Aha! The ancient heights have
become our possession,’ ” ’ 3therefore prophesy, and say, ‘Thus says the
Lord GOD: “Because they made *you* desolate and swallowed you up on
every side, so that you became the possession of the rest of the nations, and
you are taken up by the lips of talkers and slandered by the people”-
4therefore, O mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord GOD! Thus says
the Lord GOD to the mountains, the hills, the rivers, the valleys, the desolate
wastes, and the cities that have been forsaken, which became plunder and
mockery to the rest of the nations all around- 5therefore thus says the Lord
GOD: “Surely I have spoken in My burning jealousy against the rest of the
nations and against all Edom, who gave My land to themselves as a
possession, with wholehearted joy *and* spiteful minds, in order to plunder its
open country.” ’

6“Therefore prophesy concerning the land of Israel, and say to the
mountains, the hills, the rivers, and the valleys, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD:
“Behold, I have spoken in My jealousy and My fury, because you have borne
the shame of the nations.” 7Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: “I have raised
My hand in an oath that surely the nations that *are* around you shall bear their
own shame. 8But you, O mountains of Israel, you shall shoot forth your
branches and yield your fruit to My people Israel, for they are about to come.
9For indeed I *am* for you, and I will turn to you, and you shall be tilled and
sown. 10I will multiply men upon you, all the house of Israel, all of it; and the
cities shall be inhabited and the ruins rebuilt. 11I will multiply upon you man
and beast; and they shall increase and bear young; I will make you inhabited
as in former times, and do better *for you* than at your beginnings. Then you
shall know that I *am* the LORD. 12Yes, I will cause men to walk on you, My
people Israel; they shall take possession of you, and you shall be their
inheritance; no more shall you bereave them *of children.* ”

13‘Thus says the Lord GOD: “Because they say to you, ‘You devour men
and bereave your nation *of children,*’ 14therefore you shall devour men no

more, nor bereave your nation anymore," says the Lord GOD. [15]Nor will I let you hear the taunts of the nations anymore, nor bear the reproach of the peoples anymore, nor shall you cause your nation to stumble anymore," says the Lord GOD.' "

**THE RENEWAL OF ISRAEL**

[16]Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying: [17]"Son of man, when the house of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their own ways and deeds; to Me their way was like the uncleanness of a woman in her customary impurity. [18]Therefore I poured out My fury on them for the blood they had shed on the land, and for their idols *with which* they had defiled it. [19]So I scattered them among the nations, and they were dispersed throughout the countries; I judged them according to their ways and their deeds. [20]When they came to the nations, wherever they went, they profaned My holy name-when they said of them, 'These *are* the people of the LORD, *and* yet they have gone out of His land.' [21]But I had concern for My holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations wherever they went.

[22]"Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "I do not do *this* for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name's sake, which you have profaned among the nations wherever you went. [23]And I will sanctify My great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst; and the nations shall know that I *am* the LORD," says the Lord GOD, "when I am hallowed in you before their eyes. [24]For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. [25]Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. [26]I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. [27]I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do *them.* [28]Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God. [29]I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses. I will call for the grain and multiply it, and bring no famine upon you. [30]And I will multiply the fruit of your trees and the increase of your fields, so that you need never again bear

the reproach of famine among the nations. [31]Then you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that *were* not good; and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities and your abominations. [32]Not for your sake do I do *this*," says the Lord GOD, "let it be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel!"

[33]'Thus says the Lord GOD: "On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will also enable *you* to dwell in the cities, and the ruins shall be rebuilt. [34]The desolate land shall be tilled instead of lying desolate in the sight of all who pass by. [35]So they will say, 'This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden; and the wasted, desolate, and ruined cities *are now* fortified *and* inhabited.' [36]Then the nations which are left all around you shall know that I, the LORD, have rebuilt the ruined places *and* planted what was desolate. I, the LORD, have spoken *it*, and I will do *it.* "

[37]'Thus says the Lord GOD: "I will also let the house of Israel inquire of Me to do this for them: I will increase their men like a flock. [38]Like a flock *offered as* holy *sacrifices*, like the flock at Jerusalem on its feast days, so shall the ruined cities be filled with flocks of men. Then they shall know that I *am* the LORD." ' "

**THE DRY BONES LIVE**

**37** The hand of the LORD came upon me and brought me out in the Spirit of
the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it *was* full of
bones. 2Then He caused me to pass by them all around, and behold, *there*
*were* very many in the open valley; and indeed *they were* very dry. 3And He
said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" So I answered, "O Lord
GOD, You know."

4Again He said to me, "Prophesy to these bones, and say to them, 'O dry
bones, hear the word of the LORD! 5Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones:
"Surely I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live. 6I will put
sinews on you and bring flesh upon you, cover you with skin and put breath
in you; and you shall live. Then you shall know that I *am* the LORD." ' "

7So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a
noise, and suddenly a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to bone.
8Indeed, as I looked, the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin
covered them over; but *there was* no breath in them.

9Also He said to me, "Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, son of man, and
say to the breath, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Come from the four winds, O
breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live." ' " 10So I prophesied
as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood
upon their feet, an exceedingly great army.

11Then He said to me, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of
Israel. They indeed say, 'Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we
ourselves are cut off!' 12Therefore prophesy and say to them, 'Thus says the
Lord GOD: "Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to
come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. 13Then you
shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O My
people, and brought you up from your graves. 14I will put My Spirit in you,
and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall
know that I, the LORD, have spoken *it* and performed *it*," says the LORD.' "

"I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will

place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken it and performed it," says the LORD.
EZEKIEL 37:14

**ONE KINGDOM, ONE KING**

15 Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 16 "As for you, son of man, take a stick for yourself and write on it: 'For Judah and for the children of Israel, his companions.' Then take another stick and write on it, 'For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and *for* all the house of Israel, his companions.' 17 Then join them one to another for yourself into one stick, and they will become one in your hand.

18 "And when the children of your people speak to you, saying, 'Will you not show us what you *mean* by these?'- 19 say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Surely I will take the stick of Joseph, which *is* in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel, his companions; and I will join them with it, with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they will be one in My hand." ' 20 And the sticks on which you write will be in your hand before their eyes.

21 "Then say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Surely I will take the children of Israel from among the nations, wherever they have gone, and will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land; 22 and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king over them all; they shall no longer be two nations, nor shall they ever be divided into two kingdoms again. 23 They shall not defile themselves anymore with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions; but I will deliver them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them. Then they shall be My people, and I will be their God.

24 "David My servant *shall be* king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd; they shall also walk in My judgments and observe My statutes, and do them. 25 Then they shall dwell in the land that I have given to Jacob My servant, where your fathers dwelt; and they shall dwell there, they, their children, and their children's children, forever; and My servant David *shall*

*be* their prince forever. [26]Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them, and it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; I will establish them and multiply them, and I will set My sanctuary in their midst forevermore. [27]My tabernacle also shall be with them; indeed I will be their God, and they shall be My people. [28]The nations also will know that I, the LORD, sanctify Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forevermore.” ’ ”

## GOG AND ALLIES ATTACK ISRAEL

**38** Now the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 2"Son of man, set your face against Gog, of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh,[a] Meshech, and Tubal, and prophesy against him, 3and say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, I *am* against you, O Gog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal. 4I will turn you around, put hooks into your jaws, and lead you out, with all your army, horses, and horsemen, all splendidly clothed, a great company *with* bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords. 5Persia, Ethiopia,[a] and Libya[b] are with them, all of them *with* shield and helmet; 6Gomer and all its troops; the house of Togarmah *from* the far north and all its troops-many people *are* with you.

7"Prepare yourself and be ready, you and all your companies that are gathered about you; and be a guard for them. 8After many days you will be visited. In the latter years you will come into the land of those brought back from the sword *and* gathered from many people on the mountains of Israel, which had long been desolate; they were brought out of the nations, and now all of them dwell safely. 9You will ascend, coming like a storm, covering the land like a cloud, you and all your troops and many peoples with you."

10'Thus says the Lord GOD: "On that day it shall come to pass *that* thoughts will arise in your mind, and you will make an evil plan: 11You will say, 'I will go up against a land of unwalled villages; I will go to a peaceful people, who dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates'- 12to take plunder and to take booty, to stretch out your hand against the waste places *that are again* inhabited, and against a people gathered from the nations, who have acquired livestock and goods, who dwell in the midst of the land. 13Sheba, Dedan, the merchants of Tarshish, and all their young lions will say to you, 'Have you come to take plunder? Have you gathered your army to take booty, to carry away silver and gold, to take away livestock and goods, to take great plunder?' " '

14"Therefore, son of man, prophesy and say to Gog, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "On that day when My people Israel dwell safely, will you not know *it?* 15Then you will come from your place out of the far north, you and many

peoples with you, all of them riding on horses, a great company and a mighty army. [16]You will come up against My people Israel like a cloud, to cover the land. It will be in the latter days that I will bring you against My land, so that the nations may know Me, when I am hallowed in you, O Gog, before their eyes." [17]Thus says the Lord GOD: "Are *you* he of whom I have spoken in former days by My servants the prophets of Israel, who prophesied for years in those days that I would bring you against them?

**JUDGMENT ON GOG**

[18]"And it will come to pass at the same time, when Gog comes against the land of Israel," says the Lord GOD, "*that* My fury will show in My face. [19]For in My jealousy *and* in the fire of My wrath I have spoken: 'Surely in that day there shall be a great earthquake in the land of Israel, [20]so that the fish of the sea, the birds of the heavens, the beasts of the field, all creeping things that creep on the earth, and all men who *are* on the face of the earth shall shake at My presence. The mountains shall be thrown down, the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground.' [21]I will call for a sword against Gog throughout all My mountains," says the Lord GOD. "Every man's sword will be against his brother. [22]And I will bring him to judgment with pestilence and bloodshed; I will rain down on him, on his troops, and on the many peoples who *are* with him, flooding rain, great hailstones, fire, and brimstone. [23]Thus I will magnify Myself and sanctify Myself, and I will be known in the eyes of many nations. Then they shall know that I *am* the LORD." '

## GOG'S ARMIES DESTROYED

**39** "And you, son of man, prophesy against Gog, and say, 'Thus says the
Lord GOD: "Behold, I *am* against you, O Gog, the prince of Rosh,[a]
Meshech, and Tubal; 2and I will turn you around and lead you on, bringing
you up from the far north, and bring you against the mountains of Israel.
3Then I will knock the bow out of your left hand, and cause the arrows to fall
out of your right hand. 4You shall fall upon the mountains of Israel, you and
all your troops and the peoples who *are* with you; I will give you to birds of
prey of every sort and *to* the beasts of the field to be devoured. 5You shall fall
on the open field; for I have spoken," says the Lord GOD. 6"And I will send
fire on Magog and on those who live in security in the coastlands. Then they
shall know that I *am* the LORD. 7So I will make My holy name known in the
midst of My people Israel, and I will not *let them* profane My holy name
anymore. Then the nations shall know that *I am* the LORD, the Holy One in
Israel. 8Surely it is coming, and it shall be done," says the Lord GOD. "This
*is* the day of which I have spoken.

9"Then those who dwell in the cities of Israel will go out and set on fire
and burn the weapons, both the shields and bucklers, the bows and arrows,
the javelins and spears; and they will make fires with them for seven years.
10They will not take wood from the field nor cut down *any* from the forests,
because they will make fires with the weapons; and they will plunder those
who plundered them, and pillage those who pillaged them," says the Lord
GOD.

## THE BURIAL OF GOG

11"It will come to pass in that day *that* I will give Gog a burial place there
in Israel, the valley of those who pass by east of the sea; and it will obstruct
travelers, because there they will bury Gog and all his multitude. Therefore
they will call *it* the Valley of Hamon Gog.[a] 12For seven months the house of
Israel will be burying them, in order to cleanse the land. 13Indeed all the
people of the land will be burying, and they will gain renown for it on the day
that I am glorified," says the Lord GOD. 14"They will set apart men regularly

employed, with the help of a search party,[a] to pass through the land and bury those bodies remaining on the ground, in order to cleanse it. At the end of seven months they will make a search. 15The search party will pass through the land; and *when anyone* sees a man's bone, he shall set up a marker by it, till the buriers have buried it in the Valley of Hamon Gog. 16*The* name of *the* city *will* also *be* Hamonah. Thus they shall cleanse the land." '

## A TRIUMPHANT FESTIVAL

17"And as for you, son of man, thus says the Lord GOD, 'Speak to every sort of bird and to every beast of the field:

"Assemble yourselves and come;
Gather together from all sides to My
sacrificial meal
Which I am sacrificing for you,
A great sacrificial meal on the
mountains of Israel,
That you may eat flesh and drink blood.
18 You shall eat the flesh of the mighty,
Drink the blood of the princes of the
earth,
Of rams and lambs,
Of goats and bulls,
All of them fatlings of Bashan.
19 You shall eat fat till you are full,
And drink blood till you are drunk,
At My sacrificial meal
Which I am sacrificing for you.
20 You shall be filled at My table
With horses and riders,
With mighty men
And with all the men of war," says the
Lord GOD.

## ISRAEL RESTORED TO THE LAND

21 "I will set My glory among the nations; all the nations shall see My
judgment which I have executed, and My hand which I have laid on them.
22 So the house of Israel shall know that I *am* the LORD their God from that
day forward. 23 The Gentiles shall know that the house of Israel went into
captivity for their iniquity; because they were unfaithful to Me, therefore I
hid My face from them. I gave them into the hand of their enemies, and they
all fell by the sword. 24 According to their uncleanness and according to their
transgressions I have dealt with them, and hidden My face from them." '

25 "Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: 'Now I will bring back the captives
of Jacob, and have mercy on the whole house of Israel; and I will be jealous
for My holy name-26 after they have borne their shame, and all their
unfaithfulness in which they were unfaithful to Me, when they dwelt safely in
their *own* land and no one made *them* afraid. 27 When I have brought them
back from the peoples and gathered them out of their enemies' lands, and I
am hallowed in them in the sight of many nations, 28 then they shall know that
I *am* the LORD their God, who sent them into captivity among the nations, but
also brought them back to their land, and left none of them captive any
longer. 29 And I will not hide My face from them anymore; for I shall have
poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel,' says the Lord GOD."

**SOUL NOTE**

**No Fooling** *(39:7, 8)* Jeremiah predicted God's judgment on Gog's armies, saying, "Surely it is coming, and it shall be done." God sees and knows everything; He is completely in control of all that happens on this earth. God's power is beyond our comprehension; He will accomplish what He says He will accomplish. Nothing is left to chance with God. If we believe that, then we know that He is also in control of our lives. Nothing can happen to us that takes Him by surprise. With our lives entrusted to Him, we know that we can never

be shaken. **Topic: Knowing God**

## A NEW CITY, A NEW TEMPLE

**40** In the twenty-fifth year of our captivity, at the beginning of the year, on the tenth *day* of the month, in the fourteenth year after the city was captured, on the very same day the hand of the LORD was upon me; and He took me there. 2In the visions of God He took me into the land of Israel and set me on a very high mountain; on it toward the south *was* something like the structure of a city. 3He took me there, and behold, *there was* a man whose appearance *was* like the appearance of bronze. He had a line of flax and a measuring rod in his hand, and he stood in the gateway.

4And the man said to me, "Son of man, look with your eyes and hear with your ears, and fix your mind on everything I show you; for you *were* brought here so that I might show *them* to you. Declare to the house of Israel everything you see." 5Now there was a wall all around the outside of the temple.[a] In the man's hand was a measuring rod six cubits *long, each being a* cubit and a handbreadth; and he measured the width of the wall structure, one rod; and the height, one rod.

## THE EASTERN GATEWAY OF THE TEMPLE

6Then he went to the gateway which faced east; and he went up its stairs and measured the threshold of the gateway, *which was* one rod wide, and the other threshold *was* one rod wide. 7Each gate chamber *was* one rod long and one rod wide; between the gate chambers *was a space of* five cubits; and the threshold of the gateway by the vestibule of the inside gate *was* one rod. 8He also measured the vestibule of the inside gate, one rod. 9Then he measured the vestibule of the gateway, eight cubits; and the gateposts, two cubits. The vestibule of the gate *was* on the inside. 10In the eastern gateway *were* three gate chambers on one side and three on the other; the three *were* all the same size; also the gateposts were of the same size on this side and that side.

11He measured the width of the entrance to the gateway, ten cubits; *and* the length of the gate, thirteen cubits. 12*There was* a space in front of the gate chambers, one cubit *on this side* and one cubit on that side; the gate chambers *were* six cubits on this side and six cubits on that side. 13Then he measured

the gateway from the roof of *one* gate chamber to the roof of the other; the width *was* twenty-five cubits, as door faces door. [14]He measured the gateposts, sixty cubits high, and the court all around the gateway *extended* to the gatepost. [15]*From* the front of the entrance gate to the front of the vestibule of the inner gate *was* fifty cubits. [16]*There were* beveled window *frames* in the gate chambers and in their intervening archways on the inside of the gateway all around, and likewise in the vestibules. *There were* windows all around on the inside. And on each gatepost *were* palm trees.

**THE OUTER COURT**

[17]Then he brought me into the outer court; and *there were* chambers and a pavement made all around the court; thirty chambers faced the pavement. [18]The pavement was by the side of the gateways, corresponding to the length of the gateways; *this was* the lower pavement. [19]Then he measured the width from the front of the lower gateway to the front of the inner court exterior, one hundred cubits toward the east and the north.

**THE NORTHERN GATEWAY**

[20]On the outer court was also a gateway facing north, and he measured its length and its width. [21]Its gate chambers, three on this side and three on that side, its gateposts and its archways, had the same measurements as the first gate; its length *was* fifty cubits and its width twenty-five cubits. [22]Its windows and those of its archways, and also its palm trees, *had* the same measurements as the gateway facing east; it was ascended by seven steps, and its archway *was* in front of it. [23]A gate of the inner court was opposite the northern gateway, just as the eastern *gateway;* and he measured from gateway to gateway, one hundred cubits.

**THE SOUTHERN GATEWAY**

[24]After that he brought me toward the south, and there a gateway was facing south; and he measured its gateposts and archways according to these same measurements. [25]*There were* windows in it and in its archways all around like those windows; its length *was* fifty cubits and its width twenty-five cubits. [26]Seven steps led up to it, and its archway *was* in front of them;

and it had palm trees on its gateposts, one on this side and one on that side. [27]*There was* also a gateway on the inner court, facing south; and he measured from gateway to gateway toward the south, one hundred cubits.

## GATEWAYS OF THE INNER COURT

[28]Then he brought me to the inner court through the southern gateway; he measured the southern gateway according to these same measurements. [29]Also its gate chambers, its gateposts, and its archways *were* according to these same measurements; *there were* windows in it and in its archways all around; *it was* fifty cubits long and twenty-five cubits wide. [30]*There were* archways all around, twenty-five cubits long and five cubits wide. [31]Its archways faced the outer court, palm trees *were* on its gateposts, and going up to it *were* eight steps.

[32]And he brought me into the inner court facing east; he measured the gateway according to these same measurements. [33]Also its gate chambers, its gateposts, and its archways *were* according to these same measurements; and *there were* windows in it and in its archways all around; *it was* fifty cubits long and twenty-five cubits wide. [34]Its archways faced the outer court, and palm trees *were* on its gateposts on this side and on that side; and going up to it *were* eight steps.

[35]Then he brought me to the north gateway and measured *it* according to these same measurements-[36]also its gate chambers, its gateposts, and its archways. It had windows all around; its length *was* fifty cubits and its width twenty-five cubits. [37]Its gateposts faced the outer court, palm trees *were* on its gateposts on this side and on that side, and going up to it *were* eight steps.

## WHERE SACRIFICES WERE PREPARED

[38]*There was* a chamber and its entrance by the gateposts of the gateway, where they washed the burnt offering. [39]In the vestibule of the gateway *were* two tables on this side and two tables on that side, on which to slay the burnt offering, the sin offering, and the trespass offering. [40]At the outer side of the vestibule, as one goes up to the entrance of the northern gateway, *were* two tables; and on the other side of the vestibule of the gateway *were* two tables.

41 Four tables *were* on this side and four tables on that side, by the side of the
gateway, eight tables on which they slaughtered *the sacrifices.* 42 *There were*
also four tables of hewn stone for the burnt offering, one cubit and a half
long, one cubit and a half wide, and one cubit high; on these they laid the
instruments with which they slaughtered the burnt offering and the sacrifice.
43 Inside *were* hooks, a handbreadth wide, fastened all around; and the flesh of
the sacrifices *was* on the tables.

## CHAMBERS FOR SINGERS AND PRIESTS

44 Outside the inner gate *were* the chambers for the singers in the inner
court, one facing south at the side of the northern gateway, and the other
facing north at the side of the southern gateway. 45 Then he said to me, "This
chamber which faces south *is* for the priests who have charge of the temple.
46 The chamber which faces north *is* for the priests who have charge of the
altar; these *are* the sons of Zadok, from the sons of Levi, who come near the
LORD to minister to Him."

## DIMENSIONS OF THE INNER COURT AND VESTIBULE

47 And he measured the court, one hundred cubits long and one hundred
cubits wide, foursquare. The altar *was* in front of the temple. 48 Then he
brought me to the vestibule of the temple and measured the doorposts of the
vestibule, five cubits on this side and five cubits on that side; and the width of
the gateway was three cubits on this side and three cubits on that side. 49 The
length of the vestibule *was* twenty cubits, and the width eleven cubits; and by
the steps which led up to it *there were* pillars by the doorposts, one on this
side and another on that side.

## DIMENSIONS OF THE SANCTUARY

**41** Then he brought me into the sanctuary[a] and measured the doorposts, six
cubits wide on one side and six cubits wide on the other side-the width
of the tabernacle. 2The width of the entryway *was* ten cubits, and the side
walls of the entrance *were* five cubits on this side and five cubits on the other
side; and he measured its length, forty cubits, and its width, twenty cubits.

3Also he went inside and measured the doorposts, two cubits; and the
entrance, six cubits *high;* and the width of the entrance, seven cubits. 4He
measured the length, twenty cubits; and the width, twenty cubits, beyond the
sanctuary; and he said to me, "This *is* the Most Holy *Place.* "

## THE SIDE CHAMBERS ON THE WALL

5Next, he measured the wall of the temple, six cubits. The width of each
side chamber all around the temple *was* four cubits on every side. 6The side
chambers *were* in three stories, one above the other, thirty chambers in each
story; they rested on ledges which *were* for the side chambers all around, that
they might be supported, but not fastened to the wall of the temple. 7As one
went up from story to story, the side chambers became wider all around,
because their supporting ledges in the wall of the temple ascended like steps;
therefore the width of the structure increased as one went up *from* the lowest
*story* to the highest by way of the middle one. 8I also saw an elevation all
around the temple; it was the foundation of the side chambers, a full rod, *that
is,* six cubits *high.* 9The thickness of the outer wall of the side chambers *was*
five cubits, and so also the remaining terrace by the place of the side
chambers of the temple. 10And between *it and* the *wall* chambers was a width
of twenty cubits all around the temple on every side. 11The doors of the side
chambers opened on the terrace, one door toward the north and another
toward the south; and the width of the terrace *was* five cubits all around.

## THE BUILDING AT THE WESTERN END

12The building that faced the separating courtyard at its western end *was*
seventy cubits wide; the wall of the building *was* five cubits thick all around,

and its length ninety cubits.

## DIMENSIONS AND DESIGN OF THE TEMPLE AREA

[13]So he measured the temple, one hundred cubits long; and the separating courtyard with the building and its walls *was* one hundred cubits long; [14]also the width of the eastern face of the temple, including the separating courtyard, *was* one hundred cubits. [15]He measured the length of the building behind it, facing the separating courtyard, with its galleries on the one side and on the other side, one hundred cubits, as well as the inner temple and the porches of the court, [16]their doorposts and the beveled window frames. And the galleries all around their three stories opposite the threshold were paneled with wood from the ground to the windows-the windows were covered- [17]from the space above the door, even to the inner room,[a] as well as outside, and on every wall all around, inside and outside, by measure.

[18]And *it was* made with cherubim and palm trees, a palm tree between cherub and cherub. *Each* cherub had two faces, [19]so that the face of a man *was* toward a palm tree on one side, and the face of a young lion toward a palm tree on the other side; thus *it was* made throughout the temple all around. [20]From the floor to the space above the door, and on the wall of the sanctuary, cherubim and palm trees *were* carved.

[21]The doorposts of the temple *were* square, *as was* the front of the sanctuary; their appearance was similar. [22]The altar *was* of wood, three cubits high, and its length two cubits. Its corners, its length, and its sides *were* of wood; and he said to me, “This *is* the table that *is* before the LORD.”

[23]The temple and the sanctuary had two doors. [24]The doors had two panels *apiece,* two folding panels: two *panels* for one door and two panels for the other *door.* [25]Cherubim and palm trees *were* carved on the doors of the temple just as they *were* carved on the walls. A wooden canopy *was* on the front of the vestibule outside. [26]*There were* beveled window *frames* and palm trees on one side and on the other, on the sides of the vestibule-also on the side chambers of the temple and on the canopies.

## THE CHAMBERS FOR THE PRIESTS

**42** Then he brought me out into the outer court, by the way toward the north; and he brought me into the chamber which *was* opposite the separating courtyard, and which *was* opposite the building toward the north. 2Facing the length, *which was* one hundred cubits (the width was fifty cubits), was the north door. 3Opposite the inner court of twenty *cubits*, and opposite the pavement of the outer court, *was* gallery against gallery in three *stories*. 4In front of the chambers, toward the inside, *was* a walk ten cubits wide, at a distance of one cubit; and their doors faced north. 5Now the upper chambers *were* shorter, because the galleries took away *space* from them more than from the lower and middle stories of the building. 6For they *were* in three *stories* and did not have pillars like the pillars of the courts; therefore *the upper level* was shortened more than the lower and middle levels from the ground up. 7And a wall which *was* outside ran parallel to the chambers, at the front of the chambers, toward the outer court; its length *was* fifty cubits. 8The length of the chambers toward the outer court *was* fifty cubits, whereas that facing the temple *was* one hundred cubits. 9At the lower chambers *was* the entrance on the east side, as one goes into them from the outer court.

10Also *there were* chambers in the thickness of the wall of the court toward the east, opposite the separating courtyard and opposite the building. 11*There was* a walk in front of them also, and their appearance *was* like the chambers which *were* toward the north; they *were* as long and as wide as the others, and all their exits and entrances *were* according to plan. 12And corresponding to the doors of the chambers that *were* facing south, as one enters them, *there was* a door in front of the walk, the way directly in front of the wall toward the east.

13Then he said to me, "The north chambers *and* the south chambers, which *are* opposite the separating courtyard, *are* the holy chambers where the priests who approach the LORD shall eat the most holy offerings. There they shall lay the most holy offerings-the grain offering, the sin offering, and the trespass offering-for the place *is* holy. 14When the priests enter them, they shall not go out of the holy *chamber* into the outer court; but there they shall leave their garments in which they minister, for they *are* holy. They shall put

on other garments; then they may approach *that* which *is* for the people."

**OUTER DIMENSIONS OF THE TEMPLE**

15 Now when he had finished measuring the inner temple, he brought me
out through the gateway that faces toward the east, and measured it all
around. 16 He measured the east side with the measuring rod,[a] five hundred
rods by the measuring rod all around. 17 He measured the north side, five
hundred rods by the measuring rod all around. 18 He measured the south side,
five hundred rods by the measuring rod. 19 He came around to the west side
*and* measured five hundred rods by the measuring rod. 20 He measured it on
the four sides; it had a wall all around, five hundred *cubits* long and five
hundred wide, to separate the holy areas from the common.

## THE TEMPLE, THE LORD'S DWELLING PLACE

**43** Afterward he brought me to the gate, the gate that faces toward the east.
2 And behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the
east. His voice *was* like the sound of many waters; and the earth shone with
His glory. 3 *It was* like the appearance of the vision which I saw-like the
vision which I saw when I[a] came to destroy the city. The visions *were* like
the vision which I saw by the River Chebar; and I fell on my face. 4 And the
glory of the LORD came into the temple by way of the gate which faces
toward the east. 5 The Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court;
and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the temple.

6 Then I heard *Him* speaking to me from the temple, while a man stood
beside me. 7 And He said to me, "Son of man, *this is* the place of My throne
and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the
children of Israel forever. No more shall the house of Israel defile My holy
name, they nor their kings, by their harlotry or with the carcasses of their
kings on their high places. 8 When they set their threshold by My threshold,
and their doorpost by My doorpost, with a wall between them and Me, they
defiled My holy name by the abominations which they committed; therefore I
have consumed them in My anger. 9 Now let them put their harlotry and the
carcasses of their kings far away from Me, and I will dwell in their midst
forever.

10 "Son of man, describe the temple to the house of Israel, that they may be
ashamed of their iniquities; and let them measure the pattern. 11 And if they
are ashamed of all that they have done, make known to them the design of the
temple and its arrangement, its exits and its entrances, its entire design and all
its ordinances, all its forms and all its laws. Write *it* down in their sight, so
that they may keep its whole design and all its ordinances, and perform them.
12 This *is* the law of the temple: The whole area surrounding the mountaintop
*is* most holy. Behold, this *is* the law of the temple.

## DIMENSIONS OF THE ALTAR

13 "These are the measurements of the altar in cubits (the *cubit is* one cubit

and a hand-breadth): the base one cubit high and one cubit wide, with a rim all around its edge of one span. This *is* the height of the altar: [14]from the base on the ground to the lower ledge, two cubits; the width of the ledge, one cubit; from the smaller ledge to the larger ledge, four cubits; and the width of the ledge, *one* cubit. [15]The altar hearth *is* four cubits high, with four horns extending upward from the hearth. [16]The altar hearth *is* twelve cubits long, twelve wide, square at its four corners; [17]the ledge, fourteen *cubits* long and fourteen wide on its four sides, with a rim of half a cubit around it; its base, one cubit all around; and its steps face toward the east."

> The Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the temple.
> EZEKIEL 43:5

**CONSECRATING THE ALTAR**

[18]And He said to me, "Son of man, thus says the Lord GOD: 'These *are* the ordinances for the altar on the day when it is made, for sacrificing burnt offerings on it, and for sprinkling blood on it. [19]You shall give a young bull for a sin offering to the priests, the Levites, who are of the seed of Zadok, who approach Me to minister to Me,' says the Lord GOD. [20]'You shall take some of its blood and put *it* on the four horns of the altar, on the four corners of the ledge, and on the rim around it; thus you shall cleanse it and make atonement for it. [21]Then you shall also take the bull of the sin offering, and burn it in the appointed place of the temple, outside the sanctuary. [22]On the second day you shall offer a kid of the goats without blemish for a sin offering; and they shall cleanse the altar, as they cleansed *it* with the bull. [23]When you have finished cleansing *it*, you shall offer a young bull without blemish, and a ram from the flock without blemish. [24]When you offer them before the LORD, the priests shall throw salt on them, and they will offer them up *as* a burnt offering to the LORD. [25]Every day for seven days you shall prepare a goat *for* a sin offering; they shall also prepare a young bull and a ram from the flock, both without blemish. [26]Seven days they shall make atonement for the altar and purify it, and so consecrate *it.* [27]When these days

are over it shall be, on the eighth day and thereafter, that the priests shall offer your burnt offerings and your peace offerings on the altar; and I will accept you,’ says the Lord GOD.”

## THE EAST GATE AND THE PRINCE

**44** Then He brought me back to the outer gate of the sanctuary which faces
toward the east, but it *was* shut. 2And the LORD said to me, “This gate
shall be shut; it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter by it, because the
LORD God of Israel has entered by it; therefore it shall be shut. 3*As for* the
prince, *because* he *is* the prince, he may sit in it to eat bread before the LORD;
he shall enter by way of the vestibule of the gateway, and go out the same
way.”

## THOSE ADMITTED TO THE TEMPLE

4Also He brought me by way of the north gate to the front of the temple; so
I looked, and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD; and
I fell on my face. 5And the LORD said to me, “Son of man, mark well, see
with your eyes and hear with your ears, all that I say to you concerning all the
ordinances of the house of the LORD and all its laws. Mark well who may
enter the house and all who go out from the sanctuary.

6“Now say to the rebellious, to the house of Israel, ‘Thus says the Lord
GOD: “O house of Israel, let Us have no more of all your abominations.
7When you brought in foreigners, uncircumcised in heart and uncircumcised
in flesh, to be in My sanctuary to defile it-My house-and when you offered
My food, the fat and the blood, then they broke My covenant because of all
your abominations. 8And you have not kept charge of My holy things, but
you have set *others* to keep charge of My sanctuary for you.” 9Thus says the
Lord GOD: “No foreigner, uncircumcised in heart or uncircumcised in flesh,
shall enter My sanctuary, including any foreigner who *is* among the children
of Israel.

## LAWS GOVERNING PRIESTS

10“And the Levites who went far from Me, when Israel went astray, who
strayed away from Me after their idols, they shall bear their iniquity. 11Yet
they shall be ministers in My sanctuary, *as* gatekeepers of the house and
ministers of the house; they shall slay the burnt offering and the sacrifice for
the people, and they shall stand before them to minister to them. 12Because

they ministered to them before their idols and caused the house of Israel to fall into iniquity, therefore I have raised My hand in an oath against them," says the Lord GOD, "that they shall bear their iniquity. 13And they shall not come near Me to minister to Me as priest, nor come near any of My holy things, nor into the Most Holy *Place;* but they shall bear their shame and their abominations which they have committed. 14Nevertheless I will make them keep charge of the temple, for all its work, and for all that has to be done in it.

15"But the priests, the Levites, the sons of Zadok, who kept charge of My sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from Me, they shall come near Me to minister to Me; and they shall stand before Me to offer to Me the fat and the blood," says the Lord GOD. 16"They shall enter My sanctuary, and they shall come near My table to minister to Me, and they shall keep My charge. 17And it shall be, whenever they enter the gates of the inner court, that they shall put on linen garments; no wool shall come upon them while they minister within the gates of the inner court or within the house. 18They shall have linen turbans on their heads and linen trousers on their bodies; they shall not clothe themselves with *anything that causes* sweat. 19When they go out to the outer court, to the *outer* court to the people, they shall take off their garments in which they have ministered, leave them in the holy chambers, and put on other garments; and in their holy garments they shall not sanctify the people.

20"They shall neither shave their heads, nor let their hair grow long, but they shall keep their hair well trimmed. 21No priest shall drink wine when he enters the inner court. 22They shall not take as wife a widow or a divorced woman, but take virgins of the descendants of the house of Israel, or widows of priests.

23"And they shall teach My people *the difference* between the holy and the unholy, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean. 24In controversy they shall stand as judges, *and* judge it according to My judgments. They shall keep My laws and My statutes in all My appointed meetings, and they shall hallow My Sabbaths.

25"They shall not defile *themselves* by coming near a dead person. Only for

father or mother, for son or daughter, for brother or unmarried sister may they defile themselves. [26]After he is cleansed, they shall count seven days for him. [27]And on the day that he goes to the sanctuary to minister in the sanctuary, he must offer his sin offering in the inner court," says the Lord GOD.

[28]"It shall be, in regard to their inheritance, *that* I *am* their inheritance. You shall give them no possession in Israel, for I *am* their possession. [29]They shall eat the grain offering, the sin offering, and the trespass offering; every dedicated thing in Israel shall be theirs. [30]The best of all firstfruits of any kind, and every sacrifice of any kind from all your sacrifices, shall be the priest's; also you shall give to the priest the first of your ground meal, to cause a blessing to rest on your house. [31]The priests shall not eat anything, bird or beast, that died naturally or was torn *by wild beasts.*

## THE HOLY DISTRICT

**45** “Moreover, when you divide the land by lot into inheritance, you shall
set apart a district for the LORD, a holy section of the land; its length
*shall be* twenty-five thousand *cubits,* and the width ten thousand. It *shall be*
holy throughout its territory all around. 2Of this there shall be a square plot
for the sanctuary, five hundred by five hundred *rods,* with fifty cubits around
it for an open space. 3So this is the district you shall measure: twenty-five
thousand *cubits* long and ten thousand wide; in it shall be the sanctuary, the
Most Holy *Place.* 4It shall be a holy *section* of the land, belonging to the
priests, the ministers of the sanctuary, who come near to minister to the
LORD; it shall be a place for their houses and a holy place for the sanctuary.
5*An area* twenty-five thousand *cubits* long and ten thousand wide shall
belong to the Levites, the ministers of the temple; they shall have twenty
chambers as a possession.[a]

## PROPERTIES OF THE CITY AND THE PRINCE

6“You shall appoint as the property of the city *an area* five thousand *cubits*
wide and twenty-five thousand long, adjacent to the district of the holy
*section;* it shall belong to the whole house of Israel.

7“The prince shall have *a section* on one side and the other of the holy
district and the city’s property; and bordering on the holy district and the
city’s property, extending westward on the west side and eastward on the east
side, the length *shall be* side by side with one of the *tribal* portions, from the
west border to the east border. 8The land shall be his possession in Israel; and
My princes shall no more oppress My people, but they shall give *the rest of*
the land to the house of Israel, according to their tribes.”

## LAWS GOVERNING THE PRINCE

9‘Thus says the Lord GOD: “Enough, O princes of Israel! Remove
violence and plundering, execute justice and righteousness, and stop
dispossessing My people,” says the Lord GOD. 10“You shall have honest
scales, an honest ephah, and an honest bath. 11The ephah and the bath shall
be of the same measure, so that the bath contains one-tenth of a homer, and

the ephah one-tenth of a homer; their measure shall be according to the homer. [12]The shekel *shall be* twenty gerahs; twenty shekels, twenty-five shekels, *and* fifteen shekels shall be your mina.

[13]"This *is* the offering which you shall offer: you shall give one-sixth of an ephah from a homer of wheat, and one-sixth of an ephah from a homer of barley. [14]The ordinance concerning oil, the bath of oil, *is* one-tenth of a bath from a kor. A kor *is* a homer or ten baths, for ten baths *are* a homer. [15]And one lamb shall be given from a flock of two hundred, from the rich pastures of Israel. These shall be for grain offerings, burnt offerings, and peace offerings, to make atonement for them," says the Lord GOD. [16]"All the people of the land shall give this offering for the prince in Israel. [17]Then it shall be the prince's part *to give* burnt offerings, grain offerings, and drink offerings, at the feasts, the New Moons, the Sabbaths, and at all the appointed seasons of the house of Israel. He shall prepare the sin offering, the grain offering, the burnt offering, and the peace offerings to make atonement for the house of Israel."

**KEEPING THE FEASTS**

[18]'Thus says the Lord GOD: "In the first *month,* on the first *day* of the month, you shall take a young bull without blemish and cleanse the sanctuary. [19]The priest shall take some of the blood of the sin offering and put *it* on the doorposts of the temple, on the four corners of the ledge of the altar, and on the gateposts of the gate of the inner court. [20]And so you shall do on the seventh *day* of the month for everyone who has sinned unintentionally or in ignorance. Thus you shall make atonement for the temple.

[21]"In the first *month,* on the fourteenth day of the month, you shall observe the Passover, a feast of seven days; unleavened bread shall be eaten. [22]And on that day the prince shall prepare for himself and for all the people of the land a bull *for* a sin offering. [23]On the seven days of the feast he shall prepare a burnt offering to the LORD, seven bulls and seven rams without blemish, daily for seven days, and a kid of the goats daily *for* a sin offering. [24]And he shall prepare a grain offering of one ephah for each bull and one ephah for each ram, together with a hin of oil for each ephah.

25“In the seventh *month*, on the fifteenth day of the month, at the feast, he shall do likewise for seven days, according to the sin offering, the burnt offering, the grain offering, and the oil.”

**THE MANNER OF WORSHIP**

**46** ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: “The gate way of the inner court that faces
toward the east shall be shut the six working days; but on the Sabbath it
shall be opened, and on the day of the New Moon it shall be opened. 2The
prince shall enter by way of the vestibule of the gateway from the outside,
and stand by the gatepost. The priests shall prepare his burnt offering and his
peace offerings. He shall worship at the threshold of the gate. Then he shall
go out, but the gate shall not be shut until evening. 3Likewise the people of
the land shall worship at the entrance to this gateway before the LORD on the
Sabbaths and the New Moons. 4The burnt offering that the prince offers to
the LORD on the Sabbath day *shall be* six lambs without blemish, and a ram
without blemish; 5and the grain offering *shall be one* ephah for a ram, and the
grain offering for the lambs, as much as he wants to give, as well as a hin of
oil with every ephah. 6On the day of the New Moon *it shall be* a young bull
without blemish, six lambs, and a ram; they shall be without blemish. 7He
shall prepare a grain offering of an ephah for a bull, an ephah for a ram, as
much as he wants to give for the lambs, and a hin of oil with every ephah.
8When the prince enters, he shall go in by way of the vestibule of the
gateway, and go out the same way.

9“But when the people of the land come before the LORD on the appointed
feast days, whoever enters by way of the north gate to worship shall go out
by way of the south gate; and whoever enters by way of the south gate shall
go out by way of the north gate. He shall not return by way of the gate
through which he came, but shall go out through the opposite gate. 10The
prince shall then be in their midst. When they go in, he shall go in; and when
they go out, he shall go out. 11At the festivals and the appointed feast days
the grain offering shall be an ephah for a bull, an ephah for a ram, as much as
he wants to give for the lambs, and a hin of oil with every ephah.

12“Now when the prince makes a voluntary burnt offering or voluntary
peace offering to the LORD, the gate that faces toward the east shall then be
opened for him; and he shall prepare his burnt offering and his peace
offerings as he did on the Sabbath day. Then he shall go out, and after he
goes out the gate shall be shut.

13 “You shall daily make a burnt offering to the LORD *of* a lamb of the first
year without blemish; you shall prepare it every morning. 14 And you shall
prepare a grain offering with it every morning, a sixth of an ephah, and a
third of a hin of oil to moisten the fine flour. This grain offering is a perpetual
ordinance, to be made regularly to the LORD. 15 Thus they shall prepare the
lamb, the grain offering, and the oil, *as* a regular burnt offering every
morning.”

## THE PRINCE AND INHERITANCE LAWS

16 ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: “If the prince gives a gift *of some* of his
inheritance to any of his sons, it shall belong to his sons; it is their possession
by inheritance. 17 But if he gives a gift of some of his inheritance to one of his
servants, it shall be his until the year of liberty, after which it shall return to
the prince. But his inheritance shall belong to his sons; it shall become theirs.
18 Moreover the prince shall not take any of the people’s inheritance by
evicting them from their property; he shall provide an inheritance for his sons
from his own property, so that none of My people may be scattered from his
property.” ’ ”

## HOW THE OFFERINGS WERE PREPARED

19 Now he brought me through the entrance, which *was* at the side of the
gate, into the holy chambers of the priests which face toward the north; and
there a place *was* situated at their extreme western end. 20 And he said to me,
“This *is* the place where the priests shall boil the trespass offering and the sin
offering, *and* where they shall bake the grain offering, so that they do not
bring *them* out into the outer court to sanctify the people.”

21 Then he brought me out into the outer court and caused me to pass by the
four corners of the court; and in fact, in every corner of the court *there was*
*another* court. 22 In the four corners of the court *were* enclosed courts, forty
*cubits* long and thirty wide; all four corners *were* the same size. 23 *There was*
a row *of building stones* all around in them, all around the four of them; and
cooking hearths were made under the rows of stones all around. 24 And he
said to me, “These *are* the kitchens where the ministers of the temple shall
boil the sacrifices of the people.”

## THE HEALING WATERS AND TREES

**47** Then he brought me back to the door of the temple; and there was water,
flowing from under the threshold of the temple toward the east, for the
front of the temple faced east; the water was flowing from under the right
side of the temple, south of the altar. 2He brought me out by way of the north
gate, and led me around on the outside to the outer gateway that faces east;
and there was water, running out on the right side.

3And when the man went out to the east with the line in his hand, he
measured one thousand cubits, and he brought me through the waters; the
water *came up to my* ankles. 4Again he measured one thousand and brought
me through the waters; the water *came up to my* knees. Again he measured
one thousand and brought me through; the water *came up to my* waist. 5Again
he measured one thousand, *and it was* a river that I could not cross; for the
water was too deep, water in which one must swim, a river that could not be
crossed. 6He said to me, “Son of man, have you seen *this?*” Then he brought
me and returned me to the bank of the river.

7When I returned, there, along the bank of the river, *were* very many trees
on one side and the other. 8Then he said to me: “This water flows toward the
eastern region, goes down into the valley, and enters the sea. *When it* reaches
the sea, *its* waters are healed. 9And it shall be *that* every living thing that
moves, wherever the rivers go, will live. There will be a very great multitude
of fish, because these waters go there; for they will be healed, and everything
will live wherever the river goes. 10It shall be *that* fishermen will stand by it
from En Gedi to En Eglaim; they will be *places* for spreading their nets.
Their fish will be of the same kinds as the fish of the Great Sea, exceedingly
many. 11But its swamps and marshes will not be healed; they will be given
over to salt. 12Along the bank of the river, on this side and that, will grow all
*kinds of* trees used for food; their leaves will not wither, and their fruit will
not fail. They will bear fruit every month, because their water flows from the
sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for medicine.”

## BORDERS OF THE LAND

[13]Thus says the Lord GOD: “These *are* the borders by which you shall
divide the land as an inheritance among the twelve tribes of Israel. Joseph
*shall have two* portions. [14]You shall inherit it equally with one another; for I
raised My hand in an oath to give it to your fathers, and this land shall fall to
you as your inheritance. [15]“This *shall be* the border of the land on the north:
from the Great Sea, *by* the road to Hethlon, as one goes to Zedad, [16]Hamath,
Berothah, Sibraim (which *is* between the border of Damascus and the border
of Hamath), to Hazar Hatticon (which *is* on the border of Hauran). [17]Thus the
boundary shall be from the Sea to Hazar Enan, the border of Damascus; and
as for the north, northward, it is the border of Hamath. *This is* the north side.

[18]“On the east side you shall mark out the border from between Hauran
and Damascus, and between Gilead and the land of Israel, along the Jordan,
and along the eastern side of the sea. *This is* the east side.

[19]“The south side, toward the South,[a] *shall be* from Tamar to the waters of
Meribah by Kadesh, along the brook to the Great Sea. *This is* the south side,
toward the South.

[20]“The west side *shall be* the Great Sea, from the *southern* boundary until
one comes to a point opposite Hamath. This *is* the west side.

[21]“Thus you shall divide this land among yourselves according to the tribes
of Israel. [22]It shall be that you will divide it by lot as an inheritance for
yourselves, and for the strangers who dwell among you and who bear
children among you. They shall be to you as native-born among the children
of Israel; they shall have an inheritance with you among the tribes of Israel.
[23]And it shall be *that* in whatever tribe the stranger dwells, there you shall
give *him* his inheritance,” says the Lord GOD.

**DIVISION OF THE LAND**

**48** "Now these *are* the names of the tribes: From the northern border along
the road to Hethlon at the entrance of Ha-math, to Hazar Enan, the
border of Damascus northward, in the direction of Hamath, *there shall be* one
*section for* Dan from its east to its west side; 2by the border of Dan, from the
east side to the west, one *section for* Asher; 3by the border of Asher, from the
east side to the west, one *section for* Naphtali; 4by the border of Naphtali,
from the east side to the west, one *section for* Manasseh; 5by the border of
Ma-nasseh, from the east side to the west, one *section for* Ephraim; 6by the
border of Ephraim, from the east side to the west, one *section for* Reuben; 7by
the border of Reuben, from the east side to the west, one *section for* Judah;
8by the border of Judah, from the east side to the west, shall be the district
which you shall set apart, twenty-five thousand *cubits* in width, and *in* length
the same as one of the *other* portions, from the east side to the west, with the
sanctuary in the center.

9"The district that you shall set apart for the LORD *shall be* twenty-five
thousand *cubits* in length and ten thousand in width. 10To these-to the priests-
the holy district shall belong: on the north twenty-five thousand *cubits in*
*length*, on the west ten thousand in width, on the east ten thousand in width,
and on the south twenty-five thousand in length. The sanctuary of the LORD
shall be in the center. 11*It shall be* for the priests of the sons of Zadok, who
are sanctified, who have kept My charge, who did not go astray when the
children of Israel went astray, as the Levites went astray. 12And *this* district
of land that is set apart shall be to them a thing most holy by the border of the
Levites.

13"Opposite the border of the priests, the Levites *shall have an area*
twenty-five thousand *cubits* in length and ten thousand in width; its entire
length *shall be* twenty-five thousand and its width ten thousand. 14And they
shall not sell or exchange any of it; they may not alienate this best *part* of the
land, for *it is* holy to the LORD.

15"The five thousand *cubits* in width that remain, along the edge of the
twenty-five thousand, shall be for general use by the city, for dwellings and

common-land; and the city shall be in the center. [16]These *shall be* its measurements: the north side four thousand five hundred *cubits,* the south side four thousand five hundred, the east side four thousand five hundred, and the west side four thousand five hundred. [17]The common-land of the city shall be: to the north two hundred and fifty *cubits,* to the south two hundred and fifty, to the east two hundred and fifty, and to the west two hundred and fifty. [18]The rest of the length, alongside the district of the holy *section, shall be* ten thousand *cubits* to the east and ten thousand to the west. It shall be adjacent to the district of the holy *section,* and its produce shall be food for the workers of the city. [19]The workers of the city, from all the tribes of Israel, shall cultivate it. [20]The entire district *shall be* twenty-five thousand *cubits* by twenty- five thousand *cubits,* foursquare. You shall set apart the holy district with the property of the city.

[21]"The rest *shall belong* to the prince, on one side and on the other of the holy district and of the city's property, next to the twenty-five thousand *cubits* of the *holy* district as far as the eastern border, and westward next to the twenty-five thousand as far as the western border, adjacent to the *tribal* portions; *it shall belong* to the prince. It shall be the holy district, and the sanctuary of the temple *shall be* in the center. [22]Moreover, apart from the possession of the Levites and the possession of the city *which are* in the midst of what *belongs* to the prince, *the area* between the border of Judah and the border of Benjamin shall belong to the prince.

[23]"As for the rest of the tribes, from the east side to the west, Benjamin *shall have* one *section;* [24]by the border of Benjamin, from the east side to the west, Simeon *shall have* one *section;* [25]by the border of Simeon, from the east side to the west, Issachar *shall have* one *section;* [26]by the border of Issachar, from the east side to the west, Zebulun *shall have* one *section;* [27]by the border of Zebulun, from the east side to the west, Gad *shall have* one *section;* [28]by the border of Gad, on the south side, toward the South,[a] the border shall be from Tamar *to* the waters of Meribah *by* Kadesh, along the brook to the Great Sea. [29]This *is* the land which you shall divide by lot as an inheritance among the tribes of Israel, and these *are* their portions," says the Lord GOD.

**THE GATES OF THE CITY AND ITS NAME**

30 "These *are* the exits of the city. On the north side, measuring four
thousand five hundred *cubits* 31 (the gates of the city *shall be* named after the
tribes of Israel), the three gates northward: one gate for Reuben, one gate for
Judah, and one gate for Levi; 32 on the east side, four thousand five hundred
*cubits,* three gates: one gate for Joseph, one gate for Benjamin, and one gate
for Dan; 33 on the south side, measuring four thousand five hundred *cubits,*
three gates: one gate for Simeon, one gate for Issachar, and one gate for
Zebulun; 34 on the west side, four thousand five hundred *cubits* with their
three gates: one gate for Gad, one gate for Asher, and one gate for Naphtali.
35 All the way around *shall be* eighteen thousand *cubits;* and the name of the
city from *that* day *shall be:* THE LORD *IS* THERE."[a]

# Daniel



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# Daniel

"Does God *really* have my life in His hands-much less the whole world? Does He really care?"

Everyone, at one time or another, has asked this question or some form of it, raising the issue of God's sovereignty. Perhaps Daniel, more than any other Bible book, provides a clear answer. Containing the record of the Jews' seventy-year captivity in Babylon and the life experiences of an extraordinary man named Daniel, this book shows God at work in history and in individual lives.

The first half of Daniel (through chapter 6) depicts events from the prophet's personal life. It documents how the Babylonians conquered Jerusalem and deported Judah's most talented young men. These youths were immersed in Babylonian culture and pressed into royal service. Most gave in to their new lifestyle-except for Daniel and his Hebrew friends, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Because these four steadfastly followed God, they experienced His blessing and rose to influential positions within the Babylonian government. The second half of the book (starting in chapter 7) contains Daniel's visions of the future.

Daniel's integrity, courage, and wisdom provide a wonderful example for anyone who is trying to live faithfully in a faithless world. More than this, Daniel's life and the revelations given him by God remind us that God *is* in control. He *does* have our lives in His hands. As the song says, "He's got the whole world in His hands." Our souls do not have to panic or fear. History really is "His story!"

**SOUL CONCERN IN**

## DANIEL

# ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT (1:8)

## DANIEL AND HIS FRIENDS OBEY GOD

**1** In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar
king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. 2And the Lord gave
Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with some of the articles of the house
of God, which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and
he brought the articles into the treasure house of his god.

3Then the king instructed Ashpenaz, the master of his eunuchs, to bring
some of the children of Israel and some of the king's descendants and some
of the nobles, 4young men in whom *there was* no blemish, but good-looking,
gifted in all wisdom, possessing knowledge and quick to understand, who
*had* ability to serve in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the
language and literature of the Chaldeans. 5And the king appointed for them a
daily provision of the king's delicacies and of the wine which he drank, and
three years of training for them, so that at the end of *that time* they might
serve before the king. 6Now from among those of the sons of Judah were
Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. 7To them the chief of the eunuchs
gave names: he gave Daniel *the name* Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach;
to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abed-Nego.

8But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the
portion of the king's delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore
he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.
9Now God had brought Daniel into the favor and goodwill of the chief of the
eunuchs. 10And the chief of the eunuchs said to Daniel, "I fear my lord the
king, who has appointed your food and drink. For why should he see your
faces looking worse than the young men who *are* your age? Then you would
endanger my head before the king."

11So Daniel said to the steward[a] whom the chief of the eunuchs had set
over Daniel, Han-aniah, Mishael, and Azariah, 12"Please test your servants
for ten days, and let them give us vegetables to eat and water to drink. 13Then
let our appearance be examined before you, and the appearance of the young
men who eat the portion of the king's delicacies; and as you see fit, *so* deal
with your servants." 14So he consented with them in this matter, and tested

them ten days.

15 And at the end of ten days their features appeared better and fatter in
flesh than all the young men who ate the portion of the king's delicacies.
16 Thus the steward took away their portion of delicacies and the wine that
they were to drink, and gave them vegetables.

17 As for these four young men, God gave them knowledge and skill in all
literature and wisdom; and Daniel had understanding in all visions and
dreams.

18 Now at the end of the days, when the king had said that they should be
brought in, the chief of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar.
19 Then the king interviewed them,[a] and among them all none was found like
Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; therefore they served before the
king. 20 And in all matters of wisdom *and* understanding about which the king
examined them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians *and*
astrologers who *were* in all his realm. 21 Thus Daniel continued until the first
year of King Cyrus.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# DANIEL SERVED GOD FIRST

## (DANIEL 1)

Daniel was taken captive to Babylon from his native Jerusalem when he was about 15 years old. He and his Jewish friends were thrust into a hostile environment where much pressure was put on them to accept pagan beliefs and lifestyles. The fact that Daniel "purposed in his

heart" (Dan. 1:8) not to defile himself under this pressure is a great testimony to the ability of an adolescent to develop the kind of spiritual maturity that will enable them to reject peer pressure.

When Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians in the summer of 605 B.C., Daniel was only a teenager. He and several others were taken captive by the Babylonians and placed in a three-year training program in which they were expected to learn the Babylonian view of life and religion. They were even forced to learn the Babylonian language and given Babylonian names. Daniel in Hebrew means "God is my judge"; his name was changed to Belteshazzar, which in the Babylonian language means "the god Bel is my judge." It may have been as close as the Babylonians could come to translating the meaning of his name.

The verse that summarizes Jesus' adolescence serves to describe Daniel's: "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men" (Luke 2:52). Daniel built upon the good start he received as a child. He exercised great wisdom in discerning between acceptable Babylonian habits and those that would compromise his faith. He accepted the king's training but not the king's diet. He served the king loyally, but stopped at acknowledging the divine claim of the king. Daniel learned the new language, but he kept an old habit of daily prayer. Because he continually made God the focus of his life, Daniel made a deep impression on all he met. He grew into one of the clearest biblical examples of a godly person. Young people seeking to grow to serve God can learn much from Daniel's example.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Helping Teens Grow With God
See also the key passage note at 1 Timothy 4:7.

**HELPING TEENS GROW WITH GOD**

# DAWSON MCALLISTER

## (Daniel 1:8)

**P**imples, proms, and puberty-talk about a memorable time in life! Adults may recall those days through rose-colored glasses as a whimsical, carefree time filled with lots of fun and few responsibilities. Many think, “If I could just relive those high school days.” But would they really want to do it again? Uncertainty, insecurity, relationships, rejection, curfews, cliques, homework-these are but a few of the “fun” experiences of adolescence. These sometimes painful, often confusing, years provide unique challenges even for Christian teenagers. Though there are volumes one could write about adolescent development, four issues stand out as being crucial during this time: fear, feelings, friends, and faith.

### FEAR

Many men remember the first time they, as growing boys, tripped over their own feet because those feet were growing faster than any other parts of their bodies. Many women remember the experience of insecurity as they watched their bodies mature and change-never as beautifully as someone else’s, and certainly never like those teen idols in their favorite magazines. The fear of not measuring up; the fear of not being acceptable and therefore accepted-these are just some of the fears of adolescence.

Being an adolescent is like being in the Army. It’s not a job, it’s an adventure. Helping teenagers to understand what is happening to them during this part of their life is crucial to successful navigation of the adolescent stage. Like Daniel in Babylon, many teenagers today feel out of place, besieged by temptation, and confused about what

they should be doing at this point in their lives.

The challenge for parents, pastors, teachers, and counselors is to help adolescents live above their fear. Because of the power of Christ, adolescents can live a life of peace. Jesus promised, “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you. . . . Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27).

## FEELINGS

It has been said that teenagers are “walking hormones.” Often, they are tossed about like the waves in the sea because of their emotions. Two teenage girls can be best friends one day and mortal enemies the next. A snide glance or a sarcastic remark can mean devastation for an adolescent.

So much of people’s identity is formed during the adolescent years that it is hard not to exaggerate the role their feelings play during this time. Loneliness, depression, anxiousness, low self-worth-these feelings bubble to the surface amidst all the other issues facing the typical teenager. Increasing sensitivity causes them to feel persecuted, misunderstood, rejected, or smothered.

Adults need to teach and to be an example of Paul’s instruction to the Corinthians about “bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5). Young people need to learn how to “take captive” thoughts and feelings that contradict the reality of God’s Word.

## FRIENDS

Relationships with friends during the adolescent years take on a whole new dimension. The term “peer pressure” describes the immense tension that exists between a teenager’s knowledge of the right action to take and the temptation to follow a friend’s enticement to do wrong. Acceptance by one’s friends becomes the most

important thing in life during the adolescent period. Longing for a place to fit in and feel accepted becomes a driving force in their everyday lives. Unfortunately for many, even many Christian teenagers, little thought is given to their spiritual life.

As enticing as it may be to fit in and feel accepted, often it comes at a high moral price. It is vital to help adolescents to understand and grasp the words of Paul, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Rom. 12:2).

## FAITH

Although many teenagers are caught up in the fads of the day, adolescence is a time when many want to discover faith in something beyond themselves. When given the opportunity, teenagers want to grapple with the deep issues of personal faith. Some hear it for the first time and question it; others are grappling with the faith handed down from their parents. Some rebel against their family’s Christian faith. That rebellion may occur because they observe hypocrisy or desire attention. For many, however, it is merely a healthy exploration to discover that Jesus Christ is the only answer to the problems they are experiencing.

Adolescents may question the authenticity of the Bible, an earlier decision to follow Christ, the meaning of salvation, and the reality of eternal life. For some, the spiritual walk is more like a roller coaster than a joyous ride. They experience fluctuating highs and lows from intense spiritual mountaintops to lonely spiritual isolation.

It is during this period that adults need to assure them of God’s unconditional love and acceptance. Adolescents need this period of testing and questioning in order to fully understand the faith that they profess. Many adults try to squelch this exploratory time in an adolescent’s life. However, a more fruitful way of dealing with this period is to encourage teenagers to give God a chance at making a

difference in their lives. As Psalm 34:8 says: “Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him!”

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of adolescent development include:

- 1 Samuel 17
- Ecclesiastes 11:9-12:1
- Acts 2:17
- 1 Corinthians 13:11
- 2 Timothy 2:22; 3:14, 15

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on adolescent development at 1 Timothy 4:7. See also the personality profile of Daniel Served God First.

## NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAM

**2** Now in the second year of Nebuchadnez-zar's reign, Nebuchadnezzar had
dreams; and his spirit was *so* troubled that his sleep left him. [2]Then the
king gave the command to call the magicians, the astrologers, the sorcerers,
and the Chaldeans to tell the king his dreams. So they came and stood before
the king. [3]And the king said to them, "I have had a dream, and my spirit is
anxious to know the dream."

[4]Then the Chaldeans spoke to the king in Aramaic,[a] "O king, live forever!
Tell your servants the dream, and we will give the interpretation."

[5]The king answered and said to the Chalde-ans, "My decision is firm: if
you do not make known the dream to me, and its interpretation, you shall be
cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made an ash heap. [6]However, if you
tell the dream and its interpretation, you shall receive from me gifts, rewards,
and great honor. Therefore tell me the dream and its interpretation."

[7]They answered again and said, "Let the king tell his servants the dream,
and we will give its interpretation."

[8]The king answered and said, "I know for certain that you would gain time,
because you see that my decision is firm: [9]if you do not make known the
dream to me, *there is only* one decree for you! For you have agreed to speak
lying and corrupt words before me till the time has changed. Therefore tell
me the dream, and I shall know that you can give me its interpretation."

[10]The Chaldeans answered the king, and said, "There is not a man on earth
who can tell the king's matter; therefore no king, lord, or ruler has *ever* asked
such things of any magician, astrologer, or Chaldean. [11]*It is* a difficult thing
that the king requests, and there is no other who can tell it to the king except
the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh."

[12]For this reason the king was angry and very furious, and gave the
command to destroy all the wise *men* of Babylon. [13]So the decree went out,
and they began killing the wise *men;* and they sought Daniel and his
companions, to kill *them.*

## GOD REVEALS NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAM

[14]Then with counsel and wisdom Daniel answered Arioch, the captain of the king's guard, who had gone out to kill the wise *men* of Babylon; [15]he answered and said to Arioch the king's captain, "Why is the decree from the king so urgent?" Then Arioch made the decision known to Daniel.

[16]So Daniel went in and asked the king to give him time, that he might tell the king the interpretation. [17]Then Daniel went to his house, and made the decision known to Hana-niah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, [18]that they might seek mercies from the God of heaven concerning this secret, so that Daniel and his companions might not perish with the rest of the wise *men* of Babylon. [19]Then the secret was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. So Daniel blessed the God of heaven.

[20]Daniel answered and said:

"Blessed be the
name of God
forever and
ever,
For wisdom and
might are His.
[21] And He changes
the times and the seasons;
He removes kings and raises up kings;
He gives wisdom to the wise
And knowledge to those who have
understanding.
[22] He reveals deep and secret things;
He knows what *is* in the darkness,
And light dwells with Him.
[23] "I thank You and praise You,
O God of my fathers;
You have given me wisdom and might,
And have now made known to me what
we asked of You,
For You have made known to us the

king’s demand.”

**DANIEL EXPLAINS THE DREAM**

[24]Therefore Daniel went to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise *men* of Babylon. He went and said thus to him: “Do not destroy the wise *men* of Babylon; take me before the king, and I will tell the king the interpretation.”

[25]Then Arioch quickly brought Daniel before the king, and said thus to him, “I have found a man of the captives[a] of Judah, who will make known to the king the interpretation.”

[26]The king answered and said to Daniel, whose name *was* Belteshazzar, “Are you able to make known to me the dream which I have seen, and its interpretation?”

[27]Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, “The secret which the king has demanded, the wise *men*, the astrologers, the magicians, and the soothsayers cannot declare to the king. [28]But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days. Your dream, and the visions of your head upon your bed, were these: [29]As for you, O king, thoughts came *to* your *mind while* on your bed, *about* what would come to pass after this; and He who reveals secrets has made known to you what will be. [30]But as for me, this secret has not been revealed to me because I have more wisdom than anyone living, but for *our* sakes who make known the interpretation to the king, and that you may know the thoughts of your heart.

> “Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, for wisdom and might are His.”
> DANIEL 2:20

[31]“You, O king, were watching; and behold, a great image! This great image, whose splendor *was* excellent, stood before you; and its form *was* awesome. [32]This image’s head *was* of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs[a] of bronze, [33]its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay.[a] [34]You watched while a stone was cut out without hands,

which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. [35]Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

[36]"This *is* the dream. Now we will tell the interpretation of it before the king. [37]You, O king, *are* a king of kings. For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory; [38]and wherever the children of men dwell, or the beasts of the field and the birds of the heaven, He has given *them* into your hand, and has made you ruler over them all-you *are* this head of gold. [39]But after you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours; then another, a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth. [40]And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron, inasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and shatters everything; and like iron that crushes, *that kingdom* will break in pieces and crush all the others. [41]Whereas you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; yet the strength of the iron shall be in it, just as you saw the iron mixed with ceramic clay. [42]And *as* the toes of the feet *were* partly of iron and partly of clay, *so* the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly fragile. [43]As you saw iron mixed with ceramic clay, they will mingle with the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay. [44]And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. [45]Inasmuch as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold-the great God has made known to the king what will come to pass after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure."

## DANIEL AND HIS FRIENDS PROMOTED

[46]Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face, prostrate before Daniel, and commanded that they should present an offering and incense to him. [47]The king answered Daniel, and said, "Truly your God *is* the God of gods, the Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, since you could reveal this secret."

[48]Then the king promoted Daniel and gave him many great gifts; and he made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief administrator over all the wise *men* of Babylon. [49]Also Daniel petitioned the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego over the affairs of the province of Babylon; but Daniel *sat* in the gate[a] of the king.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Wise Move** *(2:20-22)* When a car makes a noise, we call a mechanic. When a sink backs up, we call a plumber. Why is it, then, that when we experience problems in our personal lives, we insist on taking care of the situation ourselves? Daniel knew just where to go when he needed wisdom: “Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, for wisdom and might are His.” God is the source of all wisdom. If we believe His ways are higher than ours, we can give up control to Him, resting in the assurance that He will give us perfect guidance. **Topic: Wisdom**

## THE IMAGE OF GOLD

**3** Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height *was* sixty
cubits *and* its width six cubits. He set it up in the plain of Dura, in the
province of Babylon. 2And King Nebuchadnezzar sent *word* to gather
together the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the
treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces, to
come to the dedication of the image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.
3So the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the
treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces
gathered together for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar
had set up; and they stood before the image that Neb-uchadnezzar had set up.
4Then a herald cried aloud: "To you it is commanded, O peoples, nations, and
languages, 5*that* at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre,
*and* psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, you shall fall down and
worship the gold image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up; 6and whoever
does not fall down and worship shall be cast immediately into the midst of a
burning fiery furnace."

7So at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the horn, flute,
harp, *and* lyre, in symphony with all kinds of music, all the people, nations,
and languages fell down *and* worshiped the gold image which King Nebu-
chadnezzar had set up.

## DANIEL'S FRIENDS DISOBEY THE KING

8Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and accused the
Jews. 9They spoke and said to King Nebuchadnezzar, "O king, live forever!
10You, O king, have made a decree that everyone who hears the sound of the
horn, flute, harp, lyre, *and* psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music,
shall fall down and worship the gold image; 11and whoever does not fall
down and worship shall be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.
12There are certain Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province
of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego; these men, O king, have
not paid due regard to you. They do not serve your gods or worship the gold
image which you have set up."

[13]Then Nebuchadnezzar, in rage and fury, gave the command to bring Shadrach, Me-shach, and Abed-Nego. So they brought these men before the king. [14]Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying to them, "*Is it* true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, *that* you do not serve my gods or worship the gold image which I have set up? [15]Now if you are ready at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, *and* psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, and you fall down and worship the image which I have made, *good!* But if you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. And who *is* the god who will deliver you from my hands?"

[16]Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnez-zar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. [17]If that *is the case,* our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver *us* from your hand, O king. [18]But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up."

**SAVED IN FIERY TRIAL**

[19]Then Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury, and the expression on his face changed toward Sha-drach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. He spoke and commanded that they heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated. [20]And he commanded certain mighty men of valor who *were* in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, *and* cast *them* into the burning fiery furnace. [21]Then these men were bound in their coats, their trousers, their turbans, and their *other* garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. [22]Therefore, because the king's command was urgent, and the furnace exceedingly hot, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. [23]And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

[24]Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished; and he rose in haste *and* spoke, saying to his counselors, "Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?"

They answered and said to the king, “True, O king.”

25“Look!” he answered, “I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.”[a]

**NEBUCHADNEZZAR PRAISES GOD**

26Then Nebuchadnezzar went near the mouth of the burning fiery furnace *and* spoke, saying, “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come *here*.” Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego came from the midst of the fire. 27And the satraps, administrators, governors, and the king’s counselors gathered together, and they saw these men on whose bodies the fire had no power; the hair of their head was not singed nor were their garments affected, and the smell of fire was not on them.

28Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying, “Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and AbedNego, who sent His Angel[a] and delivered His servants who trusted in Him, and they have frustrated the king’s word, and yielded their bodies, that they should not serve nor worship any god except their own God! 29Therefore I make a decree that any people, nation, or language which speaks anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and AbedNego shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made an ash heap; because there is no other God who can deliver like this.”

30Then the king promoted Shadrach, Me-shach, and Abed-Nego in the province of Babylon.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# THREE MEN AND A POWERFUL GOD

# (DANIEL 3)

Most of the Book of Daniel centers on his personal life and leadership. The story of his three Hebrew friends, however, provides a fascinating added example of young men holding to their beliefs and values in the face of pressure. Daniel's friends, whose Hebrew names were Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, are better known to us by their Babylonian names-Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. Despite being taken captive to Babylon and forced to serve the king, these young men remained faithful to God.

Although their lives were threatened on several occasions, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego faced their greatest test when they were ordered to bow and worship a huge statue of the king. The friends recognized that obedience in this case meant more than simply giving honor to the king as their leader. Because it included the requirement of worship, it actually involved a choice between ultimate loyalty to God or the king. For them, the choice was clear: They would serve the king, but they would not worship him.

When the three men were confronted and threatened, they offered a marvelous and courageous statement of faith: "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up" (3:16-18). Their tone was respectful, confident, and uncompromising. They only assumed God's unlimited ability, not what might happen to them. They were clearly ready to die rather than deny God.

The depth of our faith and our loyalty to God can only be measured against resistance. Threats of harm or whispers of compromise have this equal possible benefit in common: They provide an opportunity to test our faith. Sometimes, as in Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-

Nego's lives, the test becomes a miracle!

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Christian Values In Contemporary Society See also the key passage note at 2 Peter 1:5-9.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Unflinching Faith** *(3:16-18)* "But if not." With these three words (3:18), Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego offered King Nebuchadnezzar a remarkable display of faith toward God. It's one thing to walk into a fiery furnace with the knowledge that God will protect us. It's quite another thing to walk into that same furnace knowing that God may choose to let us die for reasons we don't even understand! Faith is not simply a matter of believing that God will do what we think is best for us. Faith is believing that *whatever* God does is best, regardless of how it seems to affect us. **Topic: Faith**

**NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S SECOND DREAM**

**4** Nebuchadnezzar the king,

To all peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth:

Peace be multiplied to you.

2 I thought it good to declare the signs
and wonders that the Most High God has
worked for me.
3 How great *are* His signs,
And how mighty His wonders!
His kingdom *is* an everlasting kingdom,
And His dominion *is* from generation to
generation.
4 I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at rest in my
house, and flourishing in my palace. 5 I
saw a dream which made me afraid, and
the thoughts on my bed and the visions
of my head troubled me. 6 Therefore I
issued a decree to bring in all the wise *men* of Babylon before me, that they might make known to me the interpretation of the dream. 7 Then the magicians, the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers came in, and I told them the dream; but they did not make known to me its interpretation. 8 But at last Daniel came before me (his name *is* Belteshazzar, according to the name of my god; in him *is* the Spirit of the Holy God), and I told the dream before him, *saying:* 9 "Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, because I know that the Spirit of the Holy God *is* in you, and no secret troubles you, explain to me the visions of my dream that I have seen, and its interpretation.

10 "These *were* the visions of my head
*while* on my bed:
I was looking, and behold,
A tree in the midst of the earth,
And its height was great.
11 The tree grew and became strong;

Its height reached to the heavens,
And it could be seen to the ends of all
the earth.
12 Its leaves *were* lovely,
Its fruit abundant,
And in it *was* food for all.
The beasts of the field found shade
under it,
The birds of the heavens dwelt in its
branches,
And all flesh was fed from it.
13 “I saw in the visions of my head *while*
on my bed, and there was a watcher, a
holy one, coming down from heaven.
14 He cried aloud and said thus:
‘Chop down the tree and cut off its
branches,
Strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit.
Let the beasts get out from under it,
And the birds from its branches.
15 Nevertheless leave the stump and roots
in the earth,
*Bound* with a band of iron and bronze,
In the tender grass of the field.
Let it be wet with the dew of heaven,
And *let* him graze with the beasts
On the grass of the earth.
16 Let his heart be changed from *that of* a
man,
Let him be given the heart of a beast,
And let seven times[a] pass over him.
17 ‘ This decision *is* by the decree of the
watchers,
And the sentence by the word of the
holy ones,

In order that the living may know
That the Most High rules in the kingdom
of men,
Gives it to whomever He will,
And sets over it the lowest of men.'
18 "This dream I, King Nebuchadnezzar,
have seen. Now you, Belteshazzar,
declare its interpretation, since all the
wise *men* of my kingdom are not able to
make known to me the interpretation;
but you *are* able, for the Spirit of the
Holy God *is* in you."

## DANIEL EXPLAINS THE SECOND DREAM

19 Then Daniel, whose name was
Belteshazzar, was astonished for a time,
and his thoughts troubled him. *So* the
king spoke, and said, "Belteshazzar, do
not let the dream or its interpretation
trouble you."
Belteshazzar answered and said, "My lord, *may* the dream concern those
who hate you, and its interpretation concern your enemies!
20 "The tree that you saw, which grew and
became strong, whose height reached to
the heavens and which *could be seen* by
all the earth, 21whose leaves *were* lovely and its fruit abundant, in which
*was* food for all, under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and in whose
branches the birds of the heaven had their home- 22it *is* you, O king, who
have grown and become strong; for your greatness has grown and
reaches to the heavens, and your dominion to the end of the earth.
23 "And inasmuch as the king saw a watcher, a holy one, coming down
from heaven and saying, 'Chop down the tree and destroy it, but leave
its stump and roots in the earth, *bound* with a band of iron and bronze in
the tender grass of the field; let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let
him graze with the beasts of the field, till seven times pass over him';

24 this is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the Most
High, which has come upon my lord the king: 25 They shall drive you
from men, your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they
shall make you eat grass like oxen. They shall wet you with the dew of
heaven, and seven times shall pass over you, till you know that the Most
High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He
chooses.
26 "And inasmuch as they gave the command to leave the stump *and* roots
of the tree, your kingdom shall be assured to you, after you come to
know that Heaven rules. 27 Therefore, O king, let my advice be
acceptable to you; break off your sins by *being* righteous, and your
iniquities by showing mercy to *the* poor. Perhaps there may be a
lengthening of your prosperity."

## NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S HUMILIATION

28 All *this* came upon King Nebuchadnezzar. 29 At the end of the twelve
months he was walking about the royal palace of Babylon. 30 The king
spoke, saying, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal
dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?"
31 While the word *was still* in the king's mouth, a voice fell from heaven:
"King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: the kingdom has departed
from you! 32 And they shall drive you from men, and your dwelling *shall
be* with the beasts of the field. They shall make you eat grass like oxen;
and seven times shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High
rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses."
33 That very hour the word was fulfilled concerning Nebuchadnezzar; he
was driven from men and ate grass like oxen; his body was wet with the
dew of heaven till his hair had grown like eagles' *feathers* and his nails
like birds' *claws.*

## NEBUCHADNEZZAR PRAISES GOD

34 And at the end of the time[a] I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven,
and my understanding returned to me; and I blessed the Most High and
praised and honored Him who lives forever:

For His dominion *is* an everlasting
dominion,
And His kingdom *is* from generation to
generation.
35 All the inhabitants of the earth *are*
reputed as nothing;
He does according to His will in the
army of heaven
And *among* the inhabitants of the earth.
No one can restrain His hand
Or say to Him, “What have You done?”
36 At the same time my reason returned to me, and for the glory of my
kingdom, my honor and splendor returned to me. My counselors and
nobles resorted to me, I was restored to my kingdom, and excellent
majesty was added to me. 37Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol
and honor the King of heaven, all of whose works *are* truth, and His
ways justice. And those who walk in pride He is able to put down.

**KEY PASSAGE**

# WHOLENESS

## (4:33)

Perhaps one of the most difficult situations for Christians to face is the problem of mental illness. For Christians to face such difficulty somehow seems sinful. It is important to remember, however, that people are whole beings. First, we are spiritual beings, created by God and incomplete without Him. Also, we are physical beings, and a

physical disease can lead to psychological or spiritual problems, and vice versa. And then too, we are psychological beings, meaning that each person has a mind, emotions, and a will. The interrelationships among these three realms in our humanity mean that specific problems may have many symptoms and causes behind them. If believers face some form of an emotional problem, they should seek counsel from wise, qualified Christians who can treat them with a comprehensive approach. During such a time, other believers must surround the hurting brother or sister in prayer. God promises to help His people through even the most difficult times.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Mental Illness: Reducing Suffering in the Church See also the personality profile of Nebuchadnezzar's Illness.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S ILLNESS

## (DANIEL 4:33)

Mental and emotional instability ran rampant in Nebuchadnezzar's family. Such is the legacy and heritage of those who set themselves up as gods. Daniel tells the shocking story of the king's emotional breakdown after years of success ruling the Babylonian Empire. In spite of his great victories as a warrior and achievements as a builder, Nebuchadnezzar suffered from a form of insanity similar to what we now call lycanthropy: He believed he was a wild animal. In the king's case, the condition arose as a direct result of his pride and arrogance. Nebuchadnezzar was warned of pride's danger by Daniel, but this

king chose to ignore his own insignificance before God. No sooner did the words of pride cross his lips than God removed the kingdom from his power. “He was driven from men and ate grass like oxen; his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair had grown like eagles’ feathers and his nails like birds’ claws” (Dan. 4:33).

Daniel tells us that this condition lasted for seven years, until the king’s reason returned to him when he acknowledged God (Dan. 4:25, 35, 36). Presumably, Daniel and others continued to run the affairs of state while Nebuchadnezzar was in this condition. He resumed his reign as a deeply humbled man.

Nebuchadnezzar was eventually succeeded by Nabonidus, who later abdicated the throne and lived in self-imposed exile in Arabia. During this time, Belshazzar, Nebuchadnez-zar’s grandson, ruled Babylon as a co-regent with his father, Nabonidus. While Belshazzar was in power, the Babylonian Empire fell to the Medes and the Persians.

Modern times have witnessed similar instances where national leaders suffered from times of depression or mental breakdown but were able to continue to exercise their responsibilities. The causes are not always the same as Nebuchadnezzar’s, but cases of mental disorders require compassionate treatment. For the king, time and humility provided a pathway of recovery. Those who cared for him, like Daniel, had to practice patience. The healing of mental illness is rarely an instant cure.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Mental Illness: Reducing Suffering In the Church. See also the key passage note at Daniel 4:33.

**BELSHAZZAR'S FEAST**

**5** Belshazzar the king made a great feast for a thousand of his lords, and
drank wine in the presence of the thousand. [2]While he tasted the wine,
Belshazzar gave the command to bring the gold and silver vessels which his
father Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple which *had been* in
Jerusalem, that the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines might
drink from them. [3]Then they brought the gold vessels that had been taken
from the temple of the house of God which *had been* in Jerusalem; and the
king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines drank from them. [4]They
drank wine, and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze and iron, wood
and stone.

[5]In the same hour the fingers of a man's hand appeared and wrote opposite
the lamp-stand on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace; and the king
saw the part of the hand that wrote. [6]Then the king's countenance changed,
and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his hips were loosened and
his knees knocked against each other. [7]The king cried aloud to bring in the
astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers. The king spoke, saying to the
wise *men* of Babylon, "Whoever reads this writing, and tells me its
interpretation, shall be clothed with purple and *have* a chain of gold around
his neck; and he shall be the third ruler in the kingdom." [8]Now all the king's
wise *men* came, but they could not read the writing, or make known to the
king its interpretation. [9]Then King Bel-shazzar was greatly troubled, his
countenance was changed, and his lords were astonished.

[10]The queen, because of the words of the king and his lords, came to the
banquet hall. The queen spoke, saying, "O king, live forever! Do not let your
thoughts trouble you, nor let your countenance change. [11]There is a man in
your kingdom in whom *is* the Spirit of the Holy God. And in the days of your
father, light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods,
were found in him; and King Nebuchadnezzar your father-your father the
king-made him chief of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, *and*
soothsayers. [12]Inasmuch as an excellent spirit, knowledge, understanding,
interpreting dreams, solving riddles, and explaining enigmas[a] were found in
this Daniel, whom the king named Belte-shazzar, now let Daniel be called,

and he will give the interpretation.”

**THE WRITING ON THE WALL EXPLAINED**

13 Then Daniel was brought in before the king. The king spoke, and said to
Daniel, “*Are* you that Daniel who is one of the captives[a] from Judah, whom
my father the king brought from Judah? 14 I have heard of you, that the Spirit
of God *is* in you, and *that* light and understanding and excellent wisdom are
found in you. 15 Now the wise *men,* the astrologers, have been brought in
before me, that they should read this writing and make known to me its
interpretation, but they could not give the interpretation of the thing. 16 And I
have heard of you, that you can give interpretations and explain enigmas.
Now if you can read the writing and make known to me its interpretation, you
shall be clothed with purple and *have* a chain of gold around your neck, and
shall be the third ruler in the kingdom.”

17 Then Daniel answered, and said before the king, “Let your gifts be for
yourself, and give your rewards to another; yet I will read the writing to the
king, and make known to him the interpretation. 18 O king, the Most High
God gave Nebuchadnezzar your father a kingdom and majesty, glory and
honor. 19 And because of the majesty that He gave him, all peoples, nations,
and languages trembled and feared before him. Whomever he wished, he
executed; whomever he wished, he kept alive; whomever he wished, he set
up; and whomever he wished, he put down. 20 But when his heart was lifted
up, and his spirit was hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly
throne, and they took his glory from him. 21 Then he was driven from the sons
of men, his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling *was* with the
wild donkeys. They fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with
the dew of heaven, till he knew that the Most High God rules in the kingdom
of men, and appoints over it whomever He chooses.

22 “But you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, although you
knew all this. 23 And you have lifted yourself up against the Lord of heaven.
They have brought the vessels of His house before you, and you and your
lords, your wives and your concubines, have drunk wine from them. And you
have praised the gods of silver and gold, bronze and iron, wood and stone,
which do not see or hear or know; and the God who *holds* your breath in His

hand and owns all your ways, you have not glorified. [24]Then the fingers[a] of the hand were sent from Him, and this writing was written.

[25]"And this is the inscription that was writ-ten:

MENE,[a] MENE, TEKEL,[b] UPHARSIN.[c]

[26]This *is* the interpretation of *each* word. MENE: God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it; [27]TEKEL: You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting; [28]PERES: Your kingdom has been divided, and given to the Medes and Persians."[a] [29]Then Belshazzar gave the command, and they clothed Daniel with purple and *put* a chain of gold around his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom.

**BELSHAZZAR'S FALL**

[30]That very night Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans, was slain. [31]And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, *being* about sixty-two years old.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# BELSHAZZAR'S SUBSTANCE ABUSE

# (DANIEL 5)

Belshazzar's drunken party has a notorious place in history. A royal celebration of a conquering dynasty became a final gasp before defeat. Belshazzar set his tables that night with the precious items taken by his father's victorious armies. Among those silver and golden bowls and cups were many taken from God's temple in

Jerusalem. Those dedicated utensils were filled with party wine. God's property was dishonored.

While the king and a thousand of his officials engaged in a drunken bash at the royal palace, the invading army of Medes and Persians surrounded the city. At the high point of the festivities, the fingers of God wrote a message of judgment on the wall of the palace (Dan. 5:5). The message indicated that the Babylonian Empire would fall to the Medes and Persians that very night. History records the fact that the invading army diverted the course of the Euphrates River, tunneled under the walls of Babylon, and took the city without resistance. In their drunken state, Belshazzar and his officials were incapable of resisting the invaders.

Most drug or alcohol abusers discover sooner or later that their surrender to those controlling substances renders them defenseless. Their decision-making abilities suffer badly. Choices that appear wise through a drunken haze or drug-induced high often prove tragic. Temporary sobriety usually provides more of an opportunity to survey the disaster than to repair what has been damaged or lost. Right in the middle of enjoying everything he thought he had, Belshazzar awoke to discover he had nothing. His life went from unmanageable to unlivable in one night. He lost both the kingdom and his life.

Countless others have followed Belshazzar's way of life. They may not have had as much to lose, but they lost it all anyway. Self-abusive lives like Belshazzar's always end sadly. But those who surrender to God and live for Him receive a gift of eternal life that they can never lose. They never have to face the handwriting on the wall.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about The Trap of Substance Abuse See also the key passage note at Proverbs 23:19-21.

## THE PLOT AGAINST DANIEL

**6** It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom one hundred and twenty satraps,
to be over the whole kingdom; [2]and over these, three governors, of whom
Daniel *was* one, that the satraps might give account to them, so that the king
would suffer no loss. [3]Then this Daniel distinguished himself above the
governors and satraps, because an excellent spirit *was* in him; and the king
gave thought to setting him over the whole realm. [4]So the governors and
satraps sought to find *some* charge against Daniel concerning the kingdom;
but they could find no charge or fault, because he *was* faithful; nor was there
any error or fault found in him. [5]Then these men said, “We shall not find any
charge against this Daniel unless we find *it* against him concerning the law of
his God.”

[6]So these governors and satraps thronged before the king, and said thus to
him: “King Darius, live forever! [7]All the governors of the kingdom, the
administrators and satraps, the counselors and advisors, have consulted
together to establish a royal statute and to make a firm decree, that whoever
petitions any god or man for thirty days, except you, O king, shall be cast into
the den of lions. [8]Now, O king, establish the decree and sign the writing, so
that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians,
which does not alter.” [9]Therefore King Darius signed the written decree.

## DANIEL IN THE LIONS’ DEN

[10]Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And
in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down
on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God,
as was his custom since early days.

[11]Then these men assembled and found Daniel praying and making
supplication before his God. [12]And they went before the king, and spoke
concerning the king’s decree: “Have you not signed a decree that every man
who petitions any god or man within thirty days, except you, O king, shall be
cast into the den of lions?”

The king answered and said, “The thing *is* true, according to the law of the

Medes and Persians, which does not alter."

13 So they answered and said before the king, "That Daniel, who is one of
the captives[a] from Judah, does not show due regard for you, O king, or for
the decree that you have signed, but makes his petition three times a day."

14 And the king, when he heard *these* words, was greatly displeased with
himself, and set *his* heart on Daniel to deliver him; and he labored till the
going down of the sun to deliver him. 15 Then these men approached the king,
and said to the king, "Know, O king, that *it is* the law of the Medes and
Persians that no decree or statute which the king establishes may be
changed."

16 So the king gave the command, and they brought Daniel and cast *him*
into the den of lions. *But* the king spoke, saying to Daniel, "Your God, whom
you serve continually, He will deliver you." 17 Then a stone was brought and
laid on the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring
and with the signets of his lords, that the purpose concerning Daniel might
not be changed.

## DANIEL SAVED FROM THE LIONS

18 Now the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; and no
musicians[a] were brought before him. Also his sleep went from him. 19 Then
the king arose very early in the morning and went in haste to the den of lions.
20 And when he came to the den, he cried out with a lamenting voice to
Daniel. The king spoke, saying to Daniel, "Daniel, servant of the living God,
has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the
lions?"

21 Then Daniel said to the king, "O king, live forever! 22 My God sent His
angel and shut the lions' mouths, so that they have not hurt me, because I was
found innocent before Him; and also, O king, I have done no wrong before
you."

23 Now the king was exceedingly glad for him, and commanded that they
should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den,
and no injury whatever was found on him, because he believed in his God.

**DARIUS HONORS GOD**

24 And the king gave the command, and they brought those men who had accused Daniel, and they cast *them* into the den of lions-them, their children, and their wives; and the lions overpowered them, and broke all their bones in pieces before they ever came to the bottom of the den.

25 Then King Darius wrote:

To all peoples, nations, and languages
that dwell in all the earth:
Peace be multiplied to you.
26 I make a decree that in every dominion
of my kingdom *men must* tremble and
fear before the God of Daniel.
For He *is* the living God,
And steadfast forever;
His kingdom *is the one* which shall not
be destroyed,
And His dominion *shall endure* to the
end.
27 He delivers and rescues,
And He works signs and wonders
In heaven and on earth,
Who has delivered Daniel from the
power of the lions.

28 So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Weigh the Options** *(6:10)* Daniel was a savvy political consultant. He knew that his enemies were lying in wait for him, and he knew the

penalty for praying to God. After weighing these concerns, Daniel concluded that they were nothing compared with the prospect of disrupting his relationship with God. So “with his windows open . . . he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed.” Daniel was unwilling to change his prayer habits, even at the risk of his own safety. He knew that where spiritual calling and everyday concerns clash, spiritual calling always takes precedence, no matter what. **Topic: Prayer**

## SOUL NOTE

**A Glimpse of the Miraculous** *(6:23)* King Darius and Daniel experienced the miracle of the lions’ den from significantly different perspectives. The king mouthed faithful-sounding encouragement when Daniel was thrown into the pit (6:16), but his sleepless night (6:18) didn’t show faith in God. Daniel, on the other hand, approached his sentence with complete confidence in God’s will. As a result, Darius was only able to witness the event as a spectator, only able to appreciate it from afar. In contrast, Daniel experienced the miracle firsthand and felt the loving, protective hand of God “because he believed.” When we trust in God, we will recognize His touch on our lives. **Topic: Belief**

## VISION OF THE FOUR BEASTS

**7** In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream and visions of his head *while* on his bed. Then he wrote down the dream, telling the main facts.[a]

[2]Daniel spoke, saying, “I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the Great Sea. [3]And four great beasts came up from the sea, each different from the other. [4]The first *was* like a lion, and had eagle’s wings. I watched till its wings were plucked off; and it was lifted up from the earth and made to stand on two feet like a man, and a man’s heart was given to it.

[5]“And suddenly another beast, a second, like a bear. It was raised up on one side, and *had* three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. And they said thus to it: ‘Arise, devour much flesh!’

[6]“After this I looked, and there was another, like a leopard, which had on its back four wings of a bird. The beast also had four heads, and dominion was given to it.

[7]“After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong. It had huge iron teeth; it was devouring, breaking in pieces, and trampling the residue with its feet. It *was* different from all the beasts that *were* before it, and it had ten horns. [8]I was considering the horns, and there was another horn, a little one, coming up among them, before whom three of the first horns were plucked out by the roots. And there, in this horn, *were* eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking pompous words.

## VISION OF THE ANCIENT OF DAYS

[9] “I watched till thrones were put in place,
And the Ancient of Days was seated;
His garment *was* white as snow,
And the hair of His head *was* like pure
wool.
His throne *was* a fiery flame,

Its wheels a burning fire;
10 A fiery stream issued
And came forth from before Him.
A thousand thousands ministered to Him;
Ten thousand times ten thousand stood
before Him.
The court[a] was seated,
And the books were opened.
11 "I watched then because of the sound of the pompous words which the horn was speaking; I watched till the beast was slain, and its body destroyed and given to the burning flame. 12 As for the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away, yet their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.

13 "I was watching in the night visions,
And behold, *One* like the Son of Man,
Coming with the clouds of heaven!
He came to the Ancient of Days,
And they brought Him near before Him.
14 Then to Him was given dominion and
glory and a kingdom,
That all peoples, nations, and languages
should serve Him.
His dominion *is* an everlasting
dominion,
Which shall not pass away,
And His kingdom *the one*
Which shall not be destroyed.

## DANIEL'S VISIONS INTERPRETED

15 "I, Daniel, was grieved in my spirit within *my* body, and the visions of my head troubled me. 16 I came near to one of those who stood by, and asked him the truth of all this. So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of these things: 17 'Those great beasts, which are four, *are* four kings[a] *which* arise out of the earth. 18 But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and

ever.’

19 “Then I wished to know the truth about the fourth beast, which was different from all the others, exceedingly dreadful, *with* its teeth of iron and its nails of bronze, *which* devoured, broke in pieces, and trampled the residue with its feet; 20 and the ten horns that *were* on its head, and the other *horn* which came up, before which three fell, namely, that horn which had eyes and a mouth which spoke pompous words, whose appearance *was* greater than his fellows.

21 “I was watching; and the same horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them, 22 until the Ancient of Days came, and a judgment was made *in favor* of the saints of the Most High, and the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom.

23 “Thus he said:

‘The fourth beast shall be
A fourth kingdom on earth,
Which shall be different from all *other* kingdoms,
And shall devour the whole earth,
Trample it and break it in pieces.
24 The ten horns *are* ten kings
*Who* shall arise from this kingdom.
And another shall rise after them;
He shall be different from the first *ones*,
And shall subdue three kings.
25 He shall speak *pompous* words against the Most High,
Shall persecute[a] the saints of the Most High,
And shall intend to change times and law.
Then *the saints* shall be given into his hand
For a time and times and half a time.
26 ‘ But the court shall be seated,

And they shall take away his dominion,
To consume and destroy *it* forever.
27 Then the kingdom and dominion,
And the greatness of the kingdoms
under the whole heaven,
Shall be given to the people, the saints
of the Most High.
His kingdom *is* an everlasting kingdom,
And all dominions shall serve and obey
Him.’
28 “This *is* the end of the account.[a] As for me, Daniel, my thoughts greatly troubled me, and my countenance changed; but I kept the matter in my heart.”

## VISION OF A RAM AND A GOAT

**8** In the third year of the reign of King Bel-shazzar a vision appeared *to* me-
to me, Daniel-after the one that appeared to me the first time. [2]I saw in the
vision, and it so happened while I was looking, that I *was* in Shushan, the
citadel, which *is* in the province of Elam; and I saw in the vision that I was by
the River Ulai. [3]Then I lifted my eyes and saw, and there, standing beside the
river, was a ram which had two horns, and the two horns *were* high; but one
*was* higher than the other, and the higher *one* came up last. [4]I saw the ram
pushing westward, northward, and southward, so that no animal could
withstand him; nor *was there any* that could deliver from his hand, but he did
according to his will and became great.

[5]And as I was considering, suddenly a male goat came from the west,
across the surface of the whole earth, without touching the ground; and the
goat *had* a notable horn between his eyes. [6]Then he came to the ram that had
two horns, which I had seen standing beside the river, and ran at him with
furious power. [7]And I saw him confronting the ram; he was moved with rage
against him, attacked the ram, and broke his two horns. There was no power
in the ram to withstand him, but he cast him down to the ground and trampled
him; and there was no one that could deliver the ram from his hand.

[8]Therefore the male goat grew very great; but when he became strong, the
large horn was broken, and in place of it four notable ones came up toward
the four winds of heaven. [9]And out of one of them came a little horn which
grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the
Glorious *Land*. [10]And it grew up to the host of heaven; and it cast down *some*
of the host and *some* of the stars to the ground, and trampled them. [11]He even
exalted *himself* as high as the Prince of the host; and by him the daily
*sacrifices* were taken away, and the place of His sanctuary was cast down.
[12]Because of transgression, an army was given over *to the horn* to oppose the
daily *sacrifices;* and he cast truth down to the ground. He did *all this* and
prospered.

[13]Then I heard a holy one speaking; and *another* holy one said to that
certain *one* who was speaking, “How long *will* the vision *be, concerning* the

daily *sacrifices* and the transgression of desolation, the giving of both the sanctuary and the host to be trampled underfoot?”

14 And he said to me, “For two thousand three hundred days;[a] then the sanctuary shall be cleansed.”

## GABRIEL INTERPRETS THE VISION

15 Then it happened, when I, Daniel, had seen the vision and was seeking the meaning, that suddenly there stood before me one having the appearance of a man. 16 And I heard a man’s voice between *the banks of* the Ulai, who called, and said, “Gabriel, make this *man* understand the vision.” 17 So he came near where I stood, and when he came I was afraid and fell on my face; but he said to me, “Understand, son of man, that the vision *refers* to the time of the end.”

18 Now, as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep with my face to the ground; but he touched me, and stood me upright. 19 And he said, “Look, I am making known to you what shall happen in the latter time of the indignation; for at the appointed time the end *shall be*. 20 The ram which you saw, having the two horns-*they are* the kings of Media and Persia. 21 And the male goat *is* the kingdom[a] of Greece. The large horn that *is* between its eyes *is* the first king. 22 As for the broken *horn* and the four that stood up in its place, four kingdoms shall arise out of that nation, but not with its power.

23 “And in the latter time of their
kingdom,
When the transgressors have reached
their fullness,
A king shall arise,
Having fierce features,
Who understands sinister schemes.
24 His power shall be mighty, but not by
his own power;
He shall destroy fearfully,
And shall prosper and thrive;
He shall destroy the mighty, and *also* the

holy people.
25 “Through his cunning
He shall cause deceit to prosper under
his rule;[a]
And he shall exalt *himself* in his heart.
He shall destroy many in *their*
prosperity.
He shall even rise against the Prince of
princes;
But he shall be broken without *human*
means.[b]
26 “And the vision of the evenings and
mornings
Which was told is true;
Therefore seal up the vision,
For *it refers* to many days *in the future*.”
27 And I, Daniel, fainted and was sick for days; afterward I arose and went about the king’s business. I was astonished by the vision, but no one understood it.

## DANIEL'S PRAYER FOR THE PEOPLE

**9** In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the lineage of the
Medes, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans- 2in the first
year of his reign I, Daniel, understood by the books the number of the years
*specified* by the word of the LORD through Jeremiah the prophet, that He
would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.

3Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and
supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes. 4And I prayed to the LORD
my God, and made confession, and said, "O Lord, great and awesome God,
who keeps His covenant and mercy with those who love Him, and with those
who keep His commandments, 5we have sinned and committed iniquity, we
have done wickedly and rebelled, even by departing from Your precepts and
Your judgments. 6Neither have we heeded Your servants the prophets, who
spoke in Your name to our kings and our princes, to our fathers and all the
people of the land. 7O Lord, righteousness *belongs* to You, but to us shame of
face, as *it is* this day-to the men of Judah, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and
all Israel, those near and those far off in all the countries to which You have
driven them, because of the unfaithfulness which they have committed
against You.

8"O Lord, to us *belongs* shame of face, to our kings, our princes, and our
fathers, because we have sinned against You. 9To the Lord our God *belong*
mercy and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against Him. 10We have not
obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in His laws, which He set
before us by His servants the prophets. 11Yes, all Israel has transgressed Your
law, and has departed so as not to obey Your voice; therefore the curse and
the oath written in the Law of Moses the servant of God have been poured
out on us, because we have sinned against Him. 12And He has confirmed His
words, which He spoke against us and against our judges who judged us, by
bringing upon us a great disaster; for under the whole heaven such has never
been done as what has been done to Jerusalem.

13"As *it is* written in the Law of Moses, all this disaster has come upon us;
yet we have not made our prayer before the LORD our God, that we might

turn from our iniquities and understand Your truth. [14]Therefore the LORD has kept the disaster in mind, and brought it upon us; for the LORD our God *is* righteous in all the works which He does, though we have not obeyed His voice. [15]And now, O Lord our God, who brought Your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and made Yourself a name, as *it is* this day-we have sinned, we have done wickedly!

[16]"O Lord, according to all Your righteousness, I pray, let Your anger and Your fury be turned away from Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain; because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Your people *are* a reproach to all *those* around us. [17]Now therefore, our God, hear the prayer of Your servant, and his supplications, and for the Lord's sake cause Your face to shine on Your sanctuary, which is desolate. [18]O my God, incline Your ear and hear; open Your eyes and see our desolations, and the city which is called by Your name; for we do not present our supplications before You because of our righteous deeds, but because of Your great mercies. [19]O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and act! Do not delay for Your own sake, my God, for Your city and Your people are called by Your name."

**THE SEVENTY-WEEKS PROPHECY**

[20]Now while I *was* speaking, praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God for the holy mountain of my God, [21]yes, while I *was* speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, reached me about the time of the evening offering. [22]And he informed *me*, and talked with me, and said, "O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you skill to understand. [23]At the beginning of your supplications the command went out, and I have come to tell *you*, for you *are* greatly beloved; therefore consider the matter, and understand the vision:

[24] "Seventy weeks[a] are determined
For your people and for your holy city,
To finish the transgression,
To make an end of [b] sins,
To make reconciliation for iniquity,

To bring in everlasting righteousness,
To seal up vision and prophecy,
And to anoint the Most Holy.
25 “Know therefore and understand,
*That* from the going forth of the
command
To restore and build Jerusalem
Until Messiah the Prince,
*There shall be* seven weeks and sixty-two
weeks;
The street[a] shall be built again, and the
wall,[b]
Even in troublesome times.
26 “And after the sixty-two weeks
Messiah shall be cut off, but not for
Himself;
And the people of the prince who is to
come
Shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.
The end of it *shall be* with a flood,
And till the end of the war desolations
are determined.
27 Then he shall confirm a covenant with
many for one week;
But in the middle of the week
He shall bring an end to sacrifice and
offering.
And on the wing of abominations shall
be one who makes desolate,
Even until the consummation, which is
determined,
Is poured out on the desolate.”

## VISION OF THE GLORIOUS MAN

**10** In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a message was revealed to
Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar. The message *was* true, but
the appointed time *was* long;[a] and he understood the message, and had
understanding of the vision. 2In those days I, Daniel, was mourning three full
weeks. 3I ate no pleasant food, no meat or wine came into my mouth, nor did
I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled.

4Now on the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was by the side of
the great river, that *is*, the Tigris,[a] 5I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, a
certain man clothed in linen, whose waist *was* girded with gold of Uphaz!
6His body *was* like beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes
like torches of fire, his arms and feet like burnished bronze in color, and the
sound of his words like the voice of a multitude.

7And I, Daniel, alone saw the vision, for the men who were with me did
not see the vision; but a great terror fell upon them, so that they fled to hide
themselves. 8Therefore I was left alone when I saw this great vision, and no
strength remained in me; for my vigor was turned to frailty in me, and I
retained no strength. 9Yet I heard the sound of his words; and while I heard
the sound of his words I was in a deep sleep on my face, with my face to the
ground.

## PROPHECIES CONCERNING PERSIA AND GREECE

10Suddenly, a hand touched me, which made me tremble on my knees and
*on* the palms of my hands. 11And he said to me, “O Daniel, man greatly
beloved, understand the words that I speak to you, and stand upright, for I
have now been sent to you.” While he was speaking this word to me, I stood
trembling.

12Then he said to me, “Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you
set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your
words were heard; and I have come because of your words. 13But the prince
of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; and behold,
Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone

there with the kings of Persia. [14]Now I have come to make you understand what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision *refers* to *many* days yet *to come*."

[15]When he had spoken such words to me, I turned my face toward the ground and became speechless. [16]And suddenly, *one* having the likeness of the sons[a] of men touched my lips; then I opened my mouth and spoke, saying to him who stood before me, "My lord, because of the vision my sorrows have overwhelmed me, and I have retained no strength. [17]For how can this servant of my lord talk with you, my lord? As for me, no strength remains in me now, nor is any breath left in me."

[18]Then again, *the one* having the likeness of a man touched me and strengthened me. [19]And he said, "O man greatly beloved, fear not! Peace *be* to you; be strong, yes, be strong!"

So when he spoke to me I was strengthened, and said, "Let my lord speak, for you have strengthened me."

[20]Then he said, "Do you know why I have come to you? And now I must return to fight with the prince of Persia; and when I have gone forth, indeed the prince of Greece will come. [21]But I will tell you what is noted in the Scripture of Truth. (No one upholds me against these, except Michael your prince.

**KEY PASSAGE**

# SECOND NATURE

# (10:12)

Is a spiritual discipline-such as prayer-worth the effort? The vision the Lord gave Daniel by the Tigris River answers that question. The man in the vision told Daniel, “Your words were heard; and I have come because of your words.” Spiritual disciplines are personal habits that create a focus on God. These habits help believers in their spiritual walk and spiritual growth. Disciplines such as prayer, Bible study, fasting, worship, and meditation on Scripture aid believers to deepen their relationship with God. Believers discipline themselves to strengthen their faith much as athletes discipline themselves to strengthen their muscles. These disciplines are done not to gain salvation, but out of love for Christ and a desire to be like Him. Athletes stretch various muscles and practice key skills over and over until they become second nature. Believers’ spiritual lives should be enmeshed with every other part of life so that Christlikeness becomes second nature as well.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Spiritual Disciplines. See also the personality profile of The Early Christians: United In Christ.

**11** Also in the first year of Darius the Mede, I, *even* I, stood up to confirm
and strengthen him.) 2And now I will tell you the truth: Behold, three
more kings will arise in Persia, and the fourth shall be far richer than *them* all;
by his strength, through his riches, he shall stir up all against the realm of
Greece. 3Then a mighty king shall arise, who shall rule with great dominion,
and do according to his will. 4And when he has arisen, his kingdom shall be
broken up and divided toward the four winds of heaven, but not among his
posterity nor according to his dominion with which he ruled; for his kingdom
shall be uprooted, even for others besides these.

**WARRING KINGS OF NORTH AND SOUTH**

5"Also the king of the South shall become strong, as well as *one* of his
princes; and he shall gain power over him and have dominion. His dominion
*shall be* a great dominion. 6And at the end of *some* years they shall join
forces, for the daughter of the king of the South shall go to the king of the
North to make an agreement; but she shall not retain the power of her
authority,[a] and neither he nor his authority[b] shall stand; but she shall be given
up, with those who brought her, and with him who begot her, and with him
who strengthened her in *those* times. 7But from a branch of her roots *one*
shall arise in his place, who shall come with an army, enter the fortress of the
king of the North, and deal with them and prevail. 8And he shall also carry
their gods captive to Egypt, with their princes[a] *and* their precious articles of
silver and gold; and he shall continue *more* years than the king of the North.

9"Also *the king of the North* shall come to the kingdom of the king of the
South, but shall return to his own land. 10However his sons shall stir up strife,
and assemble a multitude of great forces; and *one* shall certainly come and
overwhelm and pass through; then he shall return to his fortress and stir up
strife.

11"And the king of the South shall be moved with rage, and go out and
fight with him, with the king of the North, who shall muster a great
multitude; but the multitude shall be given into the hand of his *enemy*.
12When he has taken away the multitude, his heart will be lifted up; and he
will cast down tens of thousands, but he will not prevail. 13For the king of the
North will return and muster a multitude greater than the former, and shall

certainly come at the end of some years with a great army and much equipment.

14 “Now in those times many shall rise up against the king of the South.
Also, violent men[a] of your people shall exalt themselves in fulfillment of the
vision, but they shall fall. 15 So the king of the North shall come and build a
siege mound, and take a fortified city; and the forces[a] of the South shall not
withstand *him.* Even his choice troops *shall have* no strength to resist. 16 But
he who comes against him shall do according to his own will, and no one
shall stand against him. He shall stand in the Glorious Land with destruction
in his power.[a]

17 “He shall also set his face to enter with the strength of his whole
kingdom, and upright ones[a] with him; thus shall he do. And he shall give him
the daughter of women to destroy it; but she shall not stand *with him,* or be
for him. 18 After this he shall turn his face to the coastlands, and shall take
many. But a ruler shall bring the reproach against them to an end; and with
the reproach removed, he shall turn back on him. 19 Then he shall turn his face
toward the fortress of his own land; but he shall stumble and fall, and not be
found.

20 “There shall arise in his place one who imposes taxes *on* the glorious
kingdom; but within a few days he shall be destroyed, but not in anger or in
battle. 21 And in his place shall arise a vile person, to whom they will not give
the honor of royalty; but he shall come in peaceably, and seize the kingdom
by intrigue. 22 With the force[a] of a flood they shall be swept away from before
him and be broken, and also the prince of the covenant. 23 And after the
league *is made* with him he shall act deceitfully, for he shall come up and
become strong with a small *number of* people. 24 He shall enter peaceably,
even into the richest places of the province; and he shall do *what* his fathers
have not done, nor his forefa-thers: he shall disperse among them the plunder,
spoil, and riches; and he shall devise his plans against the strongholds, but
*only* for a time.

25 “He shall stir up his power and his courage against the king of the South
with a great army. And the king of the South shall be stirred up to battle with
a very great and mighty army; but he shall not stand, for they shall devise

plans against him. [26]Yes, those who eat of the portion of his delicacies shall destroy him; his army shall be swept away, and many shall fall down slain. [27]Both these kings' hearts *shall be* bent on evil, and they shall speak lies at the same table; but it shall not prosper, for the end *will* still *be* at the appointed time. [28]While returning to his land with great riches, his heart shall be *moved* against the holy covenant; so he shall do *damage* and return to his own land.

**THE NORTHERN KING'S BLASPHEMIES**

[29]"At the appointed time he shall return and go toward the south; but it shall not be like the former or the latter. [30]For ships from Cyprus[a] shall come against him; therefore he shall be grieved, and return in rage against the holy covenant, and do *damage*.

"So he shall return and show regard for those who forsake the holy covenant. [31]And forces[a] shall be mustered by him, and they shall defile the sanctuary fortress; then they shall take away the daily *sacrifices*, and place *there* the abomination of desolation. [32]Those who do wickedly against the covenant he shall corrupt with flattery; but the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out *great exploits*. [33]And those of the people who understand shall instruct many; yet *for many* days they shall fall by sword and flame, by captivity and plundering. [34]Now when they fall, they shall be aided with a little help; but many shall join with them by intrigue. [35]And *some* of those of understanding shall fall, to refine them, purify *them*, and make *them* white, *until* the time of the end; because *it is* still for the appointed time.

[36]"Then the king shall do according to his own will: he shall exalt and magnify himself above every god, shall speak blasphemies against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the wrath has been accomplished; for what has been determined shall be done. [37]He shall regard neither the God[a] of his fathers nor the desire of women, nor regard any god; for he shall exalt himself above *them* all. [38]But in their place he shall honor a god of fortresses; and a god which his fathers did not know he shall honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and pleasant things. [39]Thus he shall act against the strongest fortresses with a foreign god, which he shall acknowledge, *and*

advance *its* glory; and he shall cause them to rule over many, and divide the land for gain.

**THE NORTHERN KING'S CONQUESTS**

40 "At the time of the end the king of the South shall attack him; and the king of the North shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter the countries, overwhelm *them,* and pass through. 41 He shall also enter the Glorious Land, and many *countries* shall be overthrown; but these shall escape from his hand: Edom, Moab, and the prominent people of Ammon. 42 He shall stretch out his hand against the countries, and the land of Egypt shall not escape. 43 He shall have power over the treasures of gold and silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt; also the Libyans and Ethiopians *shall follow* at his heels. 44 But news from the east and the north shall trouble him; therefore he shall go out with great fury to destroy and annihilate many. 45 And he shall plant the tents of his palace between the seas and the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and no one will help him.

**PROPHECY OF THE END TIME**

**12** "At that time Michael shall stand up, The great prince who stands *watch* over the sons of your people;

And there shall be a time of trouble,
Such as never was since there was a
nation,
*Even* to that time.
And at that time your people shall be
delivered,
Every one who is found written in the
book.

2 And many of those who sleep in the
dust of the earth shall awake,
Some to everlasting life,
Some to shame *and* everlasting contempt.

3 Those who are wise shall shine
Like the brightness of the firmament,
And those who turn many to righteousness
Like the stars forever and ever.

> "Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever."
> DANIEL 12:3

4 "But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of
the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase."

5 Then I, Daniel, looked; and there stood two others, one on this riverbank and the other on that riverbank. 6 And *one* said to the man clothed in linen, who *was* above the waters of the river, "How long shall the fulfillment of these wonders *be?* "

7 Then I heard the man clothed in linen, who *was* above the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand to heaven, and swore

by Him who lives forever, that *it shall be* for a time, times, and half *a time;* and when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, all these *things* shall be finished.

[8]Although I heard, I did not understand. Then I said, “My lord, what *shall be* the end of these *things?* ”

[9]And he said, “Go *your way*, Daniel, for the words *are* closed up and sealed till the time of the end. [10]Many shall be purified, made white, and refined, but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand.

[11]“And from the time *that* the daily *sacrifice* is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, *there shall be* one thousand two hundred and ninety days. [12]Blessed *is* he who waits, and comes to the one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days.

[13]“But you, go *your way* till the end; for you shall rest, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days.”

# Hosea



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# Hosea

Adultery breaks hearts, it breaks homes, and it destroys marriages and families. The sorrow caused by a spouse seeking intimacy with someone else is unspeakable. This is the story experienced by Hosea, a prophet to the northern kingdom of Israel.

Hosea is a strange love story. At the most obvious level, it details a husband's unrequited love for his wayward wife, Gomer. Despite her gross unfaithfulness, the prophet went to great lengths to find Gomer and bring her home. At a deeper level, Hosea's experience became a living object lesson for the people of Israel. Their spiritual infidelity had wounded the very heart of God; yet, amazingly, He loved them and wanted them back.

Through the prophet, we sense God's exasperation and anguish: "O Ephraim, what shall I do to you? O Judah, what shall I do to you? For your faithfulness is like a morning cloud, and like the early dew it goes away" (6:4). But we also sense God's determined love: "How can I hand you over, Israel? . . . My heart churns within Me; My sympathy is stirred. I will not execute the fierceness of My anger" (11:8, 9).

The Book of Hosea reveals both the degradation of sin and the tender side of God. One cannot read this tragic, yet triumphal, story of tough love and not be moved by the overwhelming love of God for sinners. He loves us despite our mistakes, failures, and self-centered obsessions. Only this kind of unconditional love can transform our souls.

**SOUL CONCERN IN**

## HOSEA

ADULTERY (CH. 1)

**1** The word of the LORD that came to Hosea the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, *and* Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel.

**THE FAMILY OF HOSEA**

2 When the LORD began to speak by Hosea, the LORD said to Hosea:

"Go, take yourself a wife of harlotry
And children of harlotry,
For the land has committed great
harlotry
*By departing* from the LORD."

3 So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son. 4 Then the LORD said to him:

"Call his name Jezreel,
For in a little *while*
I will avenge the bloodshed of Jezreel on
the house of Jehu,
And bring an end to the kingdom of the
house of Israel.

5 It shall come to pass in that day
That I will break the bow of Israel in the
Valley of Jezreel."

6 And she conceived again and bore a daughter. Then *God* said to him:

"Call her name Lo-Ruhamah,[a]
For I will no longer have mercy on the
house of Israel,
But I will utterly take them away.[b]

7 Yet I will have mercy on the house of
Judah,
Will save them by the LORD their God,

And will not save them by bow,
Nor by sword or battle,
By horses or horsemen."
8 Now when she had weaned Lo-Ruhamah, she conceived and bore a son.
9 Then *God* said:

"Call his name Lo-Ammi,[a]
For you *are* not My people,
And I will not be your *God*.

**THE RESTORATION OF ISRAEL**

10 "Yet the number of the children of Israel
Shall be as the sand of the sea,
Which cannot be measured or numbered.
And it shall come to pass
In the place where it was said to them,
'You *are* not My people,'[a]
*There* it shall be said to them,
'*You are* sons of the living God.'
11 Then the children of Judah and the
children of Israel
Shall be gathered together,
And appoint for themselves one head;
And they shall come up out of the
land,
For great *will be* the day of Jezreel!

**SOUL NOTE**

**The Power of Love** *(1:2)* This was a strange couple-the prophet Hosea and the harlot Gomer. One person pointed others to God; the

other illustrated the depths of sin. Through this marriage, God painted a picture of His relationship with Israel. Hosea showered his wife Gomer with love despite her chasing other men. In the same way, God had unconditionally loved Israel despite their pursuing other gods. God loves His people so much that despite their sins, He constantly seeks to bring them to Himself: "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). **Topic: Knowing God**

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# HOSEA: A LESSON IN LOVE

## (HOSEA 1:2-9)

"And they lived happily ever after"-so ends the typical fairy tale. We enjoy stories with fairy tale endings, but in real life "happily ever after" can be an elusive dream.

Hosea's marriage was hardly a "happily ever after" story. God told Hosea, the prophet, to live his prophecies by taking "a wife of harlotry," Gomer (Hos. 1:2). Hosea obeyed, knowing that his heart would be broken through Gomer's unfaithfulness. Eventually, Gomer left Hosea. Next, as another living lesson, God told Hosea to pursue her and buy her back. Again Hosea obeyed and did so, for "fifteen shekels of silver" (Hos. 3:2)-a very cheap price. Hosea not only brought Gomer home, but he continued to love her.

Hosea did all this to illustrate God's incredible love for His people

who had committed spiritual adultery by running after other "lovers"-false gods. Despite the people's unfaithfulness, God continued to love them and pursue them in order to bring them home to Him. As He told Hosea, "Go again, love a woman who is loved by a lover and is committing adultery, just like the love of the LORD for the children of Israel, who look to other gods" (Hos. 3:1). Hosea's actions illustrated true love, God's love.

Far beyond mere sexual titillation or tingling feelings of excitement, true love is bold, and it lasts through pain and difficulty. It involves commitment and never gives up. The apostle Paul wrote, "Love suffers long . . . does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil . . . bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails" (1 Cor. 13:4-8). And that's how God loves us. Just as Hosea bought Gomer back and loved her, so God has bought us and loves us.

In the same way, our love must be committed, bold, and trustworthy. Otherwise, it is not really love at all.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Bold Love. See also the key passage note at 1 Corinthians 13:1-7.

## ADULTERY

DAVID M. CARDER

(Hosea 1)

**P**eople faced with adultery struggle with some of the most painful of

human emotions: abandonment and betrayal, as well as anger and despair. Although adultery strikes at the heart of the marriage covenant, forgiveness and healing are possible, and broken marriages can be and are being restored.

## RISING FREQUENCY

General estimates of human behavior suggest that as many as one man in two and one woman in four have had extramarital affairs. There have been several major changes in our culture which have impacted marital faithfulness. Many individuals did not have their own emotional needs met as they were growing up, and they approach marriage with painful emotional deficits that they subconsciously hope will be filled by their spouses. These individuals may enter marriage needing, and then demanding, more affection, attention, and affirmation than any one person can give.

In the changing work environment, men and women frequently work and minister in close contact with each other, which can lead to emotional and physical intimacy. Marriages are often stressed with the pressures of the careers of each spouse. Excessive and unrealistic work demands can cause burnout, anxiety, and depression for the individuals involved. And finally, an increasing number of Christians are falling victim to individuals with a history of sexual infidelities.

Other factors such as a family history of physical and sexual abuse, an early exposure to pornography, as well as a family history of alcoholism can contribute to marital infidelity. Certain marital styles seem to increase the risk for marital unfaithfulness. *Intimacy avoidant* is a marital pattern where the spouses pick on each other and criticize each other in order to keep emotional distance in the relationship. *Conflict avoidant* is a pattern, in which emotional distance is created because neither spouse wants to discuss marital disappointments and unhappiness. As a result, both spouses settle for a less than fulfilling marital relationship. Both marital styles fail to nurture the individual spouses and leave the partners vulnerable to looking outside the

marriage for their emotional needs to be met.

Stressful circumstances like the death of a loved one or a serious accident or illness can also cause a marriage to be vulnerable to infidelity. Other stressors that can create vulnerability are family transitions, such as a pregnancy or the last child leaving home, and life changes such as relocation or a change in employment.

## HEALING PROCESS

Healing is possible after infidelity. Increasing numbers of couples are braving the path of healing and restoration of their marriages. To begin the healing process, both spouses will need to understand what caused the infidelity in the marriage. This will require a long, thoughtful look at the marital pattern that has developed, as well as what each person has contributed to the marital breakdown. Difficult though it is, each spouse should focus on his or her own issues as opposed to criticizing and blaming the other person for the problem of infidelity.

Like rebuilding a wall brick by brick, a couple can begin to rebuild trust in each other by telling each other the truth and by being accountable to each other. It is vital for each person to keep his or her word. If one spouse promises to do something, he or she needs to follow through and do it. Finally, trust can be rebuilt by using gestures of affection and nonsexual touch to express caring and affirmation.

Later in the healing process, both spouses will need to take time for restoring and enriching the marriage. The restoration process involves identifying and reestablishing what was good about the marriage before the adultery. The enriching process involves learning and implementing new skills and behaviors to strengthen the relationship.

## HELPING FRIENDS

At some point, you may also need to support a friend going through recovery from adultery. First of all, two of the best gifts that you can give your friend are to pray and to listen. Resist the impulse to "fix" your friend's marriage or to prejudge whether or not your friend should get divorced. He or she must make that decision.

Don't take a role in your friend's relationship where you are the go-between. Encourage both people in the relationship to talk with each other. Don't work harder at making this marriage work than your friend is working at it. This is your friend's marriage and your friend needs to work at saving it.

Be aware that being close to someone who has experienced infidelity can "rattle" your own marriage. The other person's experience can make you painfully aware of issues you are failing to deal with in your own marriage. This can be a great opportunity to work on "affair proofing" your relationship by beginning to spend time, energy, and even money on it. Most of us marry because we want to be more connected to our spouse. We want to spend more time together, to give and receive more affection. The demands of daily living can often drain energy out of these responses. Here's a chance to renew them.

Most of all, pray daily for each other and for your relationship, and don't give up working on your own marriage.

## CONCLUSION

Remember that if your spouse has been unfaithful, or if you are helping a friend who is struggling with infidelity, you are not alone. Many Christians have experienced restoration in their marriages after adultery has taken place. Although the process can often take a long time, healing and recovery are possible through the Holy Spirit's work in our lives, healing, supporting, and helping spouses forgive one another and rebuild their marriage on a solid biblical foundation.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of adultery include:

- Exodus 20:14, 17
- Proverbs 6:32; 28:13
- Matthew 5:27-32; 19:3-10
- Romans 13:14
- 1 Corinthians 6:9-20

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on adultery at Proverbs 5:1-23. See also the personality profile of The Woman Caught In Adultery: Sin No More.

**2** Say to your brethren, ‘My people,’[a] And to your sisters, ‘Mercy[b] *is shown.*’

**GOD’S UNFAITHFUL PEOPLE**

2 “Bring charges against your mother, bring
charges;
For she *is* not My wife, nor *am* I her
Husband!

Let her put away her harlotries from her
sight,
And her adulteries from between her breasts;

3 Lest I strip her naked
And expose her, as in the day she was
born,
And make her like a wilderness,
And set her like a dry land,
And slay her with thirst.
4 “I will not have mercy on her children,
For they *are* the children of harlotry.
5 For their mother has played the harlot;
She who conceived them has behaved
shamefully.
For she said, ‘I will go after my lovers,
Who give *me* my bread and my water,
My wool and my linen,
My oil and my drink.’
6 “Therefore, behold,
I will hedge up your way with thorns,
And wall her in,
So that she cannot find her paths.
7 She will chase her lovers,
But not overtake them;
Yes, she will seek them, but not find

*them.*
Then she will say,
‘ I will go and return to my first husband,
For then *it was* better for me than now.’
8 For she did not know
That I gave her grain, new wine, and
oil,
And multiplied her silver and gold-
*Which* they prepared for Baal.
9 “Therefore I will return and take away
My grain in its time
And My new wine in its season, And will take back My wool and My linen,
*Given* to cover her nakedness.
10 Now I will uncover her lewdness in the
sight of her lovers,
And no one shall deliver her from My hand.
11 I will also cause all her mirth to cease,
Her feast days,
Her New Moons,
Her Sabbaths-
All her appointed feasts.
12 “And I will destroy her vines and her fig trees, Of which she has said,
‘These *are* my wages that my lovers have given me.’
So I will make them a forest,
And the beasts of the field shall eat
them.
13 I will punish her
For the days of the Baals to which she
burned incense.
She decked herself with her earrings and
jewelry,
And went after her lovers;
But Me she forgot,” says the LORD.

## GOD'S MERCY ON HIS PEOPLE

14 "Therefore, behold, I will allure her,
Will bring her into the wilderness, And speak comfort to her.
15 I will give her her vineyards from
there,
And the Valley of Achor as a door of
hope;
She shall sing there,
As in the days of her youth,
As in the day when she came up from
the land of Egypt.
16 "And it shall be, in that day,"
Says the LORD,
"*That* you will call Me 'My Husband,'[a]
And no longer call Me 'My Master,'[b]
17 For I will take from her mouth the
names of the Baals,
And they shall be remembered by their
name no more.
18 In that day I will make a covenant for
them
With the beasts of the field,
With the birds of the air,
And *with* the creeping things of the ground.
Bow and sword of battle I will shatter
from the earth,
To make them lie down safely.
19 "I will betroth you to Me forever;
Yes, I will betroth you to Me
In righteousness and justice,
In lovingkindness and mercy;
20 I will betroth you to Me in
faithfulness,
And you shall know the LORD.
21 "It shall come to pass in that day

*That* I will answer," says the LORD;
"I will answer the heavens,
And they shall answer the earth.
22 The earth shall answer
With grain,
With new wine,
And with oil;
They shall answer Jezreel.[a]
23 Then I will sow her for Myself in the
earth,
And I will have mercy on *her who had*
not obtained mercy;[a]
Then I will say to *those who were* not My
people,[b]
'You *are* My people!'
And they shall say, '*You are* my God!' "

**ISRAEL WILL RETURN TO GOD**

**3** Then the LORD said to me, “Go again, love a woman *who is* loved by a lover[a] and is committing adultery, just like the love of the LORD for the children of Israel, who look to other gods and love *the* raisin cakes *of the pagans.*”

2So I bought her for myself for fifteen *shekels* of silver, and one and one-half homers of barley. 3And I said to her, “You shall stay with me many days; you shall not play the harlot, nor shall you have a man-so, too, *will* I *be* toward you.”

4For the children of Israel shall abide many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or *sacred* pillar, without ephod or teraphim. 5Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the LORD their God and David their king. They shall fear the LORD and His goodness in the latter days.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# GOMER: ADDICTED TO ADULTERY

## (HOSEA 3)

**Addictions** Addictions are powerful enemies to our relationship with God. Whether the addiction is to alcohol, drugs, sex, gambling, web-surfing, shopping, or whatever, addicted people can attest to their seeming inability to control their desires.

Gomer had an addiction. As a “harlot,” she sold sexual favors for money. The Bible is unclear whether she had been a prostitute before

Hosea married her, or if God was telling Hosea that she would become adulterous. In either case, Hosea knew what he was getting in Gomer. She married Hosea, lived with him, and had children, but the children were not Hosea's, but "children of harlotry" (Hos. 1:2).

Despite Gomer's actions, Hosea loved her. She sought comfort not in his love, however, but in her addiction. She ran to others who made love but did not love her. They used her and left her alone and empty. Then Hosea bought her back.

The story illustrates the power of love, and the faithfulness of God toward His sinful people. It also tragically illustrates the results of an addiction. For Gomer, her sexual addiction pulled her away from her family and then left her alone and empty, needing to have Hosea pay a paltry amount of money to redeem her. No one else wanted her.

Addictions usually begin very subtly-an experience, substance, or individual that brings pleasure begins to become an obsession. Eventually, the obsession takes control. Rarely can a person escape the addiction without some form of intervention. Addicts must determine to change, replace the addictive substance with something more wholesome, and then finally find a way to meet their need differently.

Addictions destroy individuals, families, friendships, reputations, and careers. Addictions make people victims of their own desires. Despite all this, God offers hope to the addict. God wants to free His people from anything that takes His rightful place in their lives. He wants to show them that He can meet all their needs. With God's help and the compassionate accountability of other believers, addicts can be set free-bought back. Jesus has already paid the price.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about addictions Principled Pleasure. See also the key passage note at 1 Corinthians 6:9-12.

## SOUL NOTE

**Extraordinary Love** *(3:1-5)* When Gomer was committing adultery, God told Hosea to bring her back and love her. Hosea could have refused; he could have asked the authorities to put Gomer to death instead (Deut. 22:22). Or he simply could have tried to ignore the problem. In obedience to God, however, Hosea went to Gomer and used his own money to buy her back. Reaching out after being rejected, being faithful to the unfaithful, is difficult. Yet that is the kind of love God has shown us (Rom. 3:23-26; 5:1). God reaches out every day, calling us back to Him. **Topic: Marital Problems**

## GOD'S CHARGE AGAINST ISRAEL

**4** Hear the word of the LORD, You children of Israel, For the LORD *brings* a
charge against the inhabitants of the land:

"There is no truth or mercy
Or knowledge of God in the land.

2 *By* swearing and lying,
Killing and stealing and committing
adultery,
They break all restraint,
With bloodshed upon bloodshed.
3 Therefore the land will mourn;
And everyone who dwells there will
waste away
With the beasts of the field
And the birds of the air;
Even the fish of the sea will be taken
away.
4 "Now let no man contend, or rebuke
another;
For your people *are* like those who
contend with the priest.
5 Therefore you shall stumble in the day;
The prophet also shall stumble with you
in the night;
And I will destroy your mother.
6 My people are destroyed for lack of
knowledge.
Because you have rejected knowledge,
I also will reject you from being priest
for Me;
Because you have forgotten the law of
your God,

I also will forget your children.
7 “The more they increased,
The more they sinned against Me;
I will change[a] their glory[b] into shame.
8 They eat up the sin of My people;
They set their heart on their iniquity.
9 And it shall be: like people, like priest.
So I will punish them for their ways,
And reward them for their deeds.
10 For they shall eat, but not have enough;
They shall commit harlotry, but not
increase;
Because they have ceased obeying the LORD.

## THE IDOLATRY OF ISRAEL

11 “Harlotry, wine, and new wine enslave
the heart.
12 My people ask counsel from their
wooden *idols*,
And their staff informs them.
For the spirit of harlotry has caused
*them* to stray,
And they have played the harlot against
their God.
13 They offer sacrifices on the
mountaintops,
And burn incense on the hills,
Under oaks, poplars, and terebinths,
Because their shade *is* good.
Therefore your daughters commit
harlotry,
And your brides commit adultery.
14 “I will not punish your daughters when
they commit harlotry,
Nor your brides when they commit

adultery;
For *the men* themselves go apart with harlots,
And offer sacrifices with a ritual harlot.[a]
Therefore people *who* do not understand will be trampled.
15 “Though you, Israel, play the harlot,
Let not Judah offend.
Do not come up to Gilgal,
Nor go up to Beth Aven,
Nor swear an oath, *saying*, ‘As the LORD lives’-
16 “For Israel is stubborn
Like a stubborn calf;
Now the LORD will let them forage
Like a lamb in open country.
17 “Ephraim *is* joined to idols,
Let him alone.
18 Their drink is rebellion,
They commit harlotry continually.
Her rulers dearly love dishonor.[a]
19 The wind has wrapped her up in its wings,
And they shall be ashamed because of their sacrifices.

## IMPENDING JUDGMENT ON ISRAEL AND JUDAH

**5** “Hear this, O priests!
Take heed, O house of Israel!

Give ear, O house of the king!
For yours *is* the judgment,
Because you have been a snare to
Mizpah
And a net spread on Tabor.

2 The revolters are deeply involved in
slaughter,
Though I rebuke them all.
3 I know Ephraim,
And Israel is not hidden from Me;
For now, O Ephraim, you commit
harlotry;
Israel is defiled.
4 “They do not direct their deeds
Toward turning to their God,
For the spirit of harlotry is in their midst,
And they do not know the LORD.
5 The pride of Israel testifies to his face;
Therefore Israel and Ephraim stumble in
their iniquity;
Judah also stumbles with them.
6 “With their flocks and herds
They shall go to seek the LORD,
But they will not find *Him;*
He has withdrawn Himself from them.
7 They have dealt treacherously with the
LORD,
For they have begotten pagan children.
Now a New Moon shall devour them

and their heritage.
8 “Blow the ram’s horn in Gibeah,
The trumpet in Ramah!
Cry aloud *at* Beth Aven,
‘*Look* behind you, O Benjamin!’
9 Ephraim shall be desolate in the day of rebuke;
Among the tribes of Israel I make known what is sure.
10 “The princes of Judah are like those who remove a landmark;
I will pour out My wrath on them like water.
11 Ephraim is oppressed *and* broken in judgment,
Because he willingly walked by *human* precept.
12 Therefore I *will be* to Ephraim like a moth,
And to the house of Judah like rottenness.
13 “When Ephraim saw his sickness,
And Judah *saw* his wound,
Then Ephraim went to Assyria
And sent to King Jareb;
Yet he cannot cure you,
Nor heal you of your wound.
14 For I *will be* like a lion to Ephraim,
And like a young lion to the house of Judah.
I, *even* I, will tear *them* and go away;
I will take *them* away, and no one shall rescue.
15 I will return again to My place
Till they acknowledge their offense.

Then they will seek My face;
In their affliction they will earnestly seek Me.”

## A CALL TO REPENTANCE

**6** Come, and let us return to the LORD;
For He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up.

2 After two days He will revive us;
On the third day He will raise us up,
That we may live in His sight.
3 Let us know, Let us pursue the knowledge of the LORD.

His going forth is established as the morning;
He will come to us like the rain,
Like the latter *and* former rain to the earth.

## IMPENITENCE OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH

4 "O Ephraim, what shall I do to you?
O Judah, what shall I do to you?
For your faithfulness is like a morning cloud,
And like the early dew it goes away.
5 Therefore I have hewn *them* by the prophets,
I have slain them by the words of My mouth;
And your judgments *are like* light *that* goes forth.
6 For I desire mercy and not sacrifice,
And the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.
7 "But like men[a] they transgressed the covenant;

There they dealt treacherously with Me.
8 Gilead *is* a city of evildoers
*And* defiled with blood.
9 As bands of robbers lie in wait for a man,
*So* the company of priests murder on the way to Shechem;
Surely they commit lewdness.
10 I have seen a horrible thing in the house of Israel:
There *is* the harlotry of Ephraim;
Israel is defiled.
11 Also, O Judah, a harvest is appointed for you,
When I return the captives of My people.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Turning Point** *(6:1-3)* In the middle of his prophecies of impending judgment, Hosea called out to the Israelites to repent: "Return to the LORD." With this warning, Hosea was, in effect, saying there was still hope. Despite God's punishment, God would restore those who turned back to Him. He would heal, bind up, and revive-if only they would "pursue the knowledge of the LORD." Sometimes we may feel that we have gone too far-that we have sinned too many times or too seriously to ever be forgiven. Hosea's call to the wicked Israelites demonstrates that if we return to God, He will forgive us. **Topic: Repentance**

**7** “When I would have healed Israel,
Then the iniquity of Ephraim was uncovered,
And the wickedness of Samaria.
For they have committed fraud;
A thief comes in;
A band of robbers takes spoil outside.

2 They do not consider in their hearts
*That* I remember all their wickedness;
Now their own deeds have surrounded
them;
They are before My face.
3 They make a king glad with their
wickedness,
And princes with their lies.
4 “They *are* all adulterers.
Like an oven heated by a baker-
He ceases stirring *the fire* after kneading
the dough,
Until it is leavened.
5 In the day of our king
Princes have made *him* sick, inflamed
with wine;
He stretched out his hand with scoffers.
6 They prepare their heart like an oven,
While they lie in wait;
Their baker[a] sleeps all night;
In the morning it burns like a flaming
fire.
7 They are all hot, like an oven,
And have devoured their judges;
All their kings have fallen.
None among them calls upon Me.
8 “Ephraim has mixed himself among the
peoples;
Ephraim is a cake unturned.

9 Aliens have devoured his strength,
But he does not know *it;*
Yes, gray hairs are here and there on
him, Yet he does not know *it.*
10 And the pride of Israel testifies to his
face,
But they do not return to the LORD their
God,
Nor seek Him for all this.

**FUTILE RELIANCE ON THE NATIONS**

11 "Ephraim also is like a silly dove, without
sense-
They call to Egypt,
They go to Assyria.
12 Wherever they go, I will spread My net
on them;
I will bring them down like birds of the
air;
I will chastise them
According to what their congregation
has heard.
13 "Woe to them, for they have fled from Me!
Destruction to them,
Because they have transgressed against
Me!
Though I redeemed them,
Yet they have spoken lies against Me.
14 They did not cry out to Me with their
heart
When they wailed upon their beds.
"They assemble together for[a] grain and
new wine,
They rebel against Me;[b]
15 Though I disciplined *and* strengthened

their arms,
Yet they devise evil against Me;
16 They return, *but* not to the Most High;[a]
They are like a treacherous bow.
Their princes shall fall by the sword
For the cursings of their tongue.
This *shall be* their derision in the land of
Egypt.

**THE APOSTASY OF ISRAEL**

**8** “*Set* the trumpet[a] to your mouth!
*He shall come* like an eagle against the house of the LORD,
Because they have transgressed My covenant
And rebelled against My law.

2 Israel will cry to Me,
‘My God, we know You!’
3 Israel has rejected the good;
The enemy will pursue him.
4 “They set up kings, but not by Me;
They made princes, but I did not acknowledge *them.*
From their silver and gold
They made idols for themselves-
That they might be cut off.
5 Your calf is rejected, O Samaria!
My anger is aroused against them-
How long until they attain to innocence?
6 For from Israel *is* even this:
A workman made it, and it *is* not God;
But the calf of Samaria shall be broken to pieces.
7 “They sow the wind,
And reap the whirlwind.
The stalk has no bud;
It shall never produce meal.
If it should produce,
Aliens would swallow it up.
8 Israel is swallowed up;
Now they are among the Gentiles
Like a vessel in which *is* no pleasure.

9 For they have gone up to Assyria,
*Like* a wild donkey alone by itself;
Ephraim has hired lovers.
10 Yes, though they have hired among the
nations,
Now I will gather them;
And they shall sorrow a little,[a] Because of the burden[b] of the king of
princes.
11 “Because Ephraim has made many altars for
sin,
They have become for him altars for
sinning.
12 I have written for him the great things of
My law,
*But* they were considered a strange
thing.
13*For* the sacrifices of My offerings they
sacrifice flesh and eat *it,*
*But* the LORD does not accept them.
Now He will remember their iniquity
and punish their sins.
They shall return to Egypt.
14 “For Israel has forgotten his Maker,
And has built temples;[a]
Judah also has multiplied fortified cities;
But I will send fire upon his cities,
And it shall devour his palaces.”

**JUDGMENT OF ISRAEL'S IN**

**9** Do not rejoice, O Israel, with joy like
*other* peoples,
For you have played the harlot against
your God.
You have made love *for* hire on every
threshing floor.

2 The threshing floor and the winepress
Shall not feed them,
And the new wine shall fail in her.
3 They shall not dwell in the LORD's land,
But Ephraim shall return to Egypt,
And shall eat unclean *things* in Assyria.
4 They shall not offer wine *offerings* to the
LORD,
Nor shall their sacrifices be pleasing to
Him.
*It shall be* like bread of mourners to
them;
All who eat it shall be defiled.
For their bread *shall be* for their *own*
life;
It shall not come into the house of the
LORD.
5 What will you do in the appointed day,
And in the day of the feast of the LORD?
6 For indeed they are gone because of
destruction.
Egypt shall gather them up;
Memphis shall bury them.
Nettles shall possess their valuables of
silver;
Thorns *shall be* in their tents.

7 The days of punishment have come;
The days of recompense have come.
Israel knows!
The prophet *is* a fool,
The spiritual man *is* insane,
Because of the greatness of your iniquity
and great enmity.
8 The watchman of Ephraim *is* with my
God;
But the prophet *is* a fowler's[a] snare in all
his ways-
Enmity in the house of his God.
9 They are deeply corrupted,
As in the days of Gibeah.
He will remember their iniquity;
He will punish their sins.
10 "I found Israel
Like grapes in the wilderness;
I saw your fathers
As the firstfruits on the fig tree in its first
season.
*But* they went to Baal Peor,
And separated themselves *to that* shame;
They became an abomination like the
thing they loved.
11 *As for* Ephraim, their glory shall fly
away like a bird-
No birth, no pregnancy, and no
conception!
12 Though they bring up their children,
Yet I will bereave them to the last man.
Yes, woe to them when I depart from
them!
13 Just as I saw Ephraim like Tyre, planted
in a pleasant place,

So Ephraim will bring out his children to
the murderer.”
14 Give them, O LORD-
What will You give?
Give them a miscarrying womb
And dry breasts!
15 “All their wickedness *is* in Gilgal,
For there I hated them.
Because of the evil of their deeds
I will drive them from My house;
I will love them no more.
All their princes *are* rebellious.
16 Ephraim is stricken,
Their root is dried up;
They shall bear no fruit.
Yes, were they to bear children,
I would kill the darlings of their
womb.”
17 My God will cast them away,
Because they did not obey Him;
And they shall be wanderers among the
nations.

## ISRAEL'S SIN AND CAPTIVITY

**10** Israel empties *his* vine;
He brings forth fruit for himself.
According to the multitude of his fruit
He has increased the altars;
According to the bounty of his land
They have embellished *his sacred* pillars.

2 Their heart is divided;
Now they are held guilty.
He will break down their altars;
He will ruin their *sacred* pillars.

3 For now they say,
"We have no king,
Because we did not fear the LORD.
And as for a king, what would he do for us?"

4 They have spoken words,
Swearing falsely in making a covenant.
Thus judgment springs up like hemlock
in the furrows of the field.

5 The inhabitants of Samaria fear
Because of the calf[a] of Beth Aven.
For its people mourn for it,
And its priests shriek for it-
Because its glory has departed from it.

6 *The idol* also shall be carried to Assyria
*As* a present for King Jareb.
Ephraim shall receive shame,
And Israel shall be ashamed of his own
counsel.

7 *As for* Samaria, her king is cut off
Like a twig on the water.

8 Also the high places of Aven, the sin of
Israel,

Shall be destroyed.
The thorn and thistle shall grow on their altars;
They shall say to the mountains, “Cover us!”
And to the hills, “Fall on us!”
9 “O Israel, you have sinned from the days of Gibeah;
There they stood.
The battle in Gibeah against the children of iniquity[a]
Did not overtake them.

> Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the LORD, till He comes and rains righteousness on you.
> HOSEA 10:12

10 When *it is* My desire, I will chasten them.
Peoples shall be gathered against them
When I bind them for their two transgressions.[a]
11 Ephraim *is* a trained heifer
That loves to thresh *grain;*
But I harnessed her fair neck,
I will make Ephraim pull *a plow.*
Judah shall plow;
Jacob shall break his clods.”
12 Sow for yourselves righteousness;

Reap in mercy;
Break up your fallow ground,
For *it is* time to seek the LORD,
Till He comes and rains righteousness
on you.
13 You have plowed wickedness;
You have reaped iniquity.
You have eaten the fruit of lies,
Because you trusted in your own way,
In the multitude of your mighty men.
14 Therefore tumult shall arise among your
people,
And all your fortresses shall be
plundered As Shalman plundered Beth Arbel in the
day of battle-
A mother dashed in pieces upon *her*
children.
15 Thus it shall be done to you, O Bethel,
Because of your great wickedness.
At dawn the king of Israel Shall be cut off utterly.

## GOD’S CONTINUING LOVE FOR ISRAEL

**11** “When Israel *was* a child, I loved
him,
And out of Egypt I called My son.

2 *As* they called them,[a]
So they went from them;[b]
They sacrificed to the Baals,
And burned incense to carved images.
3 “I taught Ephraim to walk,
Taking them by their arms;[a]
But they did not
know that I
healed them.
4 I drew them with
gentle cords,[a]
With bands of
love,
And I was to them
as those who
take the yoke
from their
neck.[b]
I stooped *and* fed them.
5 “He shall not return to the land of Egypt;
But the Assyrian shall be his king,
Because they refused to repent.
6 And the sword shall slash in his cities,
Devour his districts,
And consume *them*,
Because of their own counsels.
7 My people are bent on backsliding from
Me.
Though they call to the Most High,[a]

None at all exalt *Him.*
8 “How can I give you up, Ephraim?
*How* can I hand you over, Israel?

How can I make you like Admah?
*How* can I set you like Zeboiim?
My heart churns within Me;
My sympathy is stirred.
9 I will not execute the fierceness of My
anger;
I will not again destroy Ephraim.
For I *am* God, and not man,
The Holy One in your midst;
And I will not come with terror.[a]
10 “They shall walk after the LORD.
He will roar like a lion.
When He roars,
Then *His* sons shall come trembling
from the west;
11 They shall come trembling like a bird
from Egypt,
Like a dove from the land of Assyria.
And I will let them dwell in their
houses,”
Says the LORD.

## GOD’S CHARGE AGAINST EPHRAIM

12 “Ephraim has encircled Me with lies,
And the house of Israel with deceit;
But Judah still walks with God,
Even with the Holy One[a] *who is* faithful.

**12** “Ephraim feeds on the wind,
And pursues the east wind;
He daily increases lies and desolation.
Also they make a covenant with the
Assyrians,
And oil is carried to Egypt.

2 “The LORD also *brings* a charge against
Judah,
And will punish Jacob according to his
ways;
According to his deeds He will
recompense him.
3 He took his brother by the heel in the
womb,
And in his strength he struggled with
God.[a]
4 Yes, he struggled with the Angel and
prevailed;
He wept, and sought favor from Him.
He found Him *in* Bethel,
And there He spoke to us-
5 That is, the LORD God of hosts.
The LORD *is* His memorable name.
6 So you, by *the help of* your God,
return;
Observe mercy and justice,
And wait on your God continually.
7 “A cunning Canaanite!
Deceitful scales *are* in his hand;
He loves to oppress.
8 And Ephraim said,
‘Surely I have become rich,
I have found wealth for myself;
*In* all my labors
They shall find in me no iniquity that *is*

sin.’
9 “But I *am* the LORD your God,
Ever since the land of Egypt;
I will again make you dwell in tents,
As in the days of the appointed
feast.
10 I have also spoken by the prophets,
And have multiplied visions;
I have given symbols through the
witness of the prophets.”
11 Though Gilead *has* idols-
Surely they are vanity-
Though they sacrifice bulls in Gilgal,
Indeed their altars *shall be* heaps in the
furrows of the field.
12 Jacob fled to the country of Syria;
Israel served for a spouse,
And for a wife he tended *sheep.*
13 By a prophet the LORD brought Israel out
of Egypt,
And by a prophet he was preserved.
14 Ephraim provoked *Him* to anger most
bitterly; Therefore his Lord will leave the guilt of
his bloodshed upon him,
And return his reproach upon him.

**RELENTLESS JUDGMENT ON ISRAEL**

**13** When Ephraim spoke, trembling,
He exalted *himself* in Israel;
But when he offended through Baal
*worship*, he died.

2 Now they sin more and more,
And have made for themselves molded
images,
Idols of their silver, according to their
skill;
All of it *is* the work of craftsmen.
They say of them,
"Let the men who sacrifice[a] kiss the
calves!"
3 Therefore they shall be like the morning
cloud
And like the early dew that passes away,
Like chaff blown off from a threshing
floor
And like smoke from a chimney.
4 "Yet I *am* the LORD your God
Ever since the land of Egypt,
And you shall know no God but Me;
For *there is* no savior besides Me.
5 I knew you in the wilderness,
In the land of great drought.
6 When they had pasture, they were
filled;
They were filled and their heart was
exalted;
Therefore they forgot Me.
7 "So I will be to them like a lion;
Like a leopard by the road I will lurk;

8 I will meet them like a bear deprived *of*
*her cubs;*
I will tear open their rib cage,
And there I will devour them like a lion.
The wild beast shall tear them.
9 “O Israel, you are destroyed,[a]
But your help[b] *is* from Me.
10 I will be your King;[a] Where *is any other*,
That he may save you in all your cities?
And your judges to whom you said,
‘Give me a king and princes’?
11 I gave you a king in My anger,
And took *him* away in My wrath.
12 “The iniquity of Ephraim *is* bound up;
His sin *is* stored up.
13 The sorrows of a woman in childbirth
shall come upon him.
He *is* an unwise son,
For he should not stay long where
children are born.
14 “I will ransom them from the power of
the grave;[a]
I will redeem them from death.
O Death, I will be your plagues![b]
O Grave,[c] I will be your destruction![d]
Pity is hidden from My eyes.”
15 Though he is fruitful among *his*
brethren,
An east wind shall come;
The wind of the LORD shall come up
from the wilderness.
Then his spring shall become dry,
And his fountain shall be dried up.
He shall plunder the treasury of every desirable prize.

16 Samaria is held guilty,[a]
For she has rebelled against her God.
They shall fall by the sword,
Their infants shall be dashed in pieces,
And their women with child ripped open.

**ISRAEL RESTORED AT LAST**

**14** O Israel, return to the LORD your
God,
For you have stumbled because of your
iniquity;

2 Take words with you,
And return to the LORD.
Say to Him,
"Take away all iniquity;
Receive *us* graciously,
For we will offer the sacrifices[a] of our
lips.
3 Assyria shall not save us,
We will not ride on horses,
Nor will we say anymore to the work of
our hands, '*You are* our gods.'
For in You the fatherless finds mercy."
4 "I will heal their backsliding,
I will love them freely,
For My anger has turned away from him.
5 I will be like the dew to Israel;
He shall grow like the lily,
And lengthen his roots like Lebanon.
6 His branches shall spread;
His beauty shall be like an olive tree,
And his fragrance like Lebanon.
7 Those who dwell under his shadow shall
return;
They shall be revived *like* grain,
And grow like a vine.
Their scent[a] *shall be* like the wine of
Lebanon.
8 "Ephraim *shall say,* 'What have I to do

anymore with idols?’
I have heard and observed him.
I *am* like a green cypress tree;
Your fruit is found in Me.”
9 Who *is* wise?
Let him understand these things.
*Who is* prudent?
Let him know them.
For the ways of the LORD *are* right;
The righteous walk in them,
But transgressors stumble in them.

**SOUL NOTE**

**The Beauty of Forgiveness** *(14:4-8)* The beauty of a lily, the sweet smell of cedars, the strength of an olive tree-God used these images to describe the results of His gracious love. Although Israel had rejected Him, God promised to restore their strength, vitality, and beauty. His love would be like sweet, refreshing dew to them. The Israelites’ own sins had destroyed them, but God would rebuild them. This pictures God’s forgiveness. He doesn’t merely erase our sins; He restores and recreates our broken lives: “Old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2 Cor. 5:17). **Topic: Forgiveness**

# Joel



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# Joel

Everyone looks forward to special days-birthdays, anniversaries, holidays. But these seem like nothing compared to a very special day that all believers anticipate-Joel calls it “the day of the LORD.”

This book was written by the prophet Joel, who may also have been a priest. In this prophecy, he speaks of the recent disasters of a devastating locust plague and a drought (around 800 B.C.) to warn Israel of an even greater judgment to come. He speaks at length of a future “day of the LORD” during which God will vindicate His righteousness by holding Israel and the nations accountable for their long history of rebellion. Joel calls that day “great and very terrible” (2:11).

Even in the midst of this grim prophecy, there are frequent glimmers of hope. That terrible day of the Lord need not be terrible for God’s people. Joel goes on, saying that the “day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision,” and in that day “the LORD will be a shelter for His people” (3:14, 16). God promised to restore Judah and bring about a time of unparalleled material and spiritual blessing (2:18-32; 3:18-21). “So you shall know that I am the LORD your God, dwelling in Zion My holy mountain. Then Jerusalem shall be holy” (3:17).

God always wants to bring us to a deep repentance that will lead to the renewal and restoration of our souls. A day of the Lord is still to come when He returns for His people. If we belong to Christ, we can look forward to that day of the Lord with great anticipation.

**1** The word of the LORD that came to Joel the son of Pethuel.

**THE LAND LAID WASTE**

2 Hear this, you elders,
And give ear, all you inhabitants of the land!
Has *anything like* this happened in your days,
Or even in the days of your fathers?
3 Tell your children about it,
*Let* your children *tell* their children,
And their children another generation.
4 What the chewing locust[a] left, the swarming locust has eaten;
What the swarming locust left, the crawling locust has eaten;
And what the crawling locust left, the consuming locust has eaten.
5 Awake, you drunkards, and weep;
And wail, all you drinkers of wine,
Because of the new wine,
For it has been cut off from your mouth.
6 For a nation has come up against My land,
Strong, and without number;
His teeth *are* the teeth of a lion,
And he has the fangs of a fierce lion.
7 He has laid waste My vine,
And ruined My fig tree;
He has stripped it bare and thrown *it* away;
Its branches are made white.
8 Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth
For the husband of her youth.

9 The grain offering and the drink offering
Have been cut off from the house of the
LORD;
The priests mourn, who minister to the
LORD.
10 The field is wasted,
The land mourns;
For the grain is ruined,
The new wine is dried up,
The oil fails.
11 Be ashamed, you farmers,
Wail, you vinedressers,
For the wheat and the barley;
Because the harvest of the field has
perished.
12 The vine has dried up,
And the fig tree has withered;
The pomegranate tree,
The palm tree also,
And the apple tree-
All the trees of the field are withered;
Surely joy has withered away from the
sons of men.

**MOURNING FOR THE LAND**

13 Gird yourselves and lament, you priests;
Wail, you who minister before the altar;
Come, lie all night in sackcloth,
You who minister to my God;
For the grain offering and the drink
offering
Are withheld from the house of your
God.
14 Consecrate a fast,
Call a sacred assembly;

Gather the elders
*And* all the inhabitants of the land
*Into* the house of the LORD your God,
And cry out to the LORD.
15 Alas for the day!
For the day of the LORD *is* at hand;
It shall come as destruction from the
Almighty.
16 Is not the food cut off before our eyes,
Joy and gladness from the house of our
God?
17 The seed shrivels under the clods,
Storehouses are in shambles;
Barns are broken down,
For the grain has withered.
18 How the animals groan!
The herds of cattle are restless,
Because they have no pasture;
Even the flocks of sheep suffer
punishment.[a]
19 O LORD, to You I cry out;
For fire has devoured the open
pastures,
And a flame has burned all the trees of
the field.
20 The beasts of the field also cry out to
You,
For the water brooks are dried up,
And fire has devoured the open
pastures.

## SOUL NOTE

**Teach Them Well***(1:3)* The Bible tells parents to teach their children about sin and about salvation in God (1:3; Ex. 10:2; Deut. 4:9; Ps. 22:30, 31). Joel exhorted the Israelites to remind their children of the locusts that God had sent on their land, so the children would learn the lesson God was teaching Israel. Even when it's difficult, parents should tell their children the truth about sin and what God has done for them. This will give children the opportunity to learn from their parents' mistakes. **Topic: Parenting**

## SOUL NOTE

**Wake-Up Call** *(1:15-20)* The prophet Joel lived during a time of prosperity in Judah. The more wealthy and prosperous the people became, however, the more complacent they became toward God until they had forgotten Him completely. So God sent locusts to devour the land. Joel declared that this plague was a wake-up call. We dare not forget the source of our prosperity. God owns everything, and we are responsible to Him for how we use His resources. **Topic: Money**

**THE DAY OF THE LORD**

**2** Blow the trumpet in Zion,
And sound an alarm in My holy mountain!
Let all the inhabitants of the land
tremble;
For the day of the LORD is coming,
For it is at hand:

[2] A day of darkness and gloominess,
A day of clouds and thick darkness,
Like the morning *clouds* spread over the
mountains.
A people *come*, great and strong,
The like of whom has never been;
Nor will there ever be any *such* after
them,
Even for many successive generations.
[3] A fire devours before them,
And behind them a flame burns;
The land *is* like the Garden of Eden
before them,
And behind them a desolate wilderness;
Surely nothing shall escape them.
[4] Their appearance is like the appearance
of horses;
And like swift steeds, so they run.
[5] With a noise like chariots
Over mountaintops they leap,
Like the noise of a flaming fire that
devours the stubble,
Like a strong people set in battle array.
[6] Before them the people writhe in pain;
All faces are drained of color.[a]
[7] They run like mighty men,

They climb the wall like men of war;
Every one marches in formation,
And they do not break ranks.
8 They do not push one another;
Every one marches in his own
column.[a]
Though they lunge between the
weapons,
They are not cut down.[b]
9 They run to and fro in the city,
They run on the wall;
They climb into the houses,
They enter at the windows like a thief.
10 The earth quakes before them,
The heavens tremble;
The sun and moon grow dark,
And the stars diminish their brightness.
11 The LORD gives voice before His army,
For His camp is very great;
For strong *is the One* who executes His
word.
For the day of the LORD *is* great and very
terrible;
Who can endure it?

## A CALL TO REPENTANCE

12 "Now, therefore," says the LORD,
"Turn to Me with all your heart, With fasting, with weeping, and with
mourning."
13 So rend your heart, and not your
garments;
Return to the LORD your God,
For He *is* gracious and merciful,
Slow to anger, and of great kindness;
And He relents from doing harm.

14 Who knows *if* He will turn and relent,
And leave a blessing behind Him-
A grain offering and a drink offering
For the LORD your God?
15 Blow the trumpet in Zion,
Consecrate a fast,
Call a sacred assembly;
16 Gather the people,
Sanctify the congregation,
Assemble the elders,
Gather the children and nursing babes;
Let the bridegroom go out from his
chamber,
And the bride from her dressing room.
17 Let the priests, who minister to the
LORD,
Weep between the porch and the altar;
Let them say, “Spare Your people,
O LORD,
And do not give Your heritage to
reproach,
That the nations should rule over them.
Why should they say among the peoples,
‘Where *is* their God?’ ”

**THE LAND REFRESHED**

18 Then the LORD will be zealous for His
land,
And pity His people.
19 The LORD will answer and say to His
people,
“Behold, I will send you grain and new
wine and oil,
And you will be satisfied by them;
I will no longer make you a reproach

among the nations.
20 “But I will remove far from you the
northern *army*,
And will drive him away into a barren
and desolate land,
With his face toward the eastern sea
And his back toward the western sea;
His stench will come up,
And his foul odor will rise,
Because he has done monstrous things.”
21 Fear not, O land;
Be glad and rejoice,
For the LORD has done marvelous
things!
22 Do not be afraid, you beasts of the field;
For the open pastures are springing up,
And the tree bears its fruit;
The fig tree and the vine yield their
strength.
23 Be glad then, you children of Zion,
And rejoice in the LORD your God;
For He has given you the former rain
faithfully,[a]
And He will cause the rain to come
down for you-
The former rain,
And the latter rain in the first *month*.
24 The threshing floors shall be full of
wheat,
And the vats shall overflow with new
wine and oil.
25 “So I will restore to you the years that the
swarming locust has eaten,
The crawling locust,
The consuming locust,

And the chewing locust,[a]
My great army which I sent among you.
26 You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied,
And praise the name of the LORD your God,
Who has dealt wondrously with you;
And My people shall never be put to shame.
27 Then you shall know that I *am* in the midst of Israel:
I *am* the LORD your God
And there is no other.
My people shall never be put to shame.

## GOD'S SPIRIT POURED OUT

28 "And it shall come to pass afterward
That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh;
Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
Your old men shall dream dreams,
Your young men shall see visions.
29 And also on *My* menservants and on *My* maidservants
I will pour out My Spirit in those days.
30 "And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth:
Blood and fire and pillars of smoke.
31 The sun shall be turned into darkness,
And the moon into blood,
Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD.
32 And it shall come to pass
*That* whoever calls on the name of the LORD
Shall be saved.

For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem
there shall be deliverance,
As the LORD has said,
Among the remnant whom the LORD
calls.

**SOUL NOTE**

**The Invitation** *(2:12, 13)* In the middle of this book filled with warnings and judgment stands a profound picture of God's mercy. Over the clamor of invading armies and devouring locusts, God issues a clear invitation: "Turn to Me with all your heart." In the midst of judgment, God offers mercy to those who repent. "He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness." Regardless of the circumstances, God says, "Turn to Me." When we call out to our gracious and merciful God, He hears and answers. **Topic: Repentance**

**SOUL NOTE**

**Marvelous** *(2:19-27)* God delights in doing miracles. He loves turning hopeless situations into delightful possibilities. Joel warned his people that a terrible army would invade their land and destroy their hope. Even the very heavens and earth would tremble at the devastation (2:10). In the face of such disaster, however, Joel spoke of a day when God would do "marvelous things" (2:21). God's works are truly marvelous. In response, we should "praise the name of the LORD" (2:26). **Topic: Joy**

## SOUL NOTE

**Outpouring** *(2:28-32)* Joel predicted that God's grand invitation to turn to Him (2:12) would be extended to all people: "Whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved." Christians are the beneficiaries of God's outpouring. The world hasn't been the same since the day a small band of apostles were energized by God's Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. On that day, Peter quoted this passage from Joel and encouraged people to repent and believe in Christ (Acts 2:16-21, 38). All who have accepted this call and received God's Spirit fulfill this prophecy of God's grace. **Topic: Presence of the Holy Spirit**

**GOD JUDGES THE NATIONS**

**3** "For behold, in those days and at that time,
When I bring back the captives of Judah
and Jerusalem,

[2] I will also gather all nations,
And bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat;
And I will enter into judgment with them there
On account of My people, My heritage Israel,
Whom they have scattered among the nations;
They have also divided up My land.
[3] They have cast lots for My people,
Have given a boy *as payment* for a harlot,
And sold a girl for wine, that they may drink.
[4] "Indeed, what have you to do with Me,
O Tyre and Sidon, and all the coasts of Philistia?
Will you retaliate against Me?
But if you retaliate against Me,
Swiftly and speedily I will return your retaliation upon your own head;

> Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision.
> JOEL 3:14

5 Because you have taken My silver and My gold,
And have carried into your temples My
prized possessions.
6 Also the people of Judah and the people
of Jerusalem
You have sold to the Greeks,
That you may remove them far from
their borders.
7 “Behold, I will raise them
Out of the place to which you have sold
them,
And will return your retaliation upon
your own head.
8 I will sell your sons and your daughters
Into the hand of the people of Judah,
And they will sell them to the Sabeans,[a]
To a people far off;
For the LORD has spoken.”
9 Proclaim this among the nations:
“Prepare for war!
Wake up the mighty men,
Let all the men of war draw near,
Let them come up.
10 Beat your plowshares into swords
And your pruning hooks into spears;
Let the weak say, ‘I *am* strong.’ ”
11 Assemble and come, all you nations,
And gather together all around.
Cause Your mighty ones to go down
there, O LORD.
12 “Let the nations be wakened, and come
up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat;
For there I will sit to judge all the
surrounding nations.
13 Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe.

Come, go down;
For the winepress is full,
The vats overflow-
For their wickedness *is* great."
14 Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision!
For the day of the LORD *is* near in the valley of decision.
15 The sun and moon will grow dark,
And the stars will diminish their brightness.
16 The LORD also will roar from Zion,
And utter His voice from Jerusalem;
The heavens and earth will shake;
But the LORD will be a shelter for His
people,
And the strength of the children of
Israel.
17 "So you shall know that I *am* the LORD
your God,
Dwelling in Zion My holy mountain.
Then Jerusalem shall be holy,
And no aliens shall ever pass through
her again."

**GOD BLESSES HIS PEOPLE**

18 And it will come to pass in that day
*That* the mountains shall drip with new
wine,
The hills shall flow with milk,
And all the brooks of Judah shall be
flooded with water;
A fountain shall flow from the house of
the LORD
And water the Valley of Acacias.
19 "Egypt shall be a desolation,
And Edom a desolate wilderness,
Because of violence *against* the people

of Judah,
For they have shed innocent blood in
their land.
20 But Judah shall abide forever,
And Jerusalem from generation to
generation.
21 For I will acquit them of the guilt of
bloodshed, whom I had not acquitted;
For the LORD dwells in Zion.”

# Amos



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# Amos

The lure of millions of dollars draws many to spend their hard-earned money on lottery tickets. Just match a few numbers and be set for life! Many think that with so much money, they will be able to help others. Sadly, money has an uncanny ability to corrupt, to intensify greed, and to skew perspective. That hasn't changed for thousands of years. Around 760 B.C., the nation of Israel was enjoying great wealth. Unfortunately, they were also on the verge of spiritual bankruptcy.

Enter Amos-a shepherd and fig-picker abruptly called by God to deliver a series of blunt warnings to his wayward kinsmen. Amos lived near Jerusalem in Judah, but his prophecy focused on Samaria, the capital of Israel. Name a sin and the populace was guilty of it: hypocrisy, callousness, arrogance, gross idolatry, empty ritualism, injustice, immorality, self-righteousness, materialism, corruption, and greed. Worst of all was the people's shocking sense of indifference toward God.

The stern message of Amos was similar to that of most of the prophets: Turn from your sin while you still have a chance. God is slow to anger and willing to forgive, but continued sin will eventually unleash His judgment. (Tragically, the warning went unheeded.)

The Book of Amos contains a dire warning for us about materialism and greed. There's no question that wealth can be a tremendous blessing, and a resource for blessing others. Unfortunately, wealth can also poison our souls by blinding us to the deepest realities of life-the truths of God. Amos reminds us that wealth or no wealth, spiritual neglect will result in devastation and loss.

**1** The words of Amos, who was among the sheepbreeders[a] of Tekoa, which
he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the
days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel, two years before the
earthquake.

[2]And he said:
"The LORD roars from Zion,
And utters His voice from Jerusalem;
The pastures of the shepherds mourn,
And the top of Carmel withers."

**JUDGMENT ON THE NATIONS**

[3]Thus says the LORD:

"For three transgressions of Damascus,
and for four,
I will not turn away its *punishment*,
Because they have threshed Gilead with
implements of iron.

[4] But I will send a fire into the house of
Hazael,
Which shall devour the palaces of
BenHadad.
[5] I will also break the *gate* bar of
Damascus,
And cut off the inhabitant from the
Valley of Aven,
And the one who holds the scepter from
Beth Eden.
The people of Syria shall go captive to
Kir,"
Says the LORD.
[6]Thus says the LORD:
"For three transgressions of Gaza, and for

four,
I will not turn away its *punishment*,
Because they took captive the whole
captivity
To deliver *them* up to Edom.
7 But I will send a fire upon the wall of
Gaza,
Which shall devour its palaces.
8 I will cut off the inhabitant from
Ashdod,
And the one who holds the scepter from
Ashkelon;
I will turn My hand against Ekron,
And the remnant of the Philistines shall perish,”
Says the Lord GOD.
9 Thus says the LORD:
“For three transgressions of Tyre, and for
four,
I will not turn away its *punishment*,
Because they delivered up the whole
captivity to Edom,
And did not remember the covenant of brotherhood.
10 But I will send a fire upon the wall of
Tyre,
Which shall devour its palaces.”
11 Thus says the LORD:
“For three transgressions of Edom, and
for four,
I will not turn away its *punishment*,
Because he pursued his brother with the
sword,
And cast off all pity;
His anger tore perpetually,
And he kept his wrath forever.
12 But I will send a fire upon Teman,

Which shall devour the palaces of
Bozrah.”
13 Thus says the LORD:
“For three transgressions of the people of
Ammon, and for four,
I will not turn away its *punishment*,
Because they ripped open the women
with child in Gilead,
That they might enlarge their territory.
14 But I will kindle a fire in the wall of
Rabbah,
And it shall devour its palaces,
Amid shouting in the day of battle,
And a tempest in the day of the
whirlwind.
15 Their king shall go into captivity,
He and his princes together,”
Says the LORD.

**2** Thus says the LORD:
“For three transgressions of Moab, and
for four,
I will not turn away its *punishment*,
Because he burned the bones of the king
of Edom to lime.

2 But I will send a fire upon Moab,
And it shall devour the palaces of
Kerioth;
Moab shall die with tumult,
With shouting *and* trumpet sound.
3 And I will cut off the judge from its
midst,
And slay all its princes with him,”
Says the LORD.

**JUDGMENT ON JUDAH**

4 Thus says the LORD:

“For three transgressions of Judah, and
for four,
I will not turn away its *punishment*,
Because they have despised the law of
the LORD,
And have not kept His commandments.
Their lies lead them astray, *Lies* which their fathers followed.

5 But I will send a fire upon Judah,
And it shall devour the palaces of
Jerusalem.”

**JUDGMENT ON ISRAEL**

6 Thus says the LORD:

“For three transgressions of Israel, and for

four,
I will not turn away its *punishment*,
Because they sell the righteous for
silver,
And the poor for a pair of sandals.

7 They pant after[a] the dust of the earth
*which is* on the head of the poor,
And pervert the way of the humble.
A man and his father go in to the *same*
girl,
To defile My holy name.
8 They lie down by every altar on clothes
taken in pledge,
And drink the wine of the condemned *in*
the house of their god.
9 "Yet *it was* I *who* destroyed the Amorite
before them,
Whose height *was* like the height of the
cedars,
And he *was as* strong as the oaks;
Yet I destroyed his fruit above
And his roots beneath.
10 Also *it was* I *who* brought you up from
the land of Egypt,
And led you forty years through the
wilderness,
To possess the land of the Amorite.
11 I raised up some of your sons as
prophets,
And some of your young men as
Nazirites.
*Is it* not so, O you children of Israel?"
Says the LORD.
12 "But you gave the Nazirites wine to drink,

And commanded the prophets saying,
'Do not prophesy!'
13 "Behold, I am weighed down by you,
As a cart full of sheaves is weighed
down.
14 Therefore flight shall perish from the
swift,
The strong shall not strengthen his
power,
Nor shall the mighty deliver himself;
15 He shall not stand who handles the bow,
The swift of foot shall not escape,
Nor shall he who rides a horse deliver
himself.
16 The most courageous men of might
Shall flee naked in that day,"
Says the LORD.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Justice for All** *(2:6)* Amos pronounced judgment on the surrounding nations, and even on Judah, Israel's brothers and sisters to the south. Perhaps the people in Israel enjoyed hearing that these nations faced God's judgment-until Amos added Israel to his list. They, too, had sinned greatly against God, and they would punished. There is no getting around it: God punishes sin. Just as God provided the be punished. There is no getting around it: God punishes sin. Just as God provided the opportunity for repentance and restoration to ancient Israel, He also offers it today through His Son, Jesus Christ. **Topic: Accountability**

## AUTHORITY OF THE PROPHET'S MESSAGE

**3** Hear this word that the LORD has spoken against you, O children of Israel,
against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt,
saying:

2 "You only have I known of all the families
of the earth;
Therefore I will punish you for all your
iniquities."
3 Can two walk together, unless they are
agreed?
4 Will a lion roar in the forest, when he
has no prey?
Will a young lion cry out of his den, if
he has caught nothing?
5 Will a bird fall into a snare on the earth,
where there is no trap for it?
Will a snare spring up from the earth, if
it has caught nothing at all?
6 If a trumpet is blown in a city, will not
the people be afraid?
If there is calamity in a city, will not the
LORD have done *it?*
7 Surely the Lord GOD does nothing,
Unless He reveals His secret to His servants
the prophets.
8 A lion has roared!
Who will not fear?
The Lord GOD has spoken!
Who can but prophesy?

## PUNISHMENT OF ISRAEL'S SINS

9 "Proclaim in the palaces at Ashdod,[a]
And in the palaces in the land of Egypt,

and say:
‘Assemble on the mountains of Samaria;
See great tumults in her midst,
And the oppressed within her.
10 For they do not know to do right,’
Says the LORD,
‘Who store up violence and robbery in
their palaces.’ ”
11 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD:

“An adversary *shall be* all around the
land;
He shall sap your strength from you,
And your palaces shall be plundered.”

12 Thus says the LORD:
“As a shepherd takes from the mouth of a
lion
Two legs or a piece of an ear,
So shall the children of Israel be taken
out
Who dwell in Samaria-
In the corner of a bed and on the edge[a]
of a couch!
13 Hear and testify against the house of
Jacob,”
Says the Lord GOD, the God of hosts,
14 “That in the day I punish Israel for their
transgressions,
I will also visit *destruction* on the altars
of Bethel;
And the horns of the altar shall be cut
off
And fall to the ground.
15 I will destroy the winter house along

with the summer house;
The houses of ivory shall perish,
And the great houses shall have an
end,"
Says the LORD.

**KEY PASSAGE**

# WALKING IN AGREEMENT

## (3:3)

Amos had received a prophecy from God; this meant that the predicted event would soon take place. Amos used some questions regarding interrelated events to prove that point. For example, Amos wrote, "Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?" When two people are walking together, we figure they have agreed about some things, like where and when to meet and where to go. The verse describes a general truth about relationships between people.

During a dating relationship, a couple should evaluate their agreements in various areas of life. They shouldn't "walk together" into a marriage covenant if they are not agreed in the most important issues of life-beliefs, values, and lifestyle. Paul gave the same advice when he said, "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness?" (2 Cor. 6:14).

As Christians date, they should seek the company of other

Christians. Then they should agree on the practical implications of their Christian faith. Such agreement will help them to walk through many years together.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about premarital relationships The Dating Game. See also the personality profile of Ruth & Boaz - Sexual Integrity In Premarital Relationships.

**4** Hear this word, you cows of Bashan, who *are* on the mountain of Samaria,
Who oppress the poor, Who crush the needy, Who say to your husbands,[a]
"Bring *wine,* let us drink!"

2 The Lord GOD has sworn by His
holiness:
"Behold, the days shall come upon you
When He will take you away with
fishhooks,
And your posterity with fishhooks.
3 You will go out *through* broken *walls,*
Each one straight ahead of her,
And you will be cast into Harmon,"
Says the LORD.
4 "Come to Bethel and transgress,
At Gilgal multiply transgression;
Bring your sacrifices every morning,
Your tithes every three days.[a]
5 Offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving with
leaven,
Proclaim *and* announce the freewill
offerings;
For this you love,
*You* children of Israel!"
Says the Lord GOD.

## ISRAEL DID NOT ACCEPT CORRECTION

6 "Also I gave you cleanness of teeth in all
your cities.
And lack of bread in all your places;
Yet you have not returned to Me,"
Says the LORD.
7 "I also withheld rain from you,
When *there were* still three months to
the harvest.

I made it rain on one city,
I withheld rain from another city.
One part was rained upon,
And where it did not rain the part
withered.
8 So two *or* three cities wandered to
another city to drink water,
But they were not satisfied;
Yet you have not returned to Me,”
Says the LORD.
9 “I blasted you with blight and mildew.
When your gardens increased,
Your vineyards,
Your fig trees,
And your olive trees,
The locust devoured *them;*
Yet you have not returned to Me,”
Says the LORD.
10 “I sent among you a plague after the
manner of Egypt;
Your young men I killed with a sword,
Along with your captive horses;
I made the stench of your camps come
up into your nostrils;
Yet you have not returned to Me,”
Says the LORD.
11 “I overthrew *some* of you,
As God overthrew Sodom and
Gomorrah,
And you were like a firebrand plucked
from the burning;
Yet you have not returned to Me,”
Says the LORD.
12 “Therefore thus will I do to you, O Israel;
Because I will do this to you,

Prepare to meet your God, O Israel!”

13 For behold, He who forms mountains, And creates the wind, Who
declares to man what his[a] thought *is*, And makes the morning darkness,
Who treads the high places of the earth-The LORD God of hosts *is* His
name.

## A LAMENT FOR ISRAEL

**5** Hear this word which I take up against you, a lamentation, O house of Israel:

2 The virgin of Israel has fallen;
She will rise no more.
She lies forsaken on her land;
*There is* no one to raise her up.
3 For thus says the Lord GOD:

"The city that goes out by a thousand
Shall have a hundred left,
And that which goes out by a hundred
Shall have ten left to the house of
Israel."

## A CALL TO REPENTANCE

4 For thus says the LORD to the house of Israel:

"Seek Me and live;

5 But do not seek Bethel,
Nor enter Gilgal,
Nor pass over to Beersheba;
For Gilgal shall surely go into captivity,
And Bethel shall come to nothing.
6 Seek the LORD and live,
Lest He break out like fire *in* the house
of Joseph,
And devour *it,*
With no one to quench *it* in Bethel-
7 You who turn justice to wormwood,
And lay righteousness to rest in the
earth!"
8 He made the Pleiades and Orion;

He turns the shadow of death into
morning
And makes the day dark as night;
He calls for the waters of the sea
And pours them out on the face of the
earth;
The LORD *is* His name.
9 He rains ruin upon the strong,
So that fury comes upon the fortress.
10 They hate the one who rebukes in the
gate,
And they abhor the one who speaks
uprightly.
11 Therefore, because you tread down the
poor
And take grain taxes from him,
Though you have built houses of hewn
stone,
Yet you shall not dwell in them;
You have planted pleasant vineyards,
But you shall not drink wine from them.
12 For I know your manifold transgressions
And your mighty sins:
Afflicting the just *and* taking bribes;
Diverting the poor *from justice* at the
gate.
13 Therefore the prudent keep silent at that
time,
For it *is* an evil time.
14 Seek good and not evil,
That you may live;
So the LORD God of hosts will be with
you,

As you have spoken.

15 Hate evil, love good;
Establish justice in the gate.
It may be that the LORD God of hosts
Will be gracious to the remnant of
Joseph.

## THE DAY OF THE LORD

16 Therefore the LORD God of hosts, the Lord, says this:

"*There shall be* wailing in all streets,
And they shall say in all the highways, '
Alas! Alas!'
They shall call the farmer to mourning,
And skillful lamenters to wailing.

17 In all vineyards *there shall be* wailing,
For I will pass through you,"
Says the LORD.
18 Woe to you who desire the day of the
LORD!
For what good *is* the day of the LORD to
you?
It *will be* darkness, and not light.
19 It *will be* as though a man fled from a
lion,
And a bear met him!
Or *as though* he went into the house,
Leaned his hand on the wall,
And a serpent bit him!
20 *Is* not the day of the LORD darkness, and
not light?
*Is it not* very dark, with no brightness in
it?
21 "I hate, I despise your feast days,
And I do not savor

your sacred
assemblies.

> “But let justice run down like water, and righteousness like a mighty stream.”
> AMOS 5:24

22 Though you offer
Me burnt
offerings and
your grain
offerings,
I will not accept *them,*
Nor will I regard your fattened peace
offerings.
23 Take away from Me the noise of your
songs,
For I will not hear the melody of your
stringed instruments.
24 But let justice run down like water,
And righteousness like a mighty stream.
25 “Did you offer Me sacrifices and offerings
In the wilderness forty years, O house of
Israel?
26 You also carried Sikkuth[a] your king[b]
And Chiun,[c] your idols,
The star of your gods,
Which you made for yourselves.
27 Therefore I will send you into captivity
beyond Damascus,”
Says the LORD, whose name *is* the God
of hosts.

## SOUL NOTE

**Bold Love** *(5:14, 15)* God didn't ignore the Israelites' evil ways or deny what they were doing. Instead, He confronted them through prophets who spoke truth, and with trials designed to encourage the people to return to Him (4:6, 9-11). In all of this, God was showing His love for His own. At times, love must tough, and willing to speak the truth. People dealing with sin need the light of God's be bold, tough, and willing to speak the truth. People dealing with sin need the light of God's truth. Then, through repentance, they can bask in the warmth of His forgiving love. **Topic: Love**

## WARNINGS TO ZION AND SAMARIA

**6** Woe to you *who are* at ease in Zion, And trust in Mount Samaria, Notable persons in the chief nation, To whom the house of Israel comes!

2 Go over to Calneh and see;
And from there go to Hamath the great;
Then go down to Gath of the Philistines.
*Are you* better than these kingdoms?
Or is their territory greater than your territory?

3 *Woe to* you who put far off the day of
doom,
Who cause the seat of violence to come
near;

4 Who lie on beds of ivory,
Stretch out on your couches,
Eat lambs from the flock
And calves from the midst of the stall;

5 Who sing idly to the sound of stringed
instruments,
*And* invent for yourselves musical
instruments like David;

6 Who drink wine from bowls,
And anoint
yourselves with
the best
ointments,
But are not grieved
for the affliction
of Joseph.

7 Therefore they
shall now go
captive as the
first of the captives,
And those who recline at banquets shall

be removed.
8 The Lord GOD has sworn by Himself,
The LORD God of hosts says:
"I abhor the pride of Jacob,
And hate his palaces;
Therefore I will deliver up *the* city
And all that is in it."
9 Then it shall come to pass, that if ten men remain in one house, they shall die. 10 And when a relative *of the dead,* with one who will burn *the bodies,* picks up the bodies[a] to take them out of the house, he will say to one inside the house, "*Are there* any more with you?"

Then someone will say, "None."

And he will say, "Hold your tongue! For we dare not mention the name of the LORD."

11 For behold, the LORD gives a
command:
He will break the great house into bits,
And the little house into pieces.
12 Do horses run on rocks?
Does *one* plow *there* with oxen?
Yet you have turned justice into gall,
And the fruit of righteousness into
wormwood,
13 You who rejoice over Lo Debar,[a]
Who say, "Have we not taken Karnaim[b]
for ourselves
By our own strength?"
14 "But, behold, I will raise up a nation
against you,
O house of Israel,"
Says the LORD God of hosts;
"And they will afflict you from the entrance of Hamath
To the Valley of the Arabah."

**VISION OF THE LOCUSTS**

**7** Thus the Lord GOD showed me: Behold, He formed locust swarms at the
beginning of the late crop; indeed *it was* the late crop after the king's
mowings. 2And so it was, when they had finished eating the grass of the land,
that I said:

"O Lord GOD, forgive, I pray!
Oh, that Jacob may stand,
For he *is* small!"

3*So* the LORD relented concerning this.
"It shall not be," said the LORD.

**VISION OF THE FIRE**

4Thus the Lord GOD showed me: Behold, the Lord GOD called for
conflict by fire, and it consumed the great deep and devoured the territory.
5Then I said:

"O Lord GOD, cease, I pray!
Oh, that Jacob may stand,
For he *is* small!"

6*So* the LORD relented concerning this.
"This also shall not be," said the Lord GOD.

**VISION OF THE PLUMB LINE**

7Thus He showed me: Behold, the Lord stood on a wall *made* with a plumb
line, with a plumb line in His hand. 8And the LORD said to me, "Amos, what
do you see?"

And I said, "A plumb line."
Then the Lord said:

"Behold, I am setting a plumb line

In the midst of My people Israel;
I will not pass by them anymore.

9 The high places of Isaac shall be
desolate,
And the sanctuaries of Israel shall be
laid waste.
I will rise with the sword against the
house of Jeroboam.”

**AMAZIAH’S COMPLAINT**

10 Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, “Amos has conspired against you in the midst of the house of Israel. The land is not able to bear all his words. 11 For thus Amos has said:

‘ Jeroboam shall die by the sword,
And Israel shall surely be led away
captive
From their own land.’ ”

12 Then Amaziah said to Amos:

“Go, you seer!
Flee to the land of Judah.
There eat bread,
And there prophesy.

13 But never again prophesy at Bethel,
For it *is* the king’s sanctuary,
And it *is* the royal residence.”
14 Then Amos answered, and said to Amaziah:

“I *was* no prophet,
Nor *was* I a son of a prophet,
But I *was* a sheepbreeder[a]
And a tender of sycamore fruit.

15 Then the LORD took me as I followed the flock,
And the LORD said to me,
‘Go, prophesy to My people Israel.’
16 Now therefore, hear the word of the LORD:
You say, ‘Do not prophesy against Israel,
And do not spout against the house of Isaac.’
17 “Therefore thus says the LORD:

‘Your wife shall be a harlot in the city;
Your sons and daughters shall fall by the sword;
Your land shall be divided by *survey* line;
You shall die in a defiled land;
And Israel shall surely be led away captive
From his own land.’ ”

**VISION OF THE SUMMER FRUIT**

**8** Thus the Lord GOD showed me: Behold, a basket of summer fruit. [2]And He said, “Amos, what do you see?”

So I said, “A basket of summer fruit.”
Then the LORD said to me:

“The end has come upon My people
Israel;
I will not pass by them anymore.

[3]And the songs of the temple
Shall be wailing in that day,”
Says the Lord GOD-“
Many dead bodies everywhere,
They shall be thrown out in silence.”
[4] Hear this, you who swallow up[a] the
needy,
And make the poor of the land fail,
[5]Saying:

“When will the New Moon be past,
That we may sell grain?
And the Sabbath,
That we may trade wheat?
Making the ephah small and the shekel
large,
Falsifying the scales by deceit,

[6] That we may buy the poor for silver,
And the needy for a pair of sandals-
Even sell the bad wheat?”
[7] The LORD has sworn by the pride of
Jacob:
“Surely I will never forget any of their

works.
8 Shall the land not tremble for this,
And everyone mourn who dwells in it?
All of it shall swell like the River,[a]
Heave and subside
Like the River of Egypt.
9 “And it shall come to pass in that day,”
says the Lord GOD,
“That I will make the sun go down at
noon,
And I will darken the earth in broad
daylight;
10 I will turn your feasts into
mourning,
And all your songs into lamentation;
I will bring sackcloth on every waist,
And baldness on every head;
I will make it like mourning for an only
*son*,
And its end like a bitter day.
11 “Behold, the days are coming,” says the
Lord GOD,
“That I will send a famine on the land,
Not a famine of bread,
Nor a thirst for water,
But of hearing the words of the LORD.
12 They shall wander from sea to sea,
And from north to east;
They shall run to and fro, seeking the
word of the LORD,
But shall not find *it.*
13 “In that day the fair virgins
And strong young men
Shall faint from thirst.
14 Those who swear by the sin[a] of Samaria,

Who say,
‘As your god lives, O Dan!’
And, ‘As the way of Beersheba lives!’
They shall fall and never rise again.”

## THE DESTRUCTION OF ISRAEL

**9** I saw the Lord standing by the altar, and He said:

"Strike the doorposts, that the thresholds
may shake,
And break them on the heads of them
all.
I will slay the last of them with the
sword.
He who flees from them shall not get
away,
And he who escapes from them shall not
be delivered.

2 "Though they dig into hell,[a]
From there My hand shall take them;
Though they climb up to heaven,
From there I will bring them down;
3 And though they hide themselves on top
of Carmel,
From there I will search and take them;
Though they hide from My sight at the
bottom of the sea,
From there I will command the serpent,
and it shall bite them;
4 Though they go into captivity before
their enemies,
From there I will command the sword,
And it shall slay them.
I will set My eyes on them for harm and
not for good."
5 The Lord GOD of hosts,
He who touches the earth and it melts,
And all who dwell there mourn;

All of it shall swell like the River,[a]
And subside like the River of Egypt.
6 He who builds His layers in the sky,
And has founded His strata in the earth;
Who calls for the waters of the sea,
And pours them out on the face of the
earth-
The LORD *is* His name.
7 "*Are* you not like the people of Ethiopia
to Me,
O children of Israel?" says the LORD.
"Did I not bring up Israel from the land of Egypt,
The Philistines from Caphtor,
And the Syrians from Kir?
8 "Behold, the eyes of the Lord GOD *are* on
the sinful kingdom,
And I will destroy it from the face of the
earth;
Yet I will not utterly destroy the house of
Jacob,"
Says the LORD.
9 "For surely I will command,
And will sift the house of Israel among
all nations,
As *grain* is sifted in a sieve;
Yet not the smallest grain shall fall to the
ground.
10 All the sinners of My people shall die by
the sword,
Who say, 'The calamity shall not
overtake nor confront us.'

## ISRAEL WILL BE RESTORED

11 "On that day I will raise up
The tabernacle[a] of David, which has

fallen down,
And repair its damages;
I will raise up its ruins,
And rebuild it as in the days of old;
12 That they may possess the remnant of
Edom,[a]
And all the Gentiles who are called by
My name,"
Says the LORD who does this thing.
13 "Behold, the days are coming," says the
LORD,
"When the plowman shall overtake the
reaper,
And the treader of grapes him who sows seed;
The mountains shall drip with sweet wine, And all the hills shall flow
*with it.*
14 I will bring back the captives of My
people Israel;
They shall build the waste cities and
inhabit *them;*
They shall plant vineyards and drink wine from them;
They shall also make gardens and eat fruit from them.
15 I will plant them in their land,
And no longer shall they be pulled up
From the land I have given them,"
Says the LORD your God. They shall plant vineyards and drink wine
from them;
They shall also make gardens and eat fruit from them.
15 I will plant them in their land,
And no longer shall they be pulled up
From the land I have given them,"
Says the LORD your God.

# Obadiah



## Chapter in Obadiah

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# Obadiah

Nothing hurts more than betrayal. It cuts painfully deep and leaves a scar. And with the pain and anger usually comes an obsession for revenge.

Obadiah, the shortest book in the Old Testament, is rooted in Edom's betrayal of Israel. To really understand this prophecy, we first need to know a bit of history. Both nations, Edom and Israel, descended from Isaac and Rebekah: Edom from Esau and Israel from Jacob (Gen. 25-27). These fraternal twins had been involved in a heated rivalry literally from birth-emerging from the womb, Jacob was grasping Esau's heel (Gen. 25:24-26). Jacob continued his grasping, scheming ways until he eventually wrested the family birthright and blessing from his older brother. This betrayal resulted in Esau settling in Edom and Jacob in nearby Canaan.

What began as an ugly case of sibling rivalry accelerated into a fierce feud between two nations. When the Babylonians sacked Jerusalem in 586 B.C., the Edomites not only stood by, but they cheered the enemy! Worse, they plundered Jerusalem further, killing some Jews and turning others over to their Babylonian captors. This, combined with their smugness and godless reliance on their fortress city of Sela (Petra), was a great offense to God. He used Obadiah to warn Edom that judgment was coming, that they would be wiped off the earth, and that Israel would be restored.

Obadiah's prophecy reminds us that there can be long-term societal aftereffects from our personal and corporate actions. Unbridled pride can cause long-term consequences. Forgiveness and reconciliation become more difficult with each succeeding generation. Since hurtful actions can live on for generations, the sooner we reconcile our differences, the better.

## THE COMING JUDGMENT ON EDOM

1 The vision of Obadiah.

Thus says the Lord GOD concerning Edom
(We have heard a report from the LORD,
And a messenger has been sent among the nations, *saying*,
"Arise, and let us rise up against her for battle"):
2 "Behold, I will make you small among the nations;
You shall be greatly despised.
3 The pride of your heart has deceived you,
*You* who dwell in the clefts of the rock,
Whose habitation is high;
*You* who say in your heart, 'Who will bring me down to the ground?'
4 Though you ascend *as* high as the eagle,
And though you set your nest among the stars,
From there I will bring you down," says the LORD.
5 "If thieves had come to you,
If robbers by night-
Oh, how you will be cut off!-
Would they not have stolen till they had enough?
If grape-gatherers had come to you,
Would they not have left *some* gleanings?
6 "Oh, how Esau shall be searched out!
*How* his hidden treasures shall be sought after!
7 All the men in your confederacy
Shall force you to the border;
The men at peace with you
Shall deceive you *and* prevail against you.
Th*ose who eat* your bread shall lay a trap[a] for you.
No one is aware of it.
8 "Will I not in that day," says the LORD,
"Even destroy the wise *men* from Edom,
And understanding from the mountains of Esau?
9 Then your mighty men, O Teman, shall be dismayed,

To the end that everyone from the mountains of Esau
May be cut off by slaughter.

## EDOM MISTREATED HIS BROTHER

10 “For violence against your brother Jacob,
Shame shall cover you,
And you shall be cut off forever.
11 In the day that you stood on the other side-
In the day that strangers carried captive his forces,
When foreigners entered his gates
And cast lots for Jerusalem-
Even you *were* as one of them.
12 “But you should not have gazed on the day of your brother
In the day of his captivity;[a]
Nor should you have rejoiced over the children of Judah
In the day of their destruction;
Nor should you have spoken proudly
In the day of distress.
13 You should not have entered the gate of My people
In the day of their calamity.
Indeed, you should not have gazed on their affliction
In the day of their calamity,
Nor laid *hands* on their substance
In the day of their calamity.
14 You should not have stood at the crossroads
To cut off those among them who escaped;
Nor should you have delivered up those among them who remained
In the day of distress.
15 “For the day of the LORD upon all the nations *is* near;
As you have done, it shall be done to you;
Your reprisal shall return upon your own head.
16 For as you drank on My holy mountain,
*So* shall all the nations drink continually;
Yes, they shall drink, and swallow,
And they shall be as though they had never been.

## ISRAEL'S FINAL TRIUMPH

17 "But on Mount Zion there shall be deliverance,
And there shall be holiness;
The house of Jacob shall possess their possessions.
18 The house of Jacob shall be a fire, And the house of Joseph a flame;
But the house of Esau *shall be* stubble;
They shall kindle them and devour them,
And no survivor shall *remain* of the house of Esau,"
For the LORD has spoken.
19 The South[a] shall possess the mountains of Esau,
And the Lowland shall possess Philistia.
They shall possess the fields of Ephraim And the fields of Samaria.
Benjamin *shall possess* Gilead.
20 And the captives of this host of the children of Israel
*Shall possess the land* of the Canaanites As far as Zarephath.
The captives of Jerusalem who are in Sepharad
Shall possess the cities of the South.[a]
21 Then saviors[a] shall come to Mount Zion
To judge the mountains of Esau,
And the kingdom shall be the LORD's.

### SOUL NOTE

**Gloating** *(1-3)* The Edomites were Israel's relatives, descendants of Jacob's brother, Esau. When the Israelites faced invasion, however, Edom refused to come to their aid, even gloating over Israel's troubles behind their protective mountain peaks. The prophet Obadiah condemned them for their pride and complete indifference to the Israelites' predicament. Their mountain fortress couldn't protect them from God, however. He would judge them for their pride. "As you have done, it shall be done to you," He said (15). Indeed, "pride goes

before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall” (Prov. 16:18).
**Topic: Pride**

# Jonah



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# Jonah

Visit a news site on the Internet or pick up a newspaper, and it won't take long to find a story about a nation with evil leaders that is acting cruelly against another nation, through war, invasions, or bomb threats. People hope that some kind of punishment awaits those who perpetrate evil on others. Jonah felt that way against Assyria, a powerful and cruel empire.

God longed to show mercy to the pagan Assyrians, however, and He called Jonah to preach a message of repentance in the capital city of Nineveh (ch. 1). But Jonah didn't want to go to these enemies of Israel. Jonah knew that if he obeyed God, these hated Gentiles might heed his warnings, turn to God, and find blessing! Since the self-righteous Jonah wanted the Assyrians to experience God's judgment, he ran away from his divine assignment.

Through the great fish (1:17-2:10), God eventually got Jonah to Nineveh. Confirming the prophet's worst fears, the Assyrians repented (ch. 3). Their acceptance of the grace of God is only part of the story, however. The balance of Jonah's book has to do with his personal experience in the school of God's grace (ch. 4). Using a plant, the Lord surfaced Jonah's distorted values and alarming lack of love.

As we read Jonah, we realize that our Creator is a global God who longs to pour out His love on both sinful nations and hard-hearted believers. He is "not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9). Rejoice! God's grace is for everyone!

## JONAH'S DISOBEDIENCE

**1** Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying,
2 "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their
wickedness has come up before Me." 3 But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish
from the presence of the LORD. He went down to Joppa, and found a ship
going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare, and went down into it, to go with them
to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.

## THE STORM AT SEA

4 But the LORD sent out a great wind on the sea, and there was a mighty
tempest on the sea, so that the ship was about to be broken up.

5 Then the mariners were afraid; and every man cried out to his god, and
threw the cargo that *was* in the ship into the sea, to lighten the load.[a] But
Jonah had gone down into the lowest parts of the ship, had lain down, and
was load. fast asleep.

6 So the captain came to him, and said to him, "What do you mean, sleeper?
Arise, call on your God; perhaps your God will consider us, so that we may
not perish."

7 And they said to one another, "Come, let us cast lots, that we may know
for whose cause this trouble *has come* upon us." So they cast lots, and the lot
fell on Jonah. 8 Then they said to him, "Please tell us! For whose cause *is* this
trouble upon us? What is your occupation? And where do you come from?
What is your country? And of what people are you?"

9 So he said to them, "I *am* a Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of
heaven, who made the sea and the dry *land."*

## JONAH THROWN INTO THE SEA

10 Then the men were exceedingly afraid, and said to him, "Why have you
done this?" For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the LORD,
because he had told them. 11 Then they said to him, "What shall we do to you
that the sea may be calm for us?"-for the sea was growing more tempestuous.

[12]And he said to them, “Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will become calm for you. For I know that this great tempest *is* because of me.”

[13]Nevertheless the men rowed hard to return to land, but they could not, for the sea continued to grow more tempestuous against them. [14]Therefore they cried out to the LORD and said, “We pray, O LORD, please do not let us perish for this man’s life, and do not charge us with innocent blood; for You, O LORD, have done as it pleased You.” [15]So they picked up Jonah and threw him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. [16]Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice to the LORD and took vows.

**JONAH’S PRAYER AND DELIVERANCE**

[17]Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# JONAH: RUNNING FROM GOD

## (JONAH 1:12)

Difficult experiences come in many degrees. A trauma would be considered a situation far beyond control, one that shakes a person to the core. A trauma can lead to mental disorders or to suicide. Recovery is often slow; flashbacks are common. As difficult as traumatic experiences are, however, they can also lead a person to

God.

Jonah had been called to go east to Nineveh; instead, he jumped on a ship and went west. Although he was acting in direct disobedience to God, he fell sound asleep on the ship. His conscience may not have bothered him, but God soon did. God knew that His reluctant prophet would need a traumatic experience or two to turn him around-literally. When a fierce storm tossed the ship and threatened to kill all on board, Jonah knew the reason for the storm and the solution: "Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will become calm for you. For I know that this great tempest is because of me" (1:12), he told the crew . . . and reluctantly they complied.

Immediately, a great fish swallowed Jonah. God spared his life because He still had work for Jonah to do. Trauma upon trauma eventually caused Jonah to pray: "I cried out to the LORD because of my affliction, and He answered me" (Jon. 2:2). And this conversation with God led Jonah to a promise to obey, "I will pay what I have vowed" (Jon. 2:9). Then God rescued Jonah and gave him the opportunity to fulfill his promise.

Traumatic experiences can drive people away from God or to Him. In both cases, a person may ask, "Why would God do this to me?" Those who turn *from* God ask the question in anger and accusation. Those who turn *toward* God ask the question in order to learn His lesson for their lives. When traumatic experiences come, turn to God, not away. As Jonah learned: "When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the LORD; and my prayer went up to You, into Your holy temple" (Jon. 2:7).

**To Learn More**: Turn to the article about trauma Healing The Wounds That Bind You. See also the key passage note at Lamentations 1:10-21.

**2** Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the fish's belly. [2]And he said:

"I cried out to the LORD because of my
affliction,
And He answered me.
"Out of the belly of Sheol I cried, *And* You heard my voice.
[3] For You cast me into the deep,
Into the heart of the seas,
And the floods surrounded me;
All Your billows and Your waves passed
over me.
[4] Then I said, 'I have been cast out of
Your sight;
Yet I will look again toward Your holy
temple.'
[5] The waters surrounded me, *even* to my
soul;
The deep closed around me;
Weeds were wrapped around my head.
[6] I went down to the moorings of the
mountains;
The earth with its bars *closed* behind me
forever;
Yet You have brought up my life from
the pit,
O LORD, my God.
[7] "When my soul fainted within me,
I remembered the LORD;
And my prayer went *up* to You,
Into Your holy temple.
[8] "Those who regard worthless idols
Forsake their own Mercy.
[9] But I will sacrifice to You
With the voice of thanksgiving;
I will pay what I have vowed.

Salvation *is* of the LORD."
10 So the LORD spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry *land.*

**SOUL NOTE**

**Undeserving** *(2:1-7)* Jonah didn't deserve God's forgiveness. God had said, "Go," and Jonah had run away (1:2, 3). His conscience hadn't even seemed to bother him, for during his flight from God he slept soundly (1:5). During the storm, the pagan sailors had to remind Jonah to pray (1:6). Jonah had persistently disobeyed God. Not until Jonah sank to the gloomy depths and faced certain death did he cry out to God. Mercifully and miraculously, God answered. The story of Jonah teaches that God saves the undeserving-whether a pagan nation or a wayward individual. **Topic: Salvation**

## JONAH PREACHES AT NINEVEH

**3** Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, 2"Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach to it the message that I tell you." 3So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three-day journey[a] in extent. 4And Jonah began to enter the city on the first day's walk. Then he cried out and said, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"

## THE PEOPLE OF NINEVEH BELIEVE

5So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them. 6Then word came to the king of Nineveh; and he arose from his throne and laid aside his robe, covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes. 7And he caused it to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying,

> Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; do not let them eat, or drink water. 8But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily to God; yes, let every one turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. 9Who can tell if God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish?

10Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it.

### SOUL NOTE

Traumatic Change (3:1-3) Trauma changes people. Jonah had nearly died in the ocean-he couldn't help but be changed. While in the belly of a huge fish, Jonah recognized the hand of God in his circumstances. And when all hope was lost, God was there (2:7). When Jonah found himself alive on a beach, he praised God who had

given him another chance. This time when God called, Jonah obeyed. Trauma changes us-whether the change is good or bad often depends on how we respond. God uses our troubles as tools to shape our souls.
**Topic: Trauma**

## JONAH'S ANGER AND GOD'S KINDNESS

**4** But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became angry. 2So he prayed
to the LORD, and said, "Ah, LORD, was not this what said when I was still
in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You
are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in
lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm. 3Therefore now, O LORD,
please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live!"

4Then the LORD said, "Is it right for you to be angry?"

5So Jonah went out of the city and sat on the east side of the city. There he
made himself a shelter and sat under it in the shade, till he might see what
would become of the city. 6And the LORD God prepared a plant[a] and made it
come up over Jonah, that it might be shade for his head to deliver him from
his misery. So Jonah was very grateful for the plant. 7But as morning dawned
the next day God prepared a worm, and it so damaged the plant that it
withered. 8And it happened, when the sun arose, that God prepared a
vehement east wind; and the sun beat on Jonah's head, so that he grew faint.
Then he wished death for himself, and said, "It is better for me to die than to
live."

9Then God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?"

And he said, "It is right for me to be angry, even to death!"

10But the LORD said, "You have had pity on the plant for which you have
not labored, nor made it grow, which came up in a night and perished in a
night. 11And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more
than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between
their right hand and their left-and much livestock?"

**SOUL NOTE**

Pouting Prophet (4:9) When Jonah learned that God would spare the Ninevites, he became angry. Perhaps he was concerned that his reputation was at stake if his prediction of the city's destruction didn't come true. Perhaps he wanted a front-row seat for Nineveh's destruction-after all, Assyria was Israel's enemy. Instead of rejoicing in the repentance of wicked people, Jonah became angry. His anger at Nineveh's sinfulness was correct; his selfish anger at God's mercy on them was wrong. When we feel angry, we must honestly consider why we are angry. Anger for God's causes can be helpful; selfish anger is not. **Topic: Anger**

# Micah



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# Micah

Children don't like getting caught in lies. They may say something very sweetly, but as the evidence mounts against them, they suddenly realize that they have no excuses. No matter what they say in their defense, the evidence reveals the truth.

That's the story of Micah. Israel thought they believed in God, but the evidence was against them. Micah pointed out God's charges against the people-greed, abuse of power, injustice, persecuting the prophets, and, worst of all, forsaking God Himself!

Micah was a contemporary of Isaiah, and he prophesied against Samaria and Jerusalem, the respective capitals of Israel's northern and southern kingdoms. Through him, God denounced both cities for abusing their positions of power and privilege. Then, in a surprise announcement, he predicted that the Messiah would come from neither city but would be born in the little village of Bethlehem (5:2).

In Micah's day, the population was awash in material prosperity but utterly devoid of integrity. Even the judges and priests were selling their services to the highest bidders. Shockingly, the Jews believed that God would continue to bless them. Through Micah, God put His people on trial. As the evidence mounted, it became clear that they had no excuses. They were guilty.

Micah makes clear that God's requirement for His people is "to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God" (6:8). Only this kind of lifestyle pays honor to the righteous judge of all the earth.

**SOUL CONCERN IN**

## MICAH

ATTITUDES (6:8)

**1** The word of the LORD that came to Micah of Moresheth in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, *and* Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.

## THE COMING JUDGMENT ON ISRAEL

2 Hear, all you peoples!
Listen, O earth, and all that is in it!
Let the Lord GOD be a witness against you,
The Lord from His holy temple.
3 For behold, the LORD is coming out of His place;
He will come down
And tread on the high places of the earth.
4 The mountains will melt under Him,
And the valleys will split
Like wax before the fire,
Like waters poured down a steep place.
5 All this is for the transgression of Jacob
And for the sins of the house of Israel.
What *is* the transgression of Jacob?
*Is it* not Samaria?
And what *are* the high places of Judah?
*Are they* not Jerusalem?
6 "Therefore I will make Samaria a heap of ruins in the field,
Places for planting a vineyard;
I will pour down her stones into the valley,
And I will uncover her foundations.
7 All her carved images shall be beaten to pieces,
And all her pay as a harlot shall be burned with the fire;

All her idols I will lay desolate,
For she gathered *it* from the pay of a harlot,
And they shall return to the pay of a harlot.”

## MOURNING FOR ISRAEL AND JUDAH

8 Therefore I will wail and howl,
I will go stripped and naked;
I will make a wailing like the jackals
And a mourning like the ostriches,
9 For her wounds *are* incurable.
For it has come to Judah;
It has come to the gate of My people-
To Jerusalem.
10 Tell *it* not in Gath,
Weep not at all;
In Beth Aphrah[a]
Roll yourself in the dust.
11 Pass by in naked shame, you inhabitant of Shaphir;
The inhabitant of Zaanan[a] does not go out.
Beth Ezel mourns;
Its place to stand is taken away from you.
12 For the inhabitant of Maroth pined[a] for good,
But disaster came down from the LORD
To the gate of Jerusalem.
13 O inhabitant of Lachish,
Harness the chariot to the swift steeds
(She *was* the beginning of sin to the daughter of Zion),
For the transgressions of Israel were

found in you.
14 Therefore you shall give presents to
Moresheth Gath;[a]
The houses of Achzib[b] *shall be* a lie to
the kings of Israel.
15 I will yet bring an heir to you,
O inhabitant of Mareshah;[a]
The glory of Israel shall come to
Adullam.
16 Make yourself bald and cut off your
hair,
Because of your precious children;
Enlarge your baldness like an eagle,
For they shall go from you into captivity.

**WOE TO EVILDOERS**

**2** Woe to those who devise iniquity, And work out evil on their beds!
At morning light they practice it,
Because it is in the power of their hand.

2 They covet fields and take *them* by
violence,
Also houses, and seize *them.*
So they oppress a man and his house,
A man and his inheritance.
3 Therefore thus says the LORD:

"Behold, against this family I am devising
disaster,
From which you cannot remove your
necks;
Nor shall you walk haughtily,
For this *is* an evil time.

4 In that day *one* shall take up a proverb
against you,
And lament with a bitter lamentation,
saying:
'We are utterly destroyed!
He has changed the heritage of my
people;
How He has removed *it* from me!
To a turncoat He has divided our
fields.' "
5 Therefore you will have no one to
determine boundaries[a] by lot
In the assembly of the LORD.

## LYING PROPHETS

6 “Do not prattle,” *you say to those* who
prophesy.
So they shall not prophesy to you;[a] They shall not return insult for
insult.[b]
7 *You who are* named the house of
Jacob:
“Is the Spirit of the LORD restricted?
*Are* these His doings?
Do not My words do good
To him who walks uprightly?
8 “Lately My people have risen up as an
enemy-
You pull off the robe with the garment
From those who trust *you*, as they pass
by,
Like men returned from war.
9 The women of My people you cast out
From their pleasant houses;
From their children
You have taken away My glory forever.
10 “Arise and depart,
For this *is* not *your* rest;
Because it is defiled, it shall destroy,
Yes, with utter destruction.
11 If a man should walk in a false spirit
And speak a lie, *saying*,
‘ I will prophesy to you of wine and
drink,’
Even he would be the prattler of this
people.

## ISRAEL RESTORED

12 “I will surely assemble all of you,
O Jacob,

I will surely gather the remnant of Israel;
I will put them together like sheep of the fold,[a]
Like a flock in the midst of their pasture;
They shall make a loud noise because of *so many* people.
13 The one who breaks open will come up before them;
They will break out,
Pass through the gate,
And go out by it;
Their king will pass before them,
With the LORD at their head.”

**WICKED RULERS AND PROPHETS**

**3** And I said:

"Hear now, O heads of Jacob,
And you rulers of the house of Israel:
*Is it* not for you to know justice?

2 You who hate good and love evil;
Who strip the skin from My people,[a]
And the flesh from their bones;
3 Who also eat the flesh of My people,
Flay their skin from them,
Break their bones,
And chop *them* in pieces
Like *meat* for the pot,
Like flesh in the caldron."
4 Then they will cry to the LORD,
But He will not hear them;
He will even hide His face from them at that time,
Because they have been evil in their deeds.
5 Thus says the LORD concerning the prophets
Who make my people stray;
Who chant "Peace"
While they chew with their teeth,
But who prepare war against him
Who puts nothing into their mouths:
6 "Therefore you shall have night without vision,
And you shall have darkness without divination;
The sun shall go down on the

prophets,
And the day shall be dark for them.
7 So the seers shall be ashamed,
And the diviners abashed;
Indeed they shall all cover their lips;
For *there is* no
answer from
God.”
8 But truly I am full
of power by the
Spirit of the
LORD,
And of justice and
might,
To declare to Jacob his transgression
And to Israel his sin.

> But truly I am full of power by the Spirit of the LORD, and of justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin.
> MICAH 3:8

9 Now hear this,
You heads of the house of Jacob
And rulers of the house of Israel,
Who abhor justice
And pervert all equity,
10 Who build up Zion with bloodshed
And Jerusalem with iniquity:
11 Her heads judge for a bribe,
Her priests teach for pay,
And her prophets divine for money.
Yet they lean on the LORD, and say,
“Is not the LORD among us?
No harm can come upon us.”

12 Therefore because of you
Zion shall be plowed *like* a field,
Jerusalem shall become heaps of ruins,
And the mountain of the temple[a]
Like the bare hills of the forest.

**THE LORD'S REIGN IN ZION**

**4** Now it shall come to pass in the latter days
*That* the mountain of the LORD's house
Shall be established on the top of the
mountains,
And shall be exalted above the hills;
And peoples shall flow to it.

2 Many nations shall come and say,
"Come, and let us go up to the mountain
of the LORD,
To the house of the God of Jacob;
He will teach us His ways,
And we shall walk in His paths."
For out of Zion the law shall go forth,
And the word of the LORD from
Jerusalem.
3 He shall judge between many peoples,
And rebuke strong nations afar off;
They shall beat their swords into
plowshares,
And their spears into pruning hooks;
Nation shall not lift up sword against
nation,
Neither shall they
learn war
anymore.*a*
4 But everyone shall
sit under his
vine and under
his fig tree,
And no one shall
make *them*

afraid;
For the mouth of the LORD of hosts has
spoken.
5 For all people walk each in the name of
his god,
But we will walk in the name of the
LORD our God
Forever and ever.

**ZION'S FUTURE TRIUMPH**

6 "In that day," says the LORD,
"I will assemble the lame,
I will gather the outcast
And those whom I have afflicted;
7 I will make the lame a remnant,
And the outcast a strong nation;
So the LORD will reign over them in
Mount Zion
From now on, even forever.
8 And you, O tower of the flock,
The stronghold of the daughter of Zion,
To you shall it come,
Even the former dominion shall come,
The kingdom of the daughter of
Jerusalem."
9 Now why do you cry aloud?
*Is there* no king in your midst?
Has your counselor perished?
For pangs have seized you like a woman
in labor.
10 Be in pain, and labor to bring forth,
O daughter of Zion,
Like a woman in birth pangs.
For now you shall go forth from the city,
You shall dwell in the field,

And to Babylon you shall go.
There you shall be delivered;
There the LORD will redeem you
From the hand of your enemies.
11 Now also many nations have gathered
against you,
Who say, “Let her be defiled,
And let our eye look upon Zion.”
12 But they do not know the thoughts of
the LORD,
Nor do they understand His counsel;
For He will gather them like sheaves to
the threshing floor.
13 “Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion;
For I will make your horn iron,
And I will make your hooves bronze;
You shall beat in pieces many peoples;
I will consecrate their gain to the LORD,
And their substance to the Lord of the
whole earth.”

**5** Now gather yourself in troops, O daughter of troops;

He has laid siege against us;
They will strike the judge of Israel with
a rod on the cheek.

**THE COMING MESSIAH**

2 "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
*Though* you are little among the
thousands of Judah,
*Yet* out of you shall come forth to Me
The One to be Ruler in Israel,
Whose goings forth *are* from of old,
From everlasting."
3 Therefore He shall give them up,
Until the time *that* she who is in labor
has given birth;
Then the remnant of His brethren
Shall return to the children of Israel.
4 And He shall stand and feed *His flock*
In the strength of the LORD,
In the majesty of the name of the LORD
His God;
And they shall abide,
For now He shall be great
To the ends of the earth;
5 And this *One* shall be peace.

**JUDGMENT ON ISRAEL'S ENEMIES**

When the Assyrian comes into our land,
And when he treads in our palaces,
Then we will raise against him
Seven shepherds and eight princely men.

6 They shall waste with the sword the
land of Assyria,
And the land of Nimrod at its entrances;
Thus He shall deliver *us* from the
Assyrian,
When he comes into our land
And when he treads within our borders.
7 Then the remnant of Jacob
Shall be in the midst of many peoples,
Like dew from the LORD,
Like showers on the grass,
That tarry for no man
Nor wait for the sons of men.
8 And the remnant of Jacob
Shall be among the Gentiles,
In the midst of many peoples,
Like a lion among the beasts of the
forest,
Like a young lion among flocks of sheep,
Who, if he passes through,
Both treads down and tears in pieces,
And none can deliver.
9 Your hand shall be lifted against your
adversaries,
And all your enemies shall be cut off.
10 "And it shall be in that day," says the
LORD,
"That I will cut off your horses from your
midst
And destroy your chariots.
11 I will cut off the cities of your land
And throw down all your strongholds.
12 I will cut off sorceries from your hand,
And you shall have no soothsayers.
13 Your carved images I will also cut off,

And your *sacred* pillars from your midst;
You shall no more worship the work of your hands;
14 I will pluck your wooden images[a] from your midst;
Thus I will destroy your cities.
15 And I will execute vengeance in anger and fury
On the nations that have not heard."[a]

**GOD PLEADS WITH ISLAND**

**6** Hear now what the LORD says:

"Arise, plead your case before the mountains,
And let the hills hear your voice.

2 Hear, O you mountains, the LORD's complaint,
And you strong foundations of the earth;
For the LORD has a complaint against His people,
And He will contend with Israel.
3 "O My people, what have I done to you?
And how have I wearied you?
Testify against Me.
4 For I brought you up from the land of Egypt,
I redeemed you from the house of bondage;
And I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.
5 O My people, remember now
What Balak king of Moab counseled,
And what Balaam the son of Beor answered him,
From Acacia Grove[a] to Gilgal,
That you may know the righteousness of the LORD."
6 With what shall I come before the LORD,
*And* bow myself before the High God?
Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings,
With calves a year old?

7 Will the LORD be pleased with thousands
of rams,
Ten thousand rivers of oil?
Shall I give my firstborn *for* my
transgression,
The fruit of my body *for* the sin of my
soul?
8 He has shown you, O man, what *is*
good;
And what does the LORD require of you
But to do justly,
To love mercy,
And to walk humbly with your God?

**PUNISHMENT OF ISRAEL'S INJUSTICE**

9 The LORD's voice cries to the city-
Wisdom shall see Your name:
"Hear the rod!
Who has appointed it?
10 Are there yet the treasures of
wickedness
In the house of the wicked,
And the short measure *that is* an
abomination?
11 Shall I count pure *those* with the wicked
scales,
And with the bag of deceitful
weights?
12 For her rich men are full of violence,
Her inhabitants have spoken lies,
And their tongue is deceitful in their
mouth.
13 "Therefore I will also make *you* sick by
striking you,
By making *you* desolate because of your

sins.
14 You shall eat, but not be satisfied;
Hunger[a] *shall be* in your midst.
You may carry *some* away,[b] but shall not
save *them;*
And what you do rescue I will give over
to the sword.
15 “You shall sow, but not reap;
You shall tread the olives, but not anoint
yourselves with oil;
And *make* sweet wine, but not drink
wine.
16 For the statutes of Omri are kept;
All the works of Ahab’s house *are*
*done;*
And you walk in their counsels,
That I may make
you a
desolation,
And your
inhabitants a
hissing.
Therefore you shall
bear the
reproach of My people.”[a]

**SOUL NOTE**

**Live and Love** *(6:6-8)* “How can I approach God?” This question is buried deep in everyone’s soul. The Judeans asked a similar question: “With what shall I come before the LORD?” They wanted to know

what offerings they should bring. In answer, however, Micah pointed directly at their hearts. Did they uphold God's justice in their communities? Did they show God's mercy to the disadvantaged? Had they humbly offered their lives to the Lord? God didn't want their offerings; He wanted their lives. God still wants hearts that love Him and hands that serve in His name. **Topic: Attitudes**

## HOW TO HAVE A POSITIVE ATTITUDE

DANIEL LOVETT

(Micah 6:8)

**T**oo many Christians live lives of quiet desperation, always worrying and fretting. They pray, but God's peace never seems to come to their hearts. In short, they have such negative attitudes that they are helping no one and hurting themselves. So what can we do to exchange negative attitudes for positive ones? The prophet Micah provides three requirements in Micah 6:8 which, when acted upon, will have an enormous impact on attitude.

### ATTITUDE ADJUSTMENT

The first step toward a positive attitude is to "do justly." We must be honest with ourselves and then live honestly. We must quit making excuses and start dealing with our own hearts and minds. We must admit and face up to our own problems. Problems begin on the inside. The heart of every problem is the problem of the heart. When we

admit and confess what is in our hearts and minds we will have a positive attitude. “For as he thinks in his heart, so is he. ‘Eat and drink!’ he says to you, but his heart is not with you” (Prov. 23:7).

The second step toward a positive attitude is to “love mercy.” In other words, we need to learn to make things right. If there are problems between people, one person needs to take the initiative to make things right-being merciful and forgiving if that’s needed. We cannot get along perfectly with everyone, but Paul admonished, “If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men” (Rom. 12:18). When we have right relationships with others we will have a positive attitude.

The third step toward a positive attitude is to “walk humbly” with God. We need to ask God to search our minds and hearts. Psalm 139:23, 24 says, “Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” The submissive mind puts Christ and others ahead of self (Phil. 2:4). Resentment, thoughts of bitterness, pride, or other negative attitudes will poison the heart and mind, and ultimately the whole attitude and personality. If God sees wrong thoughts and bad attitudes in our hearts and minds, He cannot give us His peace and joy. It takes faith to have a submissive mind, because humility is so contrary to the spirit of the world. Yet Jesus has said, “He who is greatest among you shall be your servant” (Matt. 23:11). When we have humble, submissive minds we will have a positive attitude.

When we start to develop harmful attitudes-being worried, critical, depressed, or discouraged-we must stop to examine ourselves. We must ask, “Do I have this attitude because I’m not being honest with myself? Am I blaming others for my problems? Am I holding a grudge and refusing to forgive or make things right? Am I being proud? Am I forgetting to think single-mindedly with Christ? Have I ceased having a submissive mind? Where along the line did I stop living for Christ?”

## DISCOVERING GOD'SWAY

Those Christians who cultivate a spiritual life will find that they develop a positive attitude. While so much of the world is wrapped up in possessions, entertainment, achievements, and other earthly enticements, believers already know that earthly things will never satisfy. That is full-time Christian living-having a positive attitude and a single mind with Christ to do what will be pleasing to Him.

Christians who spend time daily in God's Word and in prayer, who cast their cares upon the Lord, and who seek to obey His Word in all circumstances, will have the presence of God in their lives and the peace of God in their hearts. This will result in an "I can" attitude like the one Paul had when he wrote, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13).

A bad attitude can become a way of life. Some people enjoy their bad attitudes-they get attention and sympathy, which inflates their egos. Like the Pharisees, they parade their problems and troubles in order to be seen by others. There is nothing wrong with people sharing their burdens with fellow Christians if their motives are right, but doing so to attract attention and sympathy is sinful.

A positive attitude comes not with freedom *from* problems and difficulties, but with freedom *in spite of* them. When Paul wrote Philippians, he didn't deny that he was in prison; his attitude toward his imprisonment, however, had set him free to continue to be all God wanted him to be. Our homes, our jobs, our situations, even our physical bodies with their frailties can all seem like prisons. We can still experience positive attitudes, however. Paul had learned that he could do all things through Christ-and so can we. We need to start each day with surrender to the Lord. We need to ask Him to help us to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with Him. We need to stay close to Him daily. This will produce a positive attitude that results in dynamic living for Christ, giving us a positive witness to each person with whom we come in contact throughout our day. Then

we can be as the psalmist described it when he said, “They looked to Him and were radiant” (Ps. 34:5).

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of attitudes include:

- Joshua 14:10-12
- Acts 27:22
- Romans 15:5-7
- 2 Corinthians 10:5
- Galatians 6:9
- Philippians 2:5-11
- 1 Timothy 4:15, 16
- Hebrews 12:1, 2
- James 1:2-4

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on attitudes at Romans 12:1, 2. See also the personality profile Michal-watch Your Attitude.

**SORROW FOR ISRAEL'S SINS**

7 Woe is me! For I am like those who gather summer fruits,

Like those who glean vintage grapes;
*There is no* cluster to eat
Of the first-ripe fruit *which* my soul
desires.

2 The faithful *man* has perished from the
earth,
And *there is* no one upright among men.
They all lie in wait for blood;
Every man hunts his brother with a net.
3 That they may successfully do evil with
both hands-
The prince asks *for gifts,*
The judge *seeks* a bribe,
And the great *man* utters his evil desire;
So they scheme together.
4 The best of them *is* like a brier;
The most upright *is sharper* than a thorn
hedge;
The day of your watchman and your
punishment comes;
Now shall be their perplexity.
5 Do not trust in a friend;
Do not put your confidence in a
companion;
Guard the doors of your mouth
From her who lies in your bosom.

Therefore I will look to the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me.
MICAH 7:7

6 For son dishonors
father,
Daughter rises
against her
mother,
Daughter-in-law
against her
mother-in-law;
A man's enemies *are* the men of his own
household.
7 Therefore I will look to the LORD;
I will wait for the God of my salvation;
My God will hear me.

## ISRAEL'S CONFESSION AND COMFORT

8 Do not rejoice over me, my enemy;
When I fall, I will arise;
When I sit in darkness,
The LORD *will be* a light to me.
9 I will bear the indignation of the
LORD,
Because I have sinned against Him,
Until He pleads my case
And executes justice for me.
He will bring me forth to the light;
I will see His righteousness.
10 Then *she who is* my enemy will see,
And shame will cover her who said to
me,
"Where is the LORD your God?"
My eyes will see her;
Now she will be trampled down
Like mud in the streets.
11 *In* the day when your walls are to be
built,

*In* that day the decree shall go far and
wide.[a]
12 *In* that day they[a] shall come to you
From Assyria and the fortified cities,[b]
From the fortress[c] to the River,[d]
From sea to sea,
And mountain *to* mountain.
13 Yet the land shall be desolate
Because of those who dwell in it,
And for the fruit of their deeds.

## GOD WILL FORGIVE ISRAEL

14 Shepherd Your people with Your staff,
The flock of Your heritage,
Who dwell solitarily *in* a woodland,
In the midst of Carmel;
Let them feed *in* Bashan and Gilead,
As in days of old.
15 "As in the days when you came out of the
land of Egypt,
I will show them[a] wonders."
16 The nations shall see and be ashamed of
all their might;
They shall put *their* hand over *their*
mouth;
Their ears shall be deaf.
17 They shall lick the dust like a serpent;
They shall crawl from their holes like
snakes of the earth.
They shall be afraid of the LORD our
God,
And shall fear because of You.
18 Who *is* a God like You,
Pardoning iniquity

And passing over the transgression of
the remnant of His heritage?
He does not retain His anger forever,
Because He delights *in* mercy.
19 He will again have compassion on us,
And will subdue our iniquities.
You will cast all our[a] sins
Into the depths of the sea.
20 You will give truth to Jacob
*And* mercy to Abraham,
Which You have sworn to our fathers
From days of old.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Redeeming Failure** *(7:7, 8)* Judah had failed miserably. God had punished them for their sins, and Judah's enemies were rejoicing over their fall. Micah outlined what the people were to do when they were at their lowest point. Instead of listening to their enemies' taunts, they were to look to God and wait for Him. After their fall, they would arise. In the darkness, God would be a light. Judah's God is the Savior of all believers. Even if we have miserably failed, He wants to pick us up and pull us out of the darkness. With God, failure is never final. **Topic: Failure**

# Nahum



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# Nahum

Whether struggling under an oppressive employer, dealing with personal pain and heartbreak, or just feeling frustrated over world events-we want justice. Evil should be punished, right should triumph, and good should win. Yet too often the opposite seems to be the case. Whether it's mistreatment at the hands of an abusive spouse, an overbearing parent, an intrusive government, or a callous corporation, something in us recoils at oppression and applauds when things are made right.

In about 620 B.C., Judah was being oppressed by Assyria, the most powerful and cruel nation on earth. One hundred years earlier, the Assyrians had responded to the preaching of Jonah, but their repentance was clearly short-lived. So at this point, having once experienced the mercy of God, the Assyrians were all the more responsible for their actions.

God told the prophet Nahum to announce Nineveh's destruction (2:6-8). Indeed, this destruction, the wrath of God, fell on Nineveh in 612 B.C. when the Babylonians, Scythians, and Medes overran its walls and turned it into a permanent ruin.

Nahum reminds us that God's justice means He will not overlook evil, nor will He turn a deaf ear to the cries of its victims. If you personally are suffering mistreatment or feeling outrage in your soul because of unjust situations around you, let Nahum comfort you with the truth that in God's world nobody gets away with anything. Ultimately every wrong will be made right!

**SOUL CONCERN IN**

## NAHUM

TRUST (1:7)

**1** The burden[a] against Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite.

## GOD'S WRATH ON HIS ENEMIES

2 God *is* jealous, and the LORD avenges;
The LORD avenges and *is* furious.
The LORD will take vengeance on His adversaries,
And He reserves *wrath* for His enemies;
3 The LORD *is* slow to anger and great in power,
And will not at all acquit *the wicked.*
The LORD has His way In the whirlwind and in the storm,
And the clouds *are* the dust of His feet.
4 He rebukes the sea and makes it dry,
And dries up all the rivers.
Bashan and Carmel wither,
And the flower of Lebanon wilts.
5 The mountains quake before Him,
The hills melt,
And the earth heaves[a] at His presence,
Yes, the world and all who dwell in it.
6 Who can stand before His indignation?
And who can endure the fierceness of His anger?
His fury is poured out like fire,
And the rocks are thrown down by Him.
7 The LORD *is* good,
A stronghold in the day of trouble;
And He knows those who trust in Him.
8 But with an overflowing flood
He will make an utter end of its place,
And darkness will pursue His enemies.
9 What do you conspire against the LORD?
He will make an utter end *of it.*
Affliction will not rise up a second time.
10 For while tangled *like* thorns,

And while drunken *like* drunkards,
They shall be devoured like stubble fully dried.
11 From you comes forth *one* Who plots evil against the LORD,
A wicked counselor.
12 Thus says the LORD:
"Though *they are* safe, and likewise many,
Yet in this manner they will be cut down
When he passes through.
Though I have afflicted you, I will afflict you no more;
13 For now I will break off his yoke from you,
And burst your bonds apart."
14 The LORD has given a command concerning you:
"Your name shall be perpetuated no longer.
Out of the house of your gods
I will cut off the carved image and the molded image.
I will dig your grave, For you are vile."
15 Behold, on the mountains
The feet of him who brings good tidings,
Who proclaims peace!
O Judah, keep your appointed feasts,
Perform your vows.
For the wicked one shall no more pass through you;
He is utterly cut off.

The LORD is slow to anger and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked. The LORD has His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet.
NAHUM 1:3

## SOUL NOTE

**Trust in the Lord** *(1:7)* Over a century before, Jonah had warned the Assyrians (in the capital city of Nineveh) of God's judgment, and they had repented. It seems their spiritual renewal didn't last long, however, and they began oppressing God's people. They attacked Israel, the northern kingdom, taking them into captivity. Nahum's prophecy comforted the people in the southern kingdom (Judah). They knew that "the LORD is good . . . and He knows those who trust in Him." When the wicked appear to be in control, don't despair. He won't forget those who trust in Him.
**Topic: Trust**

## LEARNING TO TRUST

# PATRICK SPRINGLE

(Nahum 1:7)

**Trust is the foundation of all positive, healthy relationships. Trust is the glue that holds people together through life's most difficult experiences. With this foundation, we can endure almost anything; without it, every interaction and every decision is a threat.**

We exercise trust in virtually every interaction in our lives. We trust cars and airplanes with our lives; we trust banks with our money; we trust the restaurant with our health. We trust others as we

share our secrets. We trust a spouse with our marriage. We trust God, even though we cannot see Him.

## WHEN TRUST IS VIOLATED

Like a hammer shattering a porcelain vase, a relationship of trust can be shattered by physical, sexual, or emotional abuse. In fact, traumas like car accidents, severe injuries, or deaths in the family can also undermine a person's sense of security and trust. Less obvious, but just as devastating, are words of criticism and condemnation that wear a person's soul away like sandpaper. This erosion of trust might occur dozens of times a day-so often that it seems "normal." Trust is also eroded by the absence of love and attention.

People whose trust has been shattered or eroded feel desperate to find stability, so they try to control their lives in any way they can. Because these people do not build positive, trusting relationships, they feel empty and disillusioned. Three different types of problems can occur for these people:

1. *Blind trust*- Some try to control others by attempting to please them, doing whatever it takes to make others happy. They close their eyes to the reality of the hurt, anger, lies, and manipulation and end up trusting untrustworthy people. Their goal is to obtain the love they crave.

2. *Aggressive distrust*-Some try to control by dominating. They cover their insecurity by yelling, cursing, and blaming, but they also use charm to get what they want. This combination of charm and venom puts other people off balance.

3. *Passive distrust*-Some try to avoid being hurt any more by keeping their distance from people. They give up on relationships altogether, concluding that it is too painful and too hopeless to even try to relate to others.

## LEARNING TO TRUST

Even those with very painful pasts can learn to trust again. This is done by learning *perceptive trust*. Those who have insight and wisdom know that not everybody is trustworthy, and that trust must be earned by consistent, honorable, ethical behavior. To have perceptive trust is to live in the reality-often the harsh reality-that people we love will let us down. To have perceptive trust is to know, however, that God will never let us down.

Following are some suggestions for learning to trust perceptively:

*Identify Patterns of Distrust*

People must be honest about the pain of the past and the damage it has caused. The patterns of hiding from people, dominating them, or pleasing them at all costs exist because people are desperate to find some meaning and safety in their lives. Ultimately, such behavior only hurts them more. Repentance is a vital part of the Christian experience and involves being honest about wrong perceptions and destructive behaviors. Repentance enables them to choose what is good and right.

*Gain a New Perception of God*

People's most intimate human relationships will color their perception of God. But these perceptions can be changed as God shows His true character and great love.

Finding a fellowship of believers who are experiencing the goodness and grace of God can help people shape a healthy view of God.

*Take Steps to Trust Perceptively*

Blind trust people need to be more cautious in relationships and not trust so quickly and completely. Aggressive distrust people need to be quiet and calm, encouraging rather than intimidating. Passive distrust people need to take steps to be more open and vulnerable with those they trust. These are all healthy steps of growth and change.

*Find People Who Understand*

Changes of the heart do not occur in a vacuum. People must find others who can understand, encourage, and speak the truth to them about God and about themselves. One trustworthy, honest, perceptive person can make all the difference. In cases of severe abuse or abandonment, a pastor or a professional counselor may better provide the insight and nurture necessary for change to occur.

*Absorb the Truth About God*

To learn to trust, people must absorb the Scriptures with an attitude of commitment and with prayer. They can search passages that are particularly meaningful and memorize them. God is, and always will be, true to His Word. They can count on Him to lead them and give wisdom, peace, and strength.

No matter how much their trust has been destroyed in the past, people can still discover that God is supremely trustworthy. In Him, they can find peace and wisdom. The Bible promises, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths" (Prov. 3:5, 6).

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of trust include:

- 2 Samuel 22:3, 31
- Psalms 4:5; 5:11; 9:10; 27:10; 31:1
- . Proverbs 11:28
- John 20:29
- Romans 8:31-39

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on trust at Proverbs 3:5, 6. See also the personality profile of Habakkuk: The Tower Of Trust.

**THE DESTRUCTION OF NINEVEH**

**2** He who scatters[a] has come up before your face.
Man the fort!
Watch the road!
Strengthen *your* flanks!
Fortify *your* power mightily.

2 For the LORD will restore the excellence of Jacob
Like the excellence of Israel,
For the emptiers have emptied them out
And ruined their vine branches.
3 The shields of his mighty men *are* made red,
The valiant men *are* in scarlet.
The chariots *come* with flaming torches
In the day of his preparation,
And the spears are brandished.[a]
4 The chariots rage in the streets,
They jostle one another in the broad roads;
They seem like torches,
They run like lightning.
5 He remembers his nobles;
They stumble in their walk;
They make haste to her walls,
And the defense is prepared.
6 The gates of the rivers are opened,
And the palace is dissolved.
7 It is decreed:[a]
She shall be led away captive,
She shall be brought up;
And her maidservants shall lead *her* as with the voice of doves, Beating their breasts.
8 Though Nineveh of old *was* like a pool of water,
Now they flee away.
"Halt! Halt!" *they cry;*

But no one turns back.
9 Take spoil of silver!
Take spoil of gold!
*There is* no end of treasure, Or wealth of every desirable prize.
10 She is empty, desolate, and waste!
The heart melts, and the knees shake;
Much pain *is* in every side, And all their faces are drained of color.[a]
11 Where *is* the dwelling of the lions,
And the feeding place of the young lions,
Where the lion walked, the lioness *and* lion's cub,
And no one made *them* afraid?
12 The lion tore in pieces enough for his cubs,
Killed for his lionesses,
Filled his caves with prey,
And his dens with flesh.
13 "Behold, I *am* against you," says the LORD of hosts, "I will burn your[a] chariots in smoke, and the sword shall devour your young lions; I will cut off your prey from the earth, and the voice of your messengers shall be heard no more."

**THE WOE OF NINEVEH**

**3** Woe to the bloody city!
It *is* all full of lies *and* robbery.
*Its* victim never departs.

[2] The noise of a whip
And the noise of rattling wheels,
Of galloping horses,
Of clattering chariots!
[3] Horsemen charge with bright sword and glittering spear.
*There is* a multitude of slain,
A great number of bodies,
Countless corpses-
They stumble over the corpses-
[4] Because of the multitude of harlotries of the seductive harlot,
The mistress of sorceries,
Who sells nations through her harlotries,
And families through her sorceries.
[5] "Behold, I *am* against you," says the LORD of hosts;
"I will lift your skirts over your face,
I will show the nations your nakedness,
And the kingdoms your shame.
[6] I will cast abominable filth upon you,
Make you vile,
And make you a spectacle.
[7] It shall come to pass *that* all who look upon you
Will flee from you, and say,
'Nineveh is laid waste!
Who will bemoan her?'
Where shall I seek comforters for you?"
[8] Are you better than No Amon[a]
*That was* situated by the River,[b]
That had the waters around her,
Whose rampart *was* the sea,

Whose wall *was* the sea?
9 Ethiopia and Egypt *were* her strength,
And *it was* boundless;
Put and Lubim were your[a] helpers.
10 Yet she *was* carried away,
She went into captivity;
Her young children also were dashed to pieces
At the head of every street;
They cast lots for her honorable men,
And all her great men were bound in chains.
11 You also will be drunk;
You will be hidden;
You also will seek refuge from the enemy.
12 All your strongholds *are* fig trees with ripened figs:
If they are shaken,
They fall into the mouth of the eater.
13 Surely, your people in your midst *are* women!
The gates of your land are wide open for your enemies;
Fire shall devour the bars of your *gates.*
14 Draw your water for the siege!
Fortify your strongholds!
Go into the clay and tread the mortar!
Make strong the brick kiln!
15 There the fire will devour you,
The sword will cut you off;
It will eat you up like a locust.

Make yourself many-like the locust!
Make yourself many-like the *swarming* locusts!
16 You have multiplied your merchants more than the stars of heaven.
The locust plunders and flies away.
17 Your commanders *are* like *swarming* locusts,
And your generals like great grasshoppers,
Which camp in the hedges on a cold day;
When the sun rises they flee away,

And the place where they *are* is not known.
18 Your shepherds slumber, O king of Assyria;
Your nobles rest *in the dust.*
Your people are scattered on the mountains,
And no one gathers them.
19 Your injury *has* no healing,
Your wound is severe.
All who hear news of you
Will clap *their* hands over you,
For upon whom has not your wickedness passed continually?

# Habakkuk



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# Habakkuk

"Why do good things happen to bad people and bad things happen to good people?" That's a common lament, and no wonder: A quick look at the day's news brings more evidence than we care to consider. And our question becomes louder when the "bad things" happen to us!

The prophet Habakkuk put a variation of this question to God, asking why God was tolerating rampant evil among the people of Judah. God's shocking answer was that He intended to use the unspeakably cruel and decadent Babylonians to execute justice on His wayward nation. This revelation, far from satisfying Habakkuk's troubled soul, only prompted him to further question God's wisdom (1:12-17). God heard Habakkuk's questions; then He answered.

This short book shows Habakkuk coming to the realization that Almighty God is able to use even pagan nations to accomplish His sovereign purposes. The classic expression, "The just shall live by his faith" (2:4) is not only Habakkuk's personal profession of trust, but it is also a statement quoted frequently in the New Testament (Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38) to give expression to the foundational doctrine of salvation by faith alone. Habakkuk realized, as all God's people must, that only full confidence in God can sustain us in troubling and uncertain times.

Faith helps us put the troubles of this world into proper perspective. When ill health, economic difficulties, or personal family crises strike, faith clings to the promise that God's sovereign purposes are being accomplished. The trusting soul sees God as greater than any problem.

**SOUL CONCERN IN**

**HABAKKUK**

# ADDICTIONS (2:5-7)

**1** The burden[a] which the prophet Habakkuk saw.

**THE PROPHET'S QUESTION**

2 O LORD, how long shall I cry,
And You will not hear?
Even cry out to You, "Violence!"
And You will not save.
3 Why do You show me iniquity,
And cause *me* to see trouble?
For plundering and violence *are* before me;
There is strife, and contention arises.
4 Therefore the law is powerless,
And justice never goes forth.
For the wicked surround the righteous;
Therefore perverse judgment proceeds.

**THE LORD'S REPLY**

5 "Look among the nations and watch-Be utterly astounded!
For *I will* work a work in your days
*Which* you would not believe, though it were told *you.*
6 For indeed I am raising up the
Chaldeans,
A bitter and hasty nation
Which marches through the breadth of the earth,
To possess dwelling places *that are* not theirs.
7 They are terrible and dreadful;
Their judgment and their dignity
proceed from themselves.
8 Their horses also are swifter than leopards,
And more fierce than evening wolves.
Their chargers charge ahead;
Their cavalry comes from afar;
They fly as the eagle *that* hastens to eat.
9 "They all come for violence;

Their faces are set *like* the east wind.
They gather captives like sand.
10 They scoff at kings,
And princes are scorned by them.
They deride every stronghold,
For they heap up earthen *mounds* and seize it.
11 Then *his* mind[a] changes, and he transgresses;
He commits offense,
*Ascribing* this power to his god."

**THE PROPHET'S SECOND QUESTION**

12 Are You not from everlasting,
O LORD my God, my Holy One?
We shall not die.
O LORD, You have appointed them for judgment;
O Rock, You have marked them for correction.
13 *You are* of purer eyes than to behold evil,
And cannot look on wickedness.
Why do You look on those who deal treacherously,
*And* hold Your tongue when the wicked devours
A *person* more righteous than he?
14 *Why* do You make men like fish of the sea,
Like creeping things *that have* no ruler over them?
15 They take up all of them with a hook,
They catch them in their net,
And gather them in their dragnet.
Therefore they rejoice and are glad.
16 Therefore they sacrifice to their net,
And burn incense to their dragnet;
Because by them their share *is* sumptuous
And their food plentiful.
17 Shall they therefore empty their net,
And continue to slay nations without pity?

## SOUL NOTE

**Dealing with Doubt** *(1:1-4)* Nagging questions and doubts-everyone has them, even believers. We often feel guilty for doubting, however, so we repress our doubts. The prophet Habakkuk didn't silence his questions and doubts. Instead, he courageously brought them to God. Habakkuk began by asking God why He allowed evil to flourish, a question that has puzzled people for centuries. Habakkuk humbly asked God, and God answered. When we have questions and doubts, we should bring them to God, and He will answer. We must be willing, however, to accept the answers He gives. **Topic: Doubt**

2 I will stand my watch
And set myself on the rampart,
And watch to see what He will say to me,
And what I will answer when I am corrected.

**THE JUST LIVE BY FAITH**

2 Then the LORD answered me and said:
"Write the vision
And make *it* plain on tablets,
That he may run who reads it.
3 For the vision *is* yet for an appointed time;
But at the end it will speak, and it will not lie.
Though it tarries, wait for it;
Because it will surely come,
It will not tarry.
4 "Behold the proud,
His soul is not upright in him;
But the just shall live by his faith.

**WOE TO THE WICKED**

5 "Indeed, because he transgresses by wine,
*He is* a proud man, And he does not stay at home.
Because he enlarges his desire as hell,[a]
And he *is* like death, and cannot be satisfied,
He gathers to himself all nations
And heaps up for himself all peoples.
6 "Will not all these take up a proverb against him,
And a taunting riddle against him, and say,
'Woe to him who increases
*What* is not his-how long?
And to him who loads himself with many pledges'?[a]
7 Will not your creditors[a] rise up suddenly?
Will they not awaken who oppress you?
And you will become their booty.

8 Because you have plundered many nations,
All the remnant of the people shall plunder you,
Because of men’s blood
And the violence of the land *and* the city,
And of all who dwell in it.
9 “Woe to him who covets evil gain for his house,
That he may set his nest on high,
That he may be delivered from the power of disaster!
10 You give shameful counsel to your house,
Cutting off many peoples, And sin *against* your soul.
11 For the stone will cry out from the wall,
And the beam from the timbers will answer it.
12 “Woe to him who builds a town with bloodshed,
Who establishes a city by iniquity!
13 Behold, *is it* not of the LORD of hosts
That the peoples labor to feed the fire,[a]
And nations weary themselves in vain?
14 For the earth will be filled
With the knowledge of the glory of the LORD,
As the waters cover the sea.
15 “Woe to him who gives drink to his neighbor,
Pressing[a] *him to* your bottle,
Even to make *him* drunk,
That you may look on his nakedness!
16 You are filled with shame instead of glory.
You also-drink!
And be exposed as uncircumcised![a]
The cup of the LORD’s right hand *will be* turned against you,
And utter shame will be on your glory.
17 For the violence *done to* Lebanon will cover you,
And the plunder of beasts *which* made them afraid,
Because of men’s blood
And the violence of the land *and* the city,
And of all who dwell in it.

18 “What profit is the image, that its maker should carve it,
The molded image, a teacher of lies,
That the maker of its mold should trust in it,
To make mute idols?
19 Woe to him who says to wood, ‘Awake!’
To silent stone, ‘Arise! It shall teach!’
Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver,
Yet in it there is no breath at all.
20 “But the LORD is in His holy temple.
Let all the earth keep silence before Him.”

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# HABAKKUK: THE TOWER OF TRUST

## (HABAKKUK 2)

Why? Children ask the question as soon as they are old enough to understand the word “no.” They want to know the explanation for why they cannot do or have something. As we get older, the question continues to nag us as we encounter “why” questions at every turn. When we see evil, pain, and suffering in the world and, especially, in our lives, we ask, “Why?” Thousands of years ago, Habakkuk took that same question directly to God.

Habakkuk, God’s prophet, preached trust during a time of great trouble and distress. The nation of Judah was facing impending invasion from the Babylonians, who had taken Nineveh, the great capital of Assyria. Judah’s days were numbered, for God would use

the wicked Babylonians to conquer His people and punish their sins. Habakkuk wanted to know why: “Why do You look on those who deal treacherously, and hold Your tongue when the wicked devours a person more righteous than he?” (Hab. 1:13). Habakkuk asked this question on behalf of his nation, then he awaited God’s answer: “I will stand my watch and set myself on the rampart, and watch to see what He will say to me” (2:1).

God answered His questioning prophet, explaining that while He would use Babylon to punish Judah, the Babylonians wouldn’t even know that they were pawns in His hands. Babylon’s pride and power would eventually be its downfall. God told Habakkuk to be patient. In the end, He would make everything right.

God’s people must trust Him completely, even in the face of tragic events. Trust is believing *without* seeing. Habakkuk pronounced: “The just shall live by his faith” (2:4). When we trust in our trustworthy God, we don’t need to know why. We only need to know Him.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Learning to Trust. See also the key passage note at Proverbs 3:5, 6.

**PRINCIPLED PLEASURE**

MARK R. LAASER

(Habakkuk 2:5-7)

**T**he new century presents many challenges. In a time of impatience

and selfishness, a person's wants and desires often can gain instant gratification. Science and culture provide helpful advances and opportunities. However, some people get trapped in a downward spiral of addiction to substances and behaviors used to gratify impatient desires.

## WHAT IS ADDICTION?

The word "addiction" technically means that the brain has become neurochemically dependent on substances ingested into the body, or on the chemicals the brain produces when one performs certain behaviors. Neurochemical dependence assumes the brain will actually "crave" the substance or substance-producing behavior. Over time, more of the substance is required to achieve the same effect in the brain because the brain has an amazing ability to adjust whatever is put into it. This factor is called "tolerance." It also means that when any addict stops the addictive behavior, the brain will "rebel" against the absence and go through a phase of detoxification.

Neurochemical addiction is caused by *chemicals* such as alcohol, cocaine, or heroin. However, some believe that certain *behaviors* can create neurochemical reactions. Sexual thoughts, for example, create certain chemicals that cause intense feelings of pleasure. Simply fantasizing about sex can create these "pleasure" chemicals. Experts in sexual addiction argue that sexual thought and activity can create a neurochemical addiction similar to a substance addiction. Gamblers, likewise, experience a release of adrenaline when they take risks with money. A gambler can become addicted to the body's production of this chemical. Research has further shown that very few addicts suffer only one addiction. They may have a dominant one, but they also turn to a variety of other addictions as well. A new diagnosis that is gaining acceptance is Multiple Addiction Disorder (MAD). Whether addicts use chemicals or chemical- producing behaviors or both, their brains become a chemical smorgasbord.

One factor that can make recovery so difficult is the synergy of the

neurochemical and emotional dependencies involved in addiction. Substances and behaviors get associated with relief of certain emotions even while they are creating a chemical dependency. Smokers know, for example, that they can detoxify from the effects of nicotine in a few days. What is harder, though, is the emotional dependency they created by associating smoking with relaxing or with relaxing situations.

## WHAT CAUSES ADDICTION?

Addicts are lonely. They are starving for love, attention, and nurture. Many are angry that their needs-either when they were children, or as adults-have gone unmet. Some are angry at having been physically, sexually, or emotionally abused as children. The combination of loneliness and anger drives addicts deeper into their addiction. They may even be angry at God for not taking away or "delivering" them from their desires. Addicts often did not form healthy attachments to parents and others as children; they may not know how to find real love. That is why many people substitute addictive substances or behaviors for relationships.

Addiction is a problem of original sin-addicts believe they can control their lives better than God can. In seeking control, addicts are totally out of control. "For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do" (Rom. 7:14, 15). An addiction will get worse over time; it will always lead to destructive consequences.

## RELIEF FROM ADDICTION

Relief from addiction is usually referred to as "sobriety." The addict is in "recovery." When addicts experience ongoing sobriety, they will occasionally need to celebrate these victories. Achieving sobriety and staying in recovery is a combination of spiritual, emotional, and physical work.

Spiritually, addicts must take the risk of confessing their powerlessness. They fear that if others know about their addiction, they will be ridiculed and abandoned. Fellowship with others who can tell their stories to one another is one of the essential elements of getting well. Confessing powerlessness to others brings an addict closer to being willing to return control to God. This is in the spirit of James 5:16, which encourages fellow believers to confess sin to each other in order to bring healing.

Emotionally, addicts will need to address old wounds that have caused them to feel unloved and unlovable. This may be a matter of intensive counseling that addresses traumas and memories of abuse as a child. Healthy churches will work to create opportunities for them to have support groups. This kind of fellowship is also a kind of accountability. It is support that reminds an addict about staying sober from the addictive activity. Sponsors, mentors, or guides who have become sober for longer periods of time will be an integral part of an accountability network. Addicts will need to be accountable to change the behaviors that led to addiction. New habits of healthy behavior will need to be substituted for old destructive patterns.

Physically, addicts may need to seek medical evaluation or medical intervention. They may need medical help to detoxify. Also, some may need evaluation as to whether or not medications are necessary to bring brain chemistry back to a healthy balance.

The treatment of any addiction is often a very specialized program and will require caregivers that are experienced in providing one. Ultimately, we must all remember that there is a hunger for God and for fellowship that underlies all addictions. We must be quick to provide soul care for those needs if we are to truly help addicts to be set free from their addictions.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of addictions include:

- Psalms 44:21; 51:1-19
- Proverbs 23:21, 29-35
- Luke 21:34
- 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20
- Ephesians 5:18
- Hebrews 10:22-25

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on addictions at 1 Corinthians 6:9-12. See also the personality profile of Gomer: Addicted to Adultery.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Waiting for Answers** *(2:1-4)* Habakkuk didn't shrink from asking all his questions. He asked God why He wasn't punishing the wicked Babylonians (1:12-17). Then he awaited God's answer: "I will . . . watch to see what He will say to me" (2:1). At times, it is appropriate to wait. Habakkuk could have become angry or impatient, but instead he humbly waited for God to answer. God will answer our questions, but we need to wait and trust His perfect timing. **Topic: Trust**

**THE PROPHET'S PRAYER**

**3** A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet, on Shigionoth.[a]

2 O LORD, I have heard Your speech *and* was afraid;
O LORD, revive Your work in the midst of the years!
In the midst of the years make *it* known;
In wrath remember mercy.
3 God came from Teman,
The Holy One from Mount Paran.

Selah

His glory covered the heavens,
And the earth was full of His praise.

4 *His* brightness was like the light;
He had rays *flashing* from His hand,
And there His power *was* hidden.
5 Before Him went pestilence,
And fever followed at His feet.
6 He stood and measured the earth;
He looked and startled the nations.
And the everlasting mountains were scattered,
The perpetual hills bowed.
His ways *are* everlasting.
7 I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction;
The curtains of the land of Midian trembled.
8 O LORD, were *You* displeased with the rivers,
*Was* Your anger against the rivers,
*Was* Your wrath against the sea,
That You rode on Your horses,
Your chariots of salvation?
9 Your bow was made quite ready;
Oaths were sworn over *Your* arrows.[a]

Selah

You divided the earth with rivers.
10 The mountains saw You *and* trembled;
The overflowing of the water passed by.
The deep uttered its voice,
*And* lifted its hands on high.
11 The sun and moon stood still in their habitation;
At the light of Your arrows they went,
At the shining of Your glittering spear.
12 You marched through the land in indignation;
You trampled the nations in anger.
13 You went forth for the salvation of Your people,
For salvation with Your Anointed.
You struck the head from the house of the wicked,
By laying bare from foundation to neck.

Selah

14 You thrust through with his own arrows
The head of his villages.
They came out like a whirlwind to scatter me;
Their rejoicing was like feasting on the poor in secret.
15 You walked through the sea with Your horses,
Through the heap of great waters.
16 When I heard, my body trembled;
My lips quivered at *the* voice;
Rottenness entered my bones;
And I trembled in myself,
That I might rest in the day of trouble.
When he comes up to the people,
He will invade them with his troops.

**A HYMN OF FAITH**

17 Though the fig tree may not blossom,
Nor fruit be on the vines;
Though the labor of the olive may fail,
And the fields yield no food;

Though the flock may be cut off from the fold,
And there be no herd in the stalls-
18 Yet I will rejoice in the LORD,
I will joy in the God of my salvation.
19 The LORD God[a] is my strength;
He will make my feet like deer's *feet*,
And He will make me walk on my high hills.
To the Chief Musician. With my stringed instruments.

**SOUL NOTE**

**In Awe** *(3:1, 2)* Habakkuk was afraid when God's answer came. Wicked people fear God because He will punish them for their rebellious ways. For God's people-those who have appealed to the Lord for mercy-this fear is solemn reverence, or awe of God. It is a healthy respect of God's perfect ways and His power. God still speaks, still reveals Himself to His people, still does miracles. Our response should always be reverence and awe that the all-powerful God works in our lives. **Topic: Fear/Fear of God**

**SOUL NOTE**

**Joy in Hardships** *(3:17-19)* Habakkuk envisioned the devastation and despair of the Judeans when the Babylonians invaded their land-barren fig trees, desolate vineyards, malnourished cattle and sheep. This pictured ruin for the nation. No wonder Habakkuk trembled in fear (3:16). But Habakkuk didn't allow fear to immobilize him. He

quieted his heart and cried to God for deliverance, knowing that whatever would happen, he would always be able to “rejoice in the LORD.” No matter what happens, God is with us. In that, we can rejoice. **Topic: Joy**

# Zephaniah



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# Zephaniah

When faced with a choice of hearing bad news and good news, most people elect to hear the bad news first. Perhaps the reason is that it's only after we really grasp the magnitude of a grim situation that we can fully appreciate the good. The Book of Zephaniah's prophecy is a classic example of this phenomenon. No other prophet paints a darker picture of God's judgment, or a brighter portrait of Israel's future glory.

Because of the nation's stubborn sinfulness, God raised up Zephaniah, a descendant of godly King Hezekiah. Like his contemporary Jeremiah, Zephaniah warned of terrible judgment to come. This was the worst possible bad news. But Zephaniah's message contained good news too-the hope that a change of direction would result in God's favor and mercy (2:1-3).

God used Zephaniah and a righteous king named Josiah to make a difference in Judah. During Josiah's reign, the people turned to God, destroyed their idols, and restored true worship according to the Law (2 Kin. 23:1-15).

After Josiah's death, however, the spiritual life of the nation plummeted to an all-time low. Judgment eventually came in the form of the Babylonian captivity.

Thankfully, neither Zephaniah nor history ends on a sour note. The good news-in fact, the *great* news-is that there remains a glorious future for the people of God (3:14-20). We only need put our souls in His hands.

**SOUL CONCERN IN**

## ZEPHANIAH

CRISES (3:14-17)

**1** The word of the LORD which came to Zephaniah the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hezekiah, in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah.

### THE GREAT DAY OF THE LORD

2 "I will utterly consume everything
From the face of the land,"
Says the LORD;
3 "I will consume man and beast;
I will consume the birds of the heavens,
The fish of the sea,
And the stumbling blocks[a] along with the wicked.
I will cut off man from the face of the land,"
Says the LORD.
4 "I will stretch out My hand against Judah,
And against all the inhabitants of Jerusalem.
I will cut off every trace of Baal from this place,
The names of the idolatrous priests[a] with the *pagan* priests-
5 Those who worship the host of heaven on the housetops;
Those who worship and swear *oaths* by the LORD,
But who *also* swear by Milcom;[a]
6 Those who have turned back from *following* the LORD,
And have not sought the LORD, nor inquired of Him."
7 Be silent in the presence of the Lord GOD;
For the day of the LORD *is* at hand,
For the LORD has prepared a sacrifice;
He has invited[a] His guests.
8 "And it shall be,
In the day of the LORD's sacrifice,
That I will punish the princes and the king's children,
And all such as are clothed with foreign apparel.
9 In the same day I will punish
All those who leap over the threshold,[a]
Who fill their masters' houses with violence and deceit.

10 “And there shall be on that day,” says the LORD,
“The sound of a mournful cry from the Fish Gate,
A wailing from the Second Quarter,
And a loud crashing from the hills.
11 Wail, you inhabitants of Maktesh![a]
For all the merchant people are cut down;
All those who handle money are cut off.
12 “And it shall come to pass at that time
*That* I will search Jerusalem with lamps,
And punish the men Who are settled in complacency,[a]
Who say in their heart,
‘The LORD will not do good,
Nor will He do evil.’
13 Therefore their goods shall become booty,
And their houses a desolation;
They shall build houses, but not inhabit *them;* They shall plant vineyards, but not drink their wine.”
14 The great day of the LORD *is* near;
*It is* near and hastens quickly.
The noise of the day of the LORD is bitter;
There the mighty men shall cry out.
15 That day *is* a day of wrath,
A day of trouble and distress,
A day of devastation and desolation,
A day of darkness and gloominess,
A day of clouds and thick darkness,
16 A day of trumpet and alarm
Against the fortified cities
And against the high towers.
17 “I will bring distress upon men,
And they shall walk like blind men,
Because they have sinned against the LORD;
Their blood shall be poured out like dust,
And their flesh like refuse.”
18 Neither their silver nor their gold

Shall be able to deliver them
In the day of the LORD's wrath;
But the whole land shall be devoured
By the fire of His jealousy,
For He will make speedy riddance
Of all those who dwell in the land.

## SOUL NOTE

**Be Silent** *(1:7)* In Zephaniah's day, King Josiah was leading a spiritual revival. He was abolishing idol worship and reestablishing the worship of God (2 Chr. 34). The prophet Zephaniah reminded the people that God wouldn't tolerate wickedness, complacency, or idolatry (1:4, 5, 12, 13; 2:1, 2). He told the people to "be silent in the presence of the Lord GOD." In that silence, they should consider their sins and the punishment they deserved. At times, we need to stop our activity and stand in silence before God. Only then will we be able to hear what He has to say to us. **Topic: Praise and Worship**

## A CALL TO REPENTANCE

**2** Gather yourselves together, yes, gather together,
O undesirable[a] nation,

2 Before the decree is issued,
*Or* the day passes like chaff,
Before the LORD's fierce anger comes upon you,
Before the day of the LORD's anger comes upon you!
3 Seek the LORD, all you meek of the earth, Who have upheld His justice.
Seek righteousness, seek humility.
It may be that you will be hidden
In the day of the LORD's anger.

## JUDGMENT ON NATIONS

4 For Gaza shall be forsaken,
And Ashkelon desolate;
They shall drive out Ashdod at noonday,
And Ekron shall be uprooted.
5 Woe to the inhabitants of the seacoast,
The nation of the Cherethites!
The word of the LORD *is* against you,
O Canaan, land of the Philistines:
"I will destroy you;
So there shall be no inhabitant."
6 The seacoast shall be pastures,
With shelters[a] for shepherds and folds for flocks.
7 The coast shall be for the remnant of the house of Judah;
They shall feed *their* flocks there;
In the houses of Ashkelon they shall lie down at evening.
For the LORD their God will intervene for them,
And return their captives.
8 "I have heard the reproach of Moab,
And the insults of the people of Ammon,
With which they have reproached My people,

And made arrogant threats against their borders.
9 Therefore, as I live,”
Says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel,
“Surely Moab shall be like Sodom,
And the people of Ammon like Gomorrah-
Overrun with weeds and saltpits,
And a perpetual desolation.
The residue of My people shall plunder them,
And the remnant of My people shall possess them.”
10 This they shall have for their pride,
Because they have reproached and made arrogant threats
Against the people of the LORD of hosts.
11 The LORD *will be* awesome to them,
For He will reduce to nothing all the gods of the earth;
*People* shall worship Him,
Each one from his place,
Indeed all the shores of the nations.
12 “You Ethiopians also,
You shall be slain by My sword.”
13 And He will stretch out His hand against the north,
Destroy Assyria,
And make Nineveh a desolation,
As dry as the wilderness.
14 The herds shall lie down in her midst,
Every beast of the nation.
Both the pelican and the bittern
Shall lodge on the capitals *of* her *pillars;*
Their voice shall sing in the windows;
Desolation *shall be* at the threshold;
For He will lay bare the cedar work.
15 This is the rejoicing city
That dwelt securely,
That said in her heart,
“I *am it,* and *there is* none besides me.”
How has she become a desolation,

A place for beasts to lie down!
Everyone who passes by her
Shall hiss and shake his fist.

## THE WICKEDNESS OF JERUSALEM

**3** Woe to her who is rebellious and polluted,
To the oppressing city!

2 She has not obeyed *His* voice,
She has not received correction;
She has not trusted in the LORD,
She has not drawn near to her God.

3 Her princes in her midst *are* roaring lions;
Her judges *are* evening wolves
That leave not a bone till morning.

4 Her prophets are insolent, treacherous people;
Her priests have polluted the sanctuary,
They have done violence to the law.

5 The LORD *is* righteous in her midst,
He will do no unrighteousness.
Every morning He brings His justice to light;
He never fails,
But the unjust knows no shame.

6 "I have cut off nations,
Their fortresses are devastated;
I have made their streets desolate,
With none passing by.
Their cities are destroyed;
*There is* no one, no inhabitant.

7 I said, 'Surely you will fear Me,
You will receive instruction'-
So that her dwelling would not be cut off,
*Despite* everything for which I punished her.
But they rose early and corrupted all their deeds.

## A FAITHFUL REMNANT

8 "Therefore wait for Me," says the LORD,
"Until the day I rise up for plunder;[a]

My determination *is* to gather the nations
To My assembly of kingdoms,
To pour on them My indignation,
All My fierce anger;
All the earth shall be devoured
With the fire of My jealousy.
9 "For then I will restore to the peoples a pure language,
That they all may call on the name of the LORD,
To serve Him with one accord.
10 From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia
My worshipers,
The daughter of My dispersed ones,
Shall bring My offering.
11 In that day you shall not be shamed for any of your deeds
In which you transgress against Me;
For then I will take away from your midst
Those who rejoice in your pride,
And you shall no longer be haughty
In My holy mountain.
12 I will leave in your midst
A meek and humble people,
And they shall trust in the name of the LORD.
13 The remnant of Israel shall do no unrighteousness
And speak no lies,
Nor shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth;
For they shall feed *their* flocks and lie down,
And no one shall make *them* afraid."

## JOY IN GOD'S FAITHFULNESS

14 Sing, O daughter of Zion!
Shout, O Israel!
Be glad and rejoice with all *your* heart,
O daughter of Jerusalem!
15 The LORD has taken away your judgments,
He has cast out your enemy.

The King of Israel, the LORD, *is* in your midst;
You shall see[a] disaster no more.
16 In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem:
"Do not fear; Zion, let not your hands be weak.

> "The LORD your God in your midst, the Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing."
> ZEPHANIAH 3:17

17 The LORD your God in your midst,
The Mighty One, will save;
He will rejoice over you with gladness,
He will quiet *you* with His love,
He will rejoice over you with singing."
18 "I will gather those who sorrow over the appointed assembly,
Who are among you,
*To whom* its reproach *is* a burden.
19 Behold, at that time
I will deal with all who afflict you;
I will save the lame,
And gather those who were driven out;
I will appoint them for praise and fame
In every land where they were put to shame.
20 At that time I will bring you back,
Even at the time I gather you;
For I will give you fame and praise
Among all the peoples of the earth,
When I return your captives before your eyes,"
Says the LORD.

# CRISES AND CRISIS INTERVENTION

## H. NORMAN WRIGHT

## (Zephaniah 3:14-17)

**A** friend once told about these experiences in a yearly family newsletter: That year, her father died. Two friends died of cancer and she knew of seven others who received a cancer diagnosis. She and her husband were in a head-on car crash. Her husband had kidney stone surgery. Two friends went to prison. Her brother was alcoholic and suicidal, but entered an AA program. Her brother-in-law left his wife and family due to cocaine abuse. To top it all, one day she was having lunch with a friend at a nearby ocean pier when, right in front of them, an elderly man in a wheelchair pitched himself over the rail into the ocean in an attempted suicide.

You're probably thinking, "How could anyone survive all that?" But she *is* surviving her year-long series of crises-with God's help.

By contrast, another friend's crisis threw him into a tailspin that lasted years. He was driving home from work when he came upon an accident between a car and a motorcycle. As he approached the downed motorcycle, a disturbing recognition washed over him. It was his 19-year-old son. Dead.

Our crises are probably not so severe; even so, they are still major events for us, and we hurt.

## FACING CRISES

A crisis is a sudden upsetting event-sometimes foreseen, often not-that strikes people in a vulnerable place at a bad time. The English word is based on the Greek term *krinein*, which means “to decide.” Crises are life-changing, in part, because decisions must be made that nearly always alter the course of life. The Chinese term for crisis is made of two symbols that denote both danger and opportunity. Crises are dangerous opportunities for new living.

Crises are experienced in a vast number of ways, depending on the person experiencing them. Generally however, *the crisis state* is an experience of acute stress, a discomfort that often involves high anxiety, mental confusion, sweating, gastric distress, elevated heart rate, depression, catastrophic thinking, hopelessness, fear, and apathy. People in crisis often behave in counterproductive ways-showing poor judgment, making rash decisions, abusing alcohol or drugs, driving dangerously, becoming easily angered, being too aggressive and argumentative, or being too passive and helpless.

*The Outcomes of Crises*

There are three possible outcomes to every crisis. Life eventually gets better, gets worse, or returns to the same level. Which outcome people experience has a lot to do with how they decide, act, and live through the crisis.

Often the difference between a good or bad outcome is whether people draw closer to God or push Him away. Many reject the Lord, blaming Him for the crisis. Or they grope for a spiritual anchor without finding it, because they are not disciplined in their relationship with God. On the other hand, a crisis can crush coldheartedness and shake people out of spiritual lethargy, perhaps making them amenable to a deep work of the Holy Spirit. The psalmist put it this way, “It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes” (Ps. 119:71).

*Coping with Crises*

We cannot avoid crises, so we would do well to let God work His wonders in us for good and glorious outcomes. There are also positive steps people can take to help them weather the crisis.

They should accept that they are in crisis and admit that it hurts. Denial doesn't help. They must expect that they will experience strong feelings of anger at God, guilt, self-blame, blame of others, bewilderment, apathy, desperation, and helplessness. Some people in crisis also struggle with deep misery, intense self-loathing or self-hatred, and suicidal feelings. These are not abnormal, and should not raise a major alarm unless they begin to dominate a person's life or one begins to cross the threshold of self-destructive behavior.

They should surround themselves with truly helpful people. Crisis helpers do not give unwanted advice and are not shocked by feelings and attitudes. They can handle anger toward God and even tears. They can empathize, yet remain hopeful of a good outcome. They know that working through a crisis takes time and that recovery involves many slips and falls. They know how to invite God into the mess, but do not spiritualize everything. Real helpers are there to honestly shoulder part of the burden and help others carry what would otherwise be a crushing grief.

Since crises come and go throughout life, it is especially important for people to develop a mature resilience, an increasing ability to cope with, learn from, and help others in the crises of life. Crisis requires change. We should all learn to plan and prepare for change, becoming less and less *reactive*, and more and more *proactive* in living. We can get out of debt and salt away some money to alleviate some potential future crises. We can improve our health and carve out time to read, play, and enjoy life more effectively. We should have a plan for the major life transitions that we know we will face-marriage, having children, changing jobs or careers, children leaving home, mid-life transitions, old age and retirement, illnesses and

surgeries, death in the family.

Finally, we can treasure these words: “Do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you . . . but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy” (1 Pet. 4:12, 13).

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of crises include:

- Deuteronomy 33:27
- Psalms 18:30; 34:19; 55:22
- Isaiah 43:2
- Habakkuk 3:17-19
- Romans 8:28
- 2 Corinthians 1:3-11; 4:7-10
- Hebrews 13:5
- 1 Peter 4:19

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on crises at Psalm 46:1. See also the personality profile of David And Absalom-a Crisis In The Making.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Resting in God** *(3:11-13)* Zephaniah described the wicked (3:1, 2), contrasting them with the righteous (3:9, 12). The wicked Judeans had been rebellious, disobedient, and far from God. Despite of all God’s warnings, the people continued to sin. In sharp contrast, true believers humbly waited on God; they were meek and humble people,

the kind who “trust in the name of the LORD.” Like this faithful remnant, believers who trust in God know that He will be with them, and they will allow no one to make them afraid. With God on our side, we have everything we need. **Topic: Trust**

## SOUL NOTE

**Rejoicing in God** *(3:14-17)* When is joy felt most intensely? In health? In prosperity? Only when all is well? Strangely enough, the most profound joy often occurs during hardship. Zephaniah described this phenomena. The people had experienced the misery of suffering under God’s judgment on their sins. But one day God would forgive them and free them to rejoice in Him. He would deliver His people and quiet their troubled hearts. He would accept their joyful praise, and He would rejoice in them as well. **Topic: Joy**

# Haggai



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# Haggai

"I just can't do it anymore," mutters the burned-out employee. "I can't take it much longer," sighs the belittled spouse. "I don't think I can go on," whispers the exhausted believer. "I'm too busy to care," spouts the harried executive. Events and relationships seem to conspire to steal our resolve. So what happens when we lose our motivation, especially our *spiritual* motivation?

During their seventy years in Babylonian captivity, the Jewish people dreamed of being back in Jerusalem and worshiping in a restored temple. In 539 B.C., after the Persians conquered Babylon, King Cyrus abruptly decreed that the Jews could return to their homeland. Surprisingly, only a small number accepted this offer, and most of them quickly became preoccupied with building their own homes. They had lost their spiritual motivation, but this time from self-centeredness. God raised up the prophet Haggai to motivate His distracted people. Haggai forcefully informed his Jewish brethren that they were not making God a priority. Their neglect of the temple was really a neglect of the Lord. Haggai is one of only three Old Testament prophets who ministered after the Exile (the others being Zechariah and Malachi). Together with the Judean governor Zerubbabel (1:12) and the priest Ezra (Ezra 7:1), Haggai attempted to "jump start" the Jewish people.

Haggai reminds us that good intentions are not good if our day-to-day priorities are wrong. "I'll get around to it," we tell ourselves. But sooner becomes later, and the job never gets done. If your soul is dragging, let Haggai motivate you to God-honoring action!

## THE COMMAND TO BUILD GOD'S HOUSE

**1** In the second year of King Darius, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, saying, 2"Thus speaks the LORD of hosts, saying: 'This people says, "The time has not come, the time that the LORD's house should be built." ' "

3Then the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet, saying, 4"*Is it* time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple[a] *to lie* in ruins?" 5Now therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts: "Consider your ways!

6 "You have sown much, and bring in little;
You eat, but do not have enough;
You drink, but you are not filled with
drink;
You clothe yourselves, but no one is
warm;
And he who earns wages, Earns wages *to put* into a bag with
holes."

7Thus says the LORD of hosts: "Consider your ways! 8Go up to the mountains and bring wood and build the temple, that I may take pleasure in it and be glorified," says the LORD. 9"*You* looked for much, but indeed *it came to* little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why?" says the LORD of hosts. "Because of My house that *is in* ruins, while every one of you runs to his own house. 10Therefore the heavens above you withhold the dew, and the earth withholds its fruit. 11For I called for a drought on the land and the mountains, on the grain and the new wine and the oil, on whatever the ground brings forth, on men and livestock, and on all the labor of *your* hands."

## THE PEOPLE'S OBEDIENCE

12Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the LORD their God

had sent him; and the people feared the presence of the LORD. [13]Then Haggai, the LORD's messenger, spoke the LORD's message to the people, saying, "I *am* with you, says the LORD." [14]So the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and worked on the house of the LORD of hosts, their God, [15]on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month, in the second year of King Darius.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Considering Our Ways** *(1:3-7)* People spend money on what they consider most important. Haggai pointed out that the people in Jerusalem were valuing the comforts of their own homes over God. Their homes had paneled roofs and decorated walls, while the temple-God's house-remained in ruins. They had spent their resources on what they valued. Haggai's message was: "Consider your ways!" It's a message to us as well. We need to reevaluate where we spend our resources. Do our activities and spending habits reflect our dedication to God? **Topic: Money**

## THE COMING GLORY OF GOD'S HOUSE

**2** In the seventh *month,* on the twenty-first of the month, the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet, saying: [2]"Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of the people, saying: [3]'Who is left among you who saw this temple[a] in its former glory? And how do you see it now? In comparison with it, *is this* not in your eyes as nothing? [4]Yet now be strong, Zerubbabel,' says the LORD; 'and be strong, Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest; and be strong, all you people of the land,' says the LORD, 'and work; for I *am* with you,' says the LORD of hosts. [5]'*According to* the word that I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt, so My Spirit remains among you; do not fear!'

[6]"For thus says the LORD of hosts: 'Once more (it *is* a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; [7]and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations,[a] and I will fill this temple with glory,' says the LORD of hosts. [8]'The silver *is* Mine, and the gold *is* Mine,' says the LORD of hosts. [9]'The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former,' says the LORD of hosts. 'And in this place I will give peace,' says the LORD of hosts."

> " 'Yet now be strong, Zerubbabel,' says the LORD; 'and be strong, Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest; and be strong, all you people of the land,' says the LORD, 'and work; for I *am* with you,' says the LORD of hosts."
> HAGGAI 2:4

## THE PEOPLE ARE DEFILED

[10]On the twenty-fourth *day* of the ninth *month,* in the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet, saying, [11]"Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'Now, ask the priests *concerning the* law, saying, [12]"If one carries holy meat in the fold of his garment, and with the edge he touches bread or stew, wine or oil, or any food, will it become holy?" ' "

Then the priests answered and said, “No.”

13 And Haggai said, “If *one who is* unclean *because* of a dead body touches
any of these, will it be unclean?”

So the priests answered and said, “It shall be unclean.”

14 Then Haggai answered and said, “ ‘So is this people, and so is this nation
before Me,’ says the LORD, ‘and so is every work of their hands; and what
they offer there is unclean.

**PROMISED BLESSING**

15 ‘And now, carefully consider from this day forward: from before stone
was laid upon stone in the temple of the LORD- 16 since those *days,* when *one*
came to a heap of twenty ephahs, there were *but* ten; when *one* came to the
wine vat to draw out fifty baths from the press, there were *but* twenty. 17 I
struck you with blight and mildew and hail in all the labors of your hands; yet
you did not *turn* to Me,’ says the LORD. 18 ‘Consider now from this day
forward, from the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, from the day that the
foundation of the LORD’s temple was laid-consider it: 19 Is the seed still in the
barn? As yet the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate, and the olive tree have
not yielded *fruit. But* from this day I will bless *you.*’ ”

**ZERUBBABEL CHOSEN AS A SIGNET**

20 And again the word of the LORD came to Haggai on the twenty-fourth
day of the month, saying, 21 “Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying:

‘ I will shake heaven and earth.

22 I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms;
I will destroy the strength of the Gentile
kingdoms.
I will overthrow the chariots
And those who ride in them;
The horses and their riders shall come
down,
Every one by the sword of his brother.

23 ‘In that day,’ says the LORD of hosts, ‘I will take you, Zerubbabel My

servant, the son of Shealtiel,' says the LORD, 'and will make you like a signet *ring;* for I have chosen you,' says the LORD of hosts."

# Zechariah



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# Zechariah

Long ago, a famous architect visited the construction site of the magnificent St. Paul's in London. He approached one worker and inquired, "What are you doing?" "I'm laying brick," the grim-faced laborer replied flatly. Finding another worker, the architect asked the same question. With excitement this man exclaimed, "I'm building a great cathedral!"

Catching the vision makes all the difference. Only when we sense that we're part of something *big* do our souls fill with enthusiasm and our lives take on a renewed sense of purpose.

Zechariah, like his contemporary Haggai, was a prophet called to minister to the unmotivated inhabitants of Jerusalem after their return from captivity. Appropriately, Zechariah's name means "God remembers," for this note of hope permeates the whole book. Through a series of visions and messages, Zechariah reminded the people that God had not forgotten His covenant with Israel. A time of blessing was coming; therefore, the people of God should live in the present with that future promise in view. Rather than rebuking his disheartened countrymen for their failure to complete the temple, Zechariah attempted to motivate them by pointing them toward a future day when the glory of the long-awaited Messiah would fill that holy place.

If your soul feels spiritually dry, if you are struggling with motivation, if you seem to have lost your sense of purpose in life, let the ancient prophet Zechariah encourage you. God has an eternal plan that nothing can thwart, and He wants *you* to be part of it!

**SOUL CONCERN IN**

## ZECHARIAH

TRUTH (8:16, 17)

## A CALL TO REPENTANCE

**1** In the eighth month of the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD
came to Zechariah the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet,
saying, 2 "The LORD has been very angry with your fathers. 3 Therefore say to
them, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts: "Return to Me," says the LORD of hosts,
"and I will return to you," says the LORD of hosts. 4 "Do not be like your
fathers, to whom the former prophets preached, saying, 'Thus says the LORD
of hosts: "Turn now from your evil ways and your evil deeds." ' But they did
not hear nor heed Me," says the LORD.

5 "Your fathers, where *are* they?
And the prophets, do they live forever?
6 Yet surely My words and My statutes,
Which I commanded My servants the prophets,
Did they not overtake your fathers?

"So they returned and said:

'Just as the LORD of hosts determined to do to us,
According to our ways and according to our deeds,
So He has dealt with us.' " ' "

## VISION OF THE HORSES

7 On the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month, which is the month
Shebat, in the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came to Zechariah
the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet: 8 I saw by night, and
behold, a man riding on a red horse, and it stood among the myrtle trees in
the hollow; and behind him *were* horses: red, sorrel, and white. 9 Then I said,
"My lord, what *are* these?" So the angel who talked with me said to me, "I
will show you what they *are.* "

10 And the man who stood among the myrtle trees answered and said,
"These *are the ones* whom the LORD has sent to walk to and fro throughout
the earth."

[11]So they answered the Angel of the LORD, who stood among the myrtle trees, and said, “We have walked to and fro throughout the earth, and behold, all the earth is resting quietly.”

### THE LORD WILL COMFORT ZION

[12]Then the Angel of the LORD answered and said, “O LORD of hosts, how long will You not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which You were angry these seventy years?”

[13]And the LORD answered the angel who talked to me, *with* good *and* comforting words. [14]So the angel who spoke with me said to me, “Proclaim, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts:

“I am zealous for Jerusalem
And for Zion with great zeal.

[15] I am exceedingly angry with the nations at ease;
For I was a little angry,
And they helped-*but* with evil *intent.*”
[16]‘Therefore thus says the LORD:

“I am returning to Jerusalem with mercy;
My house shall be built in it,” says the LORD of hosts,
“And a *surveyor’s* line shall be stretched out over Jerusalem.” ’
[17]“Again proclaim, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts:
“My cities shall again spread out through prosperity;
The LORD will again comfort Zion,
And will again choose Jerusalem.” ’ ”

### VISION OF THE HORNS

[18]Then I raised my eyes and looked, and there *were* four horns. [19]And I said to the angel who talked with me, “What *are* these?”

So he answered me, “These *are* the horns that have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem.”

[20]Then the LORD showed me four craftsmen. [21]And I said, “What are these

coming to do?”

So he said, “These *are* the horns that scattered Judah, so that no one could lift up his head; but the craftsmen[a] are coming to terrify them, to cast out the horns of the nations that lifted up *their* horn against the land of Judah to scatter it.”

**SOUL NOTE**

**God’s Comfort** *(1:17)* Zechariah rehearsed Judah’s checkered past. God had warned the Judeans to abandon their wicked ways, but the people had refused. So God punished them by allowing their enemies to take them into captivity. Despite the people’s disobedience, however, God showed mercy on them. He put in the hearts of King Cyrus, and later King Darius, to allow a group of exiles to return to Jerusalem. Once more they would live in their land, fulfilling Zechariah’s prophecy that the Lord “will again comfort Zion.” When people turn from their sin, God promises comfort and restoration.
**Topic: Restoration**

## VISION OF THE MEASURING LINE

**2** Then I raised my eyes and looked, and behold, a man with a measuring
line in his hand. [2]So I said, “Where are you going?”

And he said to me, “To measure Jerusalem, to see what *is* its width and what *is* its length.”

[3]And there *was* the angel who talked with me, going out; and another angel was coming out to meet him, [4]who said to him, “Run, speak to this young man, saying: ‘Jerusalem shall be inhabited *as* towns without walls, because of the multitude of men and livestock in it. [5]For I,’ says the LORD, ‘will be a wall of fire all around her, and I will be the glory in her midst.’ ”

## FUTURE JOY OF ZION AND MANY NATIONS

[6]“Up, up! Flee from the land of the north,” says the LORD; “for I have spread you abroad like the four winds of heaven,” says the LORD. [7]Up, Zion! Escape, you who dwell with the daughter of Babylon.”

[8]For thus says the LORD of hosts: “He sent Me after glory, to the nations which plunder you; for he who touches you touches the apple of His eye. [9]For surely I will shake My hand against them, and they shall become spoil for their servants. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me.

[10]“Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion! For behold, I am coming and I will dwell in your midst,” says the LORD. [11]“Many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and they shall become My people. And I will dwell in your midst. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me to you. [12]And the LORD will take possession of Judah as His inheritance in the Holy Land, and will again choose Jerusalem. [13]Be silent, all flesh, before the LORD, for He is aroused from His holy habitation!”

## VISION OF THE HIGH PRIEST

**3** Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the
LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to oppose him. [2]And the LORD
said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, Satan! The LORD who has chosen
Jerusalem rebuke you! *Is* this not a brand plucked from the fire?"

[3]Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and was standing before
the Angel.

[4]Then He answered and spoke to those who stood before Him, saying,
"Take away the filthy garments from him." And to him He said, "See, I have
removed your iniquity from you, and I will clothe you with rich robes."

[5]And I said, "Let them put a clean turban on his head."

So they put a clean turban on his head, and they put the clothes on him.
And the Angel of the LORD stood by.

## THE COMING BRANCH

[6]Then the Angel of the LORD admonished Joshua, saying,

[7]"Thus says the LORD of hosts:

' If you will walk in My ways,
And if you will keep My command,
Then you shall also judge My house,
And likewise have charge of My courts;
I will give you places to walk
Among these who stand here.

[8] 'Hear, O Joshua, the high priest,
You and your companions who sit before you,
For they are a wondrous sign;
For behold, I am bringing forth My Servant the BRANCH.

[9] For behold, the stone That I have laid before Joshua:
Upon the stone *are* seven eyes.
Behold, I will engrave its inscription,'
Says the LORD of hosts,
' And I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.

10 In that day,’ says the LORD of hosts,
‘Everyone will invite his neighbor
Under his vine and under his fig tree.’ ”

## VISION OF THE LAMPSTAND AND OLIVE TREES

**4** Now the angel who talked with me came back and wakened me, as a man
who is wakened out of his sleep. 2And he said to me, “What do you see?”

So I said, “I am looking, and there *is* a lamp-stand of solid gold with a bowl on top of it, and on the *stand* seven lamps with seven pipes to the seven lamps. 3Two olive trees *are* by it, one at the right of the bowl and the other at its left.” 4So I answered and spoke to the angel who talked with me, saying, “What *are* these, my lord?”

5Then the angel who talked with me answered and said to me, “Do you not know what these are?”

And I said, “No, my lord.”
6So he answered and said to me:

“This *is* the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel:
‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’
Says the LORD of hosts.

7 ‘Who *are* you, O great mountain?
Before Zerubbabel *you shall become* a plain!
And he shall bring forth the capstone
With shouts of “Grace, grace to it!” ’ ”

8Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying:

9 “The hands of Zerubbabel
Have laid the foundation of this temple;[a]
His hands shall also finish *it.*
Then you will know
That the LORD of hosts has sent Me to you.
10 For who has despised the day of small things?
For these seven rejoice to see The plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel.
They are the eyes of the LORD,
Which scan to and fro throughout the whole earth.”

11 Then I answered and said to him, “What *are* these two olive trees-at the
right of the lampstand and at its left?” 12 And I further answered and said to
him, “What *are these* two olive branches that *drip* into the receptacles[a] of the
two gold pipes from which the golden *oil* drains?”

13 Then he answered me and said, “Do you not know what these *are?*”

And I said, “No, my lord.”

14 So he said, “These *are* the two anointed ones, who stand beside the Lord
of the whole earth.”

**SOUL NOTE**

**By God’s Spirit** *(4:6)* Zechariah predicted the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem-something that appeared impossible. The returning exiles had laid the foundation of the temple and even had built an altar (Ezra 3:2; 5:16), but the work had stopped. God promised through Zechariah that the temple would indeed be rebuilt: “not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit.” God would accomplish what seemed impossible. The promise is true today. God’s people can do what may seem impossible when they work not by their might and power, but by God’s Spirit.
**Topic: Presence of the Holy Spirit**

## VISION OF THE FLYING SCROLL

**5** Then I turned and raised my eyes, and saw there a flying scroll.

2 And he said to me, “What do you see?”

So I answered, “I see a flying scroll. Its length *is* twenty cubits and its width ten cubits.”

3 Then he said to me, “This *is* the curse that goes out over the face of the whole earth: ‘Every thief shall be expelled,’ according *to* this side of *the scroll;* and, ‘Every perjurer shall be expelled,’ according *to* that side of it.”

4 “I will send out *the curse,*” says the LORD of hosts;
“It shall enter the house of the thief
And the house of the one who swears falsely by My name.
It shall remain in the midst of his house
And consume it, with its timber and stones.”

## VISION OF THE WOMAN IN A BASKET

5 Then the angel who talked with me came out and said to me, “Lift your eyes now, and see what this *is* that goes forth.”

6 So I asked, “What *is* it?” And he said, “It *is* a basket[a] that is going forth.”

He also said, “This *is* their resemblance throughout the earth: 7 Here *is* a lead disc lifted up, and this *is* a woman sitting inside the basket”; 8 then he said, “This *is* Wickedness!” And he thrust her down into the basket, and threw the lead cover[a] over its mouth. 9 Then I raised my eyes and looked, and there *were* two women, coming with the wind in their wings; for they had wings like the wings of a stork, and they lifted up the basket between earth and heaven.

10 So I said to the angel who talked with me, “Where are they carrying the basket?”

11 And he said to me, “To build a house for it in the land of Shinar;[a] when it is ready, *the basket* will be set there on its base.”

## VISION OF THE FOUR CHARIOTS

**6** Then I turned and raised my eyes and looked, and behold, four chariots
*were* coming from between two mountains, and the mountains *were*
mountains of bronze. 2With the first chariot *were* red horses, with the second
chariot black horses, 3with the third chariot white horses, and with the fourth
chariot dappled horses-strong *steeds.* 4Then I answered and said to the angel
who talked with me, "What *are* these, my lord?"

5And the angel answered and said to me, "These *are* four spirits of heaven,
who go out from *their* station before the Lord of all the earth. 6The one with
the black horses is going to the north country, the white are going after them,
and the dappled are going toward the south country." 7Then the strong *steeds*
went out, eager to go, that they might walk to and fro throughout the earth.
And He said, "Go, walk to and fro throughout the earth." So they walked to
and fro throughout the earth. 8And He called to me, and spoke to me, saying,
"See, those who go toward the north country have given rest to My Spirit in
the north country."

## THE COMMAND TO CROWN JOSHUA

9Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying: 10"Receive *the gift* from
the captives-from Heldai, Tobijah, and Jedaiah, who have come from
Babylon-and go the same day and enter the house of Josiah the son of
Zephaniah. 11Take the silver and gold, make an elaborate crown, and set *it* on
the head of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest. 12Then speak to him,
saying, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, saying:

> "Behold, the Man whose name *is* the BRANCH!
> From His place He shall branch out,
> And He shall build the temple of the LORD;
>
> 13 Yes, He shall build the temple of the LORD.
> He shall bear the glory,
> And shall sit and rule on His throne;
> So He shall be a priest on His throne,

And the counsel of peace shall be between them both.” ’

14“Now the elaborate crown shall be for a memorial in the temple of the LORD for Helem,[a] Tobijah, Jedaiah, and Hen the son of Zephaniah. 15Even those from afar shall come and build the temple of the LORD. Then you shall know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me to you. And *this* shall come to pass if you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God.”

## OBEDIENCE BETTER THAN FASTING

**7** Now in the fourth year of King Darius it came to pass *that* the word of the LORD came to Zechariah, on the fourth day of the ninth month, Chislev, 2when *the people*[a] sent Sherezer,[b] with Regem-Melech and his men, *to* the house of God,[c] to pray before the LORD, 3*and* to ask the priests who *were* in the house of the LORD of hosts, and the prophets, saying, "Should I weep in the fifth month and fast as I have done for so many years?"

4Then the word of the LORD of hosts came to me, saying, 5"Say to all the people of the land, and to the priests: 'When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh *months* during those seventy years, did you really fast for Me-for Me? 6When you eat and when you drink, do you not eat and drink *for yourselves?*7*Should you* not *have obeyed* the words which the LORD proclaimed through the former prophets when Jerusalem and the cities around it were inhabited and prosperous, and the South[a] and the Lowland were inhabited?' "

## DISOBEDIENCE RESULTED IN CAPTIVITY

8Then the word of the LORD came to Zechariah, saying, 9"Thus says the LORD of hosts:

'Execute true justice,
Show mercy and compassion
Everyone to his brother.

10 Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless,
The alien or the poor.
Let none of you plan evil in his heart
Against his brother.'

11'But they refused to heed, shrugged their shoulders, and stopped their ears so that they could not hear. 12Yes, they made their hearts like flint, refusing to hear the law and the words which the LORD of hosts had sent by His Spirit through the former prophets. Thus great wrath came from the LORD of hosts. 13Therefore it happened, *that* just as He proclaimed and they would

not hear, so they called out and I would not listen," says the LORD of hosts. [14]"But I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations which they had not known. Thus the land became desolate after them, so that no one passed through or returned; for they made the pleasant land desolate."

**SOUL NOTE**

**Showing Compassion** *(7:8-10)* Although the Israelites had rebelled against God and had been exiled to Babylon, God had brought a small group of them back to Jerusalem. The exiles knew what it was like to experience God's compassion. Now, through Zechariah, God asked them to "show mercy and compassion" to each other. What did that mean? To look after widows, orphans, the poor, and those who were strangers in the land. All who have experienced God's mercy-the forgiveness Christ freely offers (Titus 3:4, 5)-need to show that same type of compassion to others. **Topic: Compassion**

**JERUSALEM, HOLY CITY OF THE FUTURE**

**8** Again the word of the LORD of hosts came, saying, 2"Thus says the LORD of hosts:

'I am zealous for Zion with great zeal;
With great fervor I am zealous for her.'

3"Thus says the LORD:

' I will return to Zion,
And dwell in the midst of Jerusalem.
Jerusalem shall be called the City of Truth,
The Mountain of the LORD of hosts,
The Holy Mountain.'

4"Thus says the LORD of hosts:

'Old men and old women shall again sit
In the streets of Jerusalem,
Each one with his staff in his hand
Because of great age.

5 The streets of the city Shall be full of boys and girls Playing in its streets.'

6"Thus says the LORD of hosts:
' If it is marvelous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days,
Will it also be marvelous in My eyes?'
Says the LORD of hosts.

7"Thus says the LORD of hosts:

' Behold, I will save My people from the land of the east
And from the land of the west;

8 I will bring them *back*,
And they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem.

They shall be My people
And I will be their God,
In truth and righteousness.’
9 “Thus says the LORD of hosts:

‘ Let your hands be strong,
You who have been hearing in these days
These words by the mouth of the prophets,
Who *spoke* in the day the foundation was laid For the house of the LORD of hosts,
That the temple might be built.

10 For before these days
Th*ere were* no wages for man nor any hire for beast;
Th*ere was* no peace from the enemy for whoever went out or came in;
For I set all men, everyone, against his neighbor.
11 ‘But now I *will* not *treat* the remnant of this people as in the former days,’ says the LORD of hosts.
12 ‘For the seed *shall be* prosperous,
The vine shall give its fruit,
The ground shall give her increase,
And the heavens shall give their dew-
I will cause the remnant of this people
To possess all these.
13 And it shall come to pass
Th*at* just as you were a curse among the nations,
O house of Judah and house of Israel,
So I will save you, and you shall be a blessing.
Do not fear,
Let your hands be strong.’
14 “For thus says the LORD of hosts:
‘Just as I determined to punish you
When your fathers provoked Me to wrath,’
Says the LORD of hosts,
‘And I would not relent,

15 So again in these days
I am determined to do good
To Jerusalem and to the house of Judah.
Do not fear.
16 These *are* the things you shall do:
Speak each man the truth to his neighbor;
Give judgment in your gates for truth, justice, and peace;
17 Let none of you think evil in your[a] heart against your neighbor;
And do not love a false oath.
For all these *are things* that I hate,'
Says the LORD."
18 Then the word of the LORD of hosts came to me, saying, 19 "Thus says the
LORD of hosts:
' The fast of the fourth *month,*
The fast of the fifth,
The fast of the seventh,
And the fast of the tenth,
Shall be joy and gladness and cheerful feasts
For the house of Judah.
Therefore love truth and peace.'
20 "Thus says the LORD of hosts:

'Peoples shall yet come,
Inhabitants of many cities;

21 The inhabitants of one *city* shall go to another, saying,
"Let us continue to go and pray before the LORD,
And seek the LORD of hosts.
I myself will go also."
22 Yes, many peoples and strong nations
Shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem,
And to pray before the LORD.'

23 "Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'In those days ten men from every
language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man, saying,

“Let us go with you, for we have heard *that* God *is* with you.” ’ ”

## DISCOVERING TRUTH

# FREDA V. CREWS

## (Zechariah 8:16, 17)

**The sincere searcher for truth, either directly or indirectly, asks such questions as: “What is truth? Where can I find it? How will I know when I find it?” Others, who lack sincerity in their search for truth, will settle for: “Truth is whatever is true for me.”**

The good news is that truth can be defined, found, and experienced. The reality is that what a person believes *does* matter.

### THE TRUTH ABOUT TRUTH

What is truth? Truth and reality refer to things as they really are, no matter what people may believe. Truth cannot be altered. Postmodernism advocates that “something is true if it is true for me.” Christians deny this definition because they believe in absolute truth, stating that truth is truth irrespective of people’s personal experience. What people call “truth” must be measured, not against what they believe, but against *absolute truth*. God is the Absolute and is the foundation for all truth because He *is* truth (Deut. 32:4; John 14:6). God loves truth and hates falsehood (Prov. 12:22); He cannot lie (Titus 1:2).

Because God is truth, He holds His people to His standard of truth:

"Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts" (Ps.51:6). Zechariah 8:16 instructs, "Speak each man the truth to his neighbor; give judgment in your gates for truth, justice, and peace." People of truth exhibit behavior that matches their words. They seek to be accurate, reliable, and trustworthy.

**HOWTO BE PEOPLE OF TRUTH**

We can petition the God of truth to help us, "Lead me in Your truth and teach me" (Ps. 25:5). The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth (John 16:13), will lead us to the truth of God's Word and give us receptive hearts and a submissive will so we can know, be, and do the truth. When we sincerely seek spiritual truth, the Holy Spirit, who guides us into all truth, will bear witness to truth in our spirit through the Word. We can *know* that we know the truth.

In order to be people of the truth, we must be authentic and genuine. In the corners of our very being we must be true to ourselves. Truth will not settle for anything less than honesty with ourselves and others. Truth will shine the light on the dark places in our lives so we can dust them out and clean them up.

When we know truth and are people of truth, we will behave accordingly. Truth will inspire us to live authentic lives and speak authentic words. Truth will refuse to rename sin in our own and others' lives. Truth will urge us to speak the truth in love as we seek to live in peace with each other. Truth will prompt spouses to be faithful to each other. Truth will stimulate parents to live consistent lives before their children. Truth will inspire us to pray that God's kingdom come and His will be done on earth as it is in heaven (Matt. 6:10).

**HOWTRUTH HELPS US**

Truth will prepare us to do battle with the forces of evil. Satan, the father of lies, will flee from the truth. The armor of God can protect us during the fiercest battles with the kingdom of darkness (Eph.

6:12-18). Truth must be in place before the rest of the armor will fit. Ephesians 6:14 says, “Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth. . . .”

Truth plays a significant role in helping relationships. In order for us to be able to help others, we must be truthful and require truthfulness from those we are attempting to help. We must be able to speak truthfully to hurting people, for they need to learn such truths as:

1. Their relationship with God is not based on their performance, but on His grace (Eph. 2:8, 9).

2. They become persons of value and worth in a relationship with Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:4, 5).

3. They need to accept the reality of their humanness with its failures and limitations (2 Cor. 12:9).

4. Their pain can be used by God to help them grow and mature (Rom. 8:28, 29).

5. They can experience joy and freedom in their Christian lives (Gal. 5:1).

**THE FREEDOM OF TRUTH**

Jesus promised that the truth will free us (John 8:32). When we know the truth as it is in Jesus Christ, we will experience freedom from the deceptions of Satan that blind us spiritually and bind us emotionally. The truth in Christ can break the chains of sin, deliver those who are imprisoned by the pain of their past, and convince them that they are persons of worth-setting them free from the prison of low self-esteem.

In Christ, we are free to be all that our heavenly Father intended us to be. The *truth* in Christ gives us the freedom we need to enjoy an intimate relationship with the God of truth: “The LORD is near to all

who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth" (Ps. 145:18). We can trust His truth forever: "The LORD is good; His mercy is everlasting, and His truth endures to all generations" (Ps. 100:5).

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of truth include:

- Psalm 119:30, 43, 142, 151, 160
- Proverbs 8:7; 12:17; 23:23
- John 3:21; 8:44-46; 14:17; 15:26; 16:13; 18:37
- Ephesians 1:13; 4:25

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on truth at John 8:31-36. See also the personality profile of Ananias-caught In a Lie.

## ISRAEL DEFENDED AGAINST ENEMIES

**9** The burden[a] of the word of the LORD Against the land of Hadrach,
And Damascus its resting place
(For the eyes of men And all the tribes of Israel Are on the LORD);

2 Also *against* Hamath, *which* borders on it,
And *against* Tyre and Sidon, though they are very wise.
3 For Tyre built herself a tower,
Heaped up silver like the dust,
And gold like the mire of the streets.
4 Behold, the LORD will cast her out;
He will destroy her power in the sea,
And she will be devoured by fire.
5 Ashkelon shall see *it* and fear;
Gaza also shall be very sorrowful;
And Ekron, for He dried up her expectation.
The king shall perish from Gaza,
And Ashkelon shall not be inhabited.
6 "A mixed race shall settle in Ashdod,
And I will cut off the pride of the Philistines.
7 I will take away the blood from his mouth,
And the abominations from between his teeth.
But he who remains, even he *shall be* for our God,
And shall be like a leader in Judah,
And Ekron like a Jebusite.
8 I will camp around My house
Because of the army,
Because of him who passes by and him who returns.
No more shall an oppressor pass through them,
For now I have seen with My eyes.

## THE COMING KING

9 "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!
Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem!

Behold, your King is coming to you;
He *is* just and having salvation,
Lowly and riding on a donkey,
A colt, the foal of a donkey.
10 I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim
And the horse from Jerusalem;
The battle bow shall be cut off.
He shall speak peace to the nations;
His dominion *shall be* ‘from sea to sea,
And from the River to the ends of the earth.’[a]

## GOD WILL SAVE HIS PEOPLE

11 “As for you also,
Because of the blood of your covenant,
I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit.
12 Return to the stronghold,
You prisoners of hope.
Even today I declare
*That* I will restore double to you.
13 For I have bent Judah, My *bow,*
Fitted the bow with Ephraim,
And raised up your sons, O Zion,
Against your sons, O Greece,
And made you like the sword of a mighty man.”
14 Then the LORD will be seen over them,
And His arrow will go forth like lightning.
The Lord GOD will blow the trumpet,
And go with whirlwinds from the south.
15 The LORD of hosts will defend them;
They shall devour and subdue with slingstones.
They shall drink *and* roar as if with wine;
They shall be filled *with blood* like basins,
Like the corners of the altar.
16 The LORD their God will save them in that day,
As the flock of His people.

For they *shall be like* the jewels of a crown,
Lifted like a banner over His land-
17 For how great is its[a] goodness
And how great its[b] beauty!
Grain shall make the young men thrive,
And new wine the young women.

**SOUL NOTE**

**A Humble King** *(9:9, 10)* Zechariah foresaw a King who would come to power riding on the back of a donkey, not a warhorse (yet). This prophecy was fulfilled when Jesus Christ rode into Jerusalem (Matt. 21:1-11). This King rode in victory into a city, onto a cross, and out of a tomb! Not only did Jesus' entry into Jerusalem fulfill Zechariah's prophecy, but it also showed Jesus' humility. Jesus became a humble human being so that He could identify with us. One day, however, Jesus *will* come as a conquering King to set things right in the world. **Topic: Knowing Jesus**

## RESTORATION OF JUDAH AND ISRAEL

**10** Ask the LORD for rain
In the time of the latter rain.[a]
The LORD will make flashing clouds;
He will give them showers of rain,
Grass in the field for everyone.

2 For the idols[a] speak delusion;
The diviners envision lies,
And tell false dreams;
They comfort in vain.
Therefore *the people* wend their way like sheep;
They are in trouble because *there is* no shepherd.
3 "My anger is kindled against the shepherds,
And I will punish the goatherds.
For the LORD of hosts will visit His flock,
The house of Judah,
And will make them as His royal horse in the battle.
4 From him comes the cornerstone,
From him the tent peg,
From him the battle bow,
From him every ruler[a] together.
5 They shall be like mighty men,
Who tread down *their enemies*
In the mire of the streets in the battle.
They shall fight because the LORD is with them,
And the riders on horses shall be put to shame.
6 "I will strengthen the house of Judah,
And I will save the house of Joseph.
I will bring them back,
Because I have mercy on them.
They shall be as though I had not cast them aside;
For I *am* the LORD their God,
And I will hear them.

7 *Those of* Ephraim shall be like a mighty man,
And their heart shall rejoice as if with wine.
Yes, their children shall see *it* and be glad;
Their heart shall rejoice in the LORD.
8 I will whistle for them and gather them,
For I will redeem them;
And they shall increase as they once increased.
9 "I will sow them among the peoples,
And they shall remember Me in far countries;
They shall live, together with their children,
And they shall return.
10 I will also bring them back from the land of Egypt,
And gather them from Assyria.
I will bring them into the land of Gilead and Lebanon,
Until no *more room* is found for them.
11 He shall pass through the sea with affliction,
And strike the waves of the sea:
All the depths of the River[a] shall dry up.
Then the pride of Assyria shall be brought down,
And the scepter of Egypt shall depart.
12 "So I will strengthen them in the LORD,
And they shall walk up and down in His name,"
Says the LORD.

**DESOLATION OF ISRAEL**

**11** Open your doors, O Lebanon,
That fire may devour your cedars.

2 Wail, O cypress, for the cedar has fallen,
Because the mighty *trees* are ruined.
Wail, O oaks of Bashan,
For the thick forest has come down.

3 *There is* the sound of wailing shepherds!
For their glory is in ruins.
*There is* the sound of roaring lions!
For the pride [a] of the Jordan is in ruins.

**PROPHECY OF THE SHEPHERDS**

4 Thus says the LORD my God, "Feed the flock for slaughter, 5 whose owners slaughter them and feel no guilt; those who sell them say, 'Blessed be the LORD, for I am rich'; and their shepherds do not pity them. 6 For I will no longer pity the inhabitants of the land," says the LORD. "But indeed I will give everyone into his neighbor's hand and into the hand of his king. They shall attack the land, and I will not deliver *them* from their hand."

7 So I fed the flock for slaughter, in particular the poor of the flock.[a] I took for myself two staffs: the one I called Beauty,[b] and the other I called Bonds;[c] and I fed the flock. 8 I dismissed the three shepherds in one month. My soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred me. 9 Then I said, "I will not feed you. Let what is dying die, and what is perishing perish. Let those that are left eat each other's flesh." 10 And I took my staff, Beauty, and cut it in two, that I might break the covenant which I had made with all the peoples. 11 So it was broken on that day. Thus the poor [a] of the flock, who were watching me, knew that it *was* the word of the LORD. 12 Then I said to them, "If it is agreeable to you, give *me* my wages; and if not, refrain." So they weighed out for my wages thirty *pieces* of silver.

13 And the LORD said to me, "Throw it to the potter"-that princely price they set on me. So I took the thirty *pieces* of silver and threw them into the

house of the LORD for the potter. [14]Then I cut in two my other staff, Bonds, that I might break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel.

[15]And the LORD said to me, “Next, take for yourself the implements of a foolish shepherd. [16]For indeed I will raise up a shepherd in the land *who* will not care for those who are cut off, nor seek the young, nor heal those that are broken, nor feed those that still stand. But he will eat the flesh of the fat and tear their hooves in pieces.

[17] “Woe to the worthless shepherd,
Who leaves the flock!
A sword *shall be* against his arm
And against his right eye;
His arm shall completely wither,
And his right eye shall be totally blinded.”

## THE COMING DELIVERANCE OF JUDAH

**12** The burden[a] of the word of the LORD against Israel. Thus says the LORD,
who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth, and
forms the spirit of man within him: 2"Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of
drunkenness to all the surrounding peoples, when they lay siege against
Judah and Jerusalem. 3And it shall happen in that day that I will make
Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples; all who would heave it away
will surely be cut in pieces, though all nations of the earth are gathered
against it. 4In that day," says the LORD, "I will strike every horse with
confusion, and its rider with madness; I will open My eyes on the house of
Judah, and will strike every horse of the peoples with blindness. 5And the
governors of Judah shall say in their heart, 'The inhabitants of Jerusalem *are*
my strength in the LORD of hosts, their God.' 6In that day I will make the
governors of Judah like a firepan in the woodpile, and like a fiery torch in the
sheaves; they shall devour all the surrounding peoples on the right hand and
on the left, but Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place-
Jerusalem.

7"The LORD will save the tents of Judah first, so that the glory of the house
of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem shall not become
greater than that of Judah. 8In that day the LORD will defend the inhabitants of
Jerusalem; the one who is feeble among them in that day shall be like David,
and the house of David *shall be* like God, like the Angel of the LORD before
them. 9It shall be in that day *that* I will seek to destroy all the nations that
come against Jerusalem.

## MOURNING FOR THE PIERCED ONE

10"And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of
Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me
whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for *his* only
*son*, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn. 11In that day there shall
be a great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning at Hadad Rimmon in the
plain of Megiddo.[a] 12And the land shall mourn, every family by itself: the
family of the house of David by itself, and their wives by themselves; the

family of the house of Nathan by itself, and their wives by themselves; [13]the family of the house of Levi by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of Shimei by itself, and their wives by themselves; [14]all the families that remain, every family by itself, and their wives by themselves.

## IDOLATRY CUT OFF

**13** “In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the
inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness.

2“It shall be in that day,” says the LORD of hosts, “*that* I will cut off the
names of the idols from the land, and they shall no longer be remembered. I
will also cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to depart from the land. 3It
shall come to pass *that* if anyone still prophesies, then his father and mother
who begot him will say to him, ‘You shall not live, because you have spoken
lies in the name of the LORD.’ And his father and mother who begot him shall
thrust him through when he prophesies.

4“And it shall be in that day *that* every prophet will be ashamed of his
vision when he prophesies; they will not wear a robe of coarse hair to
deceive. 5But he will say, ‘I *am* no prophet, I *am* a farmer; for a man taught
me to keep cattle from my youth.’ 6And *one* will say to him, ‘What are these
wounds between your arms?’[a] Then he will answer, ‘*Those* with which I was
wounded in the house of my friends.’

## THE SHEPHERD SAVIOR

7 “Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd,
Against the Man who is My Companion,”
Says the LORD of hosts.
“Strike the Shepherd, And the sheep will be scattered;
Then I will turn My hand against the little ones.
8 And it shall come to pass in all the land,”
Says the LORD,
“*That* two-thirds in it shall be cut off *and* die,
But *one*-third shall be left in it:
9 I will bring the *one*-third through the fire,
Will refine them as silver is refined,
And test them as gold is tested.
They will call on My name, And I will answer them.
I will say, ‘This *is* My people’;
And each one will say, ‘The LORD *is* my God.’ ”

**THE DAY OF THE LORD**

**14** Behold, the day of the LORD is coming,
And your spoil will be divided in your midst.
2 For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem;
The city shall be taken,
The houses rifled,
And the women ravished.
Half of the city shall go into captivity,
But the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city.
3 Then the LORD will go forth
And fight against those nations,
As He fights in the day of battle.
4 And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives,
Which faces Jerusalem on the east.
And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two,
From east to west,
*Making* a very large valley;
Half of the mountain shall move toward the north
And half of it toward the south.
5 Then you shall flee *through* My mountain valley,
For the mountain valley shall reach to Azal.
Yes, you shall flee
As you fled from the earthquake
In the days of Uzziah king of Judah.
Thus the LORD my God will come,
*And* all the saints with You.[a]
6 It shall come to pass in that day
*That* there will be no light;
The lights will diminish.
7 It shall be one day
Which is known to the LORD-
Neither day nor night.
But at evening time it shall happen

*That* it will be light.

8 And in that day it shall be
*That* living waters shall flow from Jerusalem,
Half of them toward the eastern sea
And half of them toward the western sea;
In both summer and winter it shall occur.

9 And the LORD shall be King over all the earth.
In that day it shall be-
"The LORD *is* one,"[a]
And His name one.

10 All the land shall be turned into a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem. *Jerusalem*[a] shall be raised up and inhabited in her place from Benjamin's Gate to the place of the First Gate and the Corner Gate, and *from* the Tower of Hananel to the king's winepresses.

11 The *people* shall dwell in it;
And no longer shall there be utter destruction,
But Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited.

12 And this shall be the plague with which the LORD will strike all the people who fought against Jerusalem:
Their flesh shall dissolve while they stand on their feet,
Their eyes shall dissolve in their sockets,
And their tongues shall dissolve in their mouths.

13 It shall come to pass in that day
*That* a great panic from the LORD will be among them.
Everyone will seize the hand of his neighbor,
And raise his hand against his neighbor's hand;

14 Judah also will fight at Jerusalem.
And the wealth of all the surrounding nations
Shall be gathered together:
Gold, silver, and apparel in great abundance.

15 Such also shall be the plague
On the horse *and* the mule,
On the camel and the donkey,
And on all the cattle that will be in those camps.

So *shall* this plague *be*.

**THE NATIONS WORSHIP THE KING**

16 And it shall come to pass *that* everyone who is left of all the nations
which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the
King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. 17 And it shall
be *that* whichever of the families of the earth do not come up to Jerusalem to
worship the King, the LORD of hosts, on them there will be no rain. 18 If the
family of Egypt will not come up and enter in, they *shall have* no *rain;* they
shall receive the plague with which the LORD strikes the nations who do not
come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. 19 This shall be the punishment of
Egypt and the punishment of all the nations that do not come up to keep the
Feast of Tabernacles.

20 In that day "HOLINESS TO THE LORD" shall be *engraved* on the bells
of the horses. The pots in the LORD's house shall be like the bowls before the
altar. 21 Yes, every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be holiness to the LORD
of hosts.[a] Everyone who sacrifices shall come and take them and cook in
them. In that day there shall no longer be a Canaanite in the house of the
LORD of hosts.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Dedicated to God** *(14:20, 21)* Zechariah ended his book with a vision of the "day of the LORD." On that day, the phrase "'HOLINESS TO THE LORD' shall be engraved on the bells of the horses. . . . Yes, every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be holiness to the LORD of hosts." To be "holy" means to be set apart for sacred use. In this new Jerusalem, even mundane utensils will be considered "holy": deliberately intended for God's work. Our lives should be so dedicated to God that even the most mundane tasks that we undertake

are sacred, holy, and done for the glory of God. **Topic: Spiritual Disciplines**

# Malachi



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# Malachi

Fear of aging seems to cause people to make radical lifestyle changes. They may switch to a low-fat diets, check their cholesterol, and begin an intense exercise program to help lose weight and fight off potential problems with the heart. But what about *spiritual* health? What are we doing to ensure healthy souls?

The Old Testament closes with a book about spiritual heart disease. In 430 B.C., the Israelites were wallowing in doubt and disillusionment. The priests were corrupt, and religious observances were a sham. As a result, the people were guilty of hypocrisy, idolatry, infidelity, divorce, materialism, and gross indifference to the things of God.

Enter the prophet Malachi. A contemporary of Nehemiah, he asked his countrymen a series of convicting questions designed to bring about repentance. But his pointed queries had no effect. So God eventually stopped speaking, and after Malachi, the nation received no further revelation from God until John the Baptist arrived on the scene some 400 years later.

Malachi reminds us that spiritual heart disease is slow but deadly. People who stop seeking God become discouraged and apathetic. Turning inward, they become self-absorbed and oblivious to God's voice. Though they may appear healthy on the outside because of their continuing religious activities, on the inside their hearts are becoming increasingly cold and hard. In time, the ugly symptoms of soul neglect will become obvious.

Don't be counted among those who succumb to spiritual heart disease. Through Malachi, let God examine your soul and prescribe what it needs most.

SOUL CONCERN IN

**MALACHI**

## CHILDREN PROBLEMS **(4:5, 6)**

**1** The burden[a] of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi.

## ISRAEL BELOVED OF GOD

2 "I have loved you," says the LORD.
"Yet you say, 'In what way have You
loved us?'
*Was* not Esau Jacob's brother?"
Says the LORD.
"Yet Jacob I have loved;
3 But Esau I have hated,
And laid waste his mountains and his
heritage
For the jackals of the wilderness."
4 Even though Edom has said,
"We have been impoverished,
But we will return and build the desolate
places,"
Thus says the LORD of hosts:
"They may build, but I will throw
down;
They shall be called the Territory of
Wickedness,
And the people against whom the LORD
will have indignation forever
5 Your eyes shall see,
And you shall say,
'The LORD is magnified beyond the
border of Israel.'

## POLLUTED OFFERINGS

6 "A son honors *his* father,
And a servant *his* master.
If then I am the Father,
Where *is* My honor?
And if I *am* a Master,

Where *is* My reverence?
Says the LORD of hosts
To you priests who despise My name.
Yet you say, ‘In what way have we
despised Your name?’
7 “You offer defiled food on My altar,
But say,
‘In what way have we defiled You?’
By saying, ‘
The table of the LORD is contemptible.’
8 And when you offer the blind as a
sacrifice,
*Is it* not evil?
And when you offer the lame and
sick,
*Is it* not evil?
Offer it then to your governor!
Would he be pleased with you?
Would he accept you favorably?”
Says the LORD of hosts.
9 “But now entreat God’s favor,
That He may be gracious to us.
*While* this is being *done* by your
hands,
Will He accept you favorably?”
Says the LORD of hosts.
10 “Who *is there* even among you who
would shut the doors,
So that you would not kindle fire *on* My
altar in vain?
I have no pleasure in you,
”Says the LORD of hosts,
“Nor will I accept an offering from your
hands.
11 For from the rising of the sun, even to its

going down,
My name *shall be* great among the
Gentiles;
In every place incense *shall be* offered to
My name,
And a pure offering;
For My name shall be great among the
nations,"
Says the LORD of hosts.
12 "But you profane it,
In that you say,
'The table of the LORD[a] is defiled;
And its fruit, its food, *is* contemptible.'
13 You also say,
'Oh, what a weariness!'
And you sneer at it,"
Says the LORD of hosts.
"And you bring the stolen, the lame, and
the sick;
Thus you bring an offering!
Should I accept this from your hand?"
Says the LORD.
14 "But cursed *be* the deceiver
Who has in his flock a male,
And takes a vow,
But sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished-
For I *am* a great King,"
Says the LORD of hosts,
"And My name *is to be* feared among the
nations.

## SOUL NOTE

**Only the Best** *(1:6-14)* When a guest is coming, we clean up the house and prepare refreshments. If the visitor were a dignitary, we would make more extensive preparations. If VIPs are treated like that here on earth, how much more honor should people show to God? Like the people of Malachi's day, we often relegate the heavenly King to the margins of our lives (1:6), giving Him however, we often relegate the heavenly King to the margins of our lives (1:6), giving Him less than our best. Our Savior deserves the best of our time, talent, and treasure. **Topic: Honor**

**CORRUPT PRIESTS**

**2** “And now, O priests, this commandment is for you.

2 If you will not hear,
And if you will not take *it* to heart,
To give glory to My name,”
Says the LORD of hosts,
“I will send a curse upon you,
And I will curse your blessings.
Yes, I have cursed them already,
Because you do not take *it* to heart.

3 “Behold, I will rebuke your descendants
And spread refuse on your faces,
The refuse of your solemn feasts;
And *one* will take you away with it.

4 Then you shall know that I have sent
this commandment to you,
That My covenant with Levi may
continue,”
Says the LORD of hosts.

5 “My covenant was with him, *one* of life
and peace,
And I gave them to him *that he might*
fear *Me;*
So he feared Me
And was reverent before My name.

6 The law of truth[a] was in his mouth,
And injustice was not found on his lips.
He walked with Me in peace and
equity,
And turned many away from iniquity.

7 “For the lips of a priest should keep
knowledge,
And *people* should seek the law from his

mouth;
For he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts.
8 But you have departed from the way;
You have caused many to stumble at the law.
You have corrupted the covenant of Levi,"
Says the LORD of hosts.
9 "Therefore I also have made you contemptible and base
Before all the people,
Because you have not kept My ways
But have shown partiality in the law."

## TREACHERY OF INFIDELITY

10 Have we not all one Father?
Has not one God created us?

Why do we deal treacherously with one another
By profaning the covenant of the fathers?

11 Judah has dealt treacherously,
And an abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem,
For Judah has profaned
The LORD's holy *institution* which He loves:
He has married the daughter of a foreign god.
12 May the LORD cut off from the tents of Jacob
The man who does this, being awake and aware,[a]

Yet who brings an offering to the LORD
of hosts!
13 And this is the second thing you do:
You cover the altar of the LORD with
tears,
With weeping and crying;
So He does not regard the offering
anymore,
Nor receive *it* with goodwill from your hands.
14 Yet you say, “For what reason?”
Because the LORD has been witness
Between you and the wife of your youth,
With whom you have dealt
treacherously;
Yet she is your companion
And your wife by covenant.
15 But did He not make *them* one,
Having a remnant of the Spirit?
And why one?
He seeks godly offspring.
Therefore take heed to your spirit,
And let none deal treacherously with the
wife of his youth.
16 “For the LORD God of Israel says
That He hates divorce,
For it covers one’s garment with
violence,”
Says the LORD of hosts.
“Therefore take heed to your spirit,
That you do not deal treacherously.”
17 You have wearied the LORD with your
words;
Yet you say,
“In what way have we wearied *Him?* ”
In that you say,

"Everyone who does evil
*Is* good in the sight of the LORD,
And He delights in them,"
Or, "Where *is* the God of justice?"

**SOUL NOTE**

**Loving One's Spouse** *(2:13-16)* God told the Israelites that marriage is a sacred covenant. The vows spoken at the marriage altar are not to be taken lightly; God expects married people to keep them. God's own faithfulness to His covenant promises to Abraham and the Israelites demonstrates the importance of our promises to each other. God values marriage, and our vows that He has heard fulfilling our promises to each other. God values marriage, and our vows that He has heard are to be kept. God delights in those who remain faithful to each other, who love each other, and who strive to raise children devoted to Him. **Topic: Marriage**

**THE COMING MESSENGER**

**3** “Behold, I send My messenger,
And he will prepare the way before
Me.
And the Lord, whom you seek,
Will suddenly come to His temple,
Even the Messenger of the covenant,
In whom you delight.
Behold, He is coming,”
Says the LORD of hosts.

[2] “But who can endure the day of His
coming?
And who can stand when He appears?
For He *is* like a refiner’s fire
And like launderers’ soap.
[3] He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of
silver;
He will purify the sons of Levi,
And purge them as gold and silver,

That they may offer to the LORD
An offering in righteousness.

[4] “Then the offering of Judah and
Jerusalem
Will be pleasant to the LORD,
As in the days of old,
As in former years.
[5] And I will come near you for judgment;
I will be a swift witness
Against sorcerers,
Against adulterers,
Against perjurers,
Against those who exploit wage earners

and widows and orphans,
And against those who turn away an
alien-
Because they do not fear Me,”
Says the LORD of hosts.
6 “For I *am* the LORD,
I do not change;
Therefore you are
not consumed,
O sons of Jacob.

> “For I am the LORD, I do not change; therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob.”
> MALACHI 3:6

7 Yet from the days
of your fathers
You have gone
away from My ordinances
And have not kept *them.*
Return to Me, and I will return to you,”
Says the LORD of hosts.
“But you said,
‘In what way shall we return?’

**DO NOT ROB GOD**

8 “Will a man rob God?
Yet you have robbed Me!
But you say, ‘
In what way have we robbed You?’
In tithes and offerings.
9 You are cursed with a curse,
For you have robbed Me,
*Even* this whole nation.
10 Bring all the tithes into the storehouse,

That there may be food in My house,
And try Me now in this,”
Says the LORD of hosts,
“If I will not open for you the windows of heaven
And pour out for you *such* blessing
That *there will* not *be room* enough *to receive it.*
11 “And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes,
So that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground,
Nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field,”
Says the LORD of
hosts;
12 And all nations
will call you
blessed,
For you will be a
delightful land,”
Says the LORD of hosts.

## THE PEOPLE COMPLAIN HARSHLY

13 “Your words have been harsh against Me,”
Says the LORD,
“Yet you say,
‘What have we spoken against You?’
14 You have said,
‘ It is useless to serve God;
What profit *is it* that we have kept His ordinance,
And that we have walked as mourners
Before the LORD of hosts?
15 So now we call the proud blessed,

For those who do wickedness are raised
up;
They even tempt God and go free.’ ”

## A BOOK OF REMEMBRANCE

16 Then those who feared the LORD spoke
to one another,
And the LORD listened and heard *them;*
So a book of remembrance was written
before Him
For those who fear the LORD
And who meditate on His name.
17 “They shall be Mine,” says the LORD of
hosts,
“On the day that I make them My jewels.[a]
And I will spare them
As a man spares his own son who serves
him.”
18 Then you shall again discern
Between the righteous and the wicked,
Between one who serves God
And one who does not serve Him.

### SOUL NOTE

**Refined** *(3:2, 3)* Sometimes the only way to get rid of impurity is to use a powerful soap or a refining fire. God would be to Israel “like a refiner’s fire and like launderers’ soap,” ready to clean and purify His people. Such cleansing often comes through hardship and trials. God allows difficulties to come into our lives so that the heat of these hardships can burn off impurities. Red-hot fire, pelting sand, and

strong soap are harsh, yet good, for they accomplish the desired cleaning. In the same way, life's trials can wash away what is impure in our lives, making us more pure for God. **Topic: Trials**

## SOUL NOTE

**Dare to Be Generous** *(3:8-12)* God's ways are not our ways. People think that to be secure, they must hoard their money. God says the opposite. "Bring all the tithes into the storehouse," He says, and then watch what happens. God promised to reward His people's giving with abundant blessings-so much that will not be room enough to receive it." In the New Testament, Jesus issues the same "there will not be room enough to receive it." In the New Testament, Jesus issues the same challenge: "Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over" (Luke 6:38). To refuse to give is actually to rob God; to give generously is to know God's abundant blessings. **Topic: Money**

**THE GREAT DAY OF GOD**

**4** “For behold, the day is coming,
Burning like an oven,
And all the proud, yes, all who do
wickedly will be stubble.
And the day which is coming shall burn
them up,”
Says the LORD of hosts,
“That will leave them neither root nor
branch.

2 But to you who fear My name
The Sun of Righteousness shall arise
With healing in His wings;
And you shall go out
And grow fat like stall-fed calves.
3 You shall trample the wicked,
For they shall be ashes under the soles
of your feet
On the day that I do *this*,”
Says the LORD of hosts.
4 “Remember the Law of Moses, My
servant,
Which I commanded him in Horeb for
all Israel,
*With the* statutes and judgments.
5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the
prophet
Before the coming of the great and
dreadful day of the LORD.
6 And he will turn
The hearts of the fathers to the children,
And the hearts of the children to their
fathers,
Lest I come and strike the earth with a

curse."

## SOUL NOTE

**Healing in His Wings** *(4:2-4)* Every person has needed healing at one time or another-whether it was a childhood scrape or a deep, emotional wound created by years of abuse. This imperfect world has caused many wounded hearts and souls searching for healing. Some look for healing in relationships, some in work, recreation. True healing, however, comes from God. One day, "the Sun of Righteousness others in recreation. True healing, however, comes from God. One day, "the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings" to restore all things and to bring healing to wounded hearts. Whatever pain we face, healing can be found in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. **Topic: Healing/Recovery**

## PROBLEMS IN CHILDREN

GRANT L. MARTIN

(Malachi 4:5, 6)

**C**hildren are God's blessings. How often the presence of a small child brings a smile to people's faces. Unfortunately, many children are facing difficult problems. Five to fifteen of all children in the United

States have problems that require mental percent of all children in the United States have problems that require mental health services-between three and ten million children. The reasons for these difficulties, of course, are many. Two major categories to be discussed here are child abuse and learning problems. These categories do not cover all the reasons children have problems, but illustrate why children may need the touch of the Great Physician as well as professional intervention.

## CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Millions of children are abused or neglected. Abused children are found at all socioeconomic levels. Abuse is a profoundly disruptive, disorienting, and destructive experience for children. Symptoms such as irritability, school truancy, behavior problems, poor classroom performance, health complaints, sexual promiscuity, running away from home, and lying are common in victimized children. Depression, panic disorders, dissociative disorders, and suicide attempts can also result from chronic abuse. Another form of abuse arises when children live in homes where domestic violence occurs. The child may not be a direct victim of beating but sees his or her mother suffer at the hands of her husband or partner. These children suffer similar consequences.

The Bible records incidents of child abuse. Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, advised the Hebrew midwives to kill every Hebrew boy (Ex. 1:16, 22). Ahaz sacrificed his sons in the fire (2 Chr. 28:3). Ezekiel 16:5 refers to the pagan practice of abandoning infants and exposing them to the elements. King Herod hoped to kill the Messiah by ordering all boys under age two in and around Bethlehem to be killed (Matt. 2:16).

Treatment is crucial for abused children. The majority will need some type of medical and/or psychological help. The first step is to stop the violence. This may involve legal procedures to remove the perpetrator, followed by social, economic, and emotional actions.

Therapy and education are needed for the victim and the family.

Victims often need to help in learning how to interact socially, to express their feelings in interpersonal situations, and to be more empathetic. Many of these children have negative thought patterns, accompanied by depression and feelings of helplessness. They need new, positive, and healthy ways of thinking (Rom. 12:2; Phil. 4:8).

The second step is treatment to break the cycle of violence. Limiting violent television and encouraging parents to avoid violent toys and games is a start. Most importantly, parents need to model and teach children non-violent ways to deal with their emotions. Abused children need parents who discipline effectively but without anger or violence. The family will need help with finding new patterns of conflict resolution.

## LEARNING PROBLEMS

Learning disabilities can also present problems in childhood. Five to ten percent of the school population (almost two million students) has some type of learning disorder.

A *learning disability* is a problem of likely neurological origin that affects specific areas of learning and behavior in an otherwise competent student. The areas of learning affected may include input, output, storage, retention, retrieval, or processing of information. This means a student can have difficulty in acquiring, remembering, organizing, recalling, or expressing information.

Treatment for learning disabilities falls into two categories: remediation and accommodation. Remediation includes instructional strategies and techniques to help bring up a student's deficit area to at least an average level of academic functioning. Accommodation occurs when a student's strength is used to compensate for his or her weaker area. For example, a student's strong visual skills may be used to accommodate for a weak auditory processing ability.

Other children face a difficulty called *attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder*. Some children cannot sit still. Others are highly distractible, forgetful, or inattentive. Some appear distracted by every little thing and do not seem to learn from their mistakes. Many of these children disregard rules, even when they are punished repeatedly. They tend to act without thinking, resulting in many accidents and reprimands. ADHD continues to be one of the most thoroughly researched conditions of childhood. The exact causes are still not known, but research appears to support a biological base. The data point to a genetically endowed predisposition, along with a common neurological mechanism. In other words, many ADHD children seem to arrive in the world with temperaments that leave them difficult to manage.

Treatment for ADHD consists of a variety of interventions, including parent education, implementing appropriate forms of consistency and structure at home and school, medication, instruction in self-control and social skills for the child, and use of spiritual resources such as prayer. For example, adults can ask God for discernment in telling the difference between when a child “can’t” perform up to expectations because of the ADHD, and when he “won’t” cooperate because of willful disobedience.

As Christians, we have the hope of healing as it was evidenced in Christ’s touch (Luke 22:51). That same powerful touch is experienced by children, parents, and families today. Childhood problems can certainly be overwhelming, but we should remember that there are many resources for help. Regardless of the problems children face, we can claim the healing touch of the Master’s hand.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of children problems include:

- Deuteronomy 6:6-9

- Proverbs 13:24; 22:6
- Mark 10:14-16
- Ephesians 6:1-4
- Colossians 3:20, 21

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on children problems at James 1:27. See also the personality profile of Tamar-a Legacy of Trials.

# New Testament


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Luke

John

Acts

Romans

1 Corinthians

2 Corinthians

Galatians

Ephesians

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Titus

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# Matthew

Excitement . . . expectation . . . exasperation . . . discouragement . . . disappointment . . . despair . . . .

That's the progression when we wait for something we fervently want, only to wind up with something else. From a Jewish perspective, it's also a summary of the first Gospel. When Matthew's Gospel begins, Palestine is seething with unrest; the Romans have the region under their iron grip; the Jewish religious leaders are mostly corrupt; and the people are longing for the arrival of God's promised Deliverer.

He does appear, but in a Bethlehem manger! And the Messiah, this newborn, is the product of a Jewish lineage going back through King David to Abraham. In this distinctly Jewish Gospel, Jesus is presented as the long-awaited Messiah. Matthew's biography links the Old and New Testaments by showing how Christ fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies about Him. He came not to destroy the Law or the Prophets, but to fulfill them (5:17).

But most Jews were not looking for a savior from sin. Nationally, they were expecting a kingly Messiah who would defeat Rome and restore the glory and power of the reigns of David and Solomon. When Jesus failed to perform to expectations, these Jews became disillusioned, then hateful, then murderous.

Matthew, the tax collector turned disciple and author of this book, reminds us of the need to guard against false expectations. Jesus was exactly who He said He was, and He did exactly what God sent Him to do. Matthew encourages us with the truth that God always keeps His promises, even if it's not in ways we had imagined.

**SOUL CONCERNS IN**

## MATTHEW

PRAYER (6:5-13)
CONFLICT (18:15-17)
SINGLENESS (19:12)

## THE GENEALOGY OF JESUS CHRIST

**1** The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham:

[2]Abraham begot Isaac, Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot Judah and his brothers. [3]Judah begot Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez begot Hezron, and Hezron begot Ram. [4]Ram begot Amminadab, Amminadab begot Nahshon, and Nahshon begot Salmon. [5]Salmon begot Boaz by Rahab, Boaz begot Obed by Ruth, Obed begot Jesse, [6]and Jesse begot David the king.

David the king begot Solomon by her *who had been the wife*[a] of Uriah. [7]Solomon begot Rehoboam, Rehoboam begot Abijah, and Abijah begot Asa.[a] [8]Asa begot Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat begot Joram, and Joram begot Uzziah. [9]Uzziah begot Jotham, Jotham begot Ahaz, and Ahaz begot Hezekiah. [10]Hezekiah begot Manasseh, Manasseh begot Amon,[a] and Amon begot Josiah. [11]Josiah begot Jeconiah and his brothers about the time they were carried away to Babylon.

[12]And after they were brought to Babylon, Jeconiah begot Shealtiel, and Shealtiel begot Zerubbabel. [13]Zerubbabel begot Abiud, Abiud begot Eliakim, and Eliakim begot Azor. [14]Azor begot Zadok, Zadok begot Achim, and Achim begot Eliud. [15]Eliud begot Eleazar, Eleazar begot Matthan, and Matthan begot Jacob. [16]And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ.

[17]So all the generations from Abraham to David *are* fourteen generations, from David until the captivity in Babylon *are* fourteen generations, and from the captivity in Babylon until the Christ *are* fourteen generations.

## CHRIST BORN OF MARY

[18]Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. [19]Then Joseph her husband, being a just *man*, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. [20]But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord

appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. [21]And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.”

[22]So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: [23]“Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,”[a] which is translated, “God with us.”

[24]Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, [25]and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son.[a] And he called His name JESUS.

## SOUL NOTE

**God With Us** *(1:23)* The virgin birth of Jesus was the miracle beginning of a miraculous life. Matthew quoted from the prophet Isaiah, demonstrating the fulfillment of the promise that “the virgin shall be with child.” Mary would become pregnant by a miracle so that Jesus would be born as a human, yet would be sinless. Isaiah had also written: “They shall call His name Immanuel,” and Matthew explained that the name means “God with us.” God walked this earth with people. He loves sinful humanity so much that He sent His Son to die so that all people who believe in Him might have eternal life.
**Topic: Knowing God**

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# MARY AND JOSEPH:THE BOND OF LOVE AND HONESTY

## (MATTHEW 1:24)

One of the most beautiful pictures of biblical courtship-of the sacrificial bond of love and honesty that God wants to plant at the root of every marriage-is given to us in the relationship between Joseph and Mary.

Though they were engaged to each other (Matt. 1:18), the Bible clearly states that they had no sexual relationship prior to Mary's miraculous pregnancy. Jesus was conceived in her womb by the power of the Holy Spirit. Imagine Joseph's internal struggle over her pregnancy. He came to a logical and painful conclusion that Mary had been intimate with another man. Mary's unlikely explanation stretched reality enough to drive any man to break off the relationship, and Joseph began to make plans.

Joseph demonstrated his character and his love by the way he sought to end the relationship privately-he did not want to make a public example of Mary. (Her presumed sin of adultery actually called for death by stoning.) Then God's angel appeared to Joseph in a dream and revealed the truth, instructing him to marry Mary. Once he was convinced that God Himself really did miraculously conceive the child, Joseph fulfilled every possible obligation as Mary's husband. By not having sexual relations with Mary until after the birth of Jesus, Joseph put his own desires aside in order to cooperate with God's plan.

Mary's inner turmoil must have equaled Joseph's. How could she expect Joseph to believe her story? Perhaps she was tempted to run

away. Instead, she told him the fantastic, improbable truth-the truth of the miraculous conception-and trusted God to convince Joseph. She loved Joseph and was faithful to God. She decided that her marriage to Joseph was going to be based on truth. Mary was willing to risk the relationship itself in order to preserve truth between Joseph and herself.

God's ways are far above our own. He never fulfills His purposes in marriage as long as we hold suspicions over our spouse or live a lie with them. Joseph and Mary teach us this-a lesson for all marriages, for all time.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Covenant Marriage. See also the key passage note at Matthew 19:4-6.

## WISE MEN FROM THE EAST

**2** Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, [2]saying, “Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him.”

[3]When Herod the king heard *this*, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. [4]And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.

[5]So they said to him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet:

[6] ‘But you, Bethlehem, *in* the land of Judah,
Are not the least among the rulers of Judah;
For out of you shall come a Ruler
Who will shepherd My people Israel. ’ ”[a]

[7]Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined from them what time the star appeared. [8]And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the young Child, and when you have found *Him*, bring back word to me, that I may come and worship Him also.”

[9]When they heard the king, they departed; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. [10]When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. [11]And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

[12]Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way.

## THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT

[13]Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, “Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee

to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him."

14When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, 15and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, "Out of Egypt I called My Son." [a]

**MASSACRE OF THE INNOCENTS**

16Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men. 17Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying:

18 "A voice was heard in Ramah,
Lamentation, weeping, and great mourning,
Rachel weeping *for* her children,
Refusing to be comforted,
Because they are no more."[a]

**THE HOME IN NAZARETH**

19Now when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, 20saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the young Child's life are dead." 21Then he arose, took the young Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel.

22But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea instead of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned by God in a dream, he turned aside into the region of Galilee. 23And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, "He shall be called a Nazarene."

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# THE WISE MEN: HONORING THE KING

## (MATTHEW 2:7-11)

When the incarnation took place, many people traveled great distances to honor God in the flesh. Angels flew in from the heavens. Shepherds came in from the hills. And several wise men journeyed from the East to honor this new King.

Matthew's version of the story of Christ's birth opens with a group of Eastern "Gentiles,"- probably Persian astrologers or magicians- referred to as "wise men" (or "magi," from the Greek). They arrived from the East to honor the child who was born "King of the Jews." They informed the people of Jerusalem that they had seen His birth announcement in the stars.

The significance of their trip to Palestine is twofold. First, their arrival and questions challenged Herod, who considered himself to be the king of the Jews. He was disturbed by this report that another King had been born. Herod was a man without honor who craved honor. He instinctively wanted to destroy anyone who might threaten his hollow kingdom. He had the scribes identify Bethlehem as the likely birthplace of a special King, according to the prophecy of Micah 5:2. Herod intended to murder the competition. Without honor, he couldn't even imagine that his opponent was really God.

The second importance of the wise men's trip was that it showed the universality of Christ. He was not only King of the Jews, but the

King of kings. The wise men teach us that true seekers everywhere will honor Christ. We don't know what stars they saw, but they received God's guidance. We don't know what questions they asked, but we know they found some answers. They arrived in Palestine seeking the whole truth, prepared to worship even a little child.

A person who understands honor and humility has already learned a great deal about a relationship with God. The wise men had the right kind of faith. Hebrews 11:6 describes them: "For he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." God met these men at the point of honor.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Lighthouse of Honor. See also the key passage note at 1 Peter 2:17.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# HEROD: WHEN A CHOICE IS DEADLY

## (MATTHEW 2:16-18)

Among the Herods of Scripture, Herod the Great comes first in line. His title of "Great" refers to his ventures in grand building schemes. His legacy included fortresses, palaces, and even the refurbished temple in Jerusalem. Herod displayed no greatness in dealing with people, however. The children of Bethlehem stood little chance against this suspicious and scheming king. A man guilty of killing at least three of his own grown children apparently had no hesitation over killing perhaps several dozen little boys in his effort to eliminate

a potential rival for his throne.

Herod displayed the eventual soul-destructive mindset that values individual plans, pleasures, and purposes above the very lives of others. Such thinking seems to rule as the hidden basic assumption during conversations about abortion. Although the arguments over abortion almost always use the language of agonizing choices between two lives, the practice of abortion almost always comes down to the choice between a life and convenience, or between a life and other plans or between a life and a lifestyle. The thinking that makes an unborn child disposable doesn't have to change much in order to consider the elimination of unwanted living children.

Kings like Herod were the original defenders of the right of choice. Some even called it the divine right of choice. They believed they could make any choice they wanted and that it was right because they had made it, not because it agreed with an external standard to which even they were accountable. Choice may be a human right, but every choice isn't a right one. There is an absolute standard in the character and revelation of God. All choices we make will be measured against that standard, and we will be accountable for them.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about The Debate of Life: Abortion. See also the key passage note at Psalm 139:16.

## JOHN THE BAPTIST PREPARES THE WAY

**3** In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea,
2 and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!”
3 For this is
he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying:

> “The voice of one crying in the wilderness:
> ‘Prepare the way of the LORD;
> Make His paths straight.’ ”[a]

4 Now John himself was clothed in camel’s hair, with a leather belt around
his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey.
5 Then Jerusalem, all
Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him
6 and were
baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins.

7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his
baptism, he said to them, “Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the
wrath to come?
8 Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance,
9 and do not
think to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as *our* father.’ For I say to you
that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones.
10 And
even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which
does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.
11 I indeed
baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is
mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you
with the Holy Spirit and fire.[a]
12 His winnowing fan *is* in His hand, and He
will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the
barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

## JOHN BAPTIZES JESUS

13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by
him.
14 And John *tried to* prevent Him, saying, “I need to be baptized by You,
and are You coming to me?”

15 But Jesus answered and said to him, “Permit *it to be so* now, for thus it is
fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he allowed Him.

16 When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water;
and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He[a] saw the Spirit of God

descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. [17]And suddenly a voice *came* from heaven, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

**SOUL NOTE**

**God’s Beloved Son** *(3:17)* Observers wonder about Jesus’ true identity. Some say He was no more than a good man and inspiring teacher. Others say that His claims of divinity prove He was crazy. Some try to ignore Him completely. The people who gathered beside the Jordan River saw a dramatic demonstration that Jesus was special when a dove descended from heaven and God announced, “This is My beloved Son.” Jesus is indeed someone special, and we can believe what He said about Himself. He is God’s Son, the Messiah, our Savior. **Topic: Knowing Jesus**

## SATAN TEMPTS JESUS

**4** Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

**2**And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry. 3Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.”

4But He answered and said, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’ ”[a]

5Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, 6and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written:

> ‘He shall give His angels charge over you,’
>
> and,
>
> ‘In *their* hands they shall bear you up,
> Lest you dash your foot against a stone.’ ”[a]

7Jesus said to him, “It is written again, ‘You shall not tempt the LORD your God.’ ”[a]

8Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. 9And he said to Him, “All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me.”

10Then Jesus said to him, “Away with you,[a] Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.’ ”[b]

11Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him.

## JESUS BEGINS HIS GALILEAN MINISTRY

12Now when Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, He departed to Galilee. 13And leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali, 14that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying:

15 “The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali,
*By* the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan,
Galilee of the Gentiles:
16 The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light,
And upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death
Light has dawned.” [a]

17 From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

## FOUR FISHERMEN CALLED AS DISCIPLES

18 And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. 19 Then He said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” 20 They immediately left *their* nets and followed Him.

21 Going on from there, He saw two other brothers, James *the son* of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets. He called them, 22 and immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him.

## JESUS HEALS A GREAT MULTITUDE

23 And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people. 24 Then His fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics; and He healed them. 25 Great multitudes followed Him-from Galilee, and *from* Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan.

## SOUL NOTE

**Fasting and Prayer** *(4:1-3)* Jesus went into the wilderness "to be tempted by the devil." He fasted forty days and forty nights in order to focus on God in prayer as He dealt with Satan. Fasting-going without food for a certain amount of time-helps people dedicate themselves to God and focus more fully on Him. Those who fast can use their hunger pangs to remind them how dependent they are on food, and hence, so much more on God. Fasting is a spiritual discipline that is meant to build a person's relationship with God.
**Topic:** **Spiritual Disciplines**

## KEY PASSAGE

# THE BEST WEAPON

# (4:1-11)

Jesus' experience in the wilderness provides a lesson on how to deal with temptation. *Being* tempted is not a sin, but *giving in* to temptation is.

After fasting and praying in the wilderness for forty days, Jesus was physically weakened and hungry. At that point, Satan came and suggested that Jesus turn stones into bread. Under most circumstances, eating bread would be fine, but for Jesus to have followed Satan's directive by using His power for such a self-serving purpose would have been sinful.

Jesus resisted Satan's temptations with the Word of God. While

> Satan was twisting Scripture in order to justify sin, Jesus was using Scripture correctly in order to resist Satan and sin. God's Word, correctly interpreted and hidden in our hearts, is our best weapon against Satan's craftiest temptations.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about The Whispers of Temptation. See also the personality profile of Samson: Yielding to Temptation.

## THE BEATITUDES

**5** And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. [2]Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying:

[3] "Blessed *are* the poor in spirit,
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
[4] Blessed *are* those who mourn,
For they shall be comforted.
[5] Blessed *are* the meek,
For they shall inherit the earth.
[6] Blessed *are* those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
For they shall be filled.
[7] Blessed *are* the merciful,
For they shall obtain mercy.
[8] Blessed *are* the pure in heart,
For they shall see God.
[9] Blessed *are* the peacemakers,
For they shall be called sons of God.
[10] Blessed *are* those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake,
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

> "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."
> MATTHEW 5:4

[11]"Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. [12]Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great *is* your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

## BELIEVERS ARE SALT AND LIGHT

[13]"You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled

underfoot by men.

14 “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be
hidden. 15 Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a
lampstand, and it gives light to all *who are* in the house. 16 Let your light so
shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father
in heaven.

## CHRIST FULFILLS THE LAW

17 “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not
come to destroy but to fulfill. 18 For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and
earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till
all is fulfilled. 19 Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these
commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of
heaven; but whoever does and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the
kingdom of heaven. 20 For I say to you, that unless your righteousness
exceeds *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means
enter the kingdom of heaven.

## MURDER BEGINS IN THE HEART

21 “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder,[a]
and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment. ’ 22 But I say to you
that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause[a] shall be in danger of
the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, ‘Raca!’ shall be in danger of
the council. But whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be in danger of hell fire.
23 Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your
brother has something against you, 24 leave your gift there before the altar,
and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer
your gift. 25 Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way
with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you
over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. 26 Assuredly, I say to you,
you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny.

## ADULTERY IN THE HEART

[27]"You have heard that it was said to those of old,[a] 'You shall not commit adultery.' [b] [28]But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. [29]If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast *it* from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. [30]And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast *it* from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.

**MARRIAGE IS SACRED AND BINDING**

[31]"Furthermore it has been said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' [32]But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality[a] causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.

**JESUS FORBIDS OATHS**

[33]"Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.' [34]But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; [35]nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. [36]Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. [37]But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.

**GO THE SECOND MILE**

[38]"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.'[a] [39]But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. [40]If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have *your* cloak also. [41]And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. [42]Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.

**LOVE YOUR ENEMIES**

[43]"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor[a] and
hate your enemy.' [44]But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who
curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully
use you and persecute you,[a] [45]that you may be sons of your Father in heaven;
for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the
just and on the unjust. [46]For if you love those who love you, what reward
have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? [47]And if you greet
your brethren[a] only, what do you do more *than others?* Do not even the tax
collectors[b] do so? [48]Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in
heaven is perfect.

**SOUL NOTE**

**In the Heart** *(5:27)* Quoting from Exodus 20:14, Jesus reminded His listeners of the commandment against adultery. Then He said that looking at another person lustfully is committing adultery in one's heart. Jesus explained that thinking about an act is the same as doing it, because actions begin with thoughts and desires. Since lust and adultery are first embraced in the mind and heart, believers should try to avoid situations that cause temptation. **Topic: Adultery**

**SOUL NOTE**

**Word Watch** *(5:33-37)* Jesus told people that they should not "swear at all," but should let their "yes" mean yes and their "no" mean no. God's people should not have to swear to the truth of their words.

They should be so trustworthy that their statements are believed without question. Words are important, and believers must watch what they say. They should never say one thing and mean another. God's people should be trustworthy and keep their word. **Topic: Boundaries**

## SOUL NOTE

**Perfect?** *(5:48)* Jesus says, "You shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect." Jesus was not commanding His people to be perfectionists. People who constantly strive for perfection in every area of life usually find themselves frustrated because they *cannot* be perfect. One day Christ will make us perfect; during our time on earth we should be striving for Christlikeness, always realizing that we have much room to grow. Believers should never settle for mediocrity in their walk with Christ, but should seek to deepen their faith and maturity in every area of life. **Topic: Perfectionism**

## DO GOOD TO PLEASE GOD

**6** “Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be
seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven.
2 Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before
you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may
have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. 3 But
when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your
right hand is doing, 4 that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your
Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.[a]

## THE MODEL PRAYER

5 “And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to
pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they
may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. 6 But
you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door,
pray to your Father who *is* in the secret *place;* and your Father who sees in
secret will reward you openly.[a] 7 And when you pray, do not use vain
repetitions as the heathen *do*. For they think that they will be heard for their
many words.

8 “Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you
have need of before you ask Him. 9 In this manner, therefore, pray:

Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.
10 Your kingdom come.
Your will be done On earth as *it is* in heaven.
11 Give us this day our daily bread.
12 And forgive us our debts,
As we forgive our debtors.
13 And do not lead us into temptation,
But deliver us from the evil one.
For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.[a]

14 “For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also

forgive you. [15]But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

## FASTING TO BE SEEN ONLY BY GOD

[16]"Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. [17]But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, [18]so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who *is* in the secret *place;* and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.[a]

## LAY UP TREASURES IN HEAVEN

[19]"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; [20]but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. [21]For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

## THE LAMP OF THE BODY

[22]"The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. [23]But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great *is* that darkness!

## YOU CANNOT SERVE GOD AND RICHES

[24]"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

## DO NOT WORRY

[25]"Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? [26]Look at the birds of the

air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? [27]Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?

[28]"So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; [29]and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. [30]Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, *will He* not much more *clothe* you, O you of little faith?

[31]"Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' [32]For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. [33]But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. [34]Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day *is* its own trouble.

**KEY PASSAGE**

# OPENING HEAVEN'S GATES

# (6:5-13)

Jesus taught that prayer should arise from people's sincere love for God-not from a love of show or ritual. The prayer that Jesus taught His disciples provides the perfect example of prayer.

- The first words of the prayer express adoration and love for God as Father.

•The next phrases express submission to God and trust in His power and promises: “Your kingdom come. Your will be done.”

•Then the prayer asks God for daily provision.

•The prayer also gives opportunity to express repentance, asking for forgiveness according to how the person praying forgives others.

•Next follows a request for help in resisting temptation and in fighting sin.

•The final sentence recognizes that everything belongs to God and is under His control.

Our prayers should include elements of adoration, submission, petition, repentance, and praise to God.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Powerful Prayer. See also the personality profile of Jesus: Teaching us to Pray.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Mind Clutter** *(6:25-34)* Worry fills people’s minds with useless clutter that leaves no room for God. Worry clouds perspective, causing people to focus on themselves rather than on God. Jesus said that God feeds the birds and clothes the flowers, so He will take care of His children. Trusting God involves trusting Him to care for us. Jesus tells us to “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.” As believers we still must work to meet our needs; we don’t sit back and expect God to do it all. We work, but we don’t worry. We know that God will care for us. **Topic: Worry**

**POWERFUL PRAYER**

# STORMIE OMARTIAN

## (Matthew 6:5-13)

**J**ust as our physical bodies need care, so do our souls. Our souls need to be fed, cleansed, healed, trained, and rested. Our souls can only find that kind of wholeness when we are in the presence of God. In Him we find the peace, health, growth, fulfillment, and restoration we need. The way to enter into the fullness of God's presence is through prayer.

### TALKING TO A POWERFUL GOD

Prayer is talking to God. But it is not just about asking Him for things, even though that is an important part of it. Prayer is spending time with God-listening to His voice speak to our hearts. Prayer is fulfilling that deep desire to be with God and letting our spirits align with His. Through prayer we declare our dependence on Him and draw upon His wisdom and strength. Through prayer, we tell God how much we love Him, and we let His love for us fill our souls to overflowing. Prayer is getting to know God better.

It's hard to get to know someone if we seldom talk to that person, or if the only time we talk to him or her is when we want something. The same is true with God. It's hard to get to know Him without ongoing daily communication with Him. Most of us have electricity in our homes. But if we don't plug into it, we will not have light. The

same is true of our relationship with Jesus, who is the Light of the world. If we don't plug into Him, we will miss the greatest portion of His radiance and illumination in our lives.

We become like the people with whom we spend time. When we spend time with God, His character rubs off on us. When we are in His presence, we soak in His healing and wholeness, and it makes us healed and whole. His peace becomes our peace. In His presence, our lives can be transformed.

## TRUSTING GOD THROUGH POWERFUL PRAYER

"Pray without ceasing," the Bible says (1 Thess. 5:17). That means praying constantly, making prayer a way of life. To pray without ceasing means that we draw near to God in everything we do-our work, relationships, hobbies, entertainment, travel, and the mundane activities of daily living. It means praying about everything so that we don't leave our lives to chance.

Jesus said, "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you" (Matt. 7:7). The problem is that we neglect to ask. We don't take time to seek. And we forget to knock. We get busy trying to live our complex lives on our own terms. There is so much vying for our attention, so many decisions to be made, so many issues to deplete our strength, distort our thinking, and steal our peace. Perhaps our greatest sin is thinking we can handle any part of our lives without talking to God about it.

We need to ask of God, and we need to be specific. We should keep knocking until the door opens to everything He has for us. But He doesn't want us to just ask for anything and everything, hoping He will get us out of the mess we're in or give us whatever we want. The Bible says, "You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures" (James 4:3). When we merely ask for things without first drawing close to God, we can miss how we're supposed to pray.

Prayer should not be reduced to a mere formula, but there are important elements that are good to include if our prayers are to be as effective and powerful as we want them to be. In prayer, we should try to:

- Tell God how much we love Him.
- Praise Him for who He is.
- Thank Him for all He has done.
- Declare our dependence upon Him.
- Confess any sin in our lives.
- Share everything that is in our hearts.
- Tell Him our requests.
- Wait on Him to speak to our souls.
- Thank Him for hearing our prayers.

We will find that the more we pray, the more we will find to pray about. But we mustn't be discouraged if the answers to our prayers don't seem to come right away. Sometimes it takes a while. And often we don't even recognize the answers to our own prayers because they are not answered in the way or time we thought they would be. We can't limit God to our timetable. Our job is to pray; God's job is to answer. We can trust that God always hears our prayers; something is happening whether we can see it or not.

Jesus said, "If you ask anything in My name, I will do it" (John 14:14). That is His promise to us. So say to Him, "Lord, touch me with Your healing love and power. Meet my every need and open up my understanding to all You have for me where I am right now. Reveal Yourself to me in every situation I face. Show me what I need to see and tell me what I need to know. Enable me to do what I have to do. For I know that without You, I can do nothing."

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of prayer include:

- Nehemiah 1:4-2:5
- Psalm 118:5-8
- Matthew 21:22
- Mark 1:35
- 1 John 5:14

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on prayer at Matthew 6:5-13. See also the personality profile of Jesus: Teaching us to Pray.

## DO NOT JUDGE

**7** Judge not, that you be not judged. [2]For with what judgment you judge, you will "be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. [3]And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? [4]Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank *is* in your own eye? [5]Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

[6]"Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces.

"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you."
MATTHEW 7:7

## KEEP ASKING, SEEKING, KNOCKING

[7]"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. [8]For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. [9]Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? [10]Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? [11]If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him! [12]Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

## THE NARROW WAY

[13]"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide *is* the gate and broad *is* the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. [14]Because[a] narrow *is* the gate and difficult *is* the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.

## YOU WILL KNOW THEM BY THEIR FRUITS

15“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but
inwardly they are ravenous wolves. 16You will know them by their fruits. Do
men gather grapes from thorn-bushes or figs from thistles? 17Even so, every
good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. 18A good tree cannot
bear bad fruit, nor *can* a bad tree bear good fruit. 19Every tree that does not
bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20Therefore by their
fruits you will know them.

**I NEVER KNEW YOU**

21“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of
heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. 22Many will say to
Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out
demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ 23And then I
will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice
lawlessness!’

**BUILD ON THE ROCK**

24“Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will
liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock:

25and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on
that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.

26“But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them,
will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: 27and the rain
descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and
it fell. And great was its fall.”

28And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were
astonished at His teaching, 29for He taught them as one having authority, and
not as the scribes.

## SOUL NOTE

**The Golden Rule** *(7:12)* “Whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them.” This simple statement, called the “Golden Rule,” is God’s direction for how people should treat one another. This rule would eliminate all cheating, stealing, hatred, and murder. God calls His people to a high standard. While not everyone will follow this rule, Christians must do so, setting an example for others. These timeless words can help us know how to act in any given situation. When we treat others as we would want to be treated, we show God’s love in a practical way. **Topic: Values**

## JESUS CLEANSES A LEPER

**8** When He had come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed
Him. [2]And behold, a leper came and worshiped Him, saying, “Lord, if
You are willing, You can make me clean.”

[3]Then Jesus put out *His* hand and touched him, saying, “I am willing; be
cleansed.” Immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

[4]And Jesus said to him, “See that you tell no one; but go your way, show
yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a
testimony to them.”

## JESUS HEALS A CENTURION’S SERVANT

[5]Now when Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him,
pleading with Him, [6]saying, “Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed,
dreadfully tormented.”

[7]And Jesus said to him, “I will come and heal him.”

[8]The centurion answered and said, “Lord, I am not worthy that You should
come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed.
[9]For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to
this *one*, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes; and to my
servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does *it*.”

[10]When Jesus heard *it*, He marveled, and said to those who followed,
“Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!
[11]And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down
with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. [12]But the sons of
the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and
gnashing of teeth.” [13]Then Jesus said to the centurion, “Go your way; and as
you have believed, *so* let it be done for you.” And his servant was healed that
same hour.

## PETER’S MOTHER-IN-LAW HEALED

[14]Now when Jesus had come into Peter’s house, He saw his wife’s mother

lying sick with a fever. [15]So He touched her hand, and the fever left her. And she arose and served them.[a]

## MANY HEALED AFTER SABBATH SUNSET

[16]When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick, [17]that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying:

> "He Himself took our infirmities
> And bore our sicknesses."[a]

## THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP

[18]And when Jesus saw great multitudes about Him, He gave a command to depart to the other side. [19]Then a certain scribe came and said to Him, "Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go."

[20]And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air *have* nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay *His* head."

[21]Then another of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father."

[22]But Jesus said to him, "Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead."

## WIND AND WAVE OBEY JESUS

[23]Now when He got into a boat, His disciples followed Him. [24]And suddenly a great tempest arose on the sea, so that the boat was covered with the waves. But He was asleep. [25]Then His disciples came to *Him* and awoke Him, saying, "Lord, save us! We are perishing!"

[26]But He said to them, "Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?" Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. [27]So the men marveled, saying, "Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?"

**TWO DEMON-POSSESSED MEN HEALED**

[28]When He had come to the other side, to the country of the Gergesenes,[a] there met Him two demon-possessed *men*, coming out of the tombs, exceedingly fierce, so that no one could pass that way. [29]And suddenly they cried out, saying, "What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?"

[30]Now a good way off from them there was a herd of many swine feeding. [31]So the demons begged Him, saying, "If You cast us out, permit us to go away[a] into the herd of swine."

[32]And He said to them, "Go." So when they had come out, they went into the herd of swine. And suddenly the whole herd of swine ran violently down the steep place into the sea, and perished in the water.

[33]Then those who kept *them* fled; and they went away into the city and told everything, including what *had happened* to the demon-possessed *men*. [34]And behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus. And when they saw Him, they begged *Him* to depart from their region.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Such Faith!** *(8:5-13)* A centurion-an officer who commanded 100 soldiers-asked Jesus to heal his servant. The centurion knew, from his own experience of giving commands, that Jesus only had to speak a word and the servant would be healed. Jesus "marveled, and said to those who followed . . . 'I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!'" Such great faith comes when we believe what we do not see, when we trust Jesus to do what seems impossible. Such faith pleases Him. **Topic: Faith**

## JESUS FORGIVES AND HEALS A PARALYTIC

**9** So He got into a boat, crossed over, and came to His own city. [2]Then behold, they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, “Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you.”

[3]And at once some of the scribes said within themselves, “This Man blasphemes!”

[4]But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, “Why do you think evil in your hearts? [5]For which is easier, to say, ‘*Your* sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Arise and walk’? [6]But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins”-then He said to the paralytic, “Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.” [7]And he arose and departed to his house.

[8]Now when the multitudes saw *it*, they marveled[a] and glorified God, who had given such power to men.

## MATTHEW THE TAX COLLECTOR

[9]As Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, “Follow Me.” So he arose and followed Him.

[10]Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, *that* behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. [11]And when the Pharisees saw *it*, they said to His disciples, “Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?”

[12]When Jesus heard *that*, He said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. [13]But go and learn what *this* means: ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice.’[a] For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.”[b]

## JESUS IS QUESTIONED ABOUT FASTING

[14]Then the disciples of John came to Him, saying, “Why do we and the Pharisees fast often,[a] but Your disciples do not fast?”

15 And Jesus said to them, “Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as
long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the
bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast. 16 No one
puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away
from the garment, and the tear is made worse. 17 Nor do they put new wine
into old wineskins, or else the wineskins break, the wine is spilled, and the
wineskins are ruined. But they put new wine into new wineskins, and both
are preserved.”

## A GIRL RESTORED TO LIFE AND A WOMAN HEALED

18 While He spoke these things to them, behold, a ruler came and
worshiped Him, saying, “My daughter has just died, but come and lay Your
hand on her and she will live.” 19 So Jesus arose and followed him, and so *did*
His disciples.

20 And suddenly, a woman who had a flow of blood for twelve years came
from behind and touched the hem of His garment. 21 For she said to herself,
“If only I may touch His garment, I shall be made well.” 22 But Jesus turned
around, and when He saw her He said, “Be of good cheer, daughter; your
faith has made you well.” And the woman was made well from that hour.

23 When Jesus came into the ruler’s house, and saw the flute players and the
noisy crowd wailing, 24 He said to them, “Make room, for the girl is not dead,
but sleeping.” And they ridiculed Him. 25 But when the crowd was put
outside, He went in and took her by the hand, and the girl arose. 26 And the
report of this went out into all that land.

## TWO BLIND MEN HEALED

27 When Jesus departed from there, two blind men followed Him, crying
out and saying, “Son of David, have mercy on us!”

28 And when He had come into the house, the blind men came to Him. And
Jesus said to them, “Do you believe that I am able to do this?”

They said to Him, “Yes, Lord.”

29 Then He touched their eyes, saying, “According to your faith let it be to

you.” [30]And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them, saying, “See *that* no one knows *it*.” [31]But when they had departed, they spread the news about Him in all that country.

**A MUTE MAN SPEAKS**

[32]As they went out, behold, they brought to Him a man, mute and demon-possessed. [33]And when the demon was cast out, the mute spoke. And the multitudes marveled, saying, “It was never seen like this in Israel!”

[34]But the Pharisees said, “He casts out demons by the ruler of the demons.”

**THE COMPASSION OF JESUS**

[35]Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.[a] [36]But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary[a] and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. [37]Then He said to His disciples, “The harvest truly *is* plentiful, but the laborers *are* few. [38]Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.”

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# MATTHEW: A CHANGED LIFE

## (MATTHEW 9:9)

Jewish tax collectors in Jesus’ day were the despised of the despised.

They were called traitors in the worst sense. The Jewish people viewed them with double disgust because Jewish tax collectors actually worked for the Roman government, making their money off their own people by receiving a percentage of the income from the taxes they collected. They were lumped with harlots, murderers, and thieves, and were considered offensive and off-limits to respectable Jews. Jesus offended many religious people when He called the tax collector Matthew to be one of His intimate inner circle.

Matthew's Jewish name was Levi. Jesus' simple appeal to him was dramatic and direct: "Follow Me." Matthew's instantaneous response indicates the irresistible nature of Jesus' person and character, as well as the openness of Matthew's life. We have no idea whether Matthew had any previous contact with Jesus or not. We can only assume that he must have had some awareness of the significance of the life and ministry of Jesus in order to respond to such a command.

Although Matthew rarely got mentioned by name during the events Jesus experienced with His disciples, he was there, observing, noting, and remembering. Some think the only things he took with him when he left his tax table were a pen and a keen mind for details and accounting. But Matthew's biography of Jesus bears witness to what he learned from Jesus. Unlike Mark and Luke, Matthew decided to record Jesus' life in categories. Events and lessons in the Gospel of Matthew are not organized by time sequence, but by common themes (see for example, all the parables in chapter 13).

Matthew's example offers several unique lessons about spiritual growth:

- God's calling in our lives is such that it demands an intentional response.
- Our past holds keys to God's purposes in our lives.
- God sees unlimited potential where others have given up.

Like Matthew, we don't know what the future holds. But we can

choose, like he did, to follow Jesus-the very One who holds the future.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Spiritual Growth. See also the key passage note at Strong, Fruitful Trees.

## THE TWELVE APOSTLES

**10** And when He had called His twelve disciples to *Him*, He gave them power *over* unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease. [2]Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the *son* of Zebedee, and John his brother; [3]Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the *son* of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was[a] Thaddaeus; [4]Simon the Cananite,[a] and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him.

## SENDING OUT THE TWELVE

[5]These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: "Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. [6]But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. [7]And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' [8]Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead,[a] cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. [9]Provide neither gold nor silver nor copper in your money belts, [10]nor bag for *your* journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor staffs; for a worker is worthy of his food.

[11]"Now whatever city or town you enter, inquire who in it is worthy, and stay there till you go out. [12]And when you go into a household, greet it. [13]If the household is worthy, let your peace come upon it. But if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. [14]And whoever will not receive you nor hear your words, when you depart from that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet. [15]Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city!

## PERSECUTIONS ARE COMING

[16]"Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. [17]But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues. [18]You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and

to the Gentiles. [19]But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; [20]for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.

[21]"Now brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father *his* child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. [22]And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved. [23]When they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes.

[24]"A disciple is not above *his* teacher, nor a servant above his master. [25]It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub,[a] how much more *will they call* those of his household! [26]Therefore do not fear them. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known.

## JESUS TEACHES THE FEAR OF GOD

[27]"Whatever I tell you in the dark, speak in the light; and what you hear in the ear, preach on the housetops. [28]And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. [29]Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. [30]But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. [31]Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.

## CONFESS CHRIST BEFORE MEN

[32]"Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. [33]But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.

## CHRIST BRINGS DIVISION

[34]"Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring

peace but a sword. [35]For I have come to ‘set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law’; [36]and ‘a man’s enemies will be those of his *own* household.’[a] [37]He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. [38]And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. [39]He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.

**A CUP OF COLD WATER**

[40]“He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. [41]He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet’s reward. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man’s reward. [42]And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold *water* in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward.”

**KEY PASSAGE**

# IN THE IMAGE OF GOD

## (10:29-31)

Jesus described God’s loving concern for every person, explaining that “the very hairs of your head are all numbered.” He added that because God cares even for small birds-“not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father’s will”-imagine how much more He cares for His people.

What a boost to personal encouragement! We are important to God-created in His image and loved. He loves us so much, in fact, that He "gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Scripture's View Of Self-esteem. See also the personality profile of The Difference One Person Can Make.

## JOHN THE BAPTIST SENDS MESSENGERS TO JESUS

**11** Now it came to pass, when Jesus finished commanding His twelve
disciples, that He departed from there to teach and to preach in their
cities.

[2]And when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of[a] his disciples [3]and said to Him, "Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?"

[4]Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: [5]*The* blind see and *the* lame walk; *the* lepers are cleansed and *the* deaf hear; *the* dead are raised up and *the* poor have the gospel preached to them. [6]And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me."

[7]As they departed, Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? [8]But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed, those who wear soft *clothing* are in kings' houses. [9]But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet. [10]For this is *he* of whom it is written:

> 'Behold, I send My messenger before Your face,
> Who will prepare Your way before You.'[a]

[11]"Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. [12]And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. [13]For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. [14]And if you are willing to receive *it*, he is Elijah who is to come. [15]He who has ears to hear, let him hear!

[16]"But to what shall I liken this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their companions, [17]and saying:

> 'We played the flute for you,
> And you did not dance;
> We mourned to you,
> And you did not lament.'

18For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon.’
19The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look, a glutton
and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ But wisdom is
justified by her children.”[a]

**WOE TO THE IMPENITENT CITIES**

20Then He began to rebuke the cities in which most of His mighty works
had been done, because they did not repent: 21“Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe
to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been
done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and
ashes. 22But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the
day of judgment than for you. 23And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to
heaven, will be[a] brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were
done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.
24But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the
day of judgment than for you.”

**JESUS GIVES TRUE REST**

25At that time Jesus answered and said, “I thank You, Father, Lord of
heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from *the* wise and
prudent and have revealed them to babes. 26Even so, Father, for so it seemed
good in Your sight. 27All things have been delivered to Me by My Father,
and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the
Father except the Son, and *the one* to whom the Son wills to reveal *Him*.
28Come to Me, all *you* who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you
rest. 29Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly
in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30For My yoke *is* easy and My
burden is light.”

> “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden,
> and I will give you rest.”
> MATTHEW 11:28

**KEY PASSAGE**

# ARE YOU THE ONE?

# (11:1-6)

John the Baptist had been one of the first to recognize Jesus' identity as the Messiah (John 1:29). Here, locked in prison and facing death, John sent two of his disciples to make sure that he had not been mistaken about Jesus.

Jesus responded by reminding John that He was fulfilling the messianic signs prophesied by Isaiah (Is. 35:5, 6; 61:1): the blind seeing, the lame walking, lepers being cleansed, the deaf hearing, the dead being raised, and the poor having "good tidings" preached to them. Even though John's circumstances had caused him to doubt, he took those doubts to the right place. Jesus responded, alleviating John's doubts and enabling him to face martyrdom with confidence.

When we begin to doubt, we need to do as John did: Take those doubts to God. He will answer our doubts and reassure us of His truth.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about The Thomas Factor: Treating Doubt. See also the personality profile of The Thomas Factor: Treating Doubt.

## KEY PASSAGE

### A Bearable Burden

## (11:28-30)

Many people long for rest. Jesus' welcome words call out, as if saying, "Give me your impossible burdens. I will carry them." Jesus says that He will take from our shoulders the heavy burdens that are burning us out, and replace them with an easy yoke, a light burden. Submission to Christ does not place us in bondage to a harsh taskmaster but under the loving care of the gentle and lowly Savior.

Jesus is in touch with the burdens of life that we carry and how much they hurt and exhaust us. When we give our troubled hearts to Him, He gives us rest for our souls. That kind of rest will cure our burnout and renew our enthusiasm for Him.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Overcoming Burnout. See also the personality profile of Jethro: A Friend In Need.

## JESUS IS LORD OF THE SABBATH

**12** At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. And His disciples were hungry, and began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. [2]And when the Pharisees saw *it,* they said to Him, “Look, Your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath!”

[3]But He said to them, “Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: [4]how he entered the house of God and ate the showbread which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? [5]Or have you not read in the law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless? [6]Yet I say to you that in this place there is *One* greater than the temple. [7]But if you had known what *this* means, ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice,’[a] you would not have condemned the guiltless. [8]For the Son of Man is Lord even[a] of the Sabbath.”

## HEALING ON THE SABBATH

[9]Now when He had departed from there, He went into their synagogue. [10]And behold, there was a man who had a withered hand. And they asked Him, saying, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?”-that they might accuse Him.

[11]Then He said to them, “What man is there among you who has one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift *it* out? [12]Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep? Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.” [13]Then He said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” And he stretched *it* out, and it was restored as whole as the other. [14]Then the Pharisees went out and plotted against Him, how they might destroy Him.

## BEHOLD, MY SERVANT

[15]But when Jesus knew *it,* He withdrew from there. And great multitudes[a] followed Him, and He healed them all. [16]Yet He warned them not to make Him known, [17]that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the

prophet, saying:

18 “Behold! My Servant whom I have chosen,
My Beloved in whom My soul is well pleased!
I will put My Spirit upon Him,
And He will declare justice to the Gentiles.
19 He will not quarrel nor cry out,
Nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets.
20 A bruised reed He will not break,
And smoking flax He will not quench,
Till He sends forth justice to victory;
21 And in His name Gentiles will trust.”[a]

## A HOUSE DIVIDED CANNOT STAND

22 Then one was brought to Him who was demon-possessed, blind and mute; and He healed him, so that the blind and[a] mute man both spoke and saw. 23 And all the multitudes were amazed and said, “Could this be the Son of David?”

24 Now when the Pharisees heard *it* they said, “This *fellow* does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub,[a] the ruler of the demons.”

25 But Jesus knew their thoughts, and said to them: “Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand. 26 If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? 27 And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast *them* out? Therefore they shall be your judges. 28 But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. 29 Or how can one enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house. 30 He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad.

## THE UNPARDONABLE SIN

31 “Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy *against* the Spirit will not be forgiven men. 32 Anyone who

speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the *age* to come.

## A TREE KNOWN BY ITS FRUIT

33 "Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by *its* fruit. 34 Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. 35 A good man out of the good treasure of his heart[a] brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. 36 But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. 37 For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."

## THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES ASK FOR A SIGN

38 Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You."

39 But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. 40 For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. 41 The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah *is* here. 42 The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon *is* here.

## AN UNCLEAN SPIRIT RETURNS

43 "When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. 44 Then he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when he comes, he finds *it* empty, swept, and put in order. 45 Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked

than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last *state* of that man is worse than the first. So shall it also be with this wicked generation."

**JESUS' MOTHER AND BROTHERS SEND FOR HIM**

46While He was still talking to the multitudes, behold, His mother and brothers stood outside, seeking to speak with Him. 47Then one said to Him, "Look, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, seeking to speak with You."

48But He answered and said to the one who told Him, "Who is My mother and who are My brothers?" 49And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, "Here are My mother and My brothers! 50For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother."

**SOUL NOTE**

**Ruled Out** *(12:1-8)* When Jesus' disciples ate grain while walking through a field on the Sabbath, the Pharisees criticized them for breaking God's commandment (Ex. 20:8). Their mistake, as Jesus pointed out, was in reducing God's law to a set of rules to be kept in order to earn His approval. When Christians focus on keeping rules in order to please God, they fall into the trap of legalism. Salvation is a free gift from God that cannot be earned by good works. Good works are the fruit of the Spirit and should be the outward actions of our inward faith. **Topic: Legalism**

## SOUL NOTE

**Unpardonable?** *(12:31, 32)* God promises to forgive our sins when we repent (1 John 1:9). There is one sin that cannot be forgiven, but believers don't have to worry about accidentally committing that sin. This is because the unpardonable sin is continually rejecting the Holy Spirit's conviction, stubbornly refusing to turn from sin and repent. It indicates an irreversible hardness in the heart. Only those who have rejected faith in Christ can commit this sin. It is unpardonable because they have rejected the only means of pardon. **Topic: Sin**

## THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

**13** On the same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the sea. [2]And great multitudes were gathered together to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore.

[3]Then He spoke many things to them in parables, saying: “Behold, a sower went out to sow. [4]And as he sowed, some *seed* fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them. [5]Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth. [6]But when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away. [7]And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them. [8]But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. [9]He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”

## THE PURPOSE OF PARABLES

[10]And the disciples came and said to Him, “Why do You speak to them in parables?”

[11]He answered and said to them, “Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. [12]For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. [13]Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. [14]And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says:

‘Hearing you will hear and shall not understand,
And seeing you will see and not perceive;
[15] For the hearts of this people have grown dull.
*Their* ears are hard of hearing,
And their eyes they have closed,
Lest they should see with *their* eyes and hear with *their* ears,
Lest they should understand with *their* hearts and turn,
So that I should[a] heal them.’ [b]

16 But blessed *are* your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; 17 for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous *men* desired to see what you see, and did not see *it*, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear *it*.

## THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER EXPLAINED

18 "Therefore hear the parable of the sower: 19 When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand *it*, then the wicked *one* comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside. 20 But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; 21 yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. 22 Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. 23 But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands *it*, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."

## THE PARABLE OF THE WHEAT AND THE TARES

24 Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; 25 but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. 26 But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. 27 So the servants of the owner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' 28 He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' The servants said to him, 'Do you want us then to go and gather them up?' 29 But he said, 'No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. 30 Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn." ' "

## THE PARABLE OF THE MUSTARD SEED

31 Another parable He put forth to them, saying: “The kingdom of heaven is
like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, 32 which indeed
is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs
and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches.”

## THE PARABLE OF THE LEAVEN

33 Another parable He spoke to them: “The kingdom of heaven is like
leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures[a] of meal till it was all
leavened.”

## PROPHECY AND THE PARABLES

34 All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and without a
parable He did not speak to them, 35 that it might be fulfilled which was
spoken by the prophet, saying:

> “I will open My mouth in parables;
> I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world.”[a]

## THE PARABLE OF THE TARES EXPLAINED

36 Then Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house. And His
disciples came to Him, saying, “Explain to us the parable of the tares of the
field.”

37 He answered and said to them: “He who sows the good seed is the Son of
Man. 38 The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but
the tares are the sons of the wicked *one*. 39 The enemy who sowed them is the
devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels.
40 Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the
end of this age. 41 The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will
gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice
lawlessness, 42 and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be
wailing and gnashing of teeth. 43 Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun
in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!

> “Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the

kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”
MATTHEW 13:43

**THE PARABLE OF THE HIDDEN TREASURE**

44“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

**THE PARABLE OF THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE**

45“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, 46who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

**THE PARABLE OF THE DRAGNET**

47“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind, 48which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away. 49So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, 50and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.”

51Jesus said to them,[a] “Have you understood all these things?”

They said to Him, “Yes, Lord.”[b]

52Then He said to them, “Therefore every scribe instructed concerning[a] the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure *things* new and old.”

**JESUS REJECTED AT NAZARETH**

53Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these parables, that He departed from 54When He had come to His own country, He taught them in their synagogue, so there. that they were astonished and said, “Where did this *Man* get this wisdom and *these* mighty works? 55Is this not the carpenter’s

son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joses,[a] Simon, and Judas? [56]And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this *Man* get all these things?" [57]So they were offended at Him.

But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own country and in his own house." [58]Now He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief.

## JOHN THE BAPTIST BEHEADED

**14** At that time Herod the tetrarch heard the report about Jesus [2]and said to his servants, “This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead, and therefore these powers are at work in him.” [3]For Herod had laid hold of John and bound him, and put *him* in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife. [4]Because John had said to him, “It is not lawful for you to have her.” [5]And although he wanted to put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet.

[6]But when Herod’s birthday was celebrated, the daughter of Herodias danced before them and pleased Herod. [7]Therefore he promised with an oath to give her whatever she might ask.

[8]So she, having been prompted by her mother, said, “Give me John the Baptist’s head here on a platter.”

[9]And the king was sorry; nevertheless, because of the oaths and because of those who sat with him, he commanded *it* to be given to *her*. [10]So he sent and had John beheaded in prison. [11]And his head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, and she brought *it* to her mother. [12]Then his disciples came and took away the body and buried it, and went and told Jesus.

## FEEDING THE FIVE THOUSAND

[13]When Jesus heard *it*, He departed from there by boat to a deserted place by Himself. But when the multitudes heard it, they followed Him on foot from the cities. [14]And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick. [15]When it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, “This is a deserted place, and the hour is already late. Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food.”

[16]But Jesus said to them, “They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.”

[17]And they said to Him, “We have here only five loaves and two fish.”

[18]He said, “Bring them here to Me.” [19]Then He commanded the multitudes

to sit down on the grass. And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitudes. [20]So they all ate and were filled, and they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments that remained. [21]Now those who had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

**JESUS WALKS ON THE SEA**

[22]Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. [23]And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there. [24]But the boat was now in the middle of the sea,[a] tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary.

[25]Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. [26]And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out for fear.

[27]But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid."

[28]And Peter answered Him and said, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water."

[29]So He said, "Come." And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. [30]But when he saw that the wind *was* boisterous,[a] he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!"

[31]And immediately Jesus stretched out *His* hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" [32]And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased.

[33]Then those who were in the boat came and[a] worshiped Him, saying, "Truly You are the Son of God."

**MANY TOUCH HIM AND ARE MADE WELL**

[34]When they had crossed over, they came to the land of[a] Gennesaret.

[35]And when the men of that place recognized Him, they sent out into all that surrounding region, brought to Him all who were sick, [36]and begged Him that they might only touch the hem of His garment. And as many as touched *it* were made perfectly well.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# JESUS: TEACHING US TO PRAY

## (MATTHEW 14:23)

Jesus prayed in public and in private. Jesus prayed with and for His disciples. He prayed openly for others. He commanded prayer, encouraged prayer, taught prayer, and modeled prayer. During several significant times in Jesus' life, He left the disciples and His public ministry and spent time alone in prayer.

Prayer, Jesus revealed, is not just the method for godly request-making or an exercise in guidance. He taught that prayer is also a vehicle

- for worship,
- for the expression of praise,
- for adoration,
- for confession, and
- for thanksgiving to God.

When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray (Luke

11:1), He gave them what we call the Lord's Prayer as an example.

For Jesus, prayer was not just a wordy exercise-it was connection and communion with the living God. Jesus poured His heart and soul into prayer, and it became a time of great emotional expression of His spirit. The kind of intense intimacy with God that the disciples observed in Jesus while He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matt. 26:36-46) doesn't appear overnight, but is the result of years of prayerful interaction with God.

Luke's Gospel includes an interesting example of how characteristic prayer was in Jesus' life. On the day of His resurrection, Jesus walked with two disciples from outside Jerusalem to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-32). They traveled and talked for several hours, but it wasn't until the mealtime, when Jesus prayed for the bread and broke it, that the disciples' eyes were opened to recognize Him. Prayer offered a hint that even they couldn't miss.

Prayer was central in Jesus' life. If Jesus, who was the divine Son of God, needed to get alone with God in order to pray and commune with Him, how much more do we!

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Powerful Prayer. See also the key passage note at Matthew 6:5-13.

**DEFILEMENT COMES FROM WITHIN**

**15** Then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus,
saying, [2]"Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders?
For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread."

[3]He answered and said to them, "Why do you also transgress the
commandment of God because of your tradition? [4]For God commanded,
saying, 'Honor your father and your mother';[a] and, 'He who curses father or
mother, let him be put to death.'[b] [5]But you say, 'Whoever says to his father
or mother, "Whatever profit you might have received from me *is* a gift *to
God*"- [6]then he need not honor his father or mother.'[a] Thus you have made
the commandment[b] of God of no effect by your tradition. [7]Hypocrites! Well
did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying:

[8] 'These people draw near to Me with their mouth,
And[a] honor Me with *their* lips,
But their heart is far from Me.
[9] And in vain they worship Me,
Teaching *as* doctrines the commandments of men.' "[a]

[10]When He had called the multitude to *Himself*, He said to them, "Hear
and understand: [11]Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what
comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man."

[12]Then His disciples came and said to Him, "Do You know that the
Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?"

[13]But He answered and said, "Every plant which My heavenly Father has
not planted will be uprooted. [14]Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the
blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch."

[15]Then Peter answered and said to Him, "Explain this parable to us."

[16]So Jesus said, "Are you also still without understanding? [17]Do you not
yet understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is
eliminated? [18]But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from
the heart, and they defile a man. [19]For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts,
murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. [20]These

are *the things* which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man."

## A GENTILE SHOWS HER FAITH

[21]Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon. [22]And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed."

[23]But He answered her not a word.

And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, "Send her away, for she cries out after us."

[24]But He answered and said, "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

[25]Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, "Lord, help me!"

[26]But He answered and said, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw *it* to the little dogs."

[27]And she said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table."

[28]Then Jesus answered and said to her, "O woman, great *is* your faith! Let it be to you as you desire." And her daughter was healed from that very hour.

## JESUS HEALS GREAT MULTITUDES

[29]Jesus departed from there, skirted the Sea of Galilee, and went up on the mountain and sat down there. [30]Then great multitudes came to Him, having with them *the* lame, blind, mute, maimed, and many others; and they laid them down at Jesus' feet, and He healed them. [31]So the multitude marveled when they saw *the* mute speaking, *the* maimed made whole, *the* lame walking, and *the* blind seeing; and they glorified the God of Israel.

## FEEDING THE FOUR THOUSAND

[32]Now Jesus called His disciples to *Himself* and said, "I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now continued with Me three days and

have nothing to eat. And I do not want to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way.”

33 Then His disciples said to Him, “Where could we get enough bread in the wilderness to fill such a great multitude?”

34 Jesus said to them, “How many loaves do you have?”

And they said, “Seven, and a few little fish.”

35 So He commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. 36 And He took the seven loaves and the fish and gave thanks, broke *them* and gave *them* to His disciples; and the disciples *gave* to the multitude. 37 So they all ate and were filled, and they took up seven large baskets full of the fragments that were left. 38 Now those who ate were four thousand men, besides women and children. 39 And He sent away the multitude, got into the boat, and came to the region of Magdala.[a]

## THE PHARISEES AND SADDUCEES SEEK A SIGN

**16** Then the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and testing Him asked that He would show them a sign from heaven. [2]He answered and said to them, "When it is evening you say, '*It will be* fair weather, for the sky is red'; [3]and in the morning, '*It will be* foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.' Hypocrites![a] You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot *discern* the signs of the times. [4]A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet[a] Jonah." And He left them and departed.

## THE LEAVEN OF THE PHARISEES AND SADDUCEES

[5]Now when His disciples had come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread. [6]Then Jesus said to them, "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees."

[7]And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "*It is* because we have taken no bread."

[8]But Jesus, being aware of *it,* said to them, "O you of little faith, why do you reason among yourselves because you have brought no bread?[a] [9]Do you not yet understand, or remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets you took up? [10]Nor the seven loaves of the four thousand and how many large baskets you took up? [11]How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread?-*but* to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." [12]Then they understood that He did not tell *them* to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

## PETER CONFESSES JESUS AS THE CHRIST

[13]When Jesus came into the region of Caes-area Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?"

[14]So they said, "Some *say* John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

15 He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”

16 Simon Peter answered and said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

17 Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven. 18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. 19 And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed[a] in heaven.”

> “For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?”
> MATTHEW 16:26

20 Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ.

## JESUS PREDICTS HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION

21 From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.

22 Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, “Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!”

23 But He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.”

## TAKE UP THE CROSS AND FOLLOW HIM

24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. 25 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will

find it. [26]For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? [27]For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.

**JESUS TRANSFIGURED ON THE MOUNT**

[28]Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom."

**SOUL NOTE**

**Radical Denial** *(16:24)* Radical discipleship means denying oneself and taking up the cross. Jesus was not promoting self-hatred; instead, He was saying that His followers must put God first and be willing to suffer anything for His sake. If a primary goal is to protect ourselves from embarrassment or discomfort, we are not denying ourselves. If we focus on what *we* want instead of what God wants for us, we are not denying ourselves. In the end, self-denial actually brings true fulfillment, for it allows God to use us for His purposes. That is the best way to live. **Topic: Self-Denial**

**17** Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led
them up on a high mountain by themselves; [2]and He was transfigured
before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as
the light. [3]And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him.
[4]Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if
You wish, let us[a] make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses,
and one for Elijah.”

[5]While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them;
and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is My beloved Son,
in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!” [6]And when the disciples heard *it*,
they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid. [7]But Jesus came and touched
them and said, “Arise, and do not be afraid.” [8]When they had lifted up their
eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.

[9]Now as they came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them,
saying, “Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the
dead.”

[10]And His disciples asked Him, saying, “Why then do the scribes say that
Elijah must come first?”

[11]Jesus answered and said to them, “Indeed, Elijah is coming first[a] and will
restore all things. [12]But I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they
did not know him but did to him whatever they wished. Likewise the Son of
Man is also about to suffer at their hands.” [13]Then the disciples understood
that He spoke to them of John the Baptist.

### A BOY IS HEALED

[14]And when they had come to the multitude, a man came to Him, kneeling
down to Him and saying, [15]“Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an
epileptic[a] and suffers severely; for he often falls into the fire and often into
the water. [16]So I brought him to Your disciples, but they could not cure him.”

[17]Then Jesus answered and said, “O faithless and perverse generation, how
long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him here to
Me.” [18]And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him; and the child

was cured from that very hour.

19 Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, “Why could we not cast it out?”

20 So Jesus said to them, “Because of your unbelief;[a] for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you. 21 However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.”[a]

## JESUS AGAIN PREDICTS HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION

22 Now while they were staying[a] in Galilee, Jesus said to them, “The Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men, 23 and they will kill Him, and the third day He will be raised up.” And they were exceedingly sorrowful.

## PETER AND HIS MASTER PAY THEIR TAXES

24 When they had come to Capernaum,[a] those who received the *temple* tax came to Peter and said, “Does your Teacher not pay the *temple* tax?”

25 He said, “Yes.”

And when he had come into the house, Jesus anticipated him, saying, “What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth take customs or taxes, from their sons or from strangers?”

26 Peter said to Him, “From strangers.”

Jesus said to him, “Then the sons are free. 27 Nevertheless, lest we offend them, go to the sea, cast in a hook, and take the fish that comes up first. And when you have opened its mouth, you will find a piece of money;[a] take that and give it to them for Me and you.”

## WHO IS THE GREATEST?

**18** At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?”

[2]Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, [3]and said, “Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. [4]Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. [5]Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me.

## JESUS WARNS OF OFFENSES

[6]“Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea. [7]Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!

[8]“If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast *it* from you. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire. [9]And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast *it* from you. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire.

## THE PARABLE OF THE LOST SHEEP

[10]“Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven. [11]For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost.[a]

[12]“What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying? [13]And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over that *sheep* than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray. [14]Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.

## DEALING WITH A SINNING BROTHER

15 “Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault
between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.
16 But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that ‘by the mouth
of two or three witnesses every word may be established.’ [a] 17 And if he
refuses to hear them, tell *it* to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the
church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.

18 “Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in
heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

19 “Again I say[a] to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning
anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. 20 For
where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst
of them.”

## THE PARABLE OF THE UNFORGIVING SERVANT

21 Then Peter came to Him and said, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin
against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?”

22 Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to
seventy times seven. 23 Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king
who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. 24 And when he had begun to
settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents.
25 But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with
his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. 26 The
servant therefore fell down before him, saying, ‘Master, have patience with
me, and I will pay you all.’ 27 Then the master of that servant was moved with
compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.

28 “But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who
owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took *him* by the
throat, saying, ‘Pay me what you owe!’ 29 So his fellow servant fell down at
his feet[a] and begged him, saying, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you
all.’[b] 30 And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should
pay the debt. 31 So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they
were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done.
32 Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, ‘You wicked servant!

I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. [33]Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?' [34]And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him.

[35]"So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses."[a]

**KEY PASSAGE**

# RESOLUTION SOLUTION

## (18:15-17)

Conflict is a normal part of life, but when conflicts between believers involve sinful behavior, they must be handled carefully. Jesus outlined a process toward resolving these conflicts. If a brother or sister offends us, our first responsibility is to talk with that person about the offense. At this point, the person can be made aware of the sinful behavior and be able to deal with it. If the personal discussion does not bring about resolution, then we should take one or two other responsible believers with us to confront the individual about the sinful behavior. Finally, and only if those two steps fail, the situation should be taken to the larger church body.

Jesus clearly indicated that it is best to resolve private matters privately, avoiding gossip and public confrontations whenever possible. But when that is not possible, believers must be made accountable to one another in the body of Christ.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Restoring Broken Relationships: Hope for the Heart. See also the personality profile of Paul and Mark-settling Their Differences.

## RESTORING BROKEN RELATIONSHIPS: HOPE FOR THE HEART

JUNE HUNT

(Matthew 18:15-17)

**"I** s there a doctor in the house?" Many a call for help has been heard when sickness strikes and the body dangerously fails to function. Likewise, when a relationship between two peoplefalls into the danger zone, we may be called upon to help "doctor" two wounded hearts.

While no one can escape the pain of broken relationships, they can escape becoming bitter. The Bible powerfully presents the freedom of forgiveness. But even more, Jehovah Rapha, the God who heals, gives each believer "the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:18, 19).

### HOW TO DIAGNOSE THE CONDITION OF THE HEART

Patients with bad heart conditions need to change their unhealthy habits. Heart patients who have "hardening of the arteries" receive regular examinations. Like medical doctors, we can help those who need a "heart examination." We can help to diagnose the problem by testing eight potentially problematic areas:

1. *Pride:* “Do I focus on how much I’ve been wronged?”

2. *Faultfinding:* “Do I rehearse the faults of others?”

3. *Avoidance:* “Do I avoid being around people with whom I have conflict?”

4. *Silence:* “Do I refuse to share my feelings in a healthy way?”

5. *Isolation:* “Do I withdraw emotionally?”

6. *Unfaithfulness:* “Do I share unnecessary information about my opposer?”

7. *Hopelessness:* “Do I lack faith that God can work in any situation?”

8. *Resentment:* “Do I hold on to my anger until it turns to bitterness?”

The Bible says, “Pursue peace . . . looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble” (Heb. 12:14, 15).

## HOW TO BEGIN RECONCILIATION

The process of reconciliation can occur when both parties are willing to listen without interrupting. They both need to be respectful and understand that there are two sides to every story, two sets of feelings that need to be understood, and two hearts that need to be healed. The following lists of do’s and don’ts will be helpful to those who are trying to guide two people in reconciliation:

In the “do” column: (1) See the situation from the other’s point of view. (2) Repeat back: “I hear you saying . Is that correct?” (3) Use words that encourage. (4) Be respectful, even if you are not treated respectfully. (5) Realize that you have the power to change only yourself. (6) Be at peace, knowing that you have the Prince of Peace

in your heart.

Now for the “don’ts”: (1) Don’t forget that your opposer is also God’s creation. (2) Don’t harbor resentment, bitterness, or hatred. (3) Don’t use “you” statements: “You make me mad . . . you should . . . you always. . . .” (4) Don’t get drawn into useless arguments. (5) Don’t expect an immediate change. (6) Don’t assume that reconciliation is always possible.

## HOWTO APOLOGIZE

Physical healing cannot take place unless the patient chooses to do what is healthy. Similarly, the healing of two wounded hearts will not take place if both parties defiantly refuse to ask forgiveness. But since there are wrong ways and right ways of asking, we may need to explain the difference: (1) Don’t make excuses: “I couldn’t help it.” (2) Don’t use the blame game: “You made me do it.” (3) Accept full responsibility: “My attitude was inexcusable.” (4) Accept full blame for your part: “No one can make another person sin. I acknowledge that I sinned against you.” (5) With a humble heart say, “I’ve tried to see our relationship from your point of view. I realize that I’ve been wrong in my attitude of . Would you forgive me?”

## HOWTO FORGIVE

Some patients have a wound that will not heal because they won’t leave the wound alone. Just as a wound needs to be allowed to heal, a person needs to allow forgiveness to do its work. We can be effectively used by God to present practical steps in the healing process. Some of these steps include: (1) Realizing that forgiveness is not letting the offender “off the hook,” but an act of releasing the offender from your hook and onto God’s hook. (2) Deciding that you want to be free from the pain of the past. (3) Recognizing the unmet need(s) in the one who hurt you. (4) Listing every offense, and then, instead of “picking” at the wrongs, releasing each offense and the offender into the hands of God.

## HOW TO ENLISTA MEDIATOR

If a doctor has been consulted and the medical condition seems uncertain, a "second opinion" is often sought. The Bible even speaks of bringing in a wise outside adviser: "Without counsel, plans go awry, but in the multitude of counselors they are established" (Prov. 15:22). Sometimes another mediator is needed. Seek a person whom they both can respect. Say to them, "At times an outside person brings to the table a different perspective. Would you consider a mediator to help think through the problems to reach a successful end?"

Each person must be prepared to experience the possibility of a negative outcome from the process of reconciliation. Ultimately, a relationship may not work out between two people. One person cannot be responsible for the outcome of a relationship. However, each person is responsible for handling the reconciliation process in a godly manner. "If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men" (Rom. 12:18).

## FURTHER MEDITATION:

Other passages to study about the issue of conflict include:

- Psalms 103:6-14; 133:1
- Proverbs 6:2, 3; 16:7; 17:27
- Matthew 5:44-48
- Romans 12:14, 17-21
- 1 Corinthians 1:10
- Philippians 2:3; 4:2
- Colossians 3:2, 13

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on conflict at Matthew 18:15-17. See also the personality profile of Paul And Mark-settling Their Differences.

**KEY PASSAGE**

# DON'T KEEP COUNT

## (18:21-35)

"I'm sorry."

"I forgive you."

These words are often spoken, but what do they really mean? Is the person *really* sorry? What if he or she offends again? Does the other person have to keep on forgiving?

Peter asked if forgiving a person seven times was enough. Jesus answered that seven times was *not* enough; instead, Peter should forgive "seventy times seven" times. The point: Don't even keep count; just keep on forgiving.

Jesus then told a parable about a man who, after receiving great forgiveness for a large debt he owed to someone, refused to forgive a person who owed him a small debt. Jesus was illustrating that we sinners have been graciously forgiven by God-and are being forgiven daily, over and over again. We should be just as gracious in forgiving others. To refuse to forgive shows that we have not understood how much God has forgiven us.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Forgiveness. See also the personality profile of Joseph's Forgiveness.

## MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

**19** Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these sayings, *that* He
departed from Galilee and came to the region of Judea beyond the
Jordan. [2]And great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them there.

[3]The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, "Is it
lawful for a man to divorce his wife for *just* any reason?"

[4]And He answered and said to them, "Have you not read that He who
made[a] *them* at the beginning 'made them male and female,'[b] [5]and said, 'For
this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife,
and the two shall become one flesh'?[a] [6]So then, they are no longer two but
one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate."

[7]They said to Him, "Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of
divorce, and to put her away?"

[8]He said to them, "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts,
permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.
[9]And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality,[a]
and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is
divorced commits adultery."

[10]His disciples said to Him, "If such is the case of the man with *his* wife, it
is better not to marry."

## JESUS TEACHES ON CELIBACY

[11]But He said to them, "All cannot accept this saying, but only *those* to
whom it has been given: [12]For there are eunuchs who were born thus from
*their* mother's womb, and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by
men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the
kingdom of heaven's sake. He who is able to accept *it,* let him accept *it.*"

## JESUS BLESSES LITTLE CHILDREN

[13]Then little children were brought to Him that He might put *His* hands on
them and pray, but the disciples rebuked them. [14]But Jesus said, "Let the little

children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.” [15]And He laid *His* hands on them and departed from there.

## JESUS COUNSELS THE RICH YOUNG RULER

[16]Now behold, one came and said to Him, “Good[a] Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?”

[17]So He said to him, “Why do you call Me good?[a] No one *is* good but One, *that is*, God.[b] But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.”

[18]He said to Him, “Which ones?”

Jesus said, “ ‘You shall not murder,’ ‘You shall not commit adultery,’ ‘You shall not steal,’ ‘You shall not bear false witness,’ [19]‘Honor your father and *your* mother,’[a] and, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ ”[b]

[20]The young man said to Him, “All these things I have kept from my youth.[a] What do I still lack?”

[21]Jesus said to him, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.”

[22]But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

## WITH GOD ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE

[23]Then Jesus said to His disciples, “Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. [24]And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”

> “With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”
> MATTHEW 19:26

[25]When His disciples heard *it*, they were greatly astonished, saying, “Who then can be saved?”

[26]But Jesus looked at *them* and said to them, “With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

[27]Then Peter answered and said to Him, “See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?”

[28]So Jesus said to them, “Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. [29]And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife[a] or children or lands, for My name’s sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life. [30]But many *who are* first will be last, and the last first.

**KEY PASSAGE**

# DIVORCE DIFFICULTIES

# (19:3-8)

The Pharisees’ question was meant to test Jesus’ commitment to Moses’ law: “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?” they asked.

Jesus’ response emphasized that God has always intended each married couple, one man and one woman, to remain married for life (Gen. 2:24). Moses had indeed permitted divorce (Deut. 24:1) but only because of the “hardness” of human hearts. Jesus knew that the option for divorce was included in Moses’ law because of sinful human nature, but He still defended the importance of permanence in marriage.

In this passage we learn that divorce is permissible, but it is not commanded. Marriage vows should not be taken lightly. God would have couples do their best-with His help-to keep their marriage intact. If a divorce occurs, God's compassionate love can heal even the deepest wounds.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Divorce Recovery. See also the personality profile The Woman At The Well: Found and Forgiven.

**KEY PASSAGE**

# KEEPING THE PROMISE

## (19:4-6)

"For better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health, as long as we both shall live." This promise is made by thousands of starry-eyed couples every year as they pledge their love to each other. Why, then, have so many of those promises been broken? Is it possible for marriage to be forever?

When the Pharisees questioned Jesus about divorce, Jesus spoke to them first about marriage. He emphasized that God's plan has always been for marriage to be a covenant relationship-the promises made are to be kept, regardless of the circumstances. God created male and female, joining them together as "one flesh" in marriage. God holds the permanence of the marriage bond in highest regard because it is the essential unit of His plan for the family and for society.

Marriage should never be entered into lightly. The vows made

before God are meant to be kept “for better or worse.”

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Covenant Marriage. See also the personality profile of Mary and Joseph: the Bond of Love and Honesty.

## MORE THAN BEING UNMARRIED

ALAN CORRY

(Matthew 19:12)

**S**ingle adults are in good company when they realize that the Lord Jesus Christ lived out His earthly ministry as a single adult. Christian single people find their identity in Christ, not in their marital status. Whether singleness is for a season or a lifetime, the issue is not to focus on singleness. Instead, single people should allow God to use them to make an impact on this world for His kingdom. No one should be ashamed of being single.

### COMING TO TERMS

More adults are waiting longer to get married, meaning that more adults are staying single longer. Single people must not let family or friends put undue pressure on them to get married. If they feel like they have to be in a relationship in order to be accepted by others, then they are susceptible to being used and hurt by others, or they will use and hurt others in order to be in a relationship of convenience.

Single people must come to terms with being single-knowing that

they are complete and whole as individuals in their relationship with Christ. If they feel that they cannot be whole people until they are married, then they are not ready for marriage. Marriage is not about finding someone to complete and make a person whole. Healthy marriages have as their foundation two individuals who are secure in their own identity-coming together in a state of holy matrimony. As the two of them work together as marriage partners, they will complement each other. The oneness in marriage is a spiritual oneness, but if some never marry and experience that oneness, it does not mean that they are lacking or incomplete as human beings.

Single people must also come to terms with the fact that not all adults marry. Singleness is not to be looked at as an inferior quality of life. According to Paul, "But I say to the unmarried and to the widows: It is good for them if they remain even as I am" (1 Cor. 7:8). Paul's intent was not to put marriage down, but rather to elevate the status of being single. Being married and remaining single are both honorable lifestyles. Too many single adults sit on the sidelines waiting to be married before they feel like they will be a viable part of the community. God wants them to be active in the ministry to others *now*.

Pastors and friends of single people should empower them to live life to its fullest as they seek to find God's purpose and direction for their lives. In their singleness, they should seek God in all that they do. They ought never rush to get married. If they marry, they want to be involved in a healthy, growing, and dynamic marriage. In the meantime, however, they should be content in their singleness.

## FINDING ONE'S PLACE

Being alone and being lonely are two different things. Being alone is a physical state; being lonely is an emotional state. People can be alone and be perfectly content as they walk, pray, read, watch TV, or just sit and daydream. They can also be in a crowd, but feel very lonely.

Single adults must connect with others. God created people to be social beings. After all, His heart's desire is for us to be in a personal relationship with Him through His Son Jesus Christ. Single people need to have a community of friends whom they can trust and with whom they can share activities and interests. They need to have a balance of male and female friends. Obvious places to start will be at a local church where they feel accepted and can be growing in their relationship with God as they also make new friends. Other places to seek out friendships will be in areas of personal interest as they pursue hobbies or participate in service organizations.

Single adults also need a small circle of close friends, good friends who are trustworthy. They can hold each other accountable if one of them is making unhealthy lifestyle choices. As they develop this inner circle of friends, they will deal with the loneliness issue less and less.

Another issue of concern for single adults is their sexuality. People are not only created as social beings, but as sexual beings as well. We are created male and female. The issue of celibacy and singleness causes concern for many singles. Celibacy is a gift and would be for those who choose to remain single for the express purpose of serving God in their singleness.

What about those who are single for a longer season, but yet desire to be married someday? To be celibate can be defined as the spiritual ability to have complete control of one's sexual desires. Although these people may not have the *gift* of celibacy, they still have a biblical mandate to live a chaste lifestyle until they are married. Remaining chaste involves more than refraining from sexual activity; it also means bringing all sexual desires under submission to God. This is not easy, but if single adults wish to honor God with their lives, they must allow God to be at the center, helping them handle their fears, desires, hopes, and dreams.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of singleness include:

- 1 Corinthians 7
- Philippians 4:11
- Hebrews 13:5

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on singleness at 1 Corinthians 7:26-35. See also the personality profile of Paul: Single and Not Alone.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Loose Grip** *(19:16-22)* This rich young ruler wanted to know what he needed to *do* in order to have eternal life. Jesus perceived the one barrier that was keeping this young man from being a disciple-his wealth. So Jesus challenged him to give away all his wealth and then follow Him. Jesus does not require everyone to just give all they have to the poor. That would bless some temporarily and impoverish many in the end. He does require, however, that we hold our money loosely, being willing to use it for God's kingdom, and always realizing that our wealth belongs to God. **Topic: Money**

## THE PARABLE OF THE WORKERS IN THE VINEYARD

**20** “For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in
the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. [2]Now when he had agreed
with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. [3]And he
went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace,
[4]and said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will
give you.’ So they went. [5]Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth
hour, and did likewise. [6]And about the eleventh hour he went out and found
others standing idle,[a] and said to them, ‘Why have you been standing here
idle all day?’ [7]They said to him, ‘Because no one hired us.’ He said to them,
‘You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right you will receive.’ [a]

[8]“So when evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his
steward, ‘Call the laborers and give them *their* wages, beginning with the last
to the first.’ [9]And when those came who *were hired* about the eleventh hour,
they each received a denarius. [10]But when the first came, they supposed that
they would receive more; and they likewise received each a denarius. [11]And
when they had received *it*, they complained against the landowner, [12]saying,
‘These last *men* have worked *only* one hour, and you made them equal to us
who have borne the burden and the heat of the day.’ [13]But he answered one
of them and said, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with
me for a denarius? [14]Take *what is* yours and go your way. I wish to give to
this last man *the same* as to you. [15]Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish
with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?’ [16]So the last
will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen.”[a]

## JESUS A THIRD TIME PREDICTS HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION

[17]Now Jesus, going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples aside on the
road and said to them, [18]“Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son
of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will
condemn Him to death, [19]and deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and to
scourge and to crucify. And the third day He will rise again.”

## GREATNESS IS SERVING

[20]Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Him with her sons, kneeling down and asking something from Him.

[21]And He said to her, "What do you wish?" She said to Him, "Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in Your kingdom."

[22]But Jesus answered and said, "You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?"[a]

They said to Him, "We are able."

[23]So He said to them, "You will indeed drink My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with;[a] but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but *it is for those* for whom it is prepared by My Father."

[24]And when the ten heard *it*, they were greatly displeased with the two brothers. [25]But Jesus called them to *Himself* and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. [26]Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. [27]And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave- [28]just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

## TWO BLIND MEN RECEIVE THEIR SIGHT

[29]Now as they went out of Jericho, a great multitude followed Him. [30]And behold, two blind men sitting by the road, when they heard that Jesus was passing by, cried out, saying, "Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!"

[31]Then the multitude warned them that they should be quiet; but they cried out all the more, saying, "Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!"

[32]So Jesus stood still and called them, and said, "What do you want Me to do for you?"

[33]They said to Him, "Lord, that our eyes may be opened." [34]So Jesus had compassion and touched their eyes. And immediately their eyes received

sight, and they followed Him.

## THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY

**21** Now when they drew near Jerusalem, and came to Bethphage,[a] at the
Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, [2]saying to them, "Go into
the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a
colt with her. Loose *them* and bring *them* to Me. [3]And if anyone says
anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord has need of them,' and immediately
he will send them."

[4]All[a] this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the
prophet, saying:

[5] "Tell the daughter of Zion,
'Behold, your King is coming to you,
Lowly, and sitting on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.'
"[a]

[6]So the disciples went and did as Jesus commanded them. [7]They brought
the donkey and the colt, laid their clothes on them, and set *Him*[a] on them.
[8]And a very great multitude spread their clothes on the road; others cut down
branches from the trees and spread *them* on the road. [9]Then the multitudes
who went before and those who followed cried out, saying:

"Hosanna to the Son of David!
'Blessed *is* He who comes in the name of the LORD!'[a]
Hosanna in the highest!"

[10]And when He had come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying,
"Who is this?"

[11]So the multitudes said, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of
Galilee."

## JESUS CLEANSES THE TEMPLE

[12]Then Jesus went into the temple of God[a] and drove out all those who
bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money
changers and the seats of those who sold doves. [13]And He said to them, "It is
written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,'[a] but you have made it a
'den of thieves.' "[b]

14 Then *the* blind and *the* lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed
them. 15 But when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that
He did, and the children crying out in the temple and saying, “Hosanna to the
Son of David!” they were indignant 16 and said to Him, “Do You hear what
these are saying?”

And Jesus said to them, “Yes. Have you never read,

> ‘Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants
> You have perfected praise’?”[a]

17 Then He left them and went out of the city to Bethany, and He lodged
there.

## THE FIG TREE WITHERED

18 Now in the morning, as He returned to the city, He was hungry. 19 And
seeing a fig tree by the road, He came to it and found nothing on it but leaves,
and said to it, “Let no fruit grow on you ever again.” Immediately the fig tree
withered away.

## THE LESSON OF THE WITHERED FIG TREE

20 And when the disciples saw *it,* they marveled, saying, “How did the fig
tree wither away so soon?”

21 So Jesus answered and said to them, “Assuredly, I say to you, if you
have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig
tree, but also if you say to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the
sea,’ it will be done. 22 And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you
will receive.”

## JESUS’ AUTHORITY QUESTIONED

23 Now when He came into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of
the people confronted Him as He was teaching, and said, “By what authority
are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority?”

24 But Jesus answered and said to them, “I also will ask you one thing,
which if you tell Me, I likewise will tell you by what authority I do these
things: 25 The baptism of John-where was it from? From heaven or from

men?”

And they reasoned among themselves, saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ He will say to us, ‘Why then did you not believe him?’ [26]But if we say, ‘From men,’ we fear the multitude, for all count John as a prophet.” [27]So they answered Jesus and said, “We do not know.”

And He said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.

**THE PARABLE OF THE TWO SONS**

[28]“But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, ‘Son, go, work today in my vineyard.’ [29]He answered and said, ‘I will not,’ but afterward he regretted it and went. [30]Then he came to the second and said likewise. And he answered and said, ‘I *go*, sir,’ but he did not go. [31]Which of the two did the will of *his* father?”

They said to Him, “The first.”

Jesus said to them, “Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you. [32]For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him; but tax collectors and harlots believed him; and when you saw *it*, you did not afterward relent and believe him.

**THE PARABLE OF THE WICKED VINEDRESSERS**

[33]“Hear another parable: There was a certain landowner who planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a winepress in it and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country. [34]Now when vintage-time drew near, he sent his servants to the vinedressers, that they might receive its fruit. [35]And the vinedressers took his servants, beat one, killed one, and stoned another. [36]Again he sent other servants, more than the first, and they did likewise to them. [37]Then last of all he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ [38]But when the vinedressers saw the son, they said among themselves, ‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.’ [39]So they took him and cast *him* out of the vineyard and killed *him*.

40 “Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to
those vinedressers?”

41 They said to Him, “He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and
lease *his* vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in
their seasons.”

42 Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures:

> ‘The stone which the builders rejected
> Has become the chief cornerstone.
> This was the LORD’s doing,
> And it is marvelous in our eyes’?[a]

43 “Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and
given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. 44 And whoever falls on this stone
will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder.”

45 Now when the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, they
perceived that He was speaking of them. 46 But when they sought to lay hands
on Him, they feared the multitudes, because they took Him for a prophet.

## THE PARABLE OF THE WEDDING FEAST

**22** And Jesus answered and spoke to them again by parables and said:

[2]"The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son, [3]and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come. [4]Again, he sent out other servants, saying, 'Tell those who are invited, "See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle *are* killed, and all things *are* ready. Come to the wedding." ' [5]But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business. [6]And the rest seized his servants, treated *them* spitefully, and killed *them*. [7]But when the king heard *about it*, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. [8]Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. [9]Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.' [10]So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding *hall* was filled with guests.

[11]"But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. [12]So he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. [13]Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and[a] cast *him* into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

[14]"For many are called, but few *are* chosen."

## THE PHARISEES: IS IT LAWFUL TO PAY TAXES TO CAESAR?

[15]Then the Pharisees went and plotted how they might entangle Him in *His* talk. [16]And they sent to Him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that You are true, and teach the way of God in truth; nor do You care about anyone, for You do not regard the person of men. [17]Tell us, therefore, what do You think? Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?"

[18]But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, "Why do you test Me,

*you* hypocrites? [19]Show Me the tax money."

So they brought Him a denarius.

[20]And He said to them, "Whose image and inscription *is* this?"

[21]They said to Him, "Caesar's."

And He said to them, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." [22]When they had heard *these words*, they marveled, and left Him and went their way.

**THE SADDUCEES: WHAT ABOUT THE RESURRECTION?**

[23]The same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him and asked Him, [24]saying: "Teacher, Moses said that if a man dies, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife and raise up offspring for his brother. [25]Now there were with us seven brothers. The first died after he had married, and having no offspring, left his wife to his brother. [26]Likewise the second also, and the third, even to the seventh. [27]Last of all the woman died also. [28]Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife of the seven will she be? For they all had her."

[29]Jesus answered and said to them, "You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God. [30]For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God[a] in heaven. [31]But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, [32]'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'?[a] God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." [33]And when the multitudes heard *this*, they were astonished at His teaching.

**THE SCRIBES: WHICH IS THE FIRST COMMANDMENT OF ALL?**

[34]But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. [35]Then one of them, a lawyer, asked *Him a question*, testing Him, and saying, [36]"Teacher, which *is* the great commandment in the law?"

[37]Jesus said to him, " 'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.'[a] [38]This is *the* first and great

commandment. [39]And *the* second *is* like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ [a] [40]On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”

> “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart,
> with all your soul, and with all your mind.”
> MATTHEW 22:37

**JESUS: HOW CAN DAVID CALL HIS DESCENDANT LORD?**

[41]While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, [42]saying, “What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?”

They said to Him, “*The Son* of David.”

[43]He said to them, “How then does David in the Spirit call Him *‘Lord,’* saying:

[44] ‘The LORD said to my Lord,
“ Sit at My right hand,
Till I make Your enemies Your footstool” ’ ?[a]

[45]If David then calls Him ‘Lord,’ how is He his Son?” [46]And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare question Him anymore.

## WOE TO THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES

**23** Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, [2]saying: "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. [3]Therefore whatever they tell you to observe,[a] *that* observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. [4]For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay *them* on men's shoulders; but they *themselves* will not move them with one of their fingers. [5]But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments. [6]They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, [7]greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi.' [8]But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ,[a] and you are all brethren. [9]Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. [10]And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ. [11]But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. [12]And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

[13]"But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in *yourselves*, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in. [14]Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation.[a]

[15]"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.

[16]"Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged *to perform it*.' [17]Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifies[a] the gold? [18]And, 'Whoever swears by the altar, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gift that is on it, he is obliged *to perform it*.' [19]Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that sanctifies the gift? [20]Therefore he who swears by the altar, swears by it and by all things on it. [21]He who swears by the temple, swears by it and by Him who dwells[a] in it.

22 And he who swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God and by Him who sits on it.

23 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier *matters* of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. 24 Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!

25 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence.[a] 26 Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also.

27 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead *men’s* bones and all uncleanness. 28 Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

29 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, 30 and say, ‘If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.’

31 “Therefore you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. 32 Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers’ *guilt.* 33 Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell? 34 Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: *some* of them you will kill and crucify, and *some* of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city, 35 that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. 36 Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.

## JESUS LAMENTS OVER JERUSALEM

37 “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those

who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under *her* wings, but you were not willing! [38]See! Your house is left to you desolate; [39]for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed *is* He who comes in the name of the LORD! ' "[a]

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# THE PHARISEES: LIVING BY THE RULES

## (MATTHEW 23:23-28)

The Pharisees were the conservative religious believers of Jesus' day. They viewed themselves as the defenders of the law and went to great lengths to make sure that their outward behavior met the minute demands of the law as they interpreted it. They would invest great energy to "strain out a gnat"-concentrating on useless points of meaningless regulation, and instead would "swallow a camel"-missing the major demands of the law, such as justice, mercy, forgiveness, and redemption. The Pharisees looked pious and acted religious, but they were heartless, spiritually dead. They were legalists, and they depict the fallacy of legalism. Legalists make gods of the rules of God rather than reveling in relationship with God Himself.

"Pharisee" is a term that still fits those who concern themselves with the letter of the law. They take the rules seriously. Most Pharisees in Jesus' time were not living out their faith and values in a way that truly represented the heart of God. Jesus' major criticism was that although they looked religious, they acted wickedly. He

delivered His sternest rebuke in Scripture in a series of eight "woes" pronounced against the scribes and Pharisees. He called them hypocrites, blind guides, fools, and the children of hell. Some Jewish religious leaders, like Nicodemus (John 3:1-21) and Joseph of Arimathea (Matt. 27:57-60) became disciples of Jesus. But most hated Jesus because He constantly pointed out that while their external behavior did meet the legalistic standards of the law, their hearts were often far from God.

Pharisees are alive, well, and doing damage today. Legalists focus on the rules, on appearances, on "being better" than other believers. Like the Pharisees of Jesus' day, they separate themselves from the rest of Christians, feeling superior and often acting judgmental. God's people need the Holy Spirit's help to see any accumulation of legalistic trash hidden in the corners of our lives. He will lead His people, gently but relentlessly, to repentance and true spiritual vitality.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Legalism-Focusing on the Law. See also the key passage note at Romans 7:6-14.

## JESUS PREDICTS THE DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE

**24** Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples
came up to show Him the buildings of the temple. [2]And Jesus said to
them, “Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not *one* stone
shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down.”

## THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES AND THE END OF THE AGE

[3]Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him
privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things be? And what *will be* the
sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?”

[4]And Jesus answered and said to them: “Take heed that no one deceives
you. [5]For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will
deceive many. [6]And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you
are not troubled; for all[a] *these things* must come to pass, but the end is not
yet. [7]For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And
there will be famines, pestilences,[a] and earthquakes in various places. [8]All
these *are* the beginning of sorrows.

[9]“Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be
hated by all nations for My name’s sake. [10]And then many will be offended,
will betray one another, and will hate one another. [11]Then many false
prophets will rise up and deceive many. [12]And because lawlessness will
abound, the love of many will grow cold. [13]But he who endures to the end
shall be saved. [14]And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the
world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

## THE GREAT TRIBULATION

[15]“Therefore when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’[a] spoken of by
Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place” (whoever reads, let him
understand), [16]“then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. [17]Let
him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house.
[18]And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. [19]But woe to
those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days!

[20]And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath. [21]For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. [22]And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened.

[23]"Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here *is* the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe *it*. [24]For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. [25]See, I have told you beforehand.

[26]"Therefore if they say to you, 'Look, He is in the desert!' do not go out; *or* 'Look, *He is* in the inner rooms!' do not believe *it*. [27]For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. [28]For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together.

## THE COMING OF THE SON OF MAN

[29]"Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. [30]Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. [31]And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

## THE PARABLE OF THE FIG TREE

[32]"Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer *is* near. [33]So you also, when you see all these things, know that it[a] is near-at the doors! [34]Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. [35]Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.

## NO ONE KNOWS THE DAY OR HOUR

36 “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven,[a] but My Father only. 37 But as the days of Noah *were*, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. 38 For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, 39 and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. 40 Then two *men* will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. 41 Two *women will be* grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. 42 Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour[a] your Lord is coming. 43 But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. 44 Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

## THE FAITHFUL SERVANT AND THE EVIL SERVANT

45 “Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? 46 Blessed *is* that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. 47 Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods. 48 But if that evil servant says in his heart, ‘My master is delaying his coming,’ [a] 49 and begins to beat *his* fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, 50 the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for *him* and at an hour that he is not aware of, 51 and will cut him in two and appoint *him* his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

## THE PARABLE OF THE WISE AND FOOLISH VIRGINS

**25** “Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took
their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. [2]Now five of them
were wise, and five *were* foolish. [3]Those who *were* foolish took their lamps
and took no oil with them, [4]but the wise took oil in their vessels with their
lamps. [5]But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept.

[6]“And at midnight a cry was *heard:* ‘Behold, the bridegroom is coming;[a]
go out to meet him!’ [7]Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps.
[8]And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us *some* of your oil, for our lamps are
going out.’ [9]But the wise answered, saying, ‘*No,* lest there should not be
enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for
yourselves.’ [10]And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those
who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut.

[11]“Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open to us!’
[12]But he answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.’

[13]“Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour[a] in which
the Son of Man is coming.

## THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS

[14]“For *the kingdom of heaven is* like a man traveling to a far country, *who*
called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. [15]And to one he
gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his
own ability; and immediately he went on a journey. [16]Then he who had
received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five
talents. [17]And likewise he who *had received* two gained two more also. [18]But
he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord’s
money. [19]After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled
accounts with them.

[20]“So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents,
saying, ‘Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more
talents besides them.’ [21]His lord said to him, ‘Well *done*, good and faithful

servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’ [22]He also who had received two talents came and said, ‘Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.’ [23]His lord said to him, ‘Well *done*, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’

[24]“Then he who had received the one talent came and said, ‘Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. [25]And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, *there* you have *what is* yours.’

[26]“But his lord answered and said to him, ‘You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. [27]So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. [28]So take the talent from him, and give *it* to him who has ten talents.

[29]‘For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. [30]And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

## THE SON OF MAN WILL JUDGE THE NATIONS

[31]“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy[a] angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. [32]All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides *his* sheep from the goats. [33]And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. [34]Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: [35]for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; [36]I *was* naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.’

[37]“Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed *You*, or thirsty and give *You* drink? [38]When did we see

You a stranger and take *You* in, or naked and clothe *You?* [39]Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' [40]And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did *it* to one of the least of these My brethren, you did *it* to Me.'

[41]"Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: [42]for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; [43]I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.'

[44]"Then they also will answer Him,[a] saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?' [45]Then He will answer them, saying, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do *it* to one of the least of these, you did not do *it* to Me.' [46]And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

**KEY PASSAGE**

# A TALENT FOR INVESTING

## (25:14-30)

Jesus told the parable of the talents to teach people about their personal responsibility to be good stewards of His resources. In this parable, a man traveled to a far country and entrusted his servants with investing his money in his absence. One servant received five talents, and after wise investment, earned his master another five. The second servant also doubled his master's money. A third servant,

however, hid his one talent, knowing that the master would just come back and claim any earnings for himself.

God gives people diverse gifts and talents along with the responsibility to invest these resources in His kingdom for His glory. The wise and productive use of our God-given talents yields fruit, joy, and glory for God.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Responsibility: Equipped and Willing. See also the personality profile Esther: The Buck Stops Here.

## THE PLOT TO KILL JESUS

**26** Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, *that* He
said to His disciples, [2]"You know that after two days is the Passover,
and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified."

[3]Then the chief priests, the scribes,[a] and the elders of the people assembled
at the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, [4]and plotted to take
Jesus by trickery and kill *Him*. [5]But they said, "Not during the feast, lest there
be an uproar among the people."

## THE ANOINTING AT BETHANY

[6]And when Jesus was in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, [7]a
woman came to Him having an alabaster flask of very costly fragrant oil, and
she poured *it* on His head as He sat *at the table*. [8]But when His disciples saw
*it*, they were indignant, saying, "Why this waste? [9]For this fragrant oil might
have been sold for much and given to *the* poor."

[10]But when Jesus was aware of *it*, He said to them, "Why do you trouble
the woman? For she has done a good work for Me. [11]For you have the poor
with you always, but Me you do not have always. [12]For in pouring this
fragrant oil on My body, she did *it* for My burial. [13]Assuredly, I say to you,
wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has
done will also be told as a memorial to her."

## JUDAS AGREES TO BETRAY JESUS

[14]Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests
[15]and said, "What are you willing to give me if I deliver Him to you?" And
they counted out to him thirty pieces of silver. [16]So from that time he sought
opportunity to betray Him.

## JESUS CELEBRATES PASSOVER WITH HIS DISCIPLES

[17]Now on the first *day of the Feast* of Unleavened Bread the disciples
came to Jesus, saying to Him, "Where do You want us to prepare for You to
eat the Passover?"

[18]And He said, “Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, ‘The Teacher says, “My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover at your house with My disciples.” ’ ”

[19]So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them; and they prepared the Passover.

[20]When evening had come, He sat down with the twelve. [21]Now as they were eating, He said, “Assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me.”

[22]And they were exceedingly sorrowful, and each of them began to say to Him, “Lord, is it I?”

[23]He answered and said, “He who dipped *his* hand with Me in the dish will betray Me. [24]The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born.”

[25]Then Judas, who was betraying Him, answered and said, “Rabbi, is it I?”

He said to him, “You have said it.”

## JESUS INSTITUTES THE LORD’S SUPPER

[26]And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed[a] and broke *it*, and gave *it* to the disciples and said, “Take, eat; this is My body.”

[27]Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave *it* to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. [28]For this is My blood of the new[a] covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. [29]But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom.”

[30]And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

## JESUS PREDICTS PETER’S DENIAL

[31]Then Jesus said to them, “All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written:

> ‘I will strike the Shepherd,
> And the sheep of the flock will be scattered.’ [a]

32 But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee.”

33 Peter answered and said to Him, “Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble.”

34 Jesus said to him, “Assuredly, I say to you that this night, before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.”

35 Peter said to Him, “Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!”

And so said all the disciples.

## THE PRAYER IN THE GARDEN

36 Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to the disciples, “Sit here while I go and pray over there.” 37 And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed. 38 Then He said to them, “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me.”

39 He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You *will*.”

40 Then He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, “What! Could you not watch with Me one hour? 41 Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak.”

42 Again, a second time, He went away and prayed, saying, “O My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless[a] I drink it, Your will be done.” 43 And He came and found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy.

44 So He left them, went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. 45 Then He came to His disciples and said to them, “Are *you* still sleeping and resting? Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. 46 Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand.”

## BETRAYAL AND ARREST IN GETHSEMANE

47 And while He was still speaking, behold, Judas, one of the twelve, with a

great multitude with swords and clubs, came from the chief priests and elders of the people.

48 Now His betrayer had given them a sign, saying, “Whomever I kiss, He is the One; seize Him.” 49 Immediately he went up to Jesus and said, “Greetings, Rabbi!” and kissed Him.

50 But Jesus said to him, “Friend, why have you come?”

Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and took Him. 51 And suddenly, one of those *who were* with Jesus stretched out *his* hand and drew his sword, struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear.

52 But Jesus said to him, “Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish[a] by the sword. 53 Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels? 54 How then could the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen thus?”

55 In that hour Jesus said to the multitudes, “Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs to take Me? I sat daily with you, teaching in the temple, and you did not seize Me. 56 But all this was done that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled.”

Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled.

## JESUS FACES THE SANHEDRIN

57 And those who had laid hold of Jesus led *Him* away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled. 58 But Peter followed Him at a distance to the high priest’s courtyard. And he went in and sat with the servants to see the end.

59 Now the chief priests, the elders,[a] and all the council sought false testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, 60 but found none. Even though many false witnesses came forward, they found none.[a] But at last two false witnesses[b] came forward 61 and said, “This *fellow* said, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days.’ ”

62 And the high priest arose and said to Him, “Do You answer nothing? What *is it* these men testify against You?” 63 But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest answered and said to Him, “I put You under oath by the living

God: Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!”

64 Jesus said to him, “*It is as* you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.”

65 Then the high priest tore his clothes, saying, “He has spoken blasphemy! What further need do we have of witnesses? Look, now you have heard His blasphemy! 66 What do you think?”

They answered and said, “He is deserving of death.”

67 Then they spat in His face and beat Him; and others struck *Him* with the palms of their hands, 68 saying, “Prophesy to us, Christ! Who is the one who struck You?”

**PETER DENIES JESUS, AND WEEPS BITTERLY**

69 Now Peter sat outside in the courtyard. And a servant girl came to him, saying, “You also were with Jesus of Galilee.”

70 But he denied it before *them* all, saying, “I do not know what you are saying.”

71 And when he had gone out to the gateway, another *girl* saw him and said to those *who were* there, “This *fellow* also was with Jesus of Nazareth.”

72 But again he denied with an oath, “I do not know the Man!”

73 And a little later those who stood by came up and said to Peter, “Surely you also are *one* of them, for your speech betrays you.”

74 Then he began to curse and swear, *saying,* “I do not know the Man!”

Immediately a rooster crowed. 75 And Peter remembered the word of Jesus who had said to him, “Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.” So he went out and wept bitterly.

## SOUL NOTE

**Be at Peace** *(26:51-54)* When Jesus was arrested, Peter attempted to defend Him with his sword. Jesus rebuked Peter, saying, “All who take the sword will perish by the sword.” Jesus’ kingdom is to differ greatly from the kingdoms of the world. This King did not come to ride to victory through a bloody battlefield, but on a Cross where the only blood shed would be His own. Nowhere in the New Testament are believers commanded to promote Christianity by force. God will use force when He chooses; God’s people, however, must be peacemakers (5:9). **Topic: Violence**

## JESUS HANDED OVER TO PONTIUS PILATE

**27** When morning came, all the chief priests and elders of the people plotted
against Jesus to put Him to death. [2]And when they had bound Him, they
led Him away and delivered Him to Pontius[a] Pilate the governor.

## JUDAS HANGS HIMSELF

[3]Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, [4]saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood."

And they said, "What *is that* to us? You see *to it!* "

[5]Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself.

[6]But the chief priests took the silver pieces and said, "It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, because they are the price of blood." [7]And they consulted together and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. [8]Therefore that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day.

[9]Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the value of Him who was priced, whom they of the children of Israel priced, [10]and gave them for the potter's field, as the LORD directed me."[a]

## JESUS FACES PILATE

[11]Now Jesus stood before the governor. And the governor asked Him, saying, "Are You the King of the Jews?"

Jesus said to him, "*It is as* you say." [12]And while He was being accused by the chief priests and elders, He answered nothing.

[13]Then Pilate said to Him, "Do You not hear how many things they testify against You?" [14]But He answered him not one word, so that the governor marveled greatly.

## TAKING THE PLACE OF BARABBAS

[15]Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to releasing to the

multitude one prisoner whom they wished. [16]And at that time they had a notorious prisoner called Barabbas. [a] [17]Therefore, when they had gathered together, Pilate said to them, “Whom do you want me to release to you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?” [18]For he knew that they had handed Him over because of envy.

[19]While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent to him, saying, “Have nothing to do with that just Man, for I have suffered many things today in a dream because of Him.”

[20]But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitudes that they should ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus. [21]The governor answered and said to them, “Which of the two do you want me to release to you?”

They said, “Barabbas!”

[22]Pilate said to them, “What then shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?”

*They* all said to him, “Let Him be crucified!”

[23]Then the governor said, “Why, what evil has He done?”

But they cried out all the more, saying, “Let Him be crucified!”

[24]When Pilate saw that he could not prevail at all, but rather *that* a tumult was rising, he took water and washed *his* hands before the multitude, saying, “I am innocent of the blood of this just Person.[a] You see *to it*.”

[25]And all the people answered and said, “His blood *be* on us and on our children.”

[26]Then he released Barabbas to them; and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered *Him* to be crucified.

## THE SOLDIERS MOCK JESUS

[27]Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole garrison around Him. [28]And they stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him. [29]When they had twisted a crown of thorns, they put *it* on His head, and a reed in His right hand. And they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!” [30]Then they spat on

Him, and took the reed and struck Him on the head. [31]And when they had mocked Him, they took the robe off Him, put His *own* clothes on Him, and led Him away to be crucified.

## THE KING ON A CROSS

[32]Now as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. Him they compelled to bear His cross. [33]And when they had come to a place called Golgotha, that is to say, Place of a Skull, [34]they gave Him sour[a] wine mingled with gall to drink. But when He had tasted *it*, He would not drink.

[35]Then they crucified Him, and divided His garments, casting lots,[a] that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet:

> "They divided My garments among them,
> And for My clothing they cast lots." [b]

[36]Sitting down, they kept watch over Him there. [37]And they put up over His head the accusation written against Him:

THIS IS JESUS THE KING
OF THE JEWS.

[38]Then two robbers were crucified with Him, one on the right and another on the left.

[39]And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads [40]and saying, "You who destroy the temple and build *it* in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross."

[41]Likewise the chief priests also, mocking with the scribes and elders,[a] said, [42]"He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel,[a] let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him.[b] [43]He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, 'I am the Son of God.' "

[44]Even the robbers who were crucified with Him reviled Him with the same thing.

## JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS

[45]Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all

the land. [46]And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?” that is, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” [a] [47]Some of those who stood there, when they heard *that*, said, “This Man is calling for Elijah!” [48]Immediately one of them ran and took a sponge, filled *it* with sour wine and put *it* on a reed, and offered it to Him to drink.

[49]The rest said, “Let Him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to save Him.”

[50]And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit.

[51]Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, [52]and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; [53]and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.

[54]So when the centurion and those with him, who were guarding Jesus, saw the earthquake and the things that had happened, they feared greatly, saying, “Truly this was the Son of God!”

[55]And many women who followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to Him, were there looking on from afar, [56]among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses,[a] and the mother of Zebedee’s sons.

## JESUS BURIED IN JOSEPH’S TOMB

[57]Now when evening had come, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus. [58]This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be given to him. [59]When Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, [60]and laid it in his new tomb which he had hewn out of the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the door of the tomb, and departed. [61]And Mary Magdalene was there, and the other Mary, sitting opposite the tomb.

## PILATE SETS A GUARD

62 On the next day, which followed the Day of Preparation, the chief priests
and Pharisees gathered together to Pilate, 63 saying, “Sir, we remember, while
He was still alive, how that deceiver said, ‘After three days I will rise.’
64 Therefore command that the tomb be made secure until the third day, lest
His disciples come by night[a] and steal Him *away*, and say to the people, ‘He
has risen from the dead.’ So the last deception will be worse than the first.”

65 Pilate said to them, “You have a guard; go your way, make *it* as secure as
you know how.” 66 So they went and made the tomb secure, sealing the stone
and setting the guard.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# THE SUICIDE OF JUDAS

## (MATTHEW 27:5)

Judas was a complex and deluded man, and his relationship to Christ was complicated. Matthew depicted the suicide of Judas as an act of utter frustration committed by a man who was wracked with guilt but unable to accept the possibility of forgiveness. While he acknowledged that he had sinned, Judas did not repent and seek reconciliation to Christ as Peter later did ( John 21).

Suicides are not always immediate, conscious, willful decisions. For example, suicide often results from a prolonged, severe, deep depression. Circumstances like this type of mental instability, however, don’t seem to have been the case with Judas. Other factors may have brought on the temptation to kill himself. He certainly faced the perceived hopelessness of the individual whose plan falls

apart. His act may have been an example of self-destructive impulsiveness by someone who is angry and expects unending shame for failure. Because we can only guess at his motivation for betraying Jesus, we must be cautious in our conclusions about Judas's life.

All the disciples as well as the whole nation expected Christ as the conquering King. This picture did not include humble servitude, a mute defense, or death on a cross. None understood and most were confused about Jesus. Judas may have become angry and indignant, nursing his resentments whenever Christ failed to fulfill his expectations of what a Messiah should be and do.

A genuine Christian wouldn't lose his salvation by killing himself, but in the case of Judas, the Bible indicates that even though he regretted the consequences of his betrayal, he died lost, alienated from Christ (John 6:70; 17:12; Acts 1:25). Faced with the result of one horrible act that he couldn't undo, he made the mistake of committing another such act. We don't know what his final thoughts were, but by his self-destructive act, Judas eliminated the possibility of ever getting right with Christ the way he needed to.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Choose Life. See also the key passage note at 1 Samuel 31:4.

## HE IS RISEN

**28** Now after the Sabbath, as the first *day* of the week began to dawn, Mary
Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. [2]And behold, there
was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and
came and rolled back the stone from the door,[a] and sat on it. [3]His
countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. [4]And the
guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead *men*.

[5]But the angel answered and said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I
know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. [6]He is not here; for He is risen,
as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. [7]And go quickly and tell
His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before
you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you."

[8]So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to
bring His disciples word.

## THE WOMEN WORSHIP THE RISEN LORD

[9]And as they went to tell His disciples,[a] behold, Jesus met them, saying,
"Rejoice!" So they came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him.
[10]Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go *and* tell My brethren to go
to Galilee, and there they will see Me."

## THE SOLDIERS ARE BRIBED

[11]Now while they were going, behold, some of the guard came into the city
and reported to the chief priests all the things that had happened. [12]When they
had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they gave a large sum
of money to the soldiers, [13]saying, "Tell them, 'His disciples came at night
and stole Him *away* while we slept.' [14]And if this comes to the governor's
ears, we will appease him and make you secure." [15]So they took the money
and did as they were instructed; and this saying is commonly reported among
the Jews until this day.

"Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

MATTHEW 28:20

**THE GREAT COMMISSION**

16 Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, to the mountain which
Jesus had appointed for them. 17 When they saw Him, they worshiped Him;
but some doubted.

18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given
to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore[a] and make disciples of all the
nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the
Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded
you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age." Amen.[a]

**SOUL NOTE**

**Committed to the Commission** *(28:19, 20)* Jesus left His followers with an awesome responsibility: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations." We should take this responsibility seriously. His plan included telling people the Good News about Christ and then baptizing new believers. It also includes teaching them how to grow in their faith and building them up in their personal walk with God. Go, make disciples, baptize, and teach. God loves to share His message of hope through His people. We can do this because Jesus goes with us always.**Topic: Responsibility**

# Mark



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# Mark

When you're lonely, would you rather: (a) hear a sermon about friendship, or (b) go eat lunch with a caring friend? If you were sick would you prefer: (a) the latest edition of a medical journal, or (b) an appointment with a top-notch doctor? The old axiom is true: Actions speak louder than words. Nowhere is this better demonstrated than in the Gospel of Mark.

Mark's account of the life of Christ reads like a journalist's report-just the facts. With the apostle Peter as his primary source, Mark wrote to Roman Christians only two decades after the Lord's death and resurrection. Mark was not one of the original twelve disciples, but he knew Peter and accompanied Paul and Barnabas on the first missionary journey. Mark wrote this book to present Jesus as God's tireless, miracle-working Servant, committed to meeting people's physical and spiritual needs.

Mark begins his record with John the Baptist's sudden announcement of the Messiah's arrival. Mark portrays Jesus as always on the move. The "Son of Man" (a title that indicates the divine Christ's taking on human form) is shown going from town to town, meeting new people, healing the sick, confronting the skeptics, inviting the outcasts, and loving all.

Whatever the state of your soul, you need an intimate encounter with the compassionate Christ of Mark's Gospel. He "did not come to be served, but to serve" (10:45). Are you willing to let Him touch your life in a powerful way today?

**SOUL CONCERN IN**

## MARK

MARRIAGE (10:1-12)

## JOHN THE BAPTIST PREPARES THE WAY

**1** The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. [2]As it is written in the Prophets:[a]

"Behold, I send My messenger before Your face,
Who will prepare Your way before You."[b]
[3] "The voice of one crying in the wilderness:
'Prepare the way of the LORD;
Make His paths straight.' "[a]

[4]John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. [5]Then all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to him and were all baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins.

[6]Now John was clothed with camel's hair and with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. [7]And he preached, saying, "There comes One after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose. [8]I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

## JOHN BAPTIZES JESUS

[9]It came to pass in those days *that* Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. [10]And immediately, coming up from[a] the water, He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove. [11]Then a voice came from heaven, "You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

## SATAN TEMPTS JESUS

[12]Immediately the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness. [13]And He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan, and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered to Him.

## JESUS BEGINS HIS GALILEAN MINISTRY

14 Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the
gospel of the kingdom[a] of God, 15 and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the
kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.”

## FOUR FISHERMEN CALLED AS DISCIPLES

16 And as He walked by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew his
brother casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. 17 Then Jesus said
to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men.” 18 They
immediately left their nets and followed Him.

19 When He had gone a little farther from there, He saw James the *son* of
Zebedee, and John his brother, who also *were* in the boat mending their nets.
20 And immediately He called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the
boat with the hired servants, and went after Him.

## JESUS CASTS OUT AN UNCLEAN SPIRIT

21 Then they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath He
entered the synagogue and taught. 22 And they were astonished at His
teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

23 Now there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit. And he
cried out, 24 saying, “Let *us* alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of
Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are-the Holy One
of God!”

25 But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be quiet, and come out of him!” 26 And
when the unclean spirit had convulsed him and cried out with a loud voice, he
came out of him. 27 Then they were all amazed, so that they questioned
among themselves, saying, “What is this? What new doctrine *is* this? For
with authority[a] He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him.”
28 And immediately His fame spread throughout all the region around Galilee.

## PETER’S MOTHER-IN-LAW HEALED

29 Now as soon as they had come out of the synagogue, they entered the

house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. [30]But Simon's wife's mother lay sick with a fever, and they told Him about her at once. [31]So He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and immediately the fever left her. And she served them.

> Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed.
> MARK 1:35

**MANY HEALED AFTER SABBATH SUNSET**

[32]At evening, when the sun had set, they brought to Him all who were sick and those who were demon-possessed. [33]And the whole city was gathered together at the door. [34]Then He healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and He did not allow the demons to speak, because they knew Him.

**PREACHING IN GALILEE**

[35]Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed. [36]And Simon and those *who were* with Him searched for Him. [37]When they found Him, they said to Him, "Everyone is looking for You."

[38]But He said to them, "Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth."

[39]And He was preaching in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and casting out demons.

**JESUS CLEANSES A LEPER**

[40]Now a leper came to Him, imploring Him, kneeling down to Him and saying to Him, "If You are willing, You can make me clean."

[41]Then Jesus, moved with compassion, stretched out *His* hand and touched him, and said to him, "I am willing; be cleansed." [42]As soon as He had

spoken, immediately the leprosy left him, and he was cleansed. [43]And He strictly warned him and sent him away at once, [44]and said to him, “See that you say nothing to anyone; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing those things which Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.”

[45]However, he went out and began to proclaim *it* freely, and to spread the matter, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter the city, but was outside in deserted places; and they came to Him from every direction.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Immediately!** *(1:16-18)* Simon and Andrew were casting their fishing nets into the sea when Jesus called them to drop everything and “become fishers of men.” And they did: “They immediately left their nets and followed Him.” Being a disciple, a follower of Jesus, means a radical change in life and focus. New believers may not have to leave a job, as these disciples did, but they may have to make other kinds of radical changes in order to follow their new Master. Jesus still says, “Follow Me.” Nothing should keep us from going “immediately.” **Topic: Change/Maturity**

## JESUS FORGIVES AND HEALS A PARALYTIC

**2** And again He entered Capernaum after *some* days, and it was heard that
He was in the house. [2]Immediately[a] many gathered together, so that there
was no longer room to receive *them*, not even near the door. And He
preached the word to them. [3]Then they came to Him, bringing a paralytic
who was carried by four *men*. [4]And when they could not come near Him
because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof where He was. So when they
had broken through, they let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying.

[5]When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are
forgiven you."

[6]And some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts,
[7]"Why does this *Man* speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but
God alone?"

[8]But immediately, when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they reasoned
thus within themselves, He said to them, "Why do you reason about these
things in your hearts? [9]Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, '*Your* sins are
forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise, take up your bed and walk'? [10]But that you
may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins"-He said to
the paralytic, [11]"I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house."
[12]Immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went out in the presence of
them all, so that all were amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw
*anything* like this!"

## MATTHEW THE TAX COLLECTOR

[13]Then He went out again by the sea; and all the multitude came to Him,
and He taught them. [14]As He passed by, He saw Levi the *son* of Alphaeus
sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, "Follow Me." So he arose and
followed Him.

[15]Now it happened, as He was dining in *Levi's* house, that many tax
collectors and sinners also sat together with Jesus and His disciples; for there
were many, and they followed Him. [16]And when the scribes and[a] Pharisees
saw Him eating with the tax collectors and sinners, they said to His disciples,

“How *is it* that He eats and drinks with tax collectors and sinners?”

17 When Jesus heard *it*, He said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call *the* righteous, but sinners, to repentance.” [a]

## JESUS IS QUESTIONED ABOUT FASTING

18 The disciples of John and of the Pharisees were fasting. Then they came and said to Him, “Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?”

19 And Jesus said to them, “Can the friends of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them they cannot fast. 20 But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days. 21 No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; or else the new piece pulls away from the old, and the tear is made worse. 22 And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine bursts the wineskins, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins.”

## JESUS IS LORD OF THE SABBATH

23 Now it happened that He went through the grainfields on the Sabbath; and as they went His disciples began to pluck the heads of grain. 24 And the Pharisees said to Him, “Look, why do they do what is not lawful on the Sabbath?”

25 But He said to them, “Have you never read what David did when he was in need and hungry, he and those with him: 26 how he went into the house of God *in the days* of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the showbread, which is not lawful to eat except for the priests, and also gave some to those who were with him?”

27 And He said to them, “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. 28 Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.”

## SOUL NOTE

**Heal Our Souls** *(2:1-12)* Before addressing the paralyzed man's physical need, Jesus addressed his spiritual need and forgave his sins. The astounded scribes exclaimed that only God could forgive sins. Jesus proved that He could indeed forgive sins by healing the man, an act that they could see. That unmistakable miracle of physical healing proved Jesus' identity and power. God has the power to heal. He may not always heal our physical needs, but He will always heal our souls when we come to Him in faith. **Topic: Healing/Recovery**

## HEALING ON THE SABBATH

**3** And He entered the synagogue again, and a man was there who had a
withered hand. [2]So they watched Him closely, whether He would heal him
on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him. [3]And He said to the man who
had the withered hand, “Step forward.” [4]Then He said to them, “Is it lawful
on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?” But they kept
silent. [5]And when He had looked around at them with anger, being grieved
by the hardness of their hearts, He said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.”
And he stretched *it* out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other.[a]
[6]Then the Pharisees went out and immediately plotted with the Herodians
against Him, how they might destroy Him.

## A GREAT MULTITUDE FOLLOWS JESUS

[7]But Jesus withdrew with His disciples to the sea. And a great multitude
from Galilee followed Him, and from Judea [8]and Jerusalem and Idumea and
beyond the Jordan; and those from Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when
they heard how many things He was doing, came to Him. [9]So He told His
disciples that a small boat should be kept ready for Him because of the
multitude, lest they should crush Him. [10]For He healed many, so that as many
as had afflictions pressed about Him to touch Him. [11]And the unclean spirits,
whenever they saw Him, fell down before Him and cried out, saying, “You
are the Son of God.” [12]But He sternly warned them that they should not make
Him known.

## THE TWELVE APOSTLES

[13]And He went up on the mountain and called to *Him* those He Himself
wanted. And they came to Him. [14]Then He appointed twelve,[a] that they
might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach, [15]and to have
power to heal sicknesses and[a] to cast out demons: [16]Simon,[a] to whom He
gave the name Peter; [17]James the *son* of Zebedee and John the brother of
James, to whom He gave the name Boanerges, that is, “Sons of Thunder”;
[18]Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the *son* of

Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Cananite; [19]and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him. And they went into a house.

## A HOUSE DIVIDED CANNOT STAND

[20]Then the multitude came together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. [21]But when His own people heard *about this*, they went out to lay hold of Him, for they said, “He is out of His mind.”

[22]And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, “He has Beelzebub,” and, “By the ruler of the demons He casts out demons.”

[23]So He called them to *Himself* and said to them in parables: “How can Satan cast out Satan? [24]If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. [25]And if a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. [26]And if Satan has risen up against himself, and is divided, he cannot stand, but has an end. [27]No one can enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. And then he will plunder his house.

## THE UNPARDONABLE SIN

[28]“Assuredly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they may utter; [29]but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation”-[30]because they said, “He has an unclean spirit.”

## JESUS’ MOTHER AND BROTHERS SEND FOR HIM

[31]Then His brothers and His mother came, and standing outside they sent to Him, calling Him. [32]And a multitude was sitting around Him; and they said to Him, “Look, Your mother and Your brothers[a] are outside seeking You.”

[33]But He answered them, saying, “Who is My mother, or My brothers?” [34]And He looked around in a circle at those who sat about Him, and said, “Here are My mother and My brothers! [35]For whoever does the will of God is

My brother and My sister and mother.”

> “For whoever does the will
> of God is My brother and
> My sister and mother.”
> MARK 3:35

**SOUL NOTE**

**Follow the Leader** *(3:13-19)* Jesus poured His most intense time and teaching into twelve disciples who would carry on His ministry after He was gone. Jesus mentored His followers, teaching them the truth and strengthening their faith. These men were not perfect, but because of their love for and faith in Jesus, they went on to turn the world upside down. Likewise, new believers need training so that they can grow strong in their faith. As we share our faith and as people come to salvation, we must be committed to mentoring them so that they can grow strong in the faith. **Topic: Mentoring**

## THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

**4** And again He began to teach by the sea. And a great multitude was gathered to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat *in it* on the sea; and the whole multitude was on the land facing the sea. [2]Then He taught them many things by parables, and said to them in His teaching:

[3]"Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow. [4]And it happened, as he sowed, *that* some *seed* fell by the wayside; and the birds of the air[a] came and devoured it. [5]Some fell on stony ground, where it did not have much earth; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of earth. [6]But when the sun was up it was scorched, and because it had no root it withered away. [7]And some *seed* fell among thorns; and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no crop. [8]But other *seed* fell on good ground and yielded a crop that sprang up, increased and produced: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred."

[9]And He said to them,[a] "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

## THE PURPOSE OF PARABLES

[10]But when He was alone, those around Him with the twelve asked Him about the parable. [11]And He said to them, "To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, all things come in parables, [12]so that

'Seeing they may see and not perceive,
And hearing they may hear and not
understand;
Lest they should turn,
And *their* sins be forgiven them.' "[a]

## THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER EXPLAINED

[13]And He said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables? [14]The sower sows the word. [15]And these are the ones by the wayside where the word is sown. When they hear, Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts.

16 These likewise are the ones sown on stony ground who, when they hear the
word, immediately receive it with gladness; 17 and they have no root in
themselves, and so endure only for a time. Afterward, when tribulation or
persecution arises for the word's sake, immediately they stumble. 18 Now
these are the ones sown among thorns; *they are* the ones who hear the word,
19 and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for
other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. 20 But
these are the ones sown on good ground, those who hear the word, accept *it*,
and bear fruit: some thirty-fold, some sixty, and some a hundred."

## LIGHT UNDER A BASKET

21 Also He said to them, "Is a lamp brought to be put under a basket or
under a bed? Is it not to be set on a lampstand? 22 For there is nothing hidden
which will not be revealed, nor has anything been kept secret but that it
should come to light. 23 If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear."

24 Then He said to them, "Take heed what you hear. With the same
measure you use, it will be measured to you; and to you who hear, more will
be given. 25 For whoever has, to him more will be given; but whoever does
not have, even what he has will be taken away from him."

## THE PARABLE OF THE GROWING SEED

26 And He said, "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on
the ground, 27 and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should
sprout and grow, he himself does not know how. 28 For the earth yields crops
by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head.
29 But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the
harvest has come."

## THE PARABLE OF THE MUSTARD SEED

30 Then He said, "To what shall we liken the kingdom of God? Or with
what parable shall we picture it? 31 *It is* like a mustard seed which, when it is
sown on the ground, is smaller than all the seeds on earth; 32 but when it is
sown, it grows up and becomes greater than all herbs, and shoots out large

branches, so that the birds of the air may nest under its shade."

**JESUS' USE OF PARABLES**

33 And with many such parables He spoke the word to them as they were
able to hear *it*. 34 But without a parable He did not speak to them. And when
they were alone, He explained all things to His disciples.

**WIND AND WAVE OBEY JESUS**

35 On the same day, when evening had come, He said to them, "Let us cross
over to the other side." 36 Now when they had left the multitude, they took
Him along in the boat as He was. And other little boats were also with Him.
37 And a great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it
was already filling. 38 But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And they
awoke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are
perishing?"

> But He said to them,
> "Why are you so fearful? How is
> it that you have no faith?"
> MARK 4:40

39 Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace, be
still!" And the wind ceased and there was a great calm. 40 But He said to
them, "Why are you so fearful? How *is it* that you have no faith?"[a] 41 And
they feared exceedingly, and said to one another, "Who can this be, that even
the wind and the sea obey Him!"

**SOUL NOTE**

**Rock the Boat** *(4:35-41)* Jesus and the disciples got into a boat and

began to cross the Sea of Galilee. A storm suddenly arose and the boat began filling with water. Jesus was so exhausted, however, that He slept soundly. When the terrified disciples awoke Him, Jesus stood up and calmed the storm. The disciples were stunned. “How is it that you have no faith?” Jesus asked. He was with them, yet they did not trust Him. When our “boats” are rocked by the storms of life, do we believe that Jesus can bring calm? Or would He question our faith in Him? **Topic: Faith**

## A DEMON-POSSESSED MAN HEALED

**5** Then they came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gadarenes.[a] [2]And when He had come out of the boat, immediately there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, [3]who had *his* dwelling among the tombs; and no one could bind him,[a] not even with chains, [4]because he had often been bound with shackles and chains. And the chains had been pulled apart by him, and the shackles broken in pieces; neither could anyone tame him. [5]And always, night and day, he was in the mountains and in the tombs, crying out and cutting himself with stones.

[6]When he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and worshiped Him. [7]And he cried out with a loud voice and said, "What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God that You do not torment me."

[8]For He said to him, "Come out of the man, unclean spirit!" [9]Then He asked him, "What *is* your name?"

And he answered, saying, "My name *is* Legion; for we are many." [10]Also he begged Him earnestly that He would not send them out of the country.

[11]Now a large herd of swine was feeding there near the mountains. [12]So all the demons begged Him, saying, "Send us to the swine, that we may enter them." [13]And at once Jesus[a] gave them permission. Then the unclean spirits went out and entered the swine (there were about two thousand); and the herd ran violently down the steep place into the sea, and drowned in the sea.

[14]So those who fed the swine fled, and they told *it* in the city and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that had happened. [15]Then they came to Jesus, and saw the one *who had been* demon-possessed and had the legion, sitting and clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid. [16]And those who saw it told them how it happened to him *who had been* demon-possessed, and about the swine. [17]Then they began to plead with Him to depart from their region.

[18]And when He got into the boat, he who had been demon-possessed begged Him that he might be with Him. [19]However, Jesus did not permit him, but said to him, "Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the

Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you.” [20]And he departed and began to proclaim in Decapolis all that Jesus had done for him; and all marveled.

## A GIRL RESTORED TO LIFE AND A WOMAN HEALED

[21]Now when Jesus had crossed over again by boat to the other side, a great multitude gathered to Him; and He was by the sea. [22]And behold, one of the rulers of the synagogue came, Jairus by name. And when he saw Him, he fell at His feet [23]and begged Him earnestly, saying, “My little daughter lies at the point of death. Come and lay Your hands on her, that she may be healed, and she will live.” [24]So *Jesus* went with him, and a great multitude followed Him and thronged Him.

[25]Now a certain woman had a flow of blood for twelve years, [26]and had suffered many things from many physicians. She had spent all that she had and was no better, but rather grew worse. [27]When she heard about Jesus, she came behind *Him* in the crowd and touched His garment. [28]For she said, “If only I may touch His clothes, I shall be made well.”

[29]Immediately the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she felt in *her* body that she was healed of the affliction. [30]And Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself that power had gone out of Him, turned around in the crowd and said, “Who touched My clothes?”

[31]But His disciples said to Him, “You see the multitude thronging You, and You say, ‘Who touched Me?’ ”

[32]And He looked around to see her who had done this thing. [33]But the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth. [34]And He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace, and be healed of your affliction.”

[35]While He was still speaking, *some* came from the ruler of the synagogue’s *house* who said, “Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?”

[36]As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He said to the ruler of the synagogue, “Do not be afraid; only believe.” [37]And He permitted no one to follow Him except Peter, James, and John the brother of James. [38]Then He came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and saw a tumult and those who wept and wailed loudly. [39]When He came in, He said to them, “Why make this commotion and weep? The child is not dead, but sleeping.”

[40]And they ridiculed Him. But when He had put them all outside, He took the father and the mother of the child, and those *who were* with Him, and entered where the child was lying. [41]Then He took the child by the hand, and said to her, “Talitha, cumi,” which is translated, “Little girl, I say to you, arise.” [42]Immediately the girl arose and walked, for she was twelve years *of age*. And they were overcome with great amazement. [43]But He commanded them strictly that no one should know it, and said that *something* should be given her to eat.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# HOPE FOR A WOMAN IN NEED

## (MARK 5:25-27)

Alone, sick, and seemingly without hope, this woman with a “flow of blood for twelve years” and who “had suffered many things from many physicians” expected to live in pain and as an outcast until she died. Then along came Jesus.

This woman was not supposed to be in the crowd that day. Because of her condition of constant bleeding (perhaps a uterine disorder), she

was in a continual state of uncleanness according to Jewish law. She was not to be in public because others might touch her and become unclean themselves.

But she heard that Jesus was coming to town, and she knew that He could heal her. She merely wanted to touch His clothes, knowing that she would be made well. She probably wanted to come and go unnoticed so that the jostling crowd would not be angered that she had come among them. But this act of reaching out and touching Jesus' garment also showed the depth of her faith.

Immediately the woman was healed. Jesus knew who had touched Him, of course, but he asked the question, "Who touched Me?" so that she could show her faith. Then He told her, "Your faith has made you well. Go in peace, and be healed of your affliction" (Mark 5:34).

What made that woman go to Jesus? Faith that He could do for her what He had done for so many. Her hope was not the kind of hope that says, "Maybe it will happen; I hope so." Her hope said, "I know He can heal me."

Jesus meets us however we come to Him, with whatever problem. Our hope is in Him; not because we wonder if He will help us, but because we *know* He will help us. Jesus always responds to those who hope in Him, no matter how great or how small they are. He will do more than we can imagine.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Hope. See also the key passage note at Jeremiah 29:11-13.

## JESUS REJECTED AT NAZARETH

**6** Then He went out from there and came to His own country, and His
disciples followed Him. [2]And when the Sabbath had come, He began to
teach in the synagogue. And many hearing *Him* were astonished, saying,
"Where *did* this Man *get* these things? And what wisdom *is* this which is
given to Him, that such mighty works are performed by His hands! [3]Is this
not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and
Simon? And are not His sisters here with us?" So they were offended at Him.

[4]But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own
country, among his own relatives, and in his own house." [5]Now He could do
no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and
healed *them*. [6]And He marveled because of their unbelief. Then He went
about the villages in a circuit, teaching.

## SENDING OUT THE TWELVE

[7]And He called the twelve to *Himself*, and began to send them out two *by*
two, and gave them power over unclean spirits. [8]He commanded them to take
nothing for the journey except a staff-no bag, no bread, no copper in *their*
money belts-[9]but to wear sandals, and not to put on two tunics.

[10]Also He said to them, "In whatever place you enter a house, stay there
till you depart from that place. [11]And whoever[a] will not receive you nor hear
you, when you depart from there, shake off the dust under your feet as a
testimony against them.[b] Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for
Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city!"

[12]So they went out and preached that *people* should repent. [13]And they cast
out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick, and healed
*them*.

## JOHN THE BAPTIST BEHEADED

[14]Now King Herod heard *of Him*, for His name had become well known.
And he said, "John the Baptist is risen from the dead, and therefore these
powers are at work in him."

15 Others said, “It is Elijah.”

And others said, “It is the Prophet, or[a] like one of the prophets.”

16 But when Herod heard, he said, “This is John, whom I beheaded; he has
been raised from the dead!” 17 For Herod himself had sent and laid hold of
John, and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip’s
wife; for he had married her. 18 Because John had said to Herod, “It is not
lawful for you to have your brother’s wife.”

19 Therefore Herodias held it against him and wanted to kill him, but she
could not; 20 for Herod feared John, knowing that he *was* a just and holy man,
and he protected him. And when he heard him, he did many things, and heard
him gladly.

21 Then an opportune day came when Herod on his birthday gave a feast for
his nobles, the high officers, and the chief *men* of Galilee. 22 And when
Herodias’ daughter herself came in and danced, and pleased Herod and those
who sat with him, the king said to the girl, “Ask me whatever you want, and I
will give *it* to you.” 23 He also swore to her, “Whatever you ask me, I will
give you, up to half my kingdom.”

24 So she went out and said to her mother, “What shall I ask?”

And she said, “The head of John the Baptist!”

25 Immediately she came in with haste to the king and asked, saying, “I
want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter.”

26 And the king was exceedingly sorry; *yet*, because of the oaths and
because of those who sat with him, he did not want to refuse her.
27 Immediately the king sent an executioner and commanded his head to be
brought. And he went and beheaded him in prison, 28 brought his head on a
platter, and gave it to the girl; and the girl gave it to her mother. 29 When his
disciples heard *of it*, they came and took away his corpse and laid it in a
tomb.

**FEEDING THE FIVE THOUSAND**

30 Then the apostles gathered to Jesus and told Him all things, both what

they had done and what they had taught. [31]And He said to them, “Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.” For there were many coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat. [32]So they departed to a deserted place in the boat by themselves.

[33]But the multitudes[a] saw them departing, and many knew Him and ran there on foot from all the cities. They arrived before them and came together to Him. [34]And Jesus, when He came out, saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion for them, because they were like sheep not having a shepherd. So He began to teach them many things. [35]When the day was now far spent, His disciples came to Him and said, “This is a deserted place, and already the hour *is* late. [36]Send them away, that they may go into the surrounding country and villages and buy themselves bread;[a] for they have nothing to eat.”

[37]But He answered and said to them, “You give them something to eat.”

And they said to Him, “Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give them *something* to eat?”

[38]But He said to them, “How many loaves do you have? Go and see.”

And when they found out they said, “Five, and two fish.”

[39]Then He commanded them to make them all sit down in groups on the green grass. [40]So they sat down in ranks, in hundreds and in fifties. [41]And when He had taken the five loaves and the two fish, He looked up to heaven, blessed and broke the loaves, and gave *them* to His disciples to set before them; and the two fish He divided among *them* all. [42]So they all ate and were filled. [43]And they took up twelve baskets full of fragments and of the fish. [44]Now those who had eaten the loaves were about[a] five thousand men.

**JESUS WALKS ON THE SEA**

[45]Immediately He made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while He sent the multitude away. [46]And when He had sent them away, He departed to the mountain to pray. [47]Now when evening came, the boat was in the middle of the sea; and He *was* alone on the land. [48]Then He saw them straining at rowing, for the wind was against them.

Now about the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea, and would have passed them by. [49]And when they saw Him walking on the sea, they supposed it was a ghost, and cried out; [50]for they all saw Him and were troubled. But immediately He talked with them and said to them, “Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.” [51]Then He went up into the boat to them, and the wind ceased. And they were greatly amazed in themselves beyond measure, and marveled. [52]For they had not understood about the loaves, because their heart was hardened.

**MANY TOUCH HIM AND ARE MADE WELL**

[53]When they had crossed over, they came to the land of Gennesaret and anchored there. [54]And when they came out of the boat, immediately the people recognized Him, [55]ran through that whole surrounding region, and began to carry about on beds those who were sick to wherever they heard He was. [56]Wherever He entered, into villages, cities, or the country, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged Him that they might just touch the hem of His garment. And as many as touched Him were made well.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Rest Stop** *(6:31, 32)* After an exhausting time of ministry, Jesus invited His disciples to “come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.” They took a break from their ministry in order to refresh themselves. A hectic schedule takes a physical, emotional, and spiritual toll on us. God knows that we need to come aside and rest a while so that we don’t burn out. He will refresh us so that we can continue to serve Him. Rest and refreshment is not wasted time.
**Topic: Burnout**

**DEFILEMENT COMES FROM WITHIN**

**7** Then the Pharisees and some of the scribes came together to Him, having
come from Jerusalem. 2Now when[a] they saw some of His disciples eat
bread with defiled, that is, with unwashed hands, they found fault. 3For the
Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash *their* hands in a special
way, holding the tradition of the elders. 4*When they come* from the
marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other
things which they have received and hold, *like* the washing of cups, pitchers,
copper vessels, and couches.

5Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, "Why do Your disciples not
walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed
hands?"

6He answered and said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you
hypocrites, as it is written:

'This people honors Me with *their* lips,
But their heart is far from Me.
7 And in vain they worship Me,
Teaching *as* doctrines the
commandments of men.'[a]

8For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men[a] -
the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do."

9He said to them, "*All too* well you reject the commandment of God, that
you may keep your tradition. 10For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your
mother';[a] and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.' [b]
11But you say, 'If a man says to his father or mother, "Whatever profit you
might have received from me *is* Corban"-' (that is, a gift *to God*), 12then you
no longer let him do anything for his father or his mother, 13making the word
of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And
many such things you do."

14When He had called all the multitude to *Himself*, He said to them, "Hear
Me, everyone, and understand: 15There is nothing that enters a man from

outside which can defile; but the things which come out of him, those are the things that defile a man. 16If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear!” [a]

17When He had entered a house away from the crowd, His disciples asked Him concerning the parable. 18So He said to them, “Are you thus without understanding also? Do you not perceive that whatever enters a man from outside cannot defile him, 19because it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and is eliminated, *thus* purifying all foods?”[a] 20And He said, “What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. 21For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, 22thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. 23All these evil things come from within and defile a man.”

## A GENTILE SHOWS HER FAITH

24From there He arose and went to the region of Tyre and Sidon.[a] And He entered a house and wanted no one to know *it*, but He could not be hidden. 25For a woman whose young daughter had an unclean spirit heard about Him, and she came and fell at His feet. 26The woman was a Greek, a Syro-Phoenician by birth, and she kept asking Him to cast the demon out of her daughter. 27But Jesus said to her, “Let the children be filled first, for it is not good to take the children’s bread and throw *it* to the little dogs.”

28And she answered and said to Him, “Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs under the table eat from the children’s crumbs.”

29Then He said to her, “For this saying go your way; the demon has gone out of your daughter.”

30And when she had come to her house, she found the demon gone out, and her daughter lying on the bed.

## JESUS HEALS A DEAF-MUTE

31Again, departing from the region of Tyre and Sidon, He came through the midst of the region of Decapolis to the Sea of Galilee. 32Then they brought to Him one who was deaf and had an impediment in his speech, and they begged Him to put His hand on him. 33And He took him aside from the

multitude, and put His fingers in his ears, and He spat and touched his tongue. [34]Then, looking up to heaven, He sighed, and said to him, “Ephphatha,” that is, “Be opened.”

[35]Immediately his ears were opened, and the impediment of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke plainly. [36]Then He commanded them that they should tell no one; but the more He commanded them, the more widely they proclaimed *it*. [37]And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, “He has done all things well. He makes both the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.”

## FEEDING THE FOUR THOUSAND

**8** In those days, the multitude being very great and having nothing to eat,
Jesus called His disciples *to Him* and said to them, [2]"I have compassion on
the multitude, because they have now continued with Me three days and have
nothing to eat. [3]And if I send them away hungry to their own houses, they
will faint on the way; for some of them have come from afar."

[4]Then His disciples answered Him, "How can one satisfy these people with
bread here in the wilderness?"

[5]He asked them, "How many loaves do you have?"

And they said, "Seven."

[6]So He commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. And He took
the seven loaves and gave thanks, broke *them* and gave *them* to His disciples
to set before *them*; and they set *them* before the multitude. [7]They also had a
few small fish; and having blessed them, He said to set them also before
*them*. [8]So they ate and were filled, and they took up seven large baskets of
leftover fragments. [9]Now those who had eaten were about four thousand.
And He sent them away, [10]immediately got into the boat with His disciples,
and came to the region of Dalmanutha.

## THE PHARISEES SEEK A SIGN

[11]Then the Pharisees came out and began to dispute with Him, seeking
from Him a sign from heaven, testing Him. [12]But He sighed deeply in His
spirit, and said, "Why does this generation seek a sign? Assuredly, I say to
you, no sign shall be given to this generation."

## BEWARE OF THE LEAVEN OF THE PHARISEES AND HEROD

[13]And He left them, and getting into the boat again, departed to the other
side. [14]Now the disciples[a] had forgotten to take bread, and they did not have
more than one loaf with them in the boat. [15]Then He charged them, saying,
"Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod."

16 And they reasoned among themselves, saying, “*It is* because we have no bread.”

17 But Jesus, being aware of *it*, said to them, “Why do you reason because you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive nor understand? Is your heart still[a] hardened? 18 Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear? And do you not remember? 19 When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments did you take up?”

They said to Him, “Twelve.”

20 “Also, when I broke the seven for the four thousand, how many large baskets full of fragments did you take up?”

And they said, “Seven.”

21 So He said to them, “How *is it* you do not understand?”

## A BLIND MAN HEALED AT BETHSAIDA

22 Then He came to Bethsaida; and they brought a blind man to Him, and begged Him to touch him. 23 So He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the town. And when He had spit on his eyes and put His hands on him, He asked him if he saw anything.

24 And he looked up and said, “I see men like trees, walking.”

25 Then He put *His* hands on his eyes again and made him look up. And he was restored and saw everyone clearly. 26 Then He sent him away to his house, saying, “Neither go into the town, nor tell anyone in the town.”[a]

## PETER CONFESSES JESUS AS THE CHRIST

27 Now Jesus and His disciples went out to the towns of Caesarea Philippi; and on the road He asked His disciples, saying to them, “Who do men say that I am?”

28 So they answered, “John the Baptist; but some *say*, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets.”

29 He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”

Peter answered and said to Him, “You are the Christ.”

30 Then He strictly warned them that they should tell no one about Him.

## JESUS PREDICTS HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION

31 And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many
things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be
killed, and after three days rise again. 32 He spoke this word openly. Then
Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. 33 But when He had turned
around and looked at His disciples, He rebuked Peter, saying, “Get behind
Me, Satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of
men.”

## TAKE UP THE CROSS AND FOLLOW HIM

34 When He had called the people to *Himself*, with His disciples also, He
said to them, “Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and
take up his cross, and follow Me. 35 For whoever desires to save his life will
lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s will save it.
36 For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own
soul? 37 Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? 38 For whoever is
ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him
the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His
Father with the holy angels.”

## JESUS TRANSFIGURED ON THE MOUNT

**9** And He said to them, “Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power.”

2 Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and led them up on
a high mountain apart by themselves; and He was transfigured before them.
3 His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no
launderer on earth can whiten them. 4 And Elijah appeared to them with
Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. 5 Then Peter answered and said to
Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles:
one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah”- 6 because he did not know
what to say, for they were greatly afraid.

7 And a cloud came and overshadowed them; and a voice came out of the
cloud, saying, “This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!” 8 Suddenly, when they
had looked around, they saw no one anymore, but only Jesus with
themselves.

9 Now as they came down from the mountain, He commanded them that
they should tell no one the things they had seen, till the Son of Man had risen
from the dead. 10 So they kept this word to themselves, questioning what the
rising from the dead meant.

11 And they asked Him, saying, “Why do the scribes say that Elijah must
come first?”

12 Then He answered and told them, “Indeed, Elijah is coming first and
restores all things. And how is it written concerning the Son of Man, that He
must suffer many things and be treated with contempt? 13 But I say to you that
Elijah has also come, and they did to him whatever they wished, as it is
written of him.”

## A BOY IS HEALED

14 And when He came to the disciples, He saw a great multitude around
them, and scribes disputing with them. 15 Immediately, when they saw Him,

all the people were greatly amazed, and running to *Him*, greeted Him. [16]And He asked the scribes, “What are you discussing with them?”

[17]Then one of the crowd answered and said, “Teacher, I brought You my son, who has a mute spirit. [18]And wherever it seizes him, it throws him down; he foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid. So I spoke to Your disciples, that they should cast it out, but they could not.”

[19]He answered him and said, “O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to Me.” [20]Then they brought him to Him. And when he saw Him, immediately the spirit convulsed him, and he fell on the ground and wallowed, foaming at the mouth.

[21]So He asked his father, “How long has this been happening to him?”

And he said, “From childhood. [22]And often he has thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.”

[23]Jesus said to him, “If you can believe,[a] all things *are* possible to him who believes.”

[24]Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!”

[25]When Jesus saw that the people came running together, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, “Deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, come out of him and enter him no more!” [26]Then *the spirit* cried out, convulsed him greatly, and came out of him. And he became as one dead, so that many said, “He is dead.” [27]But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose.

[28]And when He had come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, “Why could we not cast it out?”

[29]So He said to them, “This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting.”[a]

## JESUS AGAIN PREDICTS HIS DEATH

**AND RESURRECTION**

30 Then they departed from there and passed through Galilee, and He did
not want anyone to know *it*. 31 For He taught His disciples and said to them,
"The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill
Him. And after He is killed, He will rise the third day." 32 But they did not
understand this saying, and were afraid to ask Him.

**WHO IS THE GREATEST?**

33 Then He came to Capernaum. And when He was in the house He asked
them, "What was it you disputed among yourselves on the road?" 34 But they
kept silent, for on the road they had disputed among themselves who *would
be the* greatest. 35 And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "If
anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all." 36 Then He
took a little child and set him in the midst of them. And when He had taken
him in His arms, He said to them, 37 "Whoever receives one of these little
children in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me, receives not Me
but Him who sent Me."

**JESUS FORBIDS SECTARIANISM**

38 Now John answered Him, saying, "Teacher, we saw someone who does
not follow us casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him because
he does not follow us."

39 But Jesus said, "Do not forbid him, for no one who works a miracle in
My name can soon afterward speak evil of Me. 40 For he who is not against us
is on our[a] side. 41 For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in My name,
because you belong to Christ, assuredly, I say to you, he will by no means
lose his reward.

**JESUS WARNS OF OFFENSES**

42 "But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to
stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck,
and he were thrown into the sea. 43 If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It
is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go

to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched-[44]where

‘Their worm does not die
And the fire is not quenched.’[a]

[45]And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame, rather than having two feet, to be cast into hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched-[46]where

‘Their worm does not die
And the fire is not quenched.’[a]

[47]And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire- [48]where

‘Their worm does not die
And the fire is not quenched.’[a]

**TASTELESS SALT IS WORTHLESS**

[49]“For everyone will be seasoned with fire,[a] and every sacrifice will be seasoned with salt. [50]Salt *is* good, but if the salt loses its flavor, how will you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another.”

**SOUL NOTE**

**Just Believe** *(9:23)* A desperate father sought healing for his son, pleading, “If You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us” (9:22). Jesus answered, “If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.” Belief cannot make things happen apart from the sovereign will of God. Within the sovereign will of God, however, anything *is* possible to those who believe. When we face difficult situations, we must trust God, believing that He loves us and cares for us as a loving Father. That belief makes all the difference.

**Topic: Belief**

## SOUL NOTE

**Help!** *(9:24)* “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!” This was an honest response from the heart of a desperate father who wanted to believe that Jesus could do the impossible. There may come times when we may believe God up to a certain point but then need His grace to enable us to deal with our unbelief as well. At times, our faith may become shadowed by worry or fear. We want to believe, but too much logic or too much emotion clouds our faith. In those times, we can tell God, “I do believe, Lord, but help my unbelief.” **Topic: Belief**

## MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

**10** Then He arose from there and came to the region of Judea by the other side of the Jordan. And multitudes gathered to Him again, and as He was accustomed, He taught them again.

2 The Pharisees came and asked Him, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce *his* wife?” testing Him.

3 And He answered and said to them, “What did Moses command you?”

4 They said, “Moses permitted *a man* to write a certificate of divorce, and to dismiss *her*.”

5 And Jesus answered and said to them, “Because of the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept. 6 But from the beginning of the creation, God ‘made them male and female.’[a] 7 ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, 8 and the two shall become one flesh’;[a] so then they are no longer two, but one flesh. 9 Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.”

10 In the house His disciples also asked Him again about the same *matter*. 11 So He said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. 12 And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.”

## JESUS BLESSES LITTLE CHILDREN

13 Then they brought little children to Him, that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked those who brought *them*. 14 But when Jesus saw *it*, He was greatly displeased and said to them, “Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. 15 Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.” 16 And He took them up in His arms, laid *His* hands on them, and blessed them.

## JESUS COUNSELS THE RICH YOUNG RULER

17 Now as He was going out on the road, one came running, knelt before

Him, and asked Him, “Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?”

18So Jesus said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one *is* good but
One, *that is*, God. 19You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit
adultery,’ ‘Do not murder,’ ‘Do not steal,’ ‘Do not bear false witness,’ ‘Do
not defraud,’ ‘Honor your father and your mother.’ ”[a]

20And he answered and said to Him, “Teacher, all these things I have kept
from my youth.”

21Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, “One thing you
lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will
have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.”

22But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great
possessions.

**WITH GOD ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE**

23Then Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, “How hard it is for
those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!” 24And the disciples
were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them,
“Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches[a] to enter the kingdom
of God! 25It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a
rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”

26And they were greatly astonished, saying among themselves, “Who then
can be saved?”

27But Jesus looked at them and said, “With men *it is* impossible, but not
with God; for with God all things are possible.”

28Then Peter began to say to Him, “See, we have left all and followed
You.”

29So Jesus answered and said, “Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one
who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife[a] or
children or lands, for My sake and the gospel’s, 30who shall not receive a
hundredfold now in this time-houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and
children and lands, with persecutions-and in the age to come, eternal life.

[31]But many *who are* first will be last, and the last first."

## JESUS A THIRD TIME PREDICTS HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION

[32]Now they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was going before them; and they were amazed. And as they followed they were afraid. Then He took the twelve aside again and began to tell them the things that would happen to Him: [33]"Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him to the Gentiles; [34]and they will mock Him, and scourge Him, and spit on Him, and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again."

## GREATNESS IS SERVING

[35]Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Him, saying, "Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask."

[36]And He said to them, "What do you want Me to do for you?"

[37]They said to Him, "Grant us that we may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on Your left, in Your glory."

[38]But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?"

[39]They said to Him, "We are able."

So Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink the cup that I drink, and with the baptism I am baptized with you will be baptized; [40]but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but *it is for those* for whom it is prepared."

[41]And when the ten heard *it,* they began to be greatly displeased with James and John. [42]But Jesus called them to *Himself* and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. [43]Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your

servant. [44]And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. [45]For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

**JESUS HEALS BLIND BARTIMAEUS**

[46]Now they came to Jericho. As He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great multitude, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the road begging. [47]And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

[48]Then many warned him to be quiet; but he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

[49]So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be called.

Then they called the blind man, saying to him, "Be of good cheer. Rise, He is calling you."

[50]And throwing aside his garment, he rose and came to Jesus.

[51]So Jesus answered and said to him, "What do you want Me to do for you?"

The blind man said to Him, "Rabboni, that I may receive my sight."

[52]Then Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your faith has made you well." And immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus on the road.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# RICH MAN, POOR MAN

## (MARK 10:17-25)

How risky it is to be wealthy! The greater the wealth, the greater the risk to a person's soul. Jesus said, "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?" (Mark 8:36).

The wealthy Jewish ruler came to Jesus to ask what he might *do* to inherit eternal life. Jesus began His answer by reminding the man about God's commandments. The ruler responded that he had kept all of these from his youth. The Lord then told him to go and sell everything that he had, give away the proceeds, and follow Him. This stopped the ruler in his tracks. He would not meet Jesus' requirement because "he had great possessions" (Mark 10:22).

The man wanted to keep the world and add eternal life as another possession. Jesus confronted him with a choice. He couldn't hold tightly to this world (his riches) and eternal life at the same time. He would have to let go of this life in order to inherit eternal life. Those who insist on holding on to this life will eventually lose it anyway. To paraphrase a Christian martyr, how much better to give up what we cannot keep in order to gain what we cannot lose.

How tragic it is when, like this wealthy man, we lie to ourselves about our love for God. "I *don't* love money!" we claim. Yet how many of us would sell our estates and give the cash to charity to prove our allegiance to God? Sadly, not many would pass this ultimate test. We are eager to take comfort in the fact that Jesus did not make this His universal measurement of obedience. But Jesus wasn't as concerned about the man's possessions as He was that the possessions owned the man. God will not share allegiance with anyone or anything. An attitude of light holding and ready giving reflects genuine spiritual health. If you realize there is something you could not give up for the sake of Christ, you have some serious thinking to do.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Mastering Your Money. See also the key passage note at 1 Timothy 6:6-10.

## COVENANT MARRIAGE

# FRED LOWERY

# (MARK 10:1-12)

**G**od is a covenant God, the Bible is a covenant book, and we are a covenant people. God has clearly chosen to operate in the lives of His people on the basis of covenant. In the Old Testament, or Old Covenant, the sacrifice of animals and the sprinkling of blood served as an atonement (covering) for sin. In the New Testament, or New Covenant, the death of Christ on the Cross was the ultimate sacrifice for sin. The Lamb of God fulfilled the covenant for all mankind (Is. 53:6), paying sin's debt in full.

What does marriage have to do with covenant? Everything! Covenant is God's idea and ideal for marriage.

## COVENANT VS. CONTRACT

In marriage, people's commitment to each other comes out of God's commitment to us. God has promised to love, protect, cherish, and care for us forever-and that is a covenant that cannot be broken. Likewise, He has empowered husbands and wives to love, protect, cherish, and care for each other until death, and that is a covenant that should not be broken. Covenant is the "invisible" foundation that makes long-term marriage possible. It is the secret to unlocking the mystery of "oneness" and the delight of fulfillment. The essence of covenant marriage is that two people become one. Covenant demands the death of two wills and the birth of one. "I" becomes "we," never

to be separated again. The Bible says, “They are no longer two but one flesh” (Matt. 19:6). That is basic covenant.

The Hebrew word for being “united” or “joined” together means to cleave, cling, or stick. The corresponding Greek word means to be “glued” together. Covenant marriage partners, permanently bonded, will not come “unglued” when pressures come against the marriage.

Although we live in a contractual society, God knew that people could not build marriage on a private contract that can be easily canceled and cast aside on the basis of personal whims and weaknesses. He knew that a contract would not sustain the pain, pitfalls, and pressures of marriage between two imperfect human beings. Long-term marriage demands more than a piece of paper to go the distance. It requires the supernatural merging of lives and the binding of hearts.

To marry by contract is to say, “Now that I’ve signed, what do I get?” The focus is on *receiving*. To marry by covenant is to say, “I am giving myself to you unconditionally.” The focus is on *giving*. In a contract, two become connected until the agreement is broken. In a covenant, two become committed until death parts them. Contracts are enforced by courts. Covenants are enforced by character. A contract calls for the signing of names; a covenant calls for the binding of hearts.

## A MARRIAGE COVENANT IS SERIOUS

The Hebrew word for covenant is *berith*, which connotes a cutting of the flesh causing blood to flow out. The Hebrew act of “cutting covenant” was so serious that it was inaugurated with blood. The shedding of the blood of sacrificed animals in the Old Testament and of the blood of Jesus on the Cross were acts of covenant. In the Old Testament, covenants were so serious that God held accountable those who broke covenant.

In Malachi, God identified marriage as a covenant that cannot be broken without serious consequences. God takes very seriously the breaking of the marriage covenant (Mal. 2:13-16). The Bible tells us that God, on request, will set aside the covenant for only two reasons: adultery and death.

## A MARRIAGE COVENANT IS SACRED

A covenant was the most serious, the most sacred, and the most solemn agreement that could be made between human beings. It is a sacred act for a man and a woman to enter into a covenant relationship before God, family, and friends. God holds us accountable for the vows we make to each other on our wedding day. Promises made at the wedding altar allow entrance into a sacred covenant whose terms are witnessed by God Himself. Christian marriage is a triangle-it takes three for two to become one.

## A MARRIAGE COVENANT IS SACRIFICIAL

There is no such thing as covenant without sacrifice, and marriage is designed to be the most sacrificial of all relationships. Covenant represents total surrender and involves the merging of one's life into another. This biblical image of "two becoming one" does not deny personal identity, but it allows the development of a wonderful diversity.

The Old Testament covenant ceremony involved a "walk of death" that constitutes the core issue of covenant. An animal was killed and split down the middle. The covenant participants would walk in a figure eight between the halves of the animal, reciting the duties of the covenant, and returning to face each other. The figure eight, a symbol of eternity, was an acknowledgment that the covenant was forever. This covenantal "walk of death" said two important things: (1) I am dying to myself and giving up the rights to my individual life in order to become one with my covenant partner; (2) I am, in effect, pointing to the dead animal and saying to God, "Please kill me if I

break this covenant."

Selfishness is the root cause of all marital conflicts. Therefore, the key to a successful and lasting marriage is for the individuals' wills to die. It takes a lot of dying for a marriage to live. "Me-ness" must become "we-ness." The more unselfish we are, the happier we will be in our marriage.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of marriage include:

- Genesis 2:18-25
- Proverbs 5:15-19; 18:22
- Matthew 19:4-6
- 1 Corinthians 7:1-16; 13:1-8
- Ephesians 5:22-33
- Hebrews 13:4

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on marriage at Matthew 19:4-6. See also the personality profile of Mary and Joseph: the Bond of Love and Honesty.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Give It Up** *(10:28-31)* After Jesus' conversation with the rich young ruler, Peter commented that he and the other disciples had done what the rich man could not-"We have left all and followed You." Jesus responded that those who deny themselves and put Christ first will "receive a hundredfold now in this time . . . and in the age to come, eternal life." Anyone who gives up something valuable for Christ's

sake will be blessed both in this life and in the life to come. When we deny ourselves something for Christ's sake, He understands and promises to give us more in return. **Topic: Self-Denial**

## THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY

**11** Now when they drew near Jerusalem, to Bethphage[a] and Bethany, at the
Mount of Olives, He sent two of His disciples; [2]and He said to them,
"Go into the village opposite you; and as soon as you have entered it you will
find a colt tied, on which no one has sat. Loose it and bring *it*. [3]And if anyone
says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it,' and
immediately he will send it here."

[4]So they went their way, and found the[a] colt tied by the door outside on the
street, and they loosed it. [5]But some of those who stood there said to them,
"What are you doing, loosing the colt?"

[6]And they spoke to them just as Jesus had commanded. So they let them
go. [7]Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their clothes on it, and He
sat on it. [8]And many spread their clothes on the road, and others cut down
leafy branches from the trees and spread *them* on the road. [9]Then those who
went before and those who followed cried out, saying:

"Hosanna!
'Blessed *is* He who comes in the name of
the LORD! '[a]
[10] Blessed *is* the kingdom of our father
David
That comes in the name of the Lord![a] Hosanna in the highest!"

[11]And Jesus went into Jerusalem and into the temple. So when He had looked
around at all things, as the hour was already late, He went out to Bethany
with the twelve.

## THE FIG TREE WITHERED

[12]Now the next day, when they had come out from Bethany, He was
hungry. [13]And seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, He went to see if
perhaps He would find something on it. When He came to it, He found
nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. [14]In response Jesus said
to it, "Let no one eat fruit from you ever again."

And His disciples heard *it*.

## JESUS CLEANSES THE TEMPLE

15 So they came to Jerusalem. Then Jesus went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. 16 And He would not allow anyone to carry wares through the temple. 17 Then He taught, saying to them, “Is it not written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations’?[a] But you have made it a ‘den of thieves.’ ”[b]

18 And the scribes and chief priests heard it and sought how they might destroy Him; for they feared Him, because all the people were astonished at His teaching. 19 When evening had come, He went out of the city.

## THE LESSON OF THE WITHERED FIG TREE

20 Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. 21 And Peter, remembering, said to Him, “Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away.”

> “Therefore I say to you, whatever
> things you ask when you pray,
> believe that you receive them,
> and you will have them.”
> MARK 11:24

22 So Jesus answered and said to them, “Have faith in God. 23 For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. 24 Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive *them*, and you will have *them*.

## FORGIVENESS AND PRAYER

25 “And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. 26 But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.”[a]

**JESUS' AUTHORITY QUESTIONED**

[27]Then they came again to Jerusalem. And as He was walking in the temple, the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders came to Him. [28]And they said to Him, "By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority to do these things?"

[29]But Jesus answered and said to them, "I also will ask you one question; then answer Me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things: [30]The baptism of John-was it from heaven or from men? Answer Me."

[31]And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' He will say, 'Why then did you not believe him?' [32]But if we say, 'From men' "-they feared the people, for all counted John to have been a prophet indeed. [33]So they answered and said to Jesus, "We do not know."

And Jesus answered and said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things."

**SOUL NOTE**

**God's Place** *(11:15)* The temple had become a marketplace, with opportunistic merchants setting up shop in a very distracting way. Animals for sacrifice were being sold noisily. At a premium, money changers accepted Gentile coinage in exchange for temple coins that bore no human image, the only coins accepted at the temple. Jesus was angry about this money focus! Likewise, even though our churches need a solid budget and financial plan in order to keep operating, money should never become so important that we lose sight of the church's mission-to provide a place for worship, fellowship, and outreach. **Topic: Money**

## SOUL NOTE

**Mountain Movers** *(11:22-24)* When Jesus said, “Whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them,” He did not mean that we can have anything we want simply by praying. In other places, Jesus explained that prayer must be submitted to God’s sovereign will and focused on His glory. We must not pray for selfish desires or out of selfish motives. We should pray because we love God and trust Him to do His will. Even when the request seems impossible, we can still pray. God always hears and answers. **Topic: Prayer**

## SOUL NOTE

**Forgive** *(11:26)* Jesus stated that God’s forgiveness of us is somehow related to how we forgive others. When we accept God’s forgiveness of all the wrongs we have done Him, we should be so grateful that we willingly offer that same kind of forgiveness to those who have wronged us. Jesus told a parable of a person who had been forgiven of a huge debt he owed, but then refused to forgive any of his debtors (Matt. 18:21-35). To refuse to forgive others shows that we do not appreciate the forgiveness God offers us. **Topic: Forgiveness**

## THE PARABLE OF THE WICKED VINEDRESSERS

**12** Then He began to speak to them in parables: “A man planted a vineyard
and set a hedge around *it*, dug *a place for* the wine vat and built a tower.
And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country. 2Now at vintage-
time he sent a servant to the vinedressers, that he might receive some of the
fruit of the vineyard from the vinedressers. 3And they took *him* and beat him
and sent *him* away empty-handed. 4Again he sent them another servant, and
at him they threw stones,[a] wounded *him* in the head, and sent *him* away
shamefully treated. 5And again he sent another, and him they killed; and
many others, beating some and killing some. 6Therefore still having one son,
his beloved, he also sent him to them last, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’
7But those vinedressers said among themselves, ‘This is the heir. Come, let
us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.’ 8So they took him and killed
*him* and cast *him* out of the vineyard.

9“Therefore what will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and
destroy the vinedressers, and give the vineyard to others. 10Have you not
even read this Scripture:

‘The stone which the builders rejected
Has become the chief cornerstone.
11 This was the LORD’s doing,
And it is marvelous in our eyes’?”[a]

12And they sought to lay hands on Him, but feared the multitude, for they
knew He had spoken the parable against them. So they left Him and went
away.

## THE PHARISEES: IS IT LAWFUL TO PAY TAXES TO CAESAR?

13Then they sent to Him some of the Pharisees and the Herodians, to catch
Him in *His* words. 14When they had come, they said to Him, “Teacher, we
know that You are true, and care about no one; for You do not regard the
person of men, but teach the way of God in truth. Is it lawful to pay taxes to
Caesar, or not? 15Shall we pay, or shall we not pay?”

But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, “Why do you test Me? Bring Me a denarius that I may see *it*.” [16]So they brought *it*.

And He said to them, “Whose image and inscription *is* this?” They said to Him, “Caesar’s.”

[17]And Jesus answered and said to them, “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”

And they marveled at Him.

### THE SADDUCEES: WHAT ABOUT THE RESURRECTION?

[18]Then *some* Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him; and they asked Him, saying: [19]“Teacher, Moses wrote to us that if a man’s brother dies, and leaves *his* wife behind, and leaves no children, his brother should take his wife and raise up offspring for his brother. [20]Now there were seven brothers. The first took a wife; and dying, he left no offspring. [21]And the second took her, and he died; nor did he leave any offspring. And the third likewise. [22]So the seven had her and left no offspring. Last of all the woman died also. [23]Therefore, in the resurrection, when they rise, whose wife will she be? For all seven had her as wife.”

[24]Jesus answered and said to them, “Are you not therefore mistaken, because you do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God? [25]For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. [26]But concerning the dead, that they rise, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the *burning* bush *passage*, how God spoke to him, saying, ‘ I *am* the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’?[a] [27]He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. You are therefore greatly mistaken.”

### THE SCRIBES: WHICH IS THE FIRST COMMANDMENT OF ALL?

[28]Then one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, perceiving[a] that He had answered them well, asked Him, “Which is the first commandment of all?”

29 Jesus answered him, “The first of all the commandments *is*: ‘Hear, O
Israel, the *LORD* our God, the LORD is one. 30 And you shall love the LORD
your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with
all your strength.’[a] This *is* the first commandment. [b] 31 And the second, like *it*,
*is* this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’[a] There is no other
commandment greater than these.”

32 So the scribe said to Him, “Well *said*, Teacher. You have spoken the
truth, for there is one God, and there is no other but He. 33 And to love Him
with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul,[a] and with
all the strength, and to love one’s neighbor as oneself, is more than all the whole
burnt offerings and sacrifices.”

34 Now when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, He said to him, “You are
not far from the kingdom of God.”

But after that no one dared question Him.

## JESUS: HOW CAN DAVID CALL HIS DESCENDANT LORD?

35 Then Jesus answered and said, while He taught in the temple, “How *is it*
that the scribes say that the Christ is the Son of David? 36 For David himself
said by the Holy Spirit:

‘The LORD said to my Lord,
“Sit at My right hand,
Till I make Your enemies Your
footstool.” ’ [a]

37 Therefore David himself calls Him *‘Lord’*; how is He *then* his Son?”

And the common people heard Him gladly.

## BEWARE OF THE SCRIBES

38 Then He said to them in His teaching, “Beware of the scribes, who desire
to go around in long robes, *love* greetings in the marketplaces, 39 the best seats
in the synagogues, and the best places at feasts, 40 who devour widows’
houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. These will receive greater

condemnation.”

## THE WIDOW’S TWO MITES

41 Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money
into the treasury. And many *who were* rich put in much. 42 Then one poor
widow came and threw in two mites,[a] which make a quadrans. 43 So He called
His disciples to *Himself* and said to them, “Assuredly, I say to you that this
poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury;
44 for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in
all that she had, her whole livelihood.”

**SOUL NOTE**

**His Image** *(12:13-17)* The Jews of Jesus’ day were under the dominion of the Roman Empire and were forced to pay taxes to Caesar. Some thought it wrong to pay taxes that supported a pagan government. The Jewish leaders tried to trap Jesus into taking a side on the issue. Jesus took a coin, pointed out Caesar’s image on it, and said that since the coin belonged to Caesar, it could be returned to him. Then Jesus added the most important lesson: Our lives bear the image of God; therefore, we should give our lives to Him. **Topic: Money**

## JESUS PREDICTS THE DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE

**13** Then as He went out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, "Teacher, see what manner of stones and what buildings *are here!*"

2 And Jesus answered and said to him, "Do you see these great buildings? Not *one* stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

## THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES AND THE END OF THE AGE

3 Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked Him privately, 4 "Tell us, when will these things be? And what *will be* the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?"

5 And Jesus, answering them, began to say: "Take heed that no one deceives you. 6 For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am *He*,' and will deceive many. 7 But when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be troubled; for *such things* must happen, but the end *is* not yet. 8 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines and troubles.[a] These *are* the beginnings of sorrows.

9 "But watch out for yourselves, for they will deliver you up to councils, and you will be beaten in the synagogues. You will be brought[a] before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony to them. 10 And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations. 11 But when they arrest *you* and deliver you up, do not worry beforehand, or premeditate[a] what you will speak. But whatever is given you in that hour, speak that; for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. 12 Now brother will betray brother to death, and a father *his* child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. 13 And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end shall be saved.

"The gospel must first be
preached to all the nations."

MARK 13:10

## THE GREAT TRIBULATION

14 "So when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' [a] spoken of by Daniel
the prophet,[b] standing where it ought not" (let the reader understand), "then
let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. 15 Let him who is on the
housetop not go down into the house, nor enter to take anything out of his
house. 16 And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. 17 But
woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those
days! 18 And pray that your flight may not be in winter. 19 For *in* those days
there will be tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the
creation which God created until this time, nor ever shall be. 20 And unless the
Lord had shortened those days, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's
sake, whom He chose, He shortened the days.

21 "Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here *is* the Christ!' or, 'Look, *He is*
there!' do not believe it. 22 For false christs and false prophets will rise and
show signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. 23 But take
heed; see, I have told you all things beforehand.

## THE COMING OF THE SON OF MAN

24 "But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and
the moon will not give its light; 25 the stars of heaven will fall, and the powers
in the heavens will be shaken. 26 Then they will see the Son of Man coming in
the clouds with great power and glory. 27 And then He will send His angels,
and gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest part of
earth to the farthest part of heaven.

## THE PARABLE OF THE FIG TREE

28 "Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already
become tender, and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. 29 So
you also, when you see these things happening, know that it[a] is near-at the
doors! 30 Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away
till all these things take place. 31 Heaven and earth will pass away, but My

words will by no means pass away.

**NO ONE KNOWS THE DAY OR HOUR**

[32]“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. [33]Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is. [34]*It is* like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch. [35]Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming-in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning-[36]lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. [37]And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!”

## THE PLOT TO KILL JESUS

**14** After two days it was the Passover and *the Feast* of Unleavened Bread.
And the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take Him by
trickery and put *Him* to death. 2But they said, “Not during the feast, lest there
be an uproar of the people.”

## THE ANOINTING AT BETHANY

3And being in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, as He sat at the
table, a woman came having an alabaster flask of very costly oil of spikenard.
Then she broke the flask and poured *it* on His head. 4But there were some
who were indignant among themselves, and said, “Why was this fragrant oil
wasted? 5For it might have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and
given to the poor.” And they criticized her sharply.

6But Jesus said, “Let her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a
good work for Me. 7For you have the poor with you always, and whenever
you wish you may do them good; but Me you do not have always. 8She has
done what she could. She has come beforehand to anoint My body for burial.
9Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world,
what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her.”

## JUDAS AGREES TO BETRAY JESUS

10Then Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went to the chief priests to betray
Him to them. 11And when they heard *it*, they were glad, and promised to give
him money. So he sought how he might conveniently betray Him.

## JESUS CELEBRATES THE PASSOVER WITH HIS DISCIPLES

12Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they killed the Passover
*lamb*, His disciples said to Him, “Where do You want us to go and prepare,
that You may eat the Passover?”

13And He sent out two of His disciples and said to them, “Go into the city,
and a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him. 14Wherever

he goes in, say to the master of the house, ‘The Teacher says, “Where is the guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?” ’ [15]Then he will show you a large upper room, furnished *and* prepared; there make ready for us.”

[16]So His disciples went out, and came into the city, and found it just as He had said to them; and they prepared the Passover.

[17]In the evening He came with the twelve. [18]Now as they sat and ate, Jesus said, “Assuredly, I say to you, one of you who eats with Me will betray Me.”

[19]And they began to be sorrowful, and to say to Him one by one, “*Is* it I?” And another *said*, “*Is* it I?”[a]

[20]He answered and said to them, “*It is* one of the twelve, who dips with Me in the dish. [21]The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had never been born.”

## JESUS INSTITUTES THE LORD’S SUPPER

[22]And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke *it*, and gave *it* to them and said, “Take, eat;[a] this is My body.”

[23]Then He took the cup, and when He had given thanks He gave *it* to them, and they all drank from it. [24]And He said to them, “This is My blood of the new[a] covenant, which is shed for many. [25]Assuredly, I say to you, I will no longer drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.”

[26]And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

## JESUS PREDICTS PETER’S DENIAL

[27]Then Jesus said to them, “All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night,[a] for it is written:

‘I will strike the Shepherd,
And the sheep will be scattered.’[b]

[28]“But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee.”

29 Peter said to Him, “Even if all are made to stumble, yet I *will* not *be*.”

30 Jesus said to him, “Assuredly, I say to you that today, *even* this night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times.”

31 But he spoke more vehemently, “If I have to die with You, I will not deny You!”

And they all said likewise.

**THE PRAYER IN THE GARDEN**

32 Then they came to a place which was named Gethsemane; and He said to His disciples, “Sit here while I pray.” 33 And He took Peter, James, and John with Him, and He began to be troubled and deeply distressed. 34 Then He said to them, “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, *even* to death. Stay here and watch.”

35 He went a little farther, and fell on the ground, and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him. 36 And He said, “Abba, Father, all things *are* possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You *will*.”

37 Then He came and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, “Simon, are you sleeping? Could you not watch one hour? 38 Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak.”

39 Again He went away and prayed, and spoke the same words. 40 And when He returned, He found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy; and they did not know what to answer Him.

41 Then He came the third time and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and resting? It is enough! The hour has come; behold, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. 42 Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand.”

**BETRAYAL AND ARREST IN GETHSEMANE**

43 And immediately, while He was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, with a great multitude with swords and clubs, came from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. 44 Now His betrayer had given them a signal,

saying, “Whomever I kiss, He is the One; seize Him and lead *Him* away safely.”

45 As soon as he had come, immediately he went up to Him and said to Him, “Rabbi, Rabbi!” and kissed Him.

46 Then they laid their hands on Him and took Him. 47 And one of those who stood by drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear.

48 Then Jesus answered and said to them, “Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs to take Me? 49 I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize Me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled.”

50 Then they all forsook Him and fled.

## A YOUNG MAN FLEES NAKED

51 Now a certain young man followed Him, having a linen cloth thrown around *his* naked *body*. And the young men laid hold of him, 52 and he left the linen cloth and fled from them naked.

## JESUS FACES THE SANHEDRIN

53 And they led Jesus away to the high priest; and with him were assembled all the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes. 54 But Peter followed Him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. And he sat with the servants and warmed himself at the fire.

55 Now the chief priests and all the council sought testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, but found none. 56 For many bore false witness against Him, but their testimonies did not agree.

57 Then some rose up and bore false witness against Him, saying, 58 “We heard Him say, ‘I will destroy this temple made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.’ ” 59 But not even then did their testimony agree.

60 And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, saying, “Do You answer nothing? What *is it* these men testify against You?” 61 But He

kept silent and answered nothing.

Again the high priest asked Him, saying to Him, “Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?”

62 Jesus said, “I am. And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.”

63 Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, “What further need do we have of witnesses? 64 You have heard the blasphemy! What do you think?”

And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death.

65 Then some began to spit on Him, and to blindfold Him, and to beat Him, and to say to Him, “Prophesy!” And the officers struck Him with the palms of their hands.[a]

**PETER DENIES JESUS, AND WEEPS**

66 Now as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came. 67 And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, “You also were with Jesus of Nazareth.”

68 But he denied it, saying, “I neither know nor understand what you are saying.” And he went out on the porch, and a rooster crowed.

69 And the servant girl saw him again, and began to say to those who stood by, “This is one of them.” 70 But he denied it again.

And a little later those who stood by said to Peter again, “Surely you are *one* of them; for you are a Galilean, and your speech shows *it*.”[a]

71 Then he began to curse and swear, “I do not know this Man of whom you speak!”

72 A second time *the* rooster crowed. Then Peter called to mind the word that Jesus had said to him, “Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times.” And when he thought about it, he wept.

## SOUL NOTE

**Your Will** *(14:32-42)* In His humanity Jesus dreaded the Cross, and in the quiet of Gethsemane He spent time in prayer with His Father. He expressed His deepest desire that the "cup" be taken away, but He submitted Himself to the Father's will: "Nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will." Jesus faced the most difficult hours of His earthly life with the serenity of One who knew He was safe in God's hands. No matter what would come, God was in control. When we face a difficult time, we can pray, knowing that God walks with us. He is in control. **Topic: Prayer**

## JESUS FACES PILATE

**15** Immediately, in the morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council; and they bound Jesus, led *Him* away, and delivered *Him* to Pilate. 2Then Pilate asked Him, “Are You the King of the Jews?”

He answered and said to him, “*It is as* you say.”

3And the chief priests accused Him of many things, but He answered nothing. 4Then Pilate asked Him again, saying, “Do You answer nothing? See how many things they testify against You!”[a] 5But Jesus still answered nothing, so that Pilate marveled.

## TAKING THE PLACE OF BARABBAS

6Now at the feast he was accustomed to releasing one prisoner to them, whomever they requested. 7And there was one named Barabbas, *who was* chained with his fellow rebels; they had committed murder in the rebellion. 8Then the multitude, crying aloud,[a] began to ask *him to do* just as he had always done for them. 9But Pilate answered them, saying, “Do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?” 10For he knew that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy.

11But the chief priests stirred up the crowd, so that he should rather release Barabbas to them. 12Pilate answered and said to them again, “What then do you want me to do *with Him* whom you call the King of the Jews?”

13So they cried out again, “Crucify Him!”

14Then Pilate said to them, “Why, what evil has He done?”

But they cried out all the more, “Crucify Him!”

15So Pilate, wanting to gratify the crowd, released Barabbas to them; and he delivered Jesus, after he had scourged *Him*, to be crucified.

## THE SOLDIERS MOCK JESUS

16Then the soldiers led Him away into the hall called Praetorium, and they

called together the whole garrison. [17]And they clothed Him with purple; and they twisted a crown of thorns, put it on His *head*, [18]and began to salute Him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" [19]Then they struck Him on the head with a reed and spat on Him; and bowing the knee, they worshiped Him. [20]And when they had mocked Him, they took the purple off Him, put His own clothes on Him, and led Him out to crucify Him.

**THE KING ON A CROSS**

[21]Then they compelled a certain man, Simon a Cyrenian, the father of Alexander and Rufus, as he was coming out of the country and passing by, to bear His cross. [22]And they brought Him to the place Golgotha, which is translated, Place of a Skull. [23]Then they gave Him wine mingled with myrrh to drink, but He did not take *it*. [24]And when they crucified Him, they divided His garments, casting lots for them to determine what every man should take.

[25]Now it was the third hour, and they crucified Him. [26]And the inscription of His accusation was written above:

THE KING OF THE JEWS.

[27]With Him they also crucified two robbers, one on His right and the other on His left. [28]So the Scripture was fulfilled[a] which says, "And He was numbered with the transgressors."[b]

[29]And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads and saying, "Aha! *You* who destroy the temple and build *it* in three days, [30]save Yourself, and come down from the cross!"

[31]Likewise the chief priests also, mocking among themselves with the scribes, said, "He saved others; Himself He cannot save. [32]Let the Christ, the King of Israel, descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe." [a]

Even those who were crucified with Him reviled Him.

**JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS**

[33]Now when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole

land until the ninth hour. [34]And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?” which is translated, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”[a]

[35]Some of those who stood by, when they heard *that*, said, “Look, He is calling for Elijah!” [36]Then someone ran and filled a sponge full of sour wine, put *it* on a reed, and offered *it* to Him to drink, saying, “Let Him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to take Him down.”

[37]And Jesus cried out with a loud voice, and breathed His last.

[38]Then the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. [39]So when the centurion, who stood opposite Him, saw that He cried out like this and breathed His last,[a] he said, “Truly this Man was the Son of God!”

[40]There were also women looking on from afar, among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the Less and of Joses, and Salome, [41]who also followed Him and ministered to Him when He was in Galilee, and many other women who came up with Him to Jerusalem.

## JESUS BURIED IN JOSEPH’S TOMB

[42]Now when evening had come, because it was the Preparation Day, that is, the day before the Sabbath, [43]Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent council member, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, coming and taking courage, went in to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. [44]Pilate marveled that He was already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him if He had been dead for some time. [45]So when he found out from the centurion, he granted the body to Joseph. [46]Then he bought fine linen, took Him down, and wrapped Him in the linen. And he laid Him in a tomb which had been hewn out of the rock, and rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. [47]And Mary Magdalene and Mary *the mother* of Joses observed where He was laid.

## SOUL NOTE

**All Honor and Praise** *(15:16-32)* Jesus was treated horribly throughout His final hours. He was arrested like a criminal. He was spat on and beaten. His close friend Peter denied ever knowing Him. The Roman leader condemned Him without any case, and His own people called for His execution and chose a murderer to be released in His place. The Roman soldiers mocked His claims to be a king, and then crucified Him between two robbers. Jesus, the Son of God, experienced such dishonor so that one day He could bring us into glory with Him. He deserves our honor and praise every day. **Topic: Honor**

## HE IS RISEN

**16** Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary *the mother* of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him. [2]Very early in the morning, on the first *day* of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. [3]And they said among themselves, "Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?" [4]But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away-for it was very large. [5]And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed.

[6]But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. [7]But go, tell His disciples-and Peter-that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you."

[8]So they went out quickly[a] and fled from the tomb, for they trembled and were amazed. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

## MARY MAGDALENE SEES THE RISEN LORD

[9]Now when *He* rose early on the first *day* of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons. [10]She went and told those who had been with Him, as they mourned and wept. [11]And when they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe.

## JESUS APPEARS TO TWO DISCIPLES

[12]After that, He appeared in another form to two of them as they walked and went into the country. [13]And they went and told *it* to the rest, *but* they did not believe them either.

## THE GREAT COMMISSION

[14]Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen. [15]And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. [16]He who believes and is

baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. [17]And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; [18]they[a] will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.”

**CHRIST ASCENDS TO GOD’S RIGHT HAND**

[19]So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. [20]And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with *them* and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen.[a]

# Luke



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# Luke

One person weeps at a movie; another is unmoved. One friend seems painfully indecisive while another makes decisions (even big ones) with ease. When friends come over, one spouse's concern is for everyone to have good conversation; but the other spouse is fretting over whether the refreshments will last.

It's no great revelation to say that people are different. Our varied temperaments and backgrounds mean that we think and feel and respond in different ways. This fact might explain one reason for the New Testament's having four separate Gospels. They all highlight slightly different aspects of Christ's character and ministry, so as to speak effectively to different audiences.

Luke was evidently a Gentile physician who never met Jesus, but he went on to become a close associate of the apostle Paul. Writing mainly to his fellow non-Jews, Luke stressed the humanity and compassion of Christ toward all people. His goal seems to have been twofold: (1) to show that Jesus met the ideal of human perfection, and (2) to prove that Christ was the Savior sent by God "to seek and to save" lost people (19:10).

A meticulous researcher and a skillful historian, Luke has written a Gospel that is admired by scholars for its careful attention to detail. Not surprisingly, Luke's is the longest Gospel, giving the fullest portrayal of Jesus' life and ministry and including nearly ten chapters of material found in no other Gospel. As the author of this and its companion book, Acts, Luke traces both the life of Christ and the beginnings of the church.

Read Luke to discover Jesus the Savior!

**SOUL CONCERNS IN**

**LUKE**

MOTHERHOOD (1:26, 27)

JUDGMENTALISM (6:37, 38)

WORRY (12:22-31)

SELF-DENIAL (14:25-33)

## DEDICATION TO THEOPHILUS

**1** Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those
things which have been fulfilled[a] among us, 2just as those who from the
beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us,
3it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things
from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent
Theophilus, 4that you may know the certainty of those things in which you
were instructed.

## JOHN'S BIRTH ANNOUNCED TO ZACHARIAS

5There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named
Zacharias, of the division of Abijah. His wife *was* of the daughters of Aaron,
and her name *was* Elizabeth. 6And they were both righteous before God,
walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. 7But
they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both well
advanced in years.

8So it was, that while he was serving as priest before God in the order of
his division, 9according to the custom of the priesthood, his lot fell to burn
incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. 10And the whole multitude
of the people was praying outside at the hour of incense. 11Then an angel of
the Lord appeared to him, standing on the right side of the altar of incense.
12And when Zacharias saw *him*, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.

13But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is
heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his
name John. 14And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at
his birth. 15For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink
neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even
from his mother's womb. 16And he will turn many of the children of Israel to
the Lord their God. 17He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of
Elijah, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' [a] and the disobedient
to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

18And Zacharias said to the angel, "How shall I know this? For I am an old

man, and my wife is well advanced in years."

19 And the angel answered and said to him, "I am Gabriel, who stands in
the presence of God, and was sent to speak to you and bring you these glad
tidings. 20 But behold, you will be mute and not able to speak until the day
these things take place, because you did not believe my words which will be
fulfilled in their own time."

21 And the people waited for Zacharias, and marveled that he lingered so
long in the temple. 22 But when he came out, he could not speak to them; and
they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple, for he beckoned to
them and remained speechless.

23 So it was, as soon as the days of his service were completed, that he
departed to his own house. 24 Now after those days his wife Elizabeth
conceived; and she hid herself five months, saying, 25 "Thus the Lord has
dealt with me, in the days when He looked on *me,* to take away my reproach
among people."

## CHRIST'S IRTH ANNOUNCED TO MARY

26 Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of
Galilee named Nazareth, 27 to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was
Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name *was* Mary. 28 And having
come in, the angel said to her, "Rejoice, highly favored *one,* the Lord *is* with
you; blessed *are* you among women!"[a]

29 But when she saw *him,*[a] she was troubled at his saying, and considered
what manner of greeting this was. 30 Then the angel said to her, "Do not be
afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31 And behold, you will
conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name
JESUS. 32 He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the
Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. 33 And He will reign
over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end."

34 Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a
man?"

35 And the angel answered and said to her, "*The* Holy Spirit will come upon

you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. [36]Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. [37]For with God nothing will be impossible."

[38]Then Mary said, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

## MARY VISITS ELIZABETH

[39]Now Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste, to a city of Judah, [40]and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. [41]And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. [42]Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said, "Blessed *are* you among women, and blessed *is* the fruit of your womb! [43]But why *is* this *granted* to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? [44]For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. [45]Blessed *is* she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord."

## THE SONG OF MARY

[46]And Mary said:

"My soul magnifies the Lord,

[47] And my spirit has rejoiced in God my
Savior.
[48] For He has regarded the lowly state of
His maidservant;
For behold, henceforth all generations
will call me blessed.
[49] For He who is mighty has done great
things for me,
And holy *is* His name.
[50] And His mercy *is* on those who fear Him

From generation to generation.
51 He has shown strength with His arm;
He has scattered *the* proud in the
imagination of their hearts.
52 He has put down the mighty from *their*
thrones,
And exalted *the* lowly.
53 He has filled *the* hungry with good
things,
And *the* rich He has sent away empty.
54 He has helped His servant Israel,
In remembrance of *His* mercy,
55 As He spoke to our fathers,
To Abraham and to his seed forever."
56And Mary remained with her about three months, and returned to her house.

**BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST**

57Now Elizabeth's full time came for her to be delivered, and she brought forth a son. 58When her neighbors and relatives heard how the Lord had shown great mercy to her, they rejoiced with her.

**CIRCUMCISION OF JOHN THE BAPTIST**

59So it was, on the eighth day, that they came to circumcise the child; and they would have called him by the name of his father, Zacharias. 60His mother answered and said, "No; he shall be called John."

61But they said to her, "There is no one among your relatives who is called by this name." 62So they made signs to his father-what he would have him called.

63And he asked for a writing tablet, and wrote, saying, "His name is John." So they all marveled. 64Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue *loosed*, and he spoke, praising God. 65Then fear came on all who dwelt around them; and all these sayings were discussed throughout all the hill

country of Judea. [66]And all those who heard *them* kept *them* in their hearts, saying, “What kind of child will this be?” And the hand of the Lord was with him.

## ZACHARIAS’ PROPHECY

[67]Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying:

[68] “Blessed *is* the Lord God of Israel,
For He has visited and redeemed His people,
[69] And has raised up a horn of salvation for us
In the house of His servant David,
[70] As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets,
Who *have been* since the world began,
[71] That we should be saved from our enemies
And from the hand of all who hate us,
[72] To perform the mercy *promised* to our fathers
And to remember His holy covenant,
[73] The oath which He swore to our father Abraham:
[74] To grant us that we,
Being delivered from the hand of our enemies,
Might serve Him without fear,
[75] In holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life.
[76] “And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest;
For you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways,

77 To give knowledge of salvation to His
people
By the remission of their sins,
78 Through the tender mercy of our God,
With which the Dayspring from on high
has visited[a] us;
79 To give light to those who sit in darkness
and the shadow of death,
To guide our feet into the way of peace.”
80 So the child grew and became strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his manifestation to Israel.

## SOUL NOTE

**Leaping Baby** *(1:41)* The baby in Elizabeth’s womb leaped for joy when he heard the voice of Mary, the mother of Jesus. This passage shows that unborn children are alive and have a spiritual identity. Many advocates of abortion insist that a fetus isn’t a real person until birth, and that therefore abortion isn’t murder. The Bible shows, however, that life begins at conception, because God knows all about people and knows all the days of their lives *before they are born* (Ps. 139:16). All people-even those still in the womb-are precious to God.
**Topic: Abortion**

## DOES MOTHERING MATTER?

# ELISA MORGAN AND CAROL KUYKENDALL

## (Luke 1:26, 27)

**D**oes mothering matter? Sometimes mothers wonder. Even when they know that God values their commitment to mothering their children, negative feelings can pierce their confidence and accuse them of insignificance. Some mothers comment, for example:

"I feel that what I do as a mother isn't very important."

"I feel like I never finish anything!"

"I feel so exhausted all the time!"

"I feel so out of control!"

Society says that what people do equals their value. Therefore, a woman's worth is thought to be determined by the value of her work, the amount she accomplishes, and the size of her paycheck. If a mother's work is constantly unfinished or coming undone, is exhausting or without monetary reward, she may question her worth.

### WHAT *THEY* SAY ABOUT MOTHERING

Mothers face the challenge of investing their time and energy in the lives of their children. The culture, however, confronts them with two messages:

First, *they* say, "Mothering is not a job." A few years ago, California officially informed one mother who wanted to run for Congress that motherhood didn't count as a job. Because mothers don't receive pay for their work, mothering is not recognized as an occupation. Instead, it is viewed as no more than a biological status. If a woman mothers, and only mothers, society says she is not

working. And even if she mothers while being a lawyer, hanging wallpaper, or running a service from her home, the mothering part of her day isn't valued as work. The culture says that mothering is insignificant, so it undervalues the task (the "job") of mothering. It can be difficult for women to value their major investment in life-mothering-when their culture judges that investment as having no value.

Second, *they* say, "Mothering is not a skill." Mothering skills, where time and energy are invested in the lives of those who can't do for themselves, are undervalued. All around are blatant messages that mothering is no more than an expensive hobby. Little praise or encouragement is given to those who invest their lives in the lives of their children, perhaps trading personal fulfillment and a paycheck for the well-being of future adults.

## WHAT GOD SAYS ABOUT MOTHERING

Mothers need to understand the value of their mothering from God's perspective. When mothers see themselves as God sees them-as His beloved children-they are free to drop their burdens of worry or guilt about the time they spend mothering. They can focus on being the best moms they can be.

Mothering is highly esteemed in God's Word. Children are declared to be precious gifts from God (Ps. 127:3). Throughout the Book of Proverbs, exhortation is given to the "son" to listen to his father's and mother's instruction and guidance: "My son, hear the instruction of your father, and do not forsake the law of your mother; for they will be a graceful ornament on your head, and chains about your neck" (Prov. 1:8, 9). Proverbs 31, the chapter describing the "virtuous woman," pictures a mother who iligently cares for her household: She "works with her hands . . . rises while it is yet night, and provides food for her household. . . . She watches over the ways of her household, and does not eat the bread of idleness" (Prov. 31:13, 15, 27). She has a great reward for her toil, for "her children

rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her" (Prov. 31:28).

## THE DIFFERENCE THAT MOTHERING MAKES

With God's truth in place, the value of mothering can be redefined. Mothering cannot be defined by a paycheck or a promotion, but in the peace of mind that comes from being there for children. Mothering makes a difference in several areas.

Mothers make a critical difference in a child's early physical development. Recent scientific studies show that a child's environment from birth to age three influences his or her brain structure and ability to learn. A 1994 Carnegie Corporation report says that brain development before age one is more rapid, extensive, vulnerable to environmental influences, and longer lasting than previously realized. The study further states that a child's environment affects the number of brain cells, the connections among them, and the way the connections are "wired."

Mothers also make a critical difference in a child's emotional development. A mother's nurturing love builds the foundation of her child's ability to love others, to learn, and to adjust to his or her environment. Child development experts say that a secure attachment to one's mother forms the foundation for a child's entire self-structure and identity. Together they work to create an individual who can look in a mirror and squeal with delight, "That's me!"

In addition, mothering makes a difference in the life of the mother. As women adjust to becoming mothers, they often don't understand the difference their efforts make in their own lives. When a child is born, a mother is born, and she thoughtfully invests herself in her children during their formative years. She reaps the benefits in the joy of living with secure and independent children.

Mothering ultimately makes a difference in the world. The

organization called “Mothers of Preschoolers” (MOPS International) has the motto that mothering matters, because “today makes a difference tomorrow.” Mothering matters not only to the child and to the mother, but also to the world in which they live.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of motherhood include:

- Genesis 17:15-19, 21:1-7
- Exodus 2:1-10
- 1 Samuel 1:1-28; 2:18-21
- Proverbs 31
- Luke 1

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on motherhood at 2 Timothy 1:5. See also the personality profile of Mary: A Mother’s Love.

## CHRIST BORN OF MARY

**2** And it came to pass in those days *that* a decree went out from Caesar
Augustus that all the world should be registered. [2]This census first took
place while Quirinius was governing Syria. [3]So all went to be registered,
everyone to his own city.

[4]Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea,
to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house
and lineage of David, [5]to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife,[a] who
was with child. [6]So it was, that while they were there, the days were
completed for her to be delivered. [7]And she brought forth her firstborn Son,
and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because
there was no room for them in the inn.

## GLORY IN THE HIGHEST

[8]Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields,
keeping watch over their flock by night. [9]And behold,[a] an angel of the Lord
stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they
were greatly afraid. [10]Then the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for
behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people.
[11]For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ
the Lord. [12]And this *will be* the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in
swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.”

[13]And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host
praising God and saying:

[14] “Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace, goodwill toward
men!”[a]

[15]So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that
the shepherds said to one another, “Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this
thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us.” [16]And
they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a
manger. [17]Now when they had seen *Him*, they made widely[a] known the

saying which was told them concerning this Child. [18]And all those who heard *it* marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. [19]But Mary kept all these things and pondered *them* in her heart. [20]Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them.

**CIRCUMCISION OF JESUS**

[21]And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child,[a] His name was called JESUS, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.

**JESUS PRESENTED IN THE TEMPLE**

[22]Now when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present *Him* to the Lord [23](as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the LORD"),[a] [24]and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, "A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons."[a]

**SIMEON SEES GOD'S SALVATION**

[25]And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. [26]And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. [27]So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, [28]he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said:

[29] "Lord, now You are letting Your servant
depart in peace, According to Your word;
[30] For my eyes have seen Your salvation
[31] Which You have prepared before the
face of all peoples,
[32] A light to *bring* revelation to the

Gentiles,
And the glory of Your people Israel.”
33 And Joseph and His mother[a] marveled at those things which were spoken
of Him. 34 Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, “Behold,
this *Child* is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign
which will be spoken against 35 (yes, a sword will pierce through your own
soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.”

**ANNA BEARS WITNESS TO THE REDEEMER**

36 Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the
tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven
years from her virginity; 37 and this woman *was* a widow of about eighty-four
years,[a] who did not depart from the temple, but served *God* with fastings and
prayers night and day. 38 And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the
Lord,[a] and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in
Jerusalem.

**THE FAMILY RETURNS TO NAZARETH**

39 So when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord,
they returned to Galilee, to their *own* city, Nazareth. 40 And the Child grew
and became strong in spirit,[a] filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was
upon Him.

**THE BOY JESUS AMAZES THE SCHOLARS**

41 His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover.
42 And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to
the custom of the feast. 43 When they had finished the days, as they returned,
the Boy Jesus lingered behind in Jerusalem. And Joseph and His mother[a] did
not know *it;* 44 but supposing Him to have been in the company, they went a
day’s journey, and sought Him among *their* relatives and acquaintances. 45 So
when they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking Him. 46 Now
so it was *that* after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the
midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions.

47 And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers.
48 So when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, "Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously."

49 And He said to them, "Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" 50 But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them.

**JESUS ADVANCES IN WISDOM AND FAVOR**

51 Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart. 52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# MARY: A MOTHER'S LOVE

## (LUKE 2:5)

When God became a man, He didn't arrive on earth full-grown; He came, instead, as a baby born to a woman specially chosen to be His mother. Mary was a young woman of Nazareth, recently engaged to a carpenter named Joseph. She anticipated a fairly normal life-until the angel Gabriel visited her with astounding news that would turn her world upside down. A miracle would occur in her womb and allow a Baby to grow there. That Baby would be the promised Messiah. Mary was the young virgin Isaiah the prophet had foretold (Is. 7:14).

Mary accepted the angel's words: "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38), but her motherhood was already off to a rocky start-telling her fiancé would be the first difficult step. But through it all, Mary obeyed God, even traveling to Bethlehem on a donkey when she was almost ready to deliver, realizing that the Scriptures were being fulfilled in Caesar's demand for a census.

In many ways, Mary was probably a typical mother. She protected, nurtured, raised, and worried about her Son. She took Him to school and continued to guide Him until He left home for His ministry at age 30. Jesus was not a typical child, however. He had been born as a human to die as a human for all humanity. And Mary, His mother, stood at the foot of His cross and watched her precious Son die as her Savior.

Being a mother means more than just bearing or adopting a child. Being a mother takes courage, responsibility, loyalty, love, hard work, patience, consistency, and finally a willingness to let go. Tenderness and strength come together in a unique package called a "mother."

Mothers are vital to the upbringing of the next generation. Mothering is a call of God upon a woman's life, and she should see it as an awesome privilege.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Does Mothering Matter?. See also the key passage note at 2 Timothy 1:5.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Being Content** *(2:36)* Anna was very young when her husband died,

and she had been a widow for 84 years. Anna remained single, choosing to give her life to serving God through fasting and prayer. People are single for a number of reasons, and they respond to singleness in different ways. Some single people, like Anna, seek to serve God without concern about marriage; others dearly long for a spouse. It is important to remember that the key to a fulfilled single life is contentment in God. He has places of service for all people-married or single. **Topic: Singleness**

## SOUL NOTE

**Coming of Age** *(2:41, 42)* He was God incarnate, but the twelve-year-old Jesus did have His time of adolescent development-taking on more responsibility, seeking independence, and wanting answers to His questions. And Mary reacted as any parent would-worrying, being surprised, and becoming upset. Adolescent development and parental reactions are basically the same today. As children grow and mature, they are learning to become independent of their parents and more dependent on God through a personal relationship with Him. Parents must learn to allow their children to find God's direction in their lives. **Topic: Adolescent Development**

## PERSONALITY PROFILE

# JESUS, GOD'S SON

## (LUKE 2:52)

Parents and teenagers often share similar frustrations about the Gospels as biographies of Jesus. These often appear as questions: (1) Why didn't God tell us more about the childhood of Jesus? (2) Why such silence about His teen years? (3) Couldn't young people gain help from knowing more of Jesus' experiences during His adolescence? The answers to these questions are (1) God told us enough; (2) God had a reason; and (3) probably not. Added details about Jesus' childhood would have likely been used more often as excuses than as lessons. Jesus had a childhood-not everyone's childhood. God told us enough about Jesus to give us all the help we need.

When Luke summarized Jesus' teenage years, he listed a growth pattern that ought to be the goal of every young person and the prayer of every parent: "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men." The description offers few details but an abundance of direction. The gaps and the known facts of Jesus' early years combine to tell us that we can't expect to see ideal childhoods, but there are desired results. Jesus developed in four specific areas:

- Mentally (wisdom)
- Physically (stature)
- Spiritually (favor with God)
- Socially (favor with people)

What greater summary of a young person's formative years could be given than that they developed significantly in each of these areas? Yet how often do children grow up with one or more of these areas neglected completely?

Luke's summary offers parents an effective and flexible outline rather than a detailed program. Putting it into practice with children becomes, first, a matter of prayer. Children should hear their parents praying for them about these growth areas. Wisdom, stature, and favor with God and people can certainly generate numerous conversations in which children and young people are encouraged to set goals for themselves in these areas. Parents can help their kids make these character development goals part of their own prayers. Young people who have discussed these areas have a better idea of what it means to be like Jesus.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Raising Our Children. See also the key passage note at Deuteronomy 4:9, 10.

## JOHN THE BAPTIST PREPARES THE WAY

**3** Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate
being governor of Judea, Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip
tetrarch of Iturea and the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of
Abilene, 2 while Annas and Caiaphas were high priests,[a] the word of God
came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. 3 And he went into all the
region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the
remission of sins, 4 as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the
prophet, saying:

> "The voice of one crying in the
> wilderness:
> 'Prepare the way of the LORD;
> Make His paths straight.
>
> 5 Every valley shall be filled
> And every mountain and hill brought
> low;
> The crooked places shall be made
> straight
> And the rough ways smooth;
> 6 And all flesh shall see the salvation of
> God.' "[a]

## JOHN PREACHES TO THE PEOPLE

7 Then he said to the multitudes that came out to be baptized by him,
"Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?
8 Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to
yourselves, 'We have Abraham as *our* father.' For I say to you that God is
able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. 9 And even now the
ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear
good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

10 So the people asked him, saying, "What shall we do then?"

[11]He answered and said to them, “He who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise.”

[12]Then tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, “Teacher, what shall we do?”

[13]And he said to them, “Collect no more than what is appointed for you.”

[14]Likewise the soldiers asked him, saying, “And what shall we do?”

So he said to them, “Do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely, and be content with your wages.”

[15]Now as the people were in expectation, and all reasoned in their hearts about John, whether he was the Christ *or* not, [16]John answered, saying to all, “I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. [17]His winnowing fan *is* in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather the wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire.”

[18]And with many other exhortations he preached to the people. [19]But Herod the tetrarch, being rebuked by him concerning Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife,[a] and for all the evils which Herod had done, [20]also added this, above all, that he shut John up in prison.

## JOHN BAPTIZES JESUS

[21]When all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also was baptized; and while He prayed, the heaven was opened. [22]And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, “You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased.”

## THE GENEALOGY OF JESUS CHRIST

[23]Now Jesus Himself began *His ministry at* about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) *the* son of Joseph, *the son* of Heli, [24]*the son* of Matthat,[a] *the son* of Levi, *the son* of Melchi, *the son* of Janna, *the son* of Joseph, [25]*the son* of Mattathiah, *the son* of Amos, *the son* of Nahum, *the son* of Esli, *the son* of Naggai, [26]*the son* of Maath, *the son* of Mattathiah, *the son* of Semei,

*the son* of Joseph, *the son* of Judah, [27]*the son* of Joannas, *the son* of Rhesa, *the son* of Zerubbabel, *the son* of Shealtiel, *the son* of Neri, [28]*the son* of Melchi, *the son* of Addi, *the son* of Cosam, *the son* of Elmodam, *the son* of Er, [29]*the son* of Jose, *the son* of Eliezer, *the son* of Jorim, *the son* of Matthat, *the son* of Levi, [30]*the son* of Simeon, *the son* of Judah, *the son* of Joseph, *the son* of Jonan, *the son* of Eliakim, [31]*the son* of Melea, *the son* of Menan, *the son* of Mattathah, *the son* of Nathan, *the son* of David, [32]*the son* of Jesse, *the son* of Obed, *the son* of Boaz, *the son* of Salmon, *the son* of Nahshon, [33]*the son* of Amminadab, *the son* of Ram, *the son* of Hezron, *the son* of Perez, *the son* of Judah, [34]*the son* of Jacob, *the son* of Isaac, *the son* of Abraham, *the son* of Terah, *the son* of Nahor, [35]*the son* of Serug, *the son* of Reu, *the son* of Peleg, *the son* of Eber, *the son* of Shelah, [36]*the son* of Cainan, *the son* of Arphaxad, *the son* of Shem, *the son* of Noah, *the son* of Lamech, [37]*the son* of Methuselah, *the son* of Enoch, *the son* of Jared, *the son* of Mahalalel, *the son* of Cainan, [38]*the son* of Enosh, *the son* of Seth, *the son* of Adam, *the son* of God.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Special Baptism** *(3:16)* Some people thought John the Baptist was the Messiah, the Christ. John explained that he only baptized with water, but Christ would baptize “with the Holy Spirit and fire.” The baptism with the Holy Spirit occurred later, after Jesus ascended to heaven and sent the Holy Spirit on His followers (Acts 2). People are baptized with the Holy Spirit when, by faith, they accept Jesus as Savior and become a part of God’s family. The Holy Spirit comes to live within believers’ hearts, giving them the power to be witnesses for Christ and to lead God-pleasing lives. **Topic: Presence of the Holy Spirit**

**SATAN TEMPTS JESUS**

**4** Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and
was led by the Spirit into[a] the wilderness, [2]being tempted for forty days by
the devil. And in those days He ate nothing, and afterward, when they had
ended, He was hungry.

[3]And the devil said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command this
stone to become bread."

[4]But Jesus answered him, saying,[a] "It is written, 'Man shall not live by
bread alone, but by every word of God.' "[b]

[5]Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him[a] all the
kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. [6]And the devil said to Him, "All
this authority I will give You, and their glory; for *this* has been delivered to
me, and I give it to whomever I wish. [7]Therefore, if You will worship before
me, all will be Yours."

[8]And Jesus answered and said to him, "Get behind Me, Satan![a] For[b] it is
written, ' You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall
serve.' "[c]

[9]Then he brought Him to Jerusalem, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple,
and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from
here. [10]For it is written:

> 'He shall give His angels charge over you,
> To keep you,'

[11]and,

> 'In *their* hands they shall bear you up,
> Lest you dash your foot against a
> stone.' "[a]

[12]And Jesus answered and said to him, "It has been said, ' You shall not
tempt the LORD your God.' "[a]

13 Now when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him
until an opportune time.

## JESUS BEGINS HIS GALILEAN MINISTRY

14 Then Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and news of
Him went out through all the surrounding region. 15 And He taught in their
synagogues, being glorified by all.

## JESUS REJECTED AT NAZARETH

16 So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His
custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to
read. 17 And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had
opened the book, He found the place where it was written:

18 "The Spirit of the LORD *is* upon Me,
Because He has anointed Me
To preach the gospel to *the* poor;
He has sent Me to heal the
brokenhearted,[a]
To proclaim liberty to *the* captives
And recovery of sight to *the* blind,
*To* set at liberty those who are
oppressed;
19 To proclaim the acceptable year of the
LORD."[a]

20 Then He closed the book, and gave *it* back to the attendant and sat down.
And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. 21 And He
began to say to them, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." 22 So
all bore witness to Him, and marveled at the gracious words which proceeded
out of His mouth. And they said, "Is this not Joseph's son?"

23 He said to them, "You will surely say this proverb to Me, 'Physician,
heal yourself! Whatever we have heard done in Capernaum,[a] do also here in
Your country.' " 24 Then He said, "Assuredly, I say to you, no prophet is
accepted in his own country. 25 But I tell you truly, many widows were in

Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a great famine throughout all the land; [26]but to none of them was Elijah sent except to Zarephath,[a] *in the region* of Sidon, to a woman *who was* a widow. [27]And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian."

[28]So all those in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, [29]and rose up and thrust Him out of the city; and they led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw Him down over the cliff. [30]Then passing through the midst of them, He went His way.

**JESUS CASTS OUT AN UNCLEAN SPIRIT**

[31]Then He went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and was teaching them on the Sabbaths. [32]And they were astonished at His teaching, for His word was with authority. [33]Now in the synagogue there was a man who had a spirit of an unclean demon. And he cried out with a loud voice, [34]saying, "Let *us* alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are-the Holy One of God!"

[35]But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be quiet, and come out of him!" And when the demon had thrown him in *their* midst, it came out of him and did not hurt him. [36]Then they were all amazed and spoke among themselves, saying, "What a word this *is!* For with authority and power He commands the unclean spirits, and they come out." [37]And the report about Him went out into every place in the surrounding region.

**PETER'S MOTHER-IN-LAW HEALED**

[38]Now He arose from the synagogue and entered Simon's house. But Simon's wife's mother was sick with a high fever, and they made request of Him concerning her. [39]So He stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. And immediately she arose and served them.

**MANY HEALED AFTER SABBATH SUNSET**

40 When the sun was setting, all those who had any that were sick with
various diseases brought them to Him; and He laid His hands on every one of
them and healed them. 41 And demons also came out of many, crying out and
saying, “You are the Christ,[a] the Son of God!”

And He, rebuking *them*, did not allow them to speak, for they knew that He
was the Christ.

**JESUS PREACHES IN GALILEE**

42 Now when it was day, He departed and went into a deserted place. And
the crowd sought Him and came to Him, and tried to keep Him from leaving
them; 43 but He said to them, “I must preach the kingdom of God to the other
cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent.” 44 And He was
preaching in the synagogues of Galilee.[a]

**SOUL NOTE**

**Setting Limits** *(4:42)* People in the crowds around Jesus continually asked Him for healing. Jesus worked hard at spending time with people and meeting their needs. At times, however, He set limits and went off by Himself. Jesus needed time alone for prayer and spiritual renewal, and so do we. We need to set boundaries on our busyness or our lives will soon be jammed with concerns and activities. And soon we will have no time for God. No matter how much we have to do, things will go better when we make sure to spend time with God, one-on-one. **Topic: Boundaries**

## FOUR FISHERMEN CALLED AS DISCIPLES

**5** So it was, as the multitude pressed about Him to hear the word of God, that
He stood by the Lake of Gennesaret, [2]and saw two boats standing by the
lake; but the fishermen had gone from them and were washing *their* nets.
[3]Then He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put
out a little from the land. And He sat down and taught the multitudes from
the boat.

[4]When He had stopped speaking, He said to Simon, "Launch out into the
deep and let down your nets for a catch."

[5]But Simon answered and said to Him, "Master, we have toiled all night
and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net." [6]And
when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their net
was breaking. [7]So they signaled to *their* partners in the other boat to come
and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to
sink. [8]When Simon Peter saw *it*, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart
from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!"

[9]For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish
which they had taken; [10]and so also *were* James and John, the sons of
Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not
be afraid. From now on you will catch men." [11]So when they had brought
their boats to land, they forsook all and followed Him.

## JESUS CLEANSES A LEPER

[12]And it happened when He was in a certain city, that behold, a man who
was full of leprosy saw Jesus; and he fell on *his* face and implored Him,
saying, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean."

[13]Then He put out *His* hand and touched him, saying, "I am willing; be
cleansed." Immediately the leprosy left him. [14]And He charged him to tell no
one, "But go and show yourself to the priest, and make an offering for your
cleansing, as a testimony to them, just as Moses commanded."

[15]However, the report went around concerning Him all the more; and great

multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by Him of their infirmities. [16]So He Himself *often* withdrew into the wilderness and prayed.

## JESUS FORGIVES AND HEALS A PARALYTIC

[17]Now it happened on a certain day, as He was teaching, that there were Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting by, who had come out of every town of Galilee, Judea, and Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was *present* to heal them.[a] [18]Then behold, men brought on a bed a man who was paralyzed, whom they sought to bring in and lay before Him. [19]And when they could not find how they might bring him in, because of the crowd, they went up on the housetop and let him down with *his* bed through the tiling into the midst before Jesus.

[20]When He saw their faith, He said to him, "Man, your sins are forgiven you."

[21]And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, "Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

[22]But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, He answered and said to them, "Why are you reasoning in your hearts? [23]Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Rise up and walk'? [24]But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins"-He said to the man who was paralyzed, "I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house."

[25]Immediately he rose up before them, took up what he had been lying on, and departed to his own house, glorifying God. [26]And they were all amazed, and they glorified God and were filled with fear, saying, "We have seen strange things today!"

## MATTHEW THE TAX COLLECTOR

[27]After these things He went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, "Follow Me." [28]So he left all, rose up, and followed Him.

[29]Then Levi gave Him a great feast in his own house. And there were a

great number of tax collectors and others who sat down with them. [30]And their scribes and the Pharisees[a] complained against His disciples, saying, “Why do You eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?”

[31]Jesus answered and said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. [32]I have not come to call *the* righteous, but sinners, to repentance.”

**JESUS IS QUESTIONED ABOUT FASTING**

[33]Then they said to Him, “Why do[a] the disciples of John fast often and make prayers, and likewise those of the Pharisees, but Yours eat and drink?”

[34]And He said to them, “Can you make the friends of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them? [35]But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them; then they will fast in those days.”

[36]Then He spoke a parable to them: “No one puts a piece from a new garment on an old one;[a] otherwise the new makes a tear, and also the piece that was *taken* out of the new does not match the old. [37]And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine will burst the wineskins and be spilled, and the wineskins will be ruined. [38]But new wine must be put into new wineskins, and both are preserved.[a] [39]And no one, having drunk old *wine*, immediately[a] desires new; for he says, ‘The old is better.’ ”[b]

## JESUS IS LORD OF THE SABBATH

**6** Now it happened on the second Sabbath after the first[a] that He went
through the grainfields. And His disciples plucked the heads of grain and
ate *them*, rubbing *them* in *their* hands. 2And some of the Pharisees said to
them, “Why are you doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath?”

3But Jesus answering them said, “Have you not even read this, what David
did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: 4how he went into
the house of God, took and ate the showbread, and also gave some to those
with him, which is not lawful for any but the priests to eat?” 5And He said to
them, “The Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.”

## HEALING ON THE SABBATH

6Now it happened on another Sabbath, also, that He entered the synagogue
and taught. And a man was there whose right hand was withered. 7So the
scribes and Pharisees watched Him closely, whether He would heal on the
Sabbath, that they might find an accusation against Him. 8But He knew their
thoughts, and said to the man who had the withered hand, “Arise and stand
here.” And he arose and stood. 9Then Jesus said to them, “I will ask you one
thing: Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to
destroy?”[a] 10And when He had looked around at them all, He said to the
man,[a] “Stretch out your hand.” And he did so, and his hand was restored as
whole as the other.[b] 11But they were filled with rage, and discussed with one
another what they might do to Jesus.

## THE TWELVE APOSTLES

12Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to
pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. 13And when it was day, He
called His disciples to *Himself;* and from them He chose twelve whom He
also named apostles: 14Simon, whom He also named Peter, and Andrew his
brother; James and John; Philip and Bartholomew; 15Matthew and Thomas;
James the *son* of Alphaeus, and Simon called the Zealot; 16Judas *the son* of
James, and Judas Iscariot who also became a traitor.

## JESUS HEALS A GREAT MULTITUDE

17 And He came down with them and stood on a level place with a crowd of
His disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem,
and from the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, who came to hear Him and be
healed of their diseases, 18 as well as those who were tormented with unclean
spirits. And they were healed. 19 And the whole multitude sought to touch
Him, for power went out from Him and healed *them* all.

## THE BEATITUDES

20 Then He lifted up His eyes toward His disciples, and said:

"Blessed *are you* poor,
For yours is the kingdom of God.

21 Blessed *are you* who hunger now,
For you shall be filled.
Blessed *are you* who weep now,
For you shall laugh.
22 Blessed are you when men hate you,
And when they exclude you,
And revile *you,*
and cast out
your name
as evil,
For the Son of
Man's sake.

> "Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven."
> LUKE 6:37

23 Rejoice in that day
and leap for joy!
For indeed your reward *is* great in

heaven,
For in like manner their fathers did to
the prophets.

## JESUS PRONOUNCES WOES

24 “But woe to you who are rich,
For you have received your
consolation.
25 Woe to you who are full,
For you shall hunger.
Woe to you who laugh now,
For you shall mourn and weep.
26 Woe to you[a] when all[b] men speak well
of you,
For so did their fathers to the false
prophets.

## LOVE YOUR ENEMIES

27 “But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who
hate you, 28 bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use
you. 29 To him who strikes you on the *one* cheek, offer the other also. And
from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold *your* tunic either.
30 Give to everyone who asks of you. And from him who takes away your
goods do not ask *them* back. 31 And just as you want men to do to you, you
also do to them likewise.

32 “But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even
sinners love those who love them. 33 And if you do good to those who do
good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. 34 And
if you lend *to those* from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that
to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. 35 But love
your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your
reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to
the unthankful and evil. 36 Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is
merciful.

## DO NOT JUDGE

37 "Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not
be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.

38 Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken
together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same
measure that you use, it will be measured back to you."

39 And He spoke a parable to them: "Can the blind lead the blind? Will they
not both fall into the ditch? 40 A disciple is not above his teacher, but
everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher. 41 And why do you
look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not perceive the plank in your
own eye? 42 Or how can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me remove the
speck that *is* in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the plank that *is* in
your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and
then you will see clearly to remove the speck that is in your brother's eye.

## A TREE IS KNOWN BY ITS FRUIT

43 "For a good tree does not bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good
fruit. 44 For every tree is known by its own fruit. For *men* do not gather figs
from thorns, nor do they gather grapes from a bramble bush. 45 A good man
out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of
the evil treasure of his heart[a] brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of
the heart his mouth speaks.

## BUILD ON THE ROCK

46 "But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I
say? 47 Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will
show you whom he is like: 48 He is like a man building a house, who dug
deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the
stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was
founded on the rock.[a] 49 But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who
built a house on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat
vehemently; and immediately it fell.[a] And the ruin of that house was great."

## SOUL NOTE

**The Plot Thickens** *(6:27, 28)* When wronged, a human reaction often is to hate the person who wronged us and plot ways to get even. But Jesus said, “Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you . . . and pray for those who spitefully use you.” Such words turned many away from Christ and still do today. Loving one’s enemies does not mean having affectionate feelings for them. Instead, it requires a decision to act in love toward them no matter how we feel. We need to pray and ask Christ to take our hurt and bitterness, and then to replace those feelings with His love. **Topic: Bitterness**

## DEALING WITH A CRITICAL SPIRIT

ED HINDSON

(Luke 6:37, 38)

**S**ome people seem to be experts at evaluating others. They think they have an uncanny ability to read others’ minds, evaluate their actions, and judge their motives. The danger in assessing others’ behavior in such a way is that people become judgmental. Such people have critical spirits that can be cruel and divisive. Setting themselves up as prosecutor, judge, and jury, they proceed to tear

everyone apart who does not see things their way. We all know people like this.

The Bible is filled with examples of judgmentalism-the Jews in the wilderness (Num. 16:1-35), the Pharisees (Matt. 22:15-46), the prodigal son's elder brother (Luke 15:25-32), the immature Christians in the early church (1 Cor. 3:1-7). One of the most serious biblical examples was Miriam's criticism of Moses' wife (Num. 12:1-16). God severely judged Miriam's judgmental spirit.

Just for the record, there is a difference between *judging* and *being judgmental*, however. Christians need to be able to judge between what is good and what is evil so they can discern God's will for their lives. Believers are also called upon to judge disputes among believers, as well as to judge sin and deal accordingly with it (1 Cor. 5:1-12). Sometimes believers need to discern sin in their fellow believers and point it out in a loving manner. The Bible says, "As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend" (Prov. 27:17).

Many wonder, then, what Jesus meant when He said: "Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you" (Matt. 7:1, 2). In this same passage, He also said that people cannot remove the "speck" from someone else's eye when they have a "plank" in their own eye (Matt. 7:4, 5). Jesus was not against believers "sharpening" each other, as the Proverbs verse indicates. Indeed, "Faithful are the wounds of a friend" (Prov. 27:6). Instead, Jesus spoke against people having a judgmental (critical) spirit.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF JUDGMENTAL PEOPLE

Judgmental people are critical, condescending, unloving, and unforgiving. They are more concerned with pointing out others' mistakes than helping them with their problems. Their attitudes create anxiety in others whom they attempt to manipulate by demanding

compliance with their opinions.

Critical people are not likely to get close or connect emotionally with others. They have few, if any, intimate relationships. They keep most people at arm's length. Since they never share their inner feelings, they tend to be critical of those who do. Critical people tend to make others feel that they are all alone in the world. When the critic is a marriage partner, the spouse can be made to feel lonely and disconnected-leaving both of them vulnerable.

Another characteristic of judgmental people is their self-centered view of life. They are far more concerned about themselves than anyone else. They lack empathy and resist opening up enough to let others talk freely about deeply emotional issues. It is easier for them to condemn than forgive. They lock themselves into a parental-style role and refuse to change. The greatest problem with this pattern is that they also refuse to let others change.

They may try to shame people as a means of controlling them. While some judgmental people may think that they are helping others do the right thing (according to them), they are really hurting them in the long run. Forced behavior, controlled by guilt manipulation, often leaves people wanting to break free. In many cases, this leads to worse behavior patterns, not better ones.

People's reactions to judgmental people can include feelings of detachment (being emotionally inaccessible) and abandonment (connecting, then leaving), and can result in criticism (unloving responses) and even abuse (emotional violation).

## CAUSES OF JUDGMENTALISM

One of the major causes of judgmentalism is *guilt*. People tend to criticize others for problems with which they themselves struggle. For example, a gossip will be quick to spot and judge another gossip.

Another cause of judgmentalism is *fear*. People fear others whom they do not understand. Before being saved, Saul (Paul) placed judgment on the Christians because he disagreed with them and feared their growth and popularity (Acts 8:1-4; 9:1, 2). Nehemiah's critics judged and condemned his work on Jerusalem's wall because they were afraid that the city might return to its former power and glory (Neh. 2:19; 4:1-3). A legalistic person who cannot understand other believers' freedom in Christ will be quick to judge their behavior. That person fears freedom, preferring to stay confined within a set of rules so there won't be too many choices.

## CURES FOR JUDGMENTALISM

Judgmentalism is a heart attitude that often blinds people to their own problems. It is quick to point the finger but slow to bend the knee. To be set free of a critical spirit, believers can begin by praying for others and working to genuinely reach out to others in love. They can get into an accountability relationship to learn to discern the difference between appropriate judgment and judgmentalism.

A critical spirit can often be discerned by identifying people's motives. If their words are meant to tear others down in order to build themselves up, then they are being judgmental. If they are minimizing and excusing their own faults while pointing out others' faults, then they are being judgmental.

If we find ourselves being critical of others, we need to ask God for forgiveness. Ultimate judgment, of course, belongs to God (Rev. 20:11-15). We dare not attempt to put ourselves in His place!

## FURTHER MEDITATION:

Other passages to study about the issue of judgmentalism include:

- 1 Kings 3:9
- Psalms 19:9; 119:66

- Matthew 22:37-40
- Romans 14:10-13
- Ephesians 4:31, 32
- Colossians 3:12-14
- 1 John 2:10, 11

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on judgmentalism at Luke 6:37. See also the personality profile of Aaron and Miriam: A Case Study in Judgmentalism.

**KEY PASSAGE**

# PASSING JUDGMENT

## (6:37)

There's a paper-thin line between making right judgments and judgmentalism. We face it in our lives all the time: When others are critical of us, we may feel that they are being judgmental; when we are critical of others, however, we feel that we are engaging in right judgment.

Jesus told His followers not to judge others. These commands do not mean that believers are not to use discernment in making decisions or evaluating what people do. Rather, He is urging us not to pass sentence on the actions and attitudes of others without first looking at ourselves. A person with a judgmental and condemning spirit constantly looks down on others-even other believers. That

harms and hinders the entire church.

Believers and churches must make strong judgments when dealing with sin and false doctrine. But regarding minor disagreements, Jesus urges love and forgiveness so that His work on earth will not be hindered.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Dealing With a Critical Spirit. See also the personality profile of Aaron and Miriam: A Case Study in Judgmentalism.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Overflowing** *(6:38)* The words "give, and it will be given to you" follow Jesus' words urging His followers not to judge or condemn others, but rather to forgive. People who have gracious and compassionate spirits, refusing to judge and condemn, will find gracious attitudes and compassion returned toward them. People who forgive easily will find that they are forgiven their own offenses. The measure with which we give determines the measure with which we receive. **Topic: Attitudes**

## JESUS HEALS A CENTURION'S SERVANT

7 Now when He concluded all His sayings in the hearing of the people, He
entered Capernaum. 2And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear to
him, was sick and ready to die. 3So when he heard about Jesus, he sent elders
of the Jews to Him, pleading with Him to come and heal his servant. 4And
when they came to Jesus, they begged Him earnestly, saying that the one for
whom He should do this was deserving, 5"for he loves our nation, and has
built us a synagogue."

6Then Jesus went with them. And when He was already not far from the
house, the centurion sent friends to Him, saying to Him, "Lord, do not trouble
Yourself, for I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof.
7Therefore I did not even think myself worthy to come to You. But say the
word, and my servant will be healed. 8For I also am a man placed under
authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes; and
to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does
*it.*"

9When Jesus heard these things, He marveled at him, and turned around
and said to the crowd that followed Him, "I say to you, I have not found such
great faith, not even in Israel!" 10And those who were sent, returning to the
house, found the servant well who had been sick.[a]

## JESUS RAISES THE SON OF THE WIDOW OF NAIN

11Now it happened, the day after, *that* He went into a city called Nain; and
many of His disciples went with Him, and a large crowd. 12And when He
came near the gate of the city, behold, a dead man was being carried out, the
only son of his mother; and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the
city was with her. 13When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and
said to her, "Do not weep." 14Then He came and touched the open coffin, and
those who carried *him* stood still. And He said, "Young man, I say to you,
arise." 15So he who was dead sat up and began to speak. And He presented
him to his mother.

16Then fear came upon all, and they glorified God, saying, "A great

prophet has risen up among us"; and, "God has visited His people." [17]And this report about Him went throughout all Judea and all the surrounding region.

## JOHN THE BAPTIST SENDS MESSENGERS TO JESUS

[18]Then the disciples of John reported to him concerning all these things. [19]And John, calling two of his disciples to *him*, sent *them* to Jesus,[a] saying, "Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?"

[20]When the men had come to Him, they said, "John the Baptist has sent us to You, saying, 'Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?' " [21]And that very hour He cured many of infirmities, afflictions, and evil spirits; and to many blind He gave sight.

[22]Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and tell John the things you have seen and heard: that *the* blind see, *the* lame walk, *the* lepers are cleansed, *the* deaf hear, *the* dead are raised, *the* poor have the gospel preached to them. [23]And blessed is *he* who is not offended because of Me."

[24]When the messengers of John had departed, He began to speak to the multitudes concerning John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? [25]But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed those who are gorgeously appareled and live in luxury are in kings' courts. [26]But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet. [27]This is *he* of whom it is written:

> 'Behold, I send My messenger before
> Your face,
> Who will prepare Your way before You.'[a]

[28]For I say to you, among those born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist;[a] but he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he."

[29]And when all the people heard *Him*, even the tax collectors justified God, having been baptized with the baptism of John. [30]But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the will of God for themselves, not having been baptized by

him.

31 And the Lord said,[a] “To what then shall I liken the men of this
generation, and what are they like? 32 They are like children sitting in the
marketplace and calling to one another, saying:

‘We played the flute for you,
And you did not dance;
We mourned to you,
And you did not weep.’

33 For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you
say, ‘He has a demon.’ 34 The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and
you say, ‘Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and
sinners!’ 35 But wisdom is justified by all her children.”

**A SINFUL WOMAN FORGIVEN**

36 Then one of the Pharisees asked Him to eat with him. And He went to
the Pharisee’s house, and sat down to eat. 37 And behold, a woman in the city
who was a sinner, when she knew that *Jesus* sat at the table in the Pharisee’s
house, brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil, 38 and stood at His feet
behind *Him* weeping; and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and
wiped *them* with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet and anointed
*them* with the fragrant oil. 39 Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him
saw *this*, he spoke to himself, saying, “This Man, if He were a prophet, would
know who and what manner of woman *this is* who is touching Him, for she is
a sinner.”

40 And Jesus answered and said to him, “Simon, I have something to say to
you.”

So he said, “Teacher, say it.”

41 “There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five
hundred denarii, and the other fifty. 42 And when they had nothing with which
to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will
love him more?”

[43]Simon answered and said, “I suppose the *one* whom he forgave more.”

And He said to him, “You have rightly judged.” [44]Then He turned to the woman and said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped *them* with the hair of her head. [45]You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. [46]You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil. [47]Therefore I say to you, her sins, *which are* many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, *the same* loves little.”

[48]Then He said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.”

[49]And those who sat at the table with Him began to say to themselves, “Who is this who even forgives sins?”

[50]Then He said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you. Go in peace.”

**SOUL NOTE**

**Highest Honors** *(7:44-47)* Simon the Pharisee had brought Jesus into his home for a meal, but he had neglected to honor Jesus with the basic hospitality of the day-washing His feet and anointing His head. A “woman in the city who was a sinner” (7:37) came and honored Jesus by pouring on His feet valuable anointing oil and by shedding tears of repentance. She knew who Jesus was, and her sinfulness broke her heart. Jesus forgave her. We honor Christ when, like this woman, we see our need for His sacrifice on the Cross, accept it, and worship Him for who He is. **Topic: Honor**

## MANY WOMEN MINISTER TO JESUS

**8** Now it came to pass, afterward, that He went through every city and village, preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. And the twelve *were* with Him, [2]and certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities-Mary called Magdalene, out of whom had come seven demons, [3]and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who provided for Him[a] from their substance.

## THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

[4]And when a great multitude had gathered, and they had come to Him from every city, He spoke by a parable: [5]"A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trampled down, and the birds of the air devoured it. [6]Some fell on rock; and as soon as it sprang up, it withered away because it lacked moisture. [7]And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it. [8]But others fell on good ground, sprang up, and yielded a crop a hundredfold." When He had said these things He cried, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

## THE PURPOSE OF PARABLES

[9]Then His disciples asked Him, saying, "What does this parable mean?"

[10]And He said, "To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest *it is given* in parables, that

> 'Seeing they may not see,
> And hearing they may not understand.'[a]

## THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER EXPLAINED

[11]"Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. [12]Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. [13]But the ones on the rock *are those* who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away.

[14]Now the ones *that* fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity. [15]But the ones *that* fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep *it* and bear fruit with patience.

## THE PARABLE OF THE REVEALED LIGHT

[16]"No one, when he has lit a lamp, covers it with a vessel or puts *it* under a bed, but sets *it* on a lampstand, that those who enter may see the light. [17]For nothing is secret that will not be revealed, nor *anything* hidden that will not be known and come to light. [18]Therefore take heed how you hear. For whoever has, to him *more* will be given; and whoever does not have, even what he seems to have will be taken from him."

## JESUS' MOTHER AND BROTHERS COME TO HIM

[19]Then His mother and brothers came to Him, and could not approach Him because of the crowd. [20]And it was told Him *by some*, who said, "Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, desiring to see You."

[21]But He answered and said to them, "My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it."

## WIND AND WAVE OBEY JESUS

[22]Now it happened, on a certain day, that He got into a boat with His disciples. And He said to them, "Let us cross over to the other side of the lake." And they launched out. [23]But as they sailed He fell asleep. And a windstorm came down on the lake, and they were filling *with water*, and were in jeopardy. [24]And they came to Him and awoke Him, saying, "Master, Master, we are perishing!"

Then He arose and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water. And they ceased, and there was a calm. [25]But He said to them, "Where is your faith?"

And they were afraid, and marveled, saying to one another, "Who can this be? For He commands even the winds and water, and they obey Him!"

## A DEMON-POSSESSED MAN HEALED

[26]Then they sailed to the country of the Gadarenes,[a] which is opposite Galilee. [27]And when He stepped out on the land, there met Him a certain man from the city who had demons for a long time. And he wore no clothes,[a] nor did he live in a house but in the tombs. [28]When he saw Jesus, he cried out, fell down before Him, and with a loud voice said, “What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me!” [29]For He had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For it had often seized him, and he was kept under guard, bound with chains and shackles; and he broke the bonds and was driven by the demon into the wilderness.

[30]Jesus asked him, saying, “What is your name?”

And he said, “Legion,” because many demons had entered him. [31]And they begged Him that He would not command them to go out into the abyss.

[32]Now a herd of many swine was feeding there on the mountain. So they begged Him that He would permit them to enter them. And He permitted them. [33]Then the demons went out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd ran violently down the steep place into the lake and drowned.

[34]When those who fed *them* saw what had happened, they fled and told *it* in the city and in the country. [35]Then they went out to see what had happened, and came to Jesus, and found the man from whom the demons had departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid. [36]They also who had seen *it* told them by what means he who had been demon-possessed was healed. [37]Then the whole multitude of the surrounding region of the Gadarenes[a] asked Him to depart from them, for they were seized with great fear. And He got into the boat and returned.

[38]Now the man from whom the demons had departed begged Him that he might be with Him. But Jesus sent him away, saying, [39]“Return to your own house, and tell what great things God has done for you.” And he went his way and proclaimed throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him.

## A GIRL RESTORED TO LIFE AND A WOMAN HEALED

40 So it was, when Jesus returned, that the multitude welcomed Him, for
they were all waiting for Him. 41 And behold, there came a man named Jairus,
and he was a ruler of the synagogue. And he fell down at Jesus' feet and
begged Him to come to his house, 42 for he had an only daughter about twelve
years of age, and she was dying.

But as He went, the multitudes thronged Him. 43 Now a woman, having a
flow of blood for twelve years, who had spent all her livelihood on
physicians and could not be healed by any, 44 came from behind and touched
the border of His garment. And immediately her flow of blood stopped.

45 And Jesus said, "Who touched Me?"

When all denied it, Peter and those with him[a] said, "Master, the multitudes
throng and press You, and You say, 'Who touched Me?' "[b]

46 But Jesus said, "Somebody touched Me, for I perceived power going out
from Me." 47 Now when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came
trembling; and falling down before Him, she declared to Him in the presence
of all the people the reason she had touched Him and how she was healed
immediately.

48 And He said to her, "Daughter, be of good cheer;[a] your faith has made
you well. Go in peace."

49 While He was still speaking, someone came from the ruler of the
synagogue's *house,* saying to him, "Your daughter is dead. Do not trouble the
Teacher."[a]

50 But when Jesus heard *it,* He answered him, saying, "Do not be afraid;
only believe, and she will be made well." 51 When He came into the house,
He permitted no one to go in[a] except Peter, James, and John,[b] and the father
and mother of the girl. 52 Now all wept and mourned for her; but He said, "Do
not weep; she is not dead, but sleeping." 53 And they ridiculed Him, knowing
that she was dead.

54 But He put them all outside,[a] took her by the hand and called, saying,
"Little girl, arise." 55 Then her spirit returned, and she arose immediately. And

He commanded that she be given *something* to eat. [56]And her parents were astonished, but He charged them to tell no one what had happened.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Mind Power** *(8:26, 27)* Jesus stepped from the boat and was met by a demon-possessed man. What might have appeared to be a mental illness was in this case caused by demon possession. Usually, however, mental illness has other causes, such as genetics or hormonal imbalances. We may not know anyone as wild as this man, but we may know someone dealing with the debilitation of mental illness. Such people need assurance of their worthiness before God, as well as Christian professional help. Jesus has the power to heal, but He may not always choose to do so. God's people must trust His wisdom through any difficult time. **Topic: Mental Illness**

## SENDING OUT THE TWELVE

**9** Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and
authority over all demons, and to cure diseases. [2]He sent them to preach
the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. [3]And He said to them, “Take
nothing for the journey, neither staffs nor bag nor bread nor money; and do
not have two tunics apiece.

[4]“Whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart. [5]And
whoever will not receive you, when you go out of that city, shake off the very
dust from your feet as a testimony against them.”

[6]So they departed and went through the towns, preaching the gospel and
healing everywhere.

## HEROD SEEKS TO SEE JESUS

[7]Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was done by Him; and he was
perplexed, because it was said by some that John had risen from the dead,
[8]and by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the old
prophets had risen again. [9]Herod said, “John I have beheaded, but who is this
of whom I hear such things?” So he sought to see Him.

## FEEDING THE FIVE THOUSAND

[10]And the apostles, when they had returned, told Him all that they had
done. Then He took them and went aside privately into a deserted place
belonging to the city called Bethsaida. [11]But when the multitudes knew *it*,
they followed Him; and He received them and spoke to them about the
kingdom of God, and healed those who had need of healing. [12]When the day
began to wear away, the twelve came and said to Him, “Send the multitude
away, that they may go into the surrounding towns and country, and lodge
and get provisions; for we are in a deserted place here.”

[13]But He said to them, “You give them something to eat.”

And they said, “We have no more than five loaves and two fish, unless we
go and buy food for all these people.” [14]For there were about five thousand
men.

Then He said to His disciples, “Make them sit down in groups of fifty.” [15]And they did so, and made them all sit down.

[16]Then He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke *them,* and gave *them* to the disciples to set before the multitude. [17]So they all ate and were filled, and twelve baskets of the leftover fragments were taken up by them.

**PETER CONFESSES JESUS AS THE CHRIST**

[18]And it happened, as He was alone praying, *that* His disciples joined Him, and He asked them, saying, “Who do the crowds say that I am?”

[19]So they answered and said, “John the Baptist, but some *say* Elijah; and others *say* that one of the old prophets has risen again.”

[20]He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”

Peter answered and said, “The Christ of God.”

**JESUS PREDICTS HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION**

[21]And He strictly warned and commanded them to tell this to no one, [22]saying, “The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.”

**TAKE UP THE CROSS AND FOLLOW HIM**

[23]Then He said to *them* all, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily,[a] and follow Me. [24]For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. [25]For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost? [26]For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His *own* glory, and *in His* Father’s, and of the holy angels. [27]But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the kingdom of God.”

**JESUS TRANSFIGURED ON THE MOUNT**

[28]Now it came to pass, about eight days after these sayings, that He took Peter, John, and James and went up on the mountain to pray. [29]As He prayed, the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe *became* white *and* glistening. [30]And behold, two men talked with Him, who were Moses and Elijah, [31]who appeared in glory and spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. [32]But Peter and those with him were heavy with sleep; and when they were fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men who stood with Him. [33]Then it happened, as they were parting from Him, *that* Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah"-not knowing what he said.

[34]While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were fearful as they entered the cloud. [35]And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son.[a] Hear Him!" [36]When the voice had ceased, Jesus was found alone. But they kept quiet, and told no one in those days any of the things they had seen.

**A BOY IS HEALED**

[37]Now it happened on the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, that a great multitude met Him. [38]Suddenly a man from the multitude cried out, saying, "Teacher, I implore You, look on my son, for he is my only child. [39]And behold, a spirit seizes him, and he suddenly cries out; it convulses him so that he foams *at the mouth;* and it departs from him with great difficulty, bruising him. [40]So I implored Your disciples to cast it out, but they could not."

[41]Then Jesus answered and said, "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here." [42]And as he was still coming, the demon threw him down and convulsed *him.* Then Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, healed the child, and gave him back to his father.

**JESUS AGAIN PREDICTS HIS DEATH**

[43]And they were all amazed at the majesty of God.

But while everyone marveled at all the things which Jesus did, He said to His disciples, [44]"Let these words sink down into your ears, for the Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men." [45]But they did not understand this saying, and it was hidden from them so that they did not perceive it; and they were afraid to ask Him about this saying.

## WHO IS THE GREATEST?

[46]Then a dispute arose among them as to which of them would be greatest. [47]And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a little child and set him by Him, [48]and said to them, "Whoever receives this little child in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me. For he who is least among you all will be great."

## JESUS FORBIDS SECTARIANISM

[49]Now John answered and said, "Master, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow with us."

[50]But Jesus said to him, "Do not forbid *him,* for he who is not against us[a] is on our[b] side."

## A SAMARITAN VILLAGE REJECTS THE SAVIOR

[51]Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem, [52]and sent messengers before His face. And as they went, they entered a village of the Samaritans, to prepare for Him. [53]But they did not receive Him, because His face was *set* for the journey to Jerusalem. [54]And when His disciples James and John saw *this,* they said, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?"[a]

[55]But He turned and rebuked them,[a] and said, "You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. [56]For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save *them.*"[a] And they went to another village.

## THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP

[57]Now it happened as they journeyed on the road, *that* someone said to Him, “Lord, I will follow You wherever You go.”

[58]And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes and birds of the air *have* nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay *His* head.”

[59]Then He said to another, “Follow Me.”

But he said, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.”

[60]Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God.”

[61]And another also said, “Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go *and* bid them farewell who are at my house.”

[62]But Jesus said to him, “No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.”

## THE SEVENTY SENT OUT

**10** After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also,[a] and sent them
two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself
was about to go. [2]Then He said to them, “The harvest truly *is* great, but the
laborers *are* few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers
into His harvest. [3]Go your way; behold, I send you out as lambs among
wolves. [4]Carry neither money bag, knapsack, nor sandals; and greet no one
along the road. [5]But whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace to this
house.’ [6]And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest on it; if not, it will
return to you. [7]And remain in the same house, eating and drinking such
things as they give, for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not go from
house to house. [8]Whatever city you enter, and they receive you, eat such
things as are set before you. [9]And heal the sick there, and say to them, ‘The
kingdom of God has come near to you.’ [10]But whatever city you enter, and
they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, [11]‘The very dust of
your city which clings to us[a] we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know
this, that the kingdom of God has come near you.’ [12]But[a] I say to you that it
will be more tolerable in that Day for Sodom than for that city.

## WOE TO THE IMPENITENT CITIES

[13]“Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works
which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have
repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. [14]But it will be more
tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you. [15]And you,
Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades.[a] [16]He
who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects
Me rejects Him who sent Me.”

## THE SEVENTY RETURN WITH JOY

[17]Then the seventy[a] returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are
subject to us in Your name.”

[18]And He said to them, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.

[19]Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. [20]Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather[a] rejoice because your names are written in heaven."

**JESUS REJOICES IN THE SPIRIT**

[21]In that hour Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit and said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from *the* wise and prudent and revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. [22]All[a] things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and *the one* to whom the Son wills to reveal *Him.*"

[23]Then He turned to *His* disciples and said privately, "Blessed *are* the eyes which see the things you see; [24]for I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see what you see, and have not seen *it*, and to hear what you hear, and have not heard *it.*"

**THE PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN**

[25]And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

[26]He said to him, "What is written in the law? What is your reading *of it?*"

[27]So he answered and said, " 'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,'[a] and 'your neighbor as yourself.' "[b]

[28]And He said to him, "You have answered rightly; do this and you will live."

[29]But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

[30]Then Jesus answered and said: "A certain *man* went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded *him*, and departed, leaving *him* half dead. [31]Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he

passed by on the other side. [32]Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. [33]But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. [34]So he went to *him* and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

[35]On the next day, when he departed,[a] he took out two denarii, gave *them* to the innkeeper, and said to him, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.' [36]So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?"

[37]And he said, "He who showed mercy on him."

Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

## MARY AND MARTHA WORSHIP AND SERVE

[38]Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. [39]And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus'[a] feet and heard His word. [40]But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me."

[41]And Jesus[a] answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. [42]But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her."

**SOUL NOTE**

**Raging** *(10:17-19)* Since sin entered the world, wars have been fought for a wide variety of reasons. But continuous war must be fought by believers. This is the constant struggle between good and

evil as Satan tries to rule our lives. Jesus has already defeated Satan and has won this battle through His death and resurrection. Even though the battle continues, we can be assured that, with Jesus' help, the important victory-eternal life-is already ours. **Topic: Spiritual Warfare**

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# THE GOOD SAMARITAN: ABOVE AND BEYOND

## (LUKE 10:33)

Jesus had a pointed way of upsetting the prejudicial beliefs of His day. He had been speaking to a lawyer about eternal life and about obeying God's law. The lawyer understood that all of God's law boiled down to loving God and loving one's neighbor. But that led the lawyer to another question: "Who is my neighbor?" (Luke 10:29).

Jesus responded with a parable that included a Jewish man, a Samaritan man, and two Jewish religious leaders (a priest and a Levite). Jews despised Samaritans as a half-breed race, since the Samaritans were descended from Jews who had intermarried with foreigners.

The Jewish man was attacked by thieves. As he lay on the roadside dying, two Jewish religious leaders walked right by. Perhaps they were concerned about becoming unclean according to the law; perhaps they were in a hurry. In any case, they left him to die. Along

came a despised Samaritan. Given the state of race relations and the precarious situation, he could have felt justified in walking by. Instead, he showed true compassion when the Jewish religious leaders would not.

We easily show compassion on those we love, but compassion can be difficult to offer to strangers or to people against whom we might feel a trace of prejudice. It can be easy to justify a lack of compassion-we are too busy, we don't want to risk helping, we don't want to give too much, we don't like "those" people. But Jesus' answer to the lawyer's question reveals that a neighbor is anyone of any race, creed, or social background; and a neighbor in need requires our compassion.

We can show compassion on others by releasing our agenda to help them. It may mean giving time or resources; it may mean going out on a limb. As we follow God's guidance, we can be wise in our compassion, doing what will really help others. The first step is to see every person as God's creation and to be willing to be available when a need arises. God will show us how to do the rest.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Comfort and Compassion. See also the key passage note at 2 Corinthians 1:3-5.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# MARTHA: WORRIED ABOUT MANY THINGS

# (LUKE 10:38-42)

Many people bristle at the criticism Jesus leveled against Martha. After all, if everyone was like Mary, we reason, nobody would have a decent meal or a clean house! But there was more to this story than just Martha's desire to feed her guests. Jesus, who knows all, looked deep inside Martha to deal with a problem that could eventually cause her to be ineffective for Him-the problem of worry.

Martha apparently loved entertaining and so probably was good at it. When Jesus arrived in Bethany, Martha invited Him to her home. Martha had a sister named Mary, and a brother named Lazarus (whom Jesus would later raise from the dead). As Martha busied herself with the dinner (most likely feeding Jesus meant feeding His twelve disciples as well), Mary sat at Jesus' feet and listened to Him teach. Martha needed help, and so asked Jesus to ask Mary to get up and help her. But Jesus explained that Mary had "chosen that good part" and He would not take it away from her.

Jesus was not condemning Martha for caring about preparing a good meal, nor was He showing a lack of appreciation for her hard work. Martha's efficiency, however, seems to have been fueled by too much concern about appearances or nervous activity. She had become impatient and critical. Jesus wanted to teach her about setting priorities and setting aside worries. Martha obviously had the ability to be hospitable and would do it well no matter how much (or how little) she worried about it. Jesus advised her to set aside the worry and enjoy her guest-namely Himself-for He had much to teach her.

Worry never accomplishes anything-except to make us ill or ineffective. When we find ourselves worrying, we need to change our perspective and priorities, and then, most of all, we need to pray for faith in God's provision. God will shoulder the worry and give us His peace. Then we can focus on "that good part" that Christ promises will never be taken away.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Worry or Pray-you Choose. See also the key passage note at Luke 12:22-31.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# MARY: SPEAKING LOVE'S LANGUAGE

## (LUKE 10:38-42)

People show their love in different ways. For Mary's sister, Martha, showing love involved having a hospitable home and good food for her guests. Jesus and His disciples enjoyed that hospitality several times during the course of His ministry. Jesus appreciated Martha's ability, but wanted her to use it without so much hurry and worry, and with a willingness to open her heart, not just her home, to Him.

Mary showed her love by sitting at Jesus' feet and drinking in His every word. This kind of love and devotion revealed a heart open to Jesus' message and ready to accept Him as her Savior. She listened well, for she seemed to understand, even before the disciples did, why Jesus had to die. At another visit that Jesus paid to this family prior to His death, "Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair" (John 12:3). Jesus explained that her sacrifice of love was in preparation for His burial: "She has done a good work for Me. . . . For in pouring this fragrant oil on My body, she did it for My burial. Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her" (Matt. 26:10,

12, 13).

Love has many languages. Both Mary and Martha had great faith in Jesus, and both loved Him dearly. As we show our love for Christ and for others, we may do so in different ways, depending on our unique personality and gifts from God. When we speak the language of love, everyone will hear and understand.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about The Languages of Love. See also the key passage note at 1 John 3:18.

## THE MODEL PRAYER

**11** Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, *that* one of His disciples said to Him, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.”

2 So He said to them, “When you pray, say:

Our Father in heaven,[a]
Hallowed be Your name.
Your kingdom come.[b]
Your will be done On earth as *it is* in heaven.

3 Give us day by day our daily bread.
4 And forgive us our sins,
For we also forgive everyone who is
indebted to us.
And do not lead us into temptation,
But deliver us from the evil one.” [a]

## A FRIEND COMES AT MIDNIGHT

5 And He said to them, “Which of you shall have a friend, and go to him at midnight and say to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves; 6 for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him’; 7 and he will answer from within and say, ‘Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you’? 8 I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs.

## KEEP ASKING, SEEKING, KNOCKING

9 “So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 10 For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. 11 If a son asks for bread[a] from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if *he asks* for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? 12 Or if he asks for an

egg, will he offer him a scorpion? [13]If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will *your* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"

> "For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened."
> LUKE 11:10

**A HOUSE DIVIDED CANNOT STAND**

[14]And He was casting out a demon, and it was mute. So it was, when the demon had gone out, that the mute spoke; and the multitudes marveled. [15]But some of them said, "He casts out demons by Beelzebub,[a] the ruler of the demons."

[16]Others, testing *Him,* sought from Him a sign from heaven. [17]But He, knowing their thoughts, said to them: "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and a house *divided* against a house falls. [18]If Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? Because you say I cast out demons by Beelzebub. [19]And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast *them* out? Therefore they will be your judges. [20]But if I cast out demons with the finger of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. [21]When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are in peace. [22]But when a stronger than he comes upon him and overcomes him, he takes from him all his armor in which he trusted, and divides his spoils. [23]He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters.

**AN UNCLEAN SPIRIT RETURNS**

[24]"When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' [25]And when he comes, he finds *it* swept and put in order. [26]Then he goes and takes with *him* seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last *state* of that man is worse than the first."

**KEEPING THE WORD**

27 And it happened, as He spoke these things, that a certain woman from
the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, “Blessed *is* the womb that bore
You, and *the* breasts which nursed You!”

28 But He said, “More than that, blessed *are* those who hear the word of
God and keep it!”

**SEEKING A SIGN**

29 And while the crowds were thickly gathered together, He began to say,
“This is an evil generation. It seeks a sign, and no sign will be given to it
except the sign of Jonah the prophet.[a] 30 For as Jonah became a sign to the
Ninevites, so also the Son of Man will be to this generation. 31 The queen of
the South will rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation and
condemn them, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of
Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon *is* here. 32 The men of Nineveh
will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they
repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah *is* here.

**THE LAMP OF THE BODY**

33 “No one, when he has lit a lamp, puts *it* in a secret place or under a
basket, but on a lampstand, that those who come in may see the light. 34 The
lamp of the body is the eye. Therefore, when your eye is good, your whole
body also is full of light. But when *your eye* is bad, your body also *is* full of
darkness. 35 Therefore take heed that the light which is in you is not darkness.
36 If then your whole body *is* full of light, having no part dark, *the* whole *body*
will be full of light, as when the bright shining of a lamp gives you light.”

**WOE TO THE PHARISEES AND LAWYERS**

37 And as He spoke, a certain Pharisee asked Him to dine with him. So He
went in and sat down to eat. 38 When the Pharisee saw *it,* he marveled that He
had not first washed before dinner.

39 Then the Lord said to him, “Now you Pharisees make the outside of the
cup and dish clean, but your inward part is full of greed and wickedness.

40 Foolish ones! Did not He who made the outside make the inside also? 41 But
rather give alms of such things as you have; then indeed all things are clean
to you.

42 "But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and all manner of
herbs, and pass by justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done,
without leaving the others undone. 43 Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the
best seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces. 44 Woe to you,
scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites![a] For you are like graves which are not
seen, and the men who walk over *them* are not aware *of them.*"

45 Then one of the lawyers answered and said to Him, "Teacher, by saying
these things You reproach us also."

46 And He said, "Woe to you also, lawyers! For you load men with burdens
hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your
fingers. 47 Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets, and your
fathers killed them. 48 In fact, you bear witness that you approve the deeds of
your fathers; for they indeed killed them, and you build their tombs.
49 Therefore the wisdom of God also said, 'I will send them prophets and
apostles, and *some* of them they will kill and persecute,' 50 that the blood of
all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world may be
required of this generation, 51 from the blood of Abel to the blood of
Zechariah who perished between the altar and the temple. Yes, I say to you, it
shall be required of this generation.

52 "Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge.
You did not enter in yourselves, and those who were entering in you
hindered."

53 And as He said these things to them,[a] the scribes and the Pharisees began
to assail *Him* vehemently, and to cross-examine Him about many things,
54 lying in wait for Him, and seeking to catch Him in something He might say,
that they might accuse Him.[a]

## BEWARE OF HYPOCRISY

**12** In the meantime, when an innumerable multitude of people had gathered
together, so that they trampled one another, He began to say to His
disciples first *of all,* "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is
hypocrisy. [2]For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden
that will not be known. [3]Therefore whatever you have spoken in the dark will
be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will
be proclaimed on the housetops.

## JESUS TEACHES THE FEAR OF GOD

[4]"And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body,
and after that have no more that they can do. [5]But I will show you whom you
should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell;
yes, I say to you, fear Him!

[6]"Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins?[a] And not one of them is
forgotten before God. [7]But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do
not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.

## CONFESS CHRIST BEFORE MEN

[8]"Also I say to you, whoever confesses Me before men, him the Son of
Man also will confess before the angels of God. [9]But he who denies Me
before men will be denied before the angels of God.

[10]"And anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be
forgiven him; but to him who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it will not
be forgiven.

[11]"Now when they bring you to the synagogues and magistrates and
authorities, do not worry about how or what you should answer, or what you
should say. [12]For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you
ought to say."

"And which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? If you then are not able to do the least, why are

you anxious for the rest?”
LUKE 12:25, 26

**THE PARABLE OF THE RICH FOOL**

13 Then one from the crowd said to Him, “Teacher, tell my brother to
divide the inheritance with me.”

14 But He said to him, “Man, who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over
you?” 15 And He said to them, “Take heed and beware of covetousness, *a* for
one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.”

16 Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: “The ground of a certain rich
man yielded plentifully. 17 And he thought within himself, saying, ‘What shall
I do, since I have no room to store my crops?’ 18 So he said, ‘I will do this: I
will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops
and my goods. 19 And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have many goods laid
up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, *and* be merry.” ’ 20 But God said
to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will
those things be which you have provided?’

21 “So *is* he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”

**DO NOT WORRY**

22 Then He said to His disciples, “Therefore I say to you, do not worry
about your life, what you will eat; nor about the body, what you will put on.
23 Life is more than food, and the body *is more* than clothing. 24 Consider the
ravens, for they neither sow nor reap, which have neither storehouse nor
barn; and God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds?
25 And which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? 26 If you
then are not able to do *the* least, why are you anxious for the rest? 27 Consider
the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you, even
Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 28 If then God so
clothes the grass, which today is in the field and tomorrow is thrown into the
oven, how much more *will He clothe* you, O *you* of little faith?

29 “And do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, nor

have an anxious mind. [30]For all these things the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knows that you need these things. [31]But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things[a] shall be added to you.

[32]"Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. [33]Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys. [34]For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

**THE FAITHFUL SERVANT AND THE EVIL SERVANT**

[35]"Let your waist be girded and *your* lamps burning; [36]and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately. [37]Blessed *are* those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down *to eat,* and will come and serve them. [38]And if he should come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find *them* so, blessed are those servants. [39]But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and[a] not allowed his house to be broken into. [40]Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."

[41]Then Peter said to Him, "Lord, do You speak this parable *only* to us, or to all *people?*"

[42]And the Lord said, "Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom *his* master will make ruler over his household, to give *them their* portion of food in due season? [43]Blessed *is* that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. [44]Truly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has. [45]But if that servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk, [46]the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for *him,* and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint *him* his portion with the unbelievers. [47]And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare *himself* or do according to

his will, shall be beaten with many *stripes.* [48]But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.

## CHRIST BRINGS DIVISION

[49]"I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! [50]But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished! [51]Do *you* suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division. [52]For from now on five in one house will be divided: three against two, and two against three. [53]Father will be divided against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law."

## DISCERN THE TIME

[54]Then He also said to the multitudes, "Whenever *you see* a cloud rising out of the west, immediately you say, 'A shower is coming'; and so it is. [55]And when you see the south wind blow, you say, 'There will be hot weather'; and there is. [56]Hypocrites! You can discern the face of the sky and of the earth, but how *is it* you do not discern this time?

## MAKE PEACE WITH YOUR ADVERSARY

[57]"Yes, and why, even of yourselves, do you not judge what is right? [58]When you go with your adversary to the magistrate, make every effort along the way to settle with him, lest he drag you to the judge, the judge deliver you to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison. [59]I tell you, you shall not depart from there till you have paid the very last mite."

## SOUL NOTE

**Put In a Good Word** *(12:11, 12)* Telling others about Christ can be difficult, especially in a hostile environment. Jesus told His followers not to be concerned when called to answer for their faith-because an emergency spokesman would be ready. When we become frightened or tongue-tied, the Holy Spirit will tell us what to say. This does not release us from studying God's Word. We must know what God says and be ready to defend our faith (1 Pet. 3:15)-but we must not worry. Jesus promised that the Spirit would guide our words. **Topic: Presence of the Holy Spirit**

## KEY PASSAGE

# WHAT, ME WORRY?

# (12:22-31)

Worry can be a time-consuming, almost obsessive, behavior. After all, every day brings new things to worry about! Worrying about every situation in life- whether big or small-will only drive us to distraction. Not one problem is ever solved by worrying about it. In fact, many problems get worse because worry is immobilizing; thus, no action is being taken to try to work through the dilemma. Worry can thwart the work of the kingdom.

Jesus has the perfect solution for worry. Instead of worrying, He invites us to put our faith and trust in God's provision and care. This can free us from the anxiety that is caused by worry. This total trust

doesn't mean that we should not have goals, plans, investments, and so on. It does mean, however, that for everything we should trust in God, putting Him first in our lives.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Worry or Pray-you Choose. See also the personality profile of Martha: Worried About Many Things.

## WORRY OR PRAY-YOU CHOOSE

ROSEMARIE SCOTTI HUGHES

(Luke 12:22-31)

**A** grandmother worries about a 12-year-old grandson with dropping grades and bad friends. When she reads Jesus' words, "Do not worry," she wonders how she can care about him and not worry about his future.

A homeowner sits down to pay a stack of bills. Every month he goes through the exercise of writing checks and then deciding, *if* there is surplus, where that goes. When he reads Luke 12:22-31, he feels a reproach because he worries about finances.

A woman's 17-year-old son is long overdue with the family car, and she's sitting up worrying that he may have gotten into trouble.

An employee is in turmoil considering a company move and promotion. She's worried about uprooting the family and starting over somewhere else. She recently read Luke 12 about not being

worried, but she still gets butterflies in her stomach every time she thinks about this move.

Like these people, we all worry about our finances, our loved ones, our jobs, our health, and a host of other life issues. It may be hard to relate to Jesus' words concerning worry. After all, Jesus had no children, no boss, no rent to pay. Jesus never had to grocery shop for a family and make dollars stretch, or car pool kids to sports, try to make the PTA meeting, and put dinner on the table. Jesus never had to take care of his elderly parents and help his teenagers plan for college at the same time. How can we apply His teaching about not worrying to twenty-first-century life?

Actually, these passages are more for us today than ever. In a materialistic, consumption- minded, technological world, Jesus is telling us to order our priorities: "Seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you" (Luke 12:31). For most of us, however, there is a large gap between managing our day-to-day lives and seeking God's kingdom. In order to achieve the peace of God, to not be overwhelmed by the pressures of life, we have to *change*. We read that we cannot add a single hour to our life by worrying and fretting, but because worrying is what we know best, it's what we do first, especially in stressful situations.

Being concerned can be positive when it propels us to action-such as seeing a doctor when we are ill or a mechanic when the car sounds strange. But worry is unproductive. Worry becomes a negative in our life, taking its toll on our health, loved ones, productivity, and relationship with God. If we have been worried about two or more topics more days than not in the past six months, if we are focusing on situations of worry more than we are the other business of life, and if we are having feelings of our lives being out of control, then our worrying has risen to an unhealthy level.

Take, for example, two "mothers of the groom." For months, the first goes to every dress store in town, anxiously pricing, comparing,

buying, and then returning what she bought. At the wedding, still worrying about her appearance, she is frazzled, worn out, and can barely enjoy the day.

Contrast her behavior with the second mother, who *first* prays to the Lord to help her find what she needs within her price range and without using a lot of time-and to help her not to worry about it. She finds what she needs in one trip. She puts the situation in God's hands-seeking the kingdom first. The other things fall into place and she is able to enjoy the wedding.

To seek first the kingdom means to pray *first*, releasing our fears and worries to the Lord. A change in behavior and in a particular attitude follows as we make some appropriate changes to our lifestyle. Taking some steps to change our lives will help us bridge the gap between worrying and operating in faith. These changes will ultimately help us live in power, love, sound judgment, self-control, calm, and balance. For example:

- Get facts and expert advice to prevent worrying unrealistically about a situation.
- Set deadlines to make decisions, rather than ruminating forever.
- Limit worrying to a "worry list," and take that list to the Lord in your daily Bible and prayer time.
- Delegate chores and other responsibilities.
- Give yourself permission to relax, and to make mistakes.
- Eat, sleep, and exercise properly.
- Try to see the humor in a situation, to keep a sense of perspective.
- De-clutter and organize, using calendars and to-do lists.
- Realize that you will not please everyone all the time.
- Learn to say no.
- Ask yourself, "What's the worst that can happen-and is it likely

to?”

• Mentally put your worries in a box with a lid and put them on the top shelf of your closet. No peeking!

To say that we are waiting on the Lord, and then to go around with a sense of worry, misery, and dread, is to contradict the truth. Jesus modeled *prayer* when He went to the desert to fast and pray. Jesus also modeled *action* when He healed, taught, and followed God every step of the way. To be walking in peace, in calm, in trust, and in assurance is to find the balance of prayer and action, and ultimately, freedom from worry.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of worry include:

- Psalm 55:22
- Matthew 6:25-34
- John 14:27
- Philippians 4:6-9
- 2 Timothy 1:7
- 1 Peter 5:7

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on worry at Luke 12:22-31. See also the personality profile of Martha: Worried About Many Things.

## REPENT OR PERISH

**13** There were present at that season some who told Him about the
Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. 2And
Jesus answered and said to them, “Do you suppose that these Galileans were
worse sinners than all *other* Galileans, because they suffered such things? 3I
tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. 4Or those
eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that
they were worse sinners than all *other* men who dwelt in Jerusalem? 5I tell
you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.”

## THE PARABLE OF THE BARREN FIG TREE

6He also spoke this parable: “A certain *man* had a fig tree planted in his
vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. 7Then he said to
the keeper of his vineyard, ‘Look, for three years I have come seeking fruit
on this fig tree and find none. Cut it down; why does it use up the ground?’
8But he answered and said to him, ‘Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig
around it and fertilize *it.* 9And if it bears fruit, *well.* But if not, after that[a] you
can cut it down.’ ”

## A SPIRIT OF INFIRMITY

10Now He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. 11And
behold, there was a woman who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and
was bent over and could in no way raise *herself* up. 12But when Jesus saw
her, He called *her* to *Him* and said to her, “Woman, you are loosed from your
infirmity.” 13And He laid *His* hands on her, and immediately she was made
straight, and glorified God.

14But the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because Jesus
had healed on the Sabbath; and he said to the crowd, “There are six days on
which men ought to work; therefore come and be healed on them, and not on
the Sabbath day.”

15The Lord then answered him and said, “Hypocrite![a] Does not each one of
you on the Sabbath loose his ox or donkey from the stall, and lead *it* away to

water it? [16]So ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound-think of it-for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?" [17]And when He said these things, all His adversaries were put to shame; and all the multitude rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him.

**THE PARABLE OF THE MUSTARD SEED**

[18]Then He said, "What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it? [19]It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and put in his garden; and it grew and became a large[a] tree, and the birds of the air nested in its branches."

**THE PARABLE OF THE LEAVEN**

[20]And again He said, "To what shall I liken the kingdom of God? [21]It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures[a] of meal till it was all leavened."

**THE NARROW WAY**

[22]And He went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem. [23]Then one said to Him, "Lord, are there few who are saved?"

And He said to them, [24]"Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able. [25]When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open for us,' and He will answer and say to you, 'I do not know you, where you are from,' [26]then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets.' [27]But He will say, 'I tell you I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity.' [28]There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out. [29]They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God. [30]And indeed there are last who will be first, and there are

first who will be last.”

31 On that very day[a] some Pharisees came, saying to Him, “Get out and depart from here, for Herod wants to kill You.”

32 And He said to them, “Go, tell that fox, ‘Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third *day* I shall be perfected.’ 33 Nevertheless I must journey today, tomorrow, and the *day* following; for it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem.

**JESUS LAMENTS OVER JERUSALEM**

34 “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen *gathers* her brood under *her* wings, but you were not willing! 35 See! Your house is left to you desolate; and assuredly,[a] I say to you, you shall not see Me until *the time* comes when you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD! ’ ”[b]

## A MAN WITH DROPSY HEALED ON THE SABBATH

**14** Now it happened, as He went into the house of one of the rulers of the
Pharisees to eat bread on the Sabbath, that they watched Him closely.
2 And behold, there was a certain man before Him who had dropsy. 3 And
Jesus, answering, spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, "Is it lawful to
heal on the Sabbath?"[a]

4 But they kept silent. And He took *him* and healed him, and let him go.
5 Then He answered them, saying, "Which of you, having a donkey[a] or an ox
that has fallen into a pit, will not immediately pull him out on the Sabbath
day?" 6 And they could not answer Him regarding these things.

## TAKE THE LOWLY PLACE

7 So He told a parable to those who were invited, when He noted how they
chose the best places, saying to them: 8 "When you are invited by anyone to a
wedding feast, do not sit down in the best place, lest one more honorable than
you be invited by him; 9 and he who invited you and him come and say to
you, 'Give place to this man,' and then you begin with shame to take the
lowest place. 10 But when you are invited, go and sit down in the lowest place,
so that when he who invited you comes he may say to you, 'Friend, go up
higher.' Then you will have glory in the presence of those who sit at the table
with you. 11 For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles
himself will be exalted."

12 Then He also said to him who invited Him, "When you give a dinner or a
supper, do not ask your friends, your brothers, your relatives, nor rich
neighbors, lest they also invite you back, and you be repaid. 13 But when you
give a feast, invite *the* poor, *the* maimed, *the* lame, *the* blind. 14 And you will
be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the
resurrection of the just."

## THE PARABLE OF THE GREAT SUPPER

15 Now when one of those who sat at the table with Him heard these things,
he said to Him, "Blessed *is* he who shall eat bread[a] in the kingdom of God!"

16 Then He said to him, “A certain man gave a great supper and invited
many, 17 and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited,
‘Come, for all things are now ready.’ 18 But they all with one *accord* began to
make excuses. The first said to him, ‘I have bought a piece of ground, and I
must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.’ 19 And another said, ‘I
have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have
me excused.’ 20 Still another said, ‘I have married a wife, and therefore I
cannot come.’ 21 So that servant came and reported these things to his master.
Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, ‘Go out
quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here *the* poor and
*the* maimed and *the* lame and *the* blind.’ 22 And the servant said, ‘Master, it is
done as you commanded, and still there is room.’ 23 Then the master said to
the servant, ‘Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel *them* to come
in, that my house may be filled. 24 For I say to you that none of those men
who were invited shall taste my supper.’ ”

## LEAVING ALL TO FOLLOW CHRIST

25 Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them,
26 “If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and
children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My
disciple. 27 And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be
My disciple. 28 For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit
down first and count the cost, whether he has *enough* to finish *it*- 29 lest, after
he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see *it* begin to
mock him, 30 saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’
31 Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down
first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who
comes against him with twenty thousand? 32 Or else, while the other is still a
great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace. 33 So
likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My
disciple.

## TASTELESS SALT IS WORTHLESS

[34]"Salt *is* good; but if the salt has lost its flavor, how shall it be seasoned?
[35]It is neither fit for the land nor for the dunghill, *but* men throw it out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

**SOUL NOTE**

**Total Commitment** *(14:25-33)* To reach a desired goal or to successfully complete a huge task takes planning and total commitment. To be only partially committed to a project usually ends with less than desirable results. Jesus asks for total commitment from His followers. The command to "hate" one's family is not to be taken as an instruction to treat them improperly; instead, it reminds us that human relationships should never hold us back from faith in Christ. The kingdom of God must be central in all we do. The cost may be high, but the rewards are wonderful!
**Topic: Self-Denial**

**THE COST OF COMMITMENT**

VERNON BREWER

(Luke 14:25-33)

**T**here is no limit to what God can do through those who are fully

committed to Him. By total commitment we ask God to take complete control over our lives. Total commitment, then, means self-denial.

In Luke 14, Jesus described the cost of commitment to Him. He did not say that a person who doesn't meet these demands will be an inconsistent disciple, or an ungrateful disciple, or a half-hearted disciple. He said that "he cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:26, 27, 33).

## ABOVE PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

God's people must love Jesus Christ more than their personal relationships. Jesus said that anyone who wants to follow Him must "hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters" (Luke 14:26). Jesus' love transcends all personal relationships.

These words do not mean that Christians have to literally "hate" their parents. That would go against other parts of God's word where people are told to honor their parents (Ex. 20:12). The word "hate" is used as hyperbole, meaning that people's love for Jesus must transcend their love for family. The reason many people have difficulty with this verse isn't that they love their families too much; it is that they don't love God enough. They have never learned to love the Lord God with all their heart, soul, and mind (Deut. 6:5).

We love our families; we adore our spouse and children; we honor our parents. They are not the most important relationships in our lives, however. Our relationship with Jesus Christ is the most important.

## ABOVE PERSONAL LIFE

God's people must love Jesus Christ more than their personal lives. Jesus continued that anyone who wants to follow Him must "hate . . . his own life also" (Luke 14:26). Jesus' lordship transcends our

personal priorities. The disgrace of the Christian church is that more zeal is evident among Communists and cultists than among Christians. There are many non-Christians who are not as concerned about their lives as they are about their commitment to their cause.

Jesus' command does not mean that Christians have to literally "hate" their lives. That would go against other commands in Scripture to be content and joyful. People would not evidence the fruit of the Spirit if they hated their lives. They would be sad, ornery, and critical. Some people *are* that way, and they would not be held up as models of self-denial and commitment to Christ. Instead, the word "hate" means as it did in the previous section: People's love for Jesus must transcend their love for their own lives.

We enjoy life; we seek to follow God's will and accomplish what He has for us during our time on earth. However, our lives, jobs, reputations, accomplishments are not the most important. We should, at any moment, be willing to die for our faith. Indeed, people all over the world are doing that every single day.

I recently visited a country that is closed to the gospel, a country where Christians face the threat of death daily. A group of us met secretly with several pastors and other believers and heard their testimonies. A 34-year-old woman evangelist and church planter told how she continues to suffer persecution. One day, the police humiliated her by tearing off her shirt and parading her through the streets. She stood in a public gathering, half-naked, with her hands tied behind her back and said, "I live for Jesus Christ . . . if I die, I die for Jesus Christ!"

## ABOVE PERSONAL RIGHTS

God's people must love Jesus Christ more than their personal rights. Jesus said, "Whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:27). Jesus' lordship transcends personal rights, choices, decisions, goals, and plans.

The people of Jesus' day well understood what it meant to carry one's own cross. When a person was sentenced to death by the Romans, he had to carry his own cross through the city to the execution site. This constantly reminded the people of their subjection to Rome, and taught them an object lesson about obeying Rome's leaders.

These words do not mean that Christians have to carry the heavy burdens of life on our backs like a cross. That would contradict the psalmist who assured us that we can cast our burdens on the Lord (Ps. 55:22). Instead, we should proudly "carry Jesus' cross," being identified with Him, casting aside our love for what we think is fair, for what we want, for what we consider our "rights," in order to serve Him.

**ABOVE PERSONAL RESOURCES**

God's people must love Jesus Christ more than their personal resources. Jesus said, "Whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:33). Jesus' lordship transcends everything people own, achieve, share, and give. This is perhaps the most unpopular of all of Christ's terms of discipleship and self-denial.

These words do not mean that Christians must become hermits. To "forsake all" does not mean that believers cannot own homes, buy clothing and food, and take vacations. Again, it has to do with our attitudes toward all of our possessions. To "forsake" all means not being so attached to anything we own that we cannot let it go for the sake of God's kingdom.

To truly be Jesus' disciple means to love Him more than our relationships, lives, rights, and resources. What He gives in return is beyond value!

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of self-denial include:

- Psalm 119:9
- Matthew 16:24
- Romans 12:12
- Galatians 5:24
- Philippians 2:2-4
- 2 Timothy 2:3, 4
- James 1:12

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on self-denial at Galatians 2:20. See also the personality profile of John the Baptist: Everything for Jesus.

## THE PARABLE OF THE LOST SHEEP

**15** Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him.
2 And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, “This Man receives
sinners and eats with them.” 3 So He spoke this parable to them, saying:

4 “What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does
not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost
until he finds it? 5 And when he has found *it*, he lays *it* on his shoulders,
rejoicing. 6 And when he comes home, he calls together *his* friends and
neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep
which was lost!’ 7 I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven
over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no
repentance.

## THE PARABLE OF THE LOST COIN

8 “Or what woman, having ten silver coins,[a] if she loses one coin, does not
light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds *it?* 9 And
when she has found *it*, she calls *her* friends and neighbors together, saying,
‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost!’ 10 Likewise, I say
to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who
repents.”

## THE PARABLE OF THE LOST SON

11 Then He said: “A certain man had two sons. 12 And the younger of them
said to *his* father, ‘Father, give me the portion of goods that falls *to me.*’ So
he divided to them *his* livelihood. 13 And not many days after, the younger
son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his
possessions with prodigal living. 14 But when he had spent all, there arose a
severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want. 15 Then he went and
joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to
feed swine. 16 And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that
the swine ate, and no one gave him *anything.*

17 “But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired

servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! [18]I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, [19]and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.” ’

[20]“And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. [21]And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

[22]“But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring[a] out the best robe and put *it* on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on *his* feet. [23]And bring the fatted calf here and kill *it*, and let us eat and be merry; [24]for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ And they began to be merry.

[25]“Now his older son was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. [26]So he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. [27]And he said to him, ‘Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fatted calf.’

[28]“But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him. [29]So he answered and said to *his* father, ‘Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends. [30]But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.’

[31]“And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. [32]It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.’ ”

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# THE PRODIGAL SON'S LOVING FATHER

## (LUKE 15:11)

The Parable of the Prodigal Son follows two other parables that Jesus told in response to some critics. They were upset about the people with whom He was spending time. His crime? "This Man receives sinners and eats with them" (Luke 15:2). All three parables illustrate the high value that God places on an individual life. A wayward sheep, a wayward coin and a wayward son are each "found" and become the reason for celebration. God plays a different character in each parable: the owner of the flock, the owner of the coins, and the father of two sons.

Parables have an amazing capacity for affecting different members of an audience in very different ways. The Parable of the Prodigal may offer a younger brother, an older brother, or a father startling and varied insights. Although the most active role in this parable falls to the younger brother, the father proves to be the central actor. The character of this father, who represents our Heavenly Father, demonstrates a number of significant lessons for earthly fathers:

- He provided a caring model for his sons.
- He provided financial and emotional support for his sons.
- He gave them the blessing of a heritage.
- He guided but did not force his sons to conform.
- He gave them room to fail and a place to return.
- He exercised mercy and grace toward his children.
- He met his children more than half way.
- He forgave.

The two brothers in Jesus' parable represent opposite ends of a continuum of children's characters from passivity to action. The list above offers earthly fathers significant help in relating to the differences in their children as well as guidance about the consistency that sons and daughters need to observe in their fathers. Wise earthly fathers exercise humility and persistence as they seek to imitate their Heavenly Father in their special role. Only One does it perfectly; the rest dare not do less than their best.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about fatherhood Someone Special. See also the key passage note at Ephesians 6:4.

**KEY PASSAGE**

## NOW I GET IT!

## (15:17, 18)

The story of the lost (rebellious) child is as relevant today as it was in Jesus' day. Adolescence can be turbulent-a time of learning independence, and often a time of rebellion against parental authority and regulations.

This parable reminds us that any parent can experience children with adolescent problems. It is not an indictment on the parent that the child struggles through the stage of adolescence-making wrong choices, challenging authority, seeking his or her own identity. What *is* a reflection on the parent is their attitude toward their struggling and wayward child. In the case of the father in the parable, he looked

for and anticipated the return of his son. We should never close the door on our relationships with our children. Even when they have made the worst of choices, they need to know that loving, caring, and forgiving parents are waiting and praying and will rejoice when they return.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about adolescent problems The Disconnected Generation See also the personality profile of Eli's Sons-wayward Children.

## THE PARABLE OF THE UNJUST STEWARD

**16** He also said to His disciples: “There was a certain rich man who had a
steward, and an accusation was brought to him that this man was wasting
his goods. 2So he called him and said to him, ‘What is this I hear about you?
Give an account of your stewardship, for you can no longer be steward.’

3“Then the steward said within himself, ‘What shall I do? For my master is
taking the stewardship away from me. I cannot dig; I am ashamed to beg. 4I
have resolved what to do, that when I am put out of the stewardship, they
may receive me into their houses.’

5“So he called every one of his master’s debtors to *him*, and said to the
first, ‘How much do you owe my master?’ 6And he said, ‘A hundred
measures[a] of oil.’ So he said to him, ‘Take your bill, and sit down quickly
and write fifty.’ 7Then he said to another, ‘And how much do you owe?’ So
he said, ‘A hundred measures[a] of wheat.’ And he said to him, ‘Take your bill,
and write eighty.’ 8So the master commended the unjust steward because he
had dealt shrewdly. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in their
generation than the sons of light.

9“And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon,
that when you fail,[a] they may receive you into an everlasting home. 10He who
*is* faithful in *what is* least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in
*what is* least is unjust also in much. 11Therefore if you have not been faithful
in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true *riches?*
12And if you have not been faithful in what is another man’s, who will give
you what is your own?

13“No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and
love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You
cannot serve God and mammon.”

## THE LAW, THE PROPHETS, AND THE KINGDOM

14Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, also heard all these
things, and they derided Him. 15And He said to them, “You are those who
justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly

esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.

16 "The law and the prophets *were* until John. Since that time the kingdom
of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it. 17 And it is easier
for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle of the law to fail.

18 "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery; and
whoever marries her who is divorced from *her* husband commits adultery.

## THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS

19 "There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen
and fared sumptuously every day. 20 But there was a certain beggar named
Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, 21 desiring to be fed with the
crumbs which fell[a] from the rich man's table. Moreover the dogs came and
licked his sores. 22 So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the
angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. 23 And
being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off,
and Lazarus in his bosom.

24 "Then he cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send
Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for
I am tormented in this flame.' 25 But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in
your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil
things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. 26 And besides all
this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to
pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.'

27 "Then he said, 'I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to
my father's house, 28 for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest
they also come to this place of torment.' 29 Abraham said to him, 'They have
Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.' 30 And he said, 'No, father
Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' 31 But he
said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be
persuaded though one rise from the dead.' "

## SOUL NOTE

**Master Lock** *(16:13)* All people are ultimately "serving" something-whether it is God, a false god, a principle, or simply oneself. Jesus warned about trying to serve two masters at the same time. In this case, He pointed to God and money. Money masters people when they spend most of their time getting it or worrying losing it. Serving money means not trusting God to provide for one's needs. That about losing it. Serving money means not trusting God to provide for one's needs. That means a person cannot focus totally on money and then attempt to serve God. No one can serve two masters. Identifying the focus of our lives will tell us whom we serve. **Topic: Money**

## JESUS WARNS OF OFFENSES

**17** Then He said to the disciples, “It is impossible that no offenses should
come, but woe *to him* through whom they do come! 2It would be better
for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into
the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones. 3Take heed to
yourselves. If your brother sins against you,[a] rebuke him; and if he repents,
forgive him. 4And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven
times in a day returns to you,[a] saying, ‘I repent,’ you shall forgive him.”

## FAITH AND DUTY

5And the apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith.”

6So the Lord said, “If you have faith as a mustard seed, you can say to this
mulberry tree, ‘Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea,’ and it
would obey you. 7And which of you, having a servant plowing or tending
sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, ‘Come at once and
sit down to eat’? 8But will he not rather say to him, ‘Prepare something for
my supper, and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk, and
afterward you will eat and drink’? 9Does he thank that servant because he did
the things that were commanded him? I think not.[a] 10So likewise you, when
you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, ‘We are
unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.’ ”

## TEN LEPERS CLEANSED

11Now it happened as He went to Jerusalem that He passed through the
midst of Samaria and Galilee. 12Then as He entered a certain village, there
met Him ten men who were lepers, who stood afar off. 13And they lifted up
*their* voices and said, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!”

14So when He saw *them,* He said to them, “Go, show yourselves to the
priests.” And so it was that as they went, they were cleansed.

15And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a
loud voice glorified God, 16and fell down on *his* face at His feet, giving Him

thanks. And he was a Samaritan.

17 So Jesus answered and said, “Were there not ten cleansed? But where
*are* the nine? 18 Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God
except this foreigner?” 19 And He said to him, “Arise, go your way. Your faith
has made you well.”

**THE COMING OF THE KINGDOM**

20 Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God
would come, He answered them and said, “The kingdom of God does not
come with observation; 21 nor will they say, ‘See here!’ or ‘See there!’[a] For
indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.”

22 Then He said to the disciples, “The days will come when you will desire
to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see *it.* 23 And they
will say to you, ‘Look here!’ or ‘Look there!’[a] Do not go after *them* or follow
*them.* 24 For as the lightning that flashes out of one *part* under heaven shines
to the other *part* under heaven, so also the Son of Man will be in His day.
25 But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.
26 And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son
of Man: 27 They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in
marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and
destroyed them all. 28 Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate,
they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; 29 but on the day
that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and
destroyed *them* all. 30 Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is
revealed.

31 “In that day, he who is on the housetop, and his goods *are* in the house,
let him not come down to take them away. And likewise the one who is in the
field, let him not turn back. 32 Remember Lot’s wife. 33 Whoever seeks to save
his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it. 34 I tell you, in
that night there will be two *men* in one bed: the one will be taken and the
other will be left. 35 Two *women* will be grinding together: the one will be
taken and the other left. 36 Two *men* will be in the field: the one will be taken
and the other left.”[a]

[37]And they answered and said to Him, “Where, Lord?”

So He said to them, “Wherever the body is, there the eagles will be gathered together.”

## THE PARABLE OF THE PERSISTENT WIDOW

**18** Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not
lose heart, [2]saying: “There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear
God nor regard man. [3]Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to
him, saying, ‘Get justice for me from my adversary.’ [4]And he would not for a
while; but afterward he said within himself, ‘Though I do not fear God nor
regard man, [5]yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by
her continual coming she weary me.’ ”

[6]Then the Lord said, “Hear what the unjust judge said. [7]And shall God not
avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears
long with them? [8]I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless,
when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?”

## THE PARABLE OF THE PHARISEE AND THE TAX COLLECTOR

[9]Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they
were righteous, and despised others: [10]“Two men went up to the temple to
pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. [11]The Pharisee stood and
prayed thus with himself, ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other men-
extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. [12]I fast twice a
week; I give tithes of all that I possess.’ [13]And the tax collector, standing afar
off, would not so much as raise *his* eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying,
‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’ [14]I tell you, this man went down to his
house justified *rather* than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be
humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

## JESUS BLESSES LITTLE CHILDREN

[15]Then they also brought infants to Him that He might touch them; but
when the disciples saw *it*, they rebuked them. [16]But Jesus called them to *Him*
and said, “Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of
such is the kingdom of God. [17]Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not
receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.”

"Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God."
LUKE 18:16

**JESUS COUNSELS THE RICH YOUNG RULER**

18 Now a certain ruler asked Him, saying, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

19 So Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one *is* good but One, *that is,* God. 20 You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Honor your father and your mother.' "[a]

21 And he said, "All these things I have kept from my youth."

22 So when Jesus heard these things, He said to him, "You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."

23 But when he heard this, he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich.

**WITH GOD ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE**

24 And when Jesus saw that he became very sorrowful, He said, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God! 25 For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

26 And those who heard it said, "Who then can be saved?"

27 But He said, "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God."

28 Then Peter said, "See, we have left all[a] and followed You."

29 So He said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or parents or brothers or wife or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, 30 who shall not receive many times more in this present time, and in the age to come eternal life."

## JESUS A THIRD TIME PREDICTS HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION

31 Then He took the twelve aside and said to them, “Behold, we are going
up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the
Son of Man will be accomplished. 32 For He will be delivered to the Gentiles
and will be mocked and insulted and spit upon. 33 They will scourge *Him* and
kill Him. And the third day He will rise again.”

34 But they understood none of these things; this saying was hidden from
them, and they did not know the things which were spoken.

## A BLIND MAN RECEIVES HIS SIGHT

35 Then it happened, as He was coming near Jericho, that a certain blind
man sat by the road begging. 36 And hearing a multitude passing by, he asked
what it meant. 37 So they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by.
38 And he cried out, saying, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”

39 Then those who went before warned him that he should be quiet; but he
cried out all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”

40 So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be brought to Him. And
when he had come near, He asked him, 41 saying, “What do you want Me to
do for you?”

He said, “Lord, that I may receive my sight.”

42 Then Jesus said to him, “Receive your sight; your faith has made you
well.” 43 And immediately he received his sight, and followed Him, glorifying
God. And all the people, when they saw *it*, gave praise to God.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Don’t Give Up** *(18:1)* Jesus’ parable illustrated “that men always

ought to pray and not lose heart.” The parable of the unjust judge reminds us that even though we may have prayed for a long time about something, crying out to God and yet not receiving an answer, we must not give up. If human judges, with all their inadequacies, can be convinced to do the right thing, how much more can we trust God to answer our petitions and do what is right. **Topic: Prayer**

## JESUS COMES TO ZACCHAEUS' HOUSE

**19** Then *Jesus* entered and passed through Jericho. [2]Now behold, *there was* a man named Zacchaeus who was a chief tax collector, and he was rich. [3]And he sought to see who Jesus was, but could not because of the crowd, for he was of short stature. [4]So he ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him, for He was going to pass that *way*. [5]And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and saw him,[a] and said to him, "Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house." [6]So he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully. [7]But when they saw *it*, they all complained, saying, "He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner."

[8]Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold."

[9]And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; [10]for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

## THE PARABLE OF THE MINAS

[11]Now as they heard these things, He spoke another parable, because He was near Jerusalem and because they thought the kingdom of God would appear immediately. [12]Therefore He said: "A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. [13]So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas,[a] and said to them, 'Do business till I come.' [14]But his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We will not have this *man* to reign over us.'

> "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."
> LUKE 19:10

[15]"And so it was that when he returned, having received the kingdom, he then commanded these servants, to whom he had given the money, to be

called to him, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. [16]Then came the first, saying, ‘Master, your mina has earned ten minas.’ [17]And he said to him, ‘Well *done,* good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.’ [18]And the second came, saying, ‘Master, your mina has earned five minas.’ [19]Likewise he said to him, ‘You also be over five cities.’

[20]“Then another came, saying, ‘Master, here is your mina, which I have kept put away in a handkerchief. [21]For I feared you, because you are an austere man. You collect what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow.’ [22]And he said to him, ‘Out of your own mouth I will judge you, *you* wicked servant. You knew that I was an austere man, collecting what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow. [23]Why then did you not put my money in the bank, that at my coming I might have collected it with interest?’

[24]“And he said to those who stood by, ‘Take the mina from him, and give *it* to him who has ten minas.’ [25](But they said to him, ‘Master, he has ten minas.’) [26]‘For I say to you, that to everyone who has will be given; and from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. [27]But bring here those enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, and slay *them* before me.’ ”

**THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY**

[28]When He had said this, He went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. [29]And it came to pass, when He drew near to Bethphage[a] and Bethany, at the mountain called Olivet, *that* He sent two of His disciples, [30]saying, “Go into the village opposite *you,* where as you enter you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat. Loose it and bring *it here.* [31]And if anyone asks you, ‘Why are you loosing *it?*’ thus you shall say to him, ‘Because the Lord has need of it.’ ”

[32]So those who were sent went their way and found *it* just as He had said to them. [33]But as they were loosing the colt, the owners of it said to them, “Why are you loosing the colt?”

[34]And they said, “The Lord has need of him.” [35]Then they brought him to Jesus. And they threw their own clothes on the colt, and they set Jesus on

him. [36]And as He went, *many* spread their clothes on the road.

[37]Then, as He was now drawing near the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works they had seen, [38]saying:

> " 'Blessed *is* the King who comes in the
> name of the LORD!'[a]
> Peace in heaven and glory in the
> highest!"

[39]And some of the Pharisees called to Him from the crowd, "Teacher, rebuke Your disciples."

[40]But He answered and said to them, "I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out."

## JESUS WEEPS OVER JERUSALEM

[41]Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, [42]saying, "If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things *that make* for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. [43]For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, [44]and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation."

## JESUS CLEANSES THE TEMPLE

[45]Then He went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in it,[a] [46]saying to them, "It is written, 'My house is[a] a house of prayer,'[b] but you have made it a 'den of thieves.' "[c]

[47]And He was teaching daily in the temple. But the chief priests, the scribes, and the leaders of the people sought to destroy Him, [48]and were unable to do anything; for all the people were very attentive to hear Him.

## JESUS' AUTHORITY QUESTIONED

**20** Now it happened on one of those days, as He taught the people in the
temple and preached the gospel, *that* the chief priests and the scribes,
together with the elders, confronted *Him* [2]and spoke to Him, saying, "Tell us,
by what authority are You doing these things? Or who is he who gave You
this authority?"

[3]But He answered and said to them, "I also will ask you one thing, and
answer Me: [4]The baptism of John-was it from heaven or from men?"

[5]And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,'
He will say, 'Why then[a] did you not believe him?' [6]But if we say, 'From
men,' all the people will stone us, for they are persuaded that John was a
prophet." [7]So they answered that they did not know where *it was* from.

[8]And Jesus said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do
these things."

## THE PARABLE OF THE WICKED VINEDRESSERS

[9]Then He began to tell the people this parable: "A certain man planted a
vineyard, leased it to vinedressers, and went into a far country for a long
time. [10]Now at vintage-time he sent a servant to the vinedressers, that they
might give him some of the fruit of the vineyard. But the vinedressers beat
him and sent *him* away empty-handed. [11]Again he sent another servant; and
they beat him also, treated *him* shamefully, and sent *him* away empty-handed.
[12]And again he sent a third; and they wounded him also and cast *him* out.

[13]"Then the owner of the vineyard said, 'What shall I do? I will send my
beloved son. Probably they will respect *him* when they see him.' [14]But when
the vinedressers saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, 'This is
the heir. Come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours.' [15]So they
cast him out of the vineyard and killed *him.* Therefore what will the owner of
the vineyard do to them? [16]He will come and destroy those vinedressers and
give the vineyard to others."

And when they heard *it* they said, "Certainly not!"

17 Then He looked at them and said, “What then is this that is written:

‘The stone which the builders rejected
Has become the chief cornerstone’?[a]

18 Whoever falls on that stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder.”

19 And the chief priests and the scribes that very hour sought to lay hands on Him, but they feared the people[a] -for they knew He had spoken this parable against them.

## THE PHARISEES: IS IT LAWFUL TO PAY TAXES TO CAESAR?

20 So they watched *Him*, and sent spies who pretended to be righteous, that they might seize on His words, in order to deliver Him to the power and the authority of the governor.

21 Then they asked Him, saying, “Teacher, we know that You say and teach rightly, and You do not show personal favoritism, but teach the way of God in truth: 22 Is it lawful for us to pay taxes to Caesar or not?”

23 But He perceived their craftiness, and said to them, “Why do you test Me?[a] 24 Show Me a denarius. Whose image and inscription does it have?”

They answered and said, “Caesar’s.”

25 And He said to them, “Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”

26 But they could not catch Him in His words in the presence of the people. And they marveled at His answer and kept silent.

## THE SADDUCEES: WHAT ABOUT THE RESURRECTION?

27 Then some of the Sadducees, who deny that there is a resurrection, came to *Him* and asked Him, 28 saying: “Teacher, Moses wrote to us *that* if a man’s brother dies, having a wife, and he dies without children, his brother should take his wife and raise up offspring for his brother. 29 Now there were seven brothers. And the first took a wife, and died without children. 30 And the

second[a] took her as wife, and he died childless. [31]Then the third took her, and in like manner the seven also; and they left no children,[a] and died. [32]Last of all the woman died also. [33]Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife does she become? For all seven had her as wife."

[34]Jesus answered and said to them, "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage. [35]But those who are counted worthy to attain that age, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; [36]nor can they die anymore, for they are equal to the angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection. [37]But even Moses showed in the *burning* bush *passage* that the dead are raised, when he called the Lord 'the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.'[a] [38]For He is not the God of the dead but of the living, for all live to Him."

[39]Then some of the scribes answered and said, "Teacher, You have spoken well." [40]But after that they dared not question Him anymore.

## JESUS: HOW CAN DAVID CALL HIS DESCENDANT LORD?

[41]And He said to them, "How can they say that the Christ is the Son of David? [42]Now David himself said in the Book of Psalms:

> 'The LORD said to my Lord, "
> Sit at My right hand,
>
> [43] Till I make Your enemies Your
> footstool." ' [a]

[44]Therefore David calls Him 'Lord'; how is He then his Son?"

## BEWARE OF THE SCRIBES

[45]Then, in the hearing of all the people, He said to His disciples, [46]"Beware of the scribes, who desire to go around in long robes, love greetings in the marketplaces, the best seats in the synagogues, and the best places at feasts, [47]who devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. These will receive greater condemnation."

## THE WIDOW'S TWO MITES

**21** And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury,
2 and He saw also a certain poor widow putting in two mites. 3 So He
said, "Truly I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all; 4 for all
these out of their abundance have put in offerings for God,[a] but she out of her
poverty put in all the livelihood that she had."

## JESUS PREDICTS THE DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE

5 Then, as some spoke of the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful
stones and donations, He said, 6 "These things which you see-the days will
come in which not *one* stone shall be left upon another that shall not be
thrown down."

## THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES AND THE END OF THE AGE

7 So they asked Him, saying, "Teacher, but when will these things be? And
what sign *will there be* when these things are about to take place?"

8 And He said: "Take heed that you not be deceived. For many will come in
My name, saying, 'I am *He,*' and, 'The time has drawn near.' Therefore[a] do
not go after them. 9 But when you hear of wars and commotions, do not be
terrified; for these things must come to pass first, but the end *will not come*
immediately."

10 Then He said to them, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom
against kingdom. 11 And there will be great earthquakes in various places, and
famines and pestilences; and there will be fearful sights and great signs from
heaven. 12 But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and
persecute *you,* delivering *you* up to the synagogues and prisons. You will be
brought before kings and rulers for My name's sake. 13 But it will turn out for
you as an occasion for testimony. 14 Therefore settle *it* in your hearts not to
meditate beforehand on what you will answer; 15 for I will give you a mouth
and wisdom which all your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist.
16 You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relatives and friends;
and they will put *some* of you to death. 17 And you will be hated by all for My

name’s sake. [18]But not a hair of your head shall be lost. [19]By your patience possess your souls.

## THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM

[20]“But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. [21]Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her. [22]For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. [23]But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people. [24]And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

## THE COMING OF THE SON OF MAN

[25]“And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; [26]men’s hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. [27]Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. [28]Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near.”

## THE PARABLE OF THE FIG TREE

[29]Then He spoke to them a parable: “Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. [30]When they are already budding, you see and know for yourselves that summer is now near. [31]So you also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near. [32]Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all things take place. [33]Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF WATCHING

[34]“But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with

carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. [35]For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. [36]Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy[a] to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."

[37]And in the daytime He was teaching in the temple, but at night He went out and stayed on the mountain called Olivet. [38]Then early in the morning all the people came to Him in the temple to hear Him.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Risky Giving** *(21:1-4)* Abundant giving seems risky, and giving everything is downright scary. Jesus praised the widow for her generosity. Her gift was small, but it was a sacrifice, and she gave it willingly, trusting that God would meet her needs. People are not expected to give away every paycheck and then trust God to provide-that paycheck *is* God's provision. God doesn't expect us to give away everything we have, but neither does He want us to give Him only what we don't need. We should give to God sacrificially, yet responsibly. God honors the size of the heart, not the size of the offering. **Topic: Money**

## THE PLOT TO KILL JESUS

**22** Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread drew near, which is called Passover.
2 And the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might kill Him,
for they feared the people.

3 Then Satan entered Judas, surnamed Iscariot, who was numbered among
the twelve. 4 So he went his way and conferred with the chief priests and
captains, how he might betray Him to them. 5 And they were glad, and agreed
to give him money. 6 So he promised and sought opportunity to betray Him to
them in the absence of the multitude.

## JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES PREPARE THE PASSOVER

7 Then came the Day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover must be
killed. 8 And He sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover for
us, that we may eat."

9 So they said to Him, "Where do You want us to prepare?"

10 And He said to them, "Behold, when you have entered the city, a man
will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him into the house which he
enters. 11 Then you shall say to the master of the house, 'The Teacher says to
you, "Where is the guest room where I may eat the Passover with My
disciples?" ' 12 Then he will show you a large, furnished upper room; there
make ready."

13 So they went and found it just as He had said to them, and they prepared
the Passover.

## JESUS INSTITUTES THE LORD'S SUPPER

14 When the hour had come, He sat down, and the twelve[a] apostles with
Him. 15 Then He said to them, "With *fervent* desire I have desired to eat this
Passover with you before I suffer; 16 for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it
until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God."

17 Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, "Take this and divide *it*
among yourselves; 18 for I say to you,[a] I will not drink of the fruit of the vine

until the kingdom of God comes."

19 And He took bread, gave thanks and broke *it,* and gave *it* to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me."

20 Likewise He also *took* the cup after supper, saying, "This cup *is* the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you. 21 But behold, the hand of My betrayer *is* with Me on the table. 22 And truly the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom He is betrayed!"

23 Then they began to question among themselves, which of them it was who would do this thing.

## THE DISCIPLES ARGUE ABOUT GREATNESS

24 Now there was also a dispute among them, as to which of them should be considered the greatest. 25 And He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called 'benefactors.' 26 But not so *among* you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves. 27 For who *is* greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? *Is* it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the One who serves.

28 "But you are those who have continued with Me in My trials. 29 And I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed *one* upon Me, 30 that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

## JESUS PREDICTS PETER'S DENIAL

31 And the Lord said,[a] "Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift *you* as wheat. 32 But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to *Me,* strengthen your brethren."

33 But he said to Him, "Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death."

34 Then He said, "I tell you, Peter, the rooster shall not crow this day before you will deny three times that you know Me."

## SUPPLIES FOR THE ROAD

35 And He said to them, “When I sent you without money bag, knapsack, and sandals, did you lack anything?”

So they said, “Nothing.”

36 Then He said to them, “But now, he who has a money bag, let him take *it*, and likewise a knapsack; and he who has no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one. 37 For I say to you that this which is written must still be accomplished in Me: ‘And He was numbered with the transgressors.’[a] For the things concerning Me have an end.”

38 So they said, “Lord, look, here *are* two swords.”

And He said to them, “It is enough.”

## THE PRAYER IN THE GARDEN

39 Coming out, He went to the Mount of Olives, as He was accustomed, and His disciples also followed Him. 40 When He came to the place, He said to them, “Pray that you may not enter into temptation.”

41 And He was withdrawn from them about a stone’s throw, and He knelt down and prayed, 42 saying, “Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.” 43 Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him. 44 And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.[a]

45 When He rose up from prayer, and had come to His disciples, He found them sleeping from sorrow. 46 Then He said to them, “Why do you sleep? Rise and pray, lest you enter into temptation.”

## BETRAYAL AND ARREST IN GETHSEMANE

47 And while He was still speaking, behold, a multitude; and he who was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them and drew near to Jesus to kiss Him. 48 But Jesus said to him, “Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?”

49 When those around Him saw what was going to happen, they said to

Him, “Lord, shall we strike with the sword?” [50]And one of them struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear.

[51]But Jesus answered and said, “Permit even this.” And He touched his ear and healed him.

[52]Then Jesus said to the chief priests, captains of the temple, and the elders who had come to Him, “Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs? [53]When I was with you daily in the temple, you did not try to seize Me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness.”

**PETER DENIES JESUS, AND WEEPS BITTERLY**

[54]Having arrested Him, they led *Him* and brought Him into the high priest’s house. But Peter followed at a distance. [55]Now when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat among them. [56]And a certain servant girl, seeing him as he sat by the fire, looked intently at him and said, “This man was also with Him.”

[57]But he denied Him,[a] saying, “Woman, I do not know Him.”

[58]And after a little while another saw him and said, “You also are of them.”

But Peter said, “Man, I am not!”

[59]Then after about an hour had passed, another confidently affirmed, saying, “Surely this *fellow* also was with Him, for he is a Galilean.”

[60]But Peter said, “Man, I do not know what you are saying!”

Immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster[a] crowed. [61]And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, “Before the rooster crows,[a] you will deny Me three times.” [62]So Peter went out and wept bitterly.

**JESUS MOCKED AND BEATEN**

[63]Now the men who held Jesus mocked Him and beat Him. [64]And having blindfolded Him, they struck Him on the face and asked Him,[a] saying, “Prophesy! Who is the one who struck You?” [65]And many other things they

blasphemously spoke against Him.

**JESUS FACES THE SANHEDRIN**

66 As soon as it was day, the elders of the people, both chief priests and
scribes, came together and led Him into their council, saying, 67 "If You are
the Christ, tell us."

But He said to them, "If I tell you, you will by no means believe. 68 And if I
also ask *you*, you will by no means answer Me or let *Me* go.[a] 69 Hereafter the
Son of Man will sit on the right hand of the power of God."

70 Then they all said, "Are You then the Son of God?"

So He said to them, "You *rightly* say that I am."

71 And they said, "What further testimony do we need? For we have heard
it ourselves from His own mouth."

**SOUL NOTE**

**Overwhelmed** *(22:31, 32)* What grace Jesus showed to Peter! Satan had asked for Peter, wanting to "sift" him like wheat. Jesus said that He had prayed for Peter that his "faith should not fail." Then afterward, Peter should return and strengthen his brothers. Peter would deny Christ and face painful sorrow. His faith did not fail, however, and Jesus restored him (John 21). Believers can make painful mistakes, but through those difficult times they learn of God's grace. When they return to Christ, they can take the lessons they learned and strengthen other believers about sin, temptation, and God's grace. **Topic: Restoration**

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# PETER: FAILURE IS NOT FOREVER

## (LUKE 22:54-62)

Peter had a flair for sticking his foot in his mouth. His ability to speak up would eventually be used by God for great purposes; first, however, God would deal with Peter's impulsiveness and streak of temper. Peter's story reveals a man who learned God's lessons well, allowing God to take his failures and use them for His glory.

Peter had boldly told Jesus, "Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble" (Matt. 26:33). Peter insisted that he would never fail, but Jesus stopped Peter's bravado short when He told him that failure would indeed come that very night. Peter surely hoped to instead prove his loyalty to Jesus. In the garden, Peter attempted to defend Jesus in Gethsemane, using his sword and wounding a man. He then followed Jesus to the courtyard of the High Priest's residence, refusing to stay behind. He sat around the fire, trying to stay warm in the chilly dawn air. And the rest of the story reveals the tragic truth of Peter's failure, as he denies having any relationship with or knowledge of Jesus.

In truth, Peter's failure had begun the moment he insisted that he would never fail. His bravado had to be tamed, or he could never be the servant Christ would need in His church. When Peter looked into Jesus' eyes moments after his third denial, the proud servant realized what he had done, and "went out and wept bitterly."

Unlike his fellow disciple, Judas, who killed himself, Peter repented of his sin and was forgiven and restored by Christ (John 21:15-17). Broken by his failure, Peter emerged a stronger, humbler man, able to be used greatly in the growth of the early church.

Failure can destroy us, or it can immobilize us, or it can simply teach us a lesson about what *not* to do. Failure can rub off our rough spots and soften our hard hearts. It can be the first step toward being a great success. God can use our failures to make us the people He wants us to be.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about failure God's View Of Failure. See also the key passage note at Proverbs 24:16.

## JESUS HANDED OVER TO PONTIUS PILATE

**23** Then the whole multitude of them arose and led Him to Pilate. [2]And they began to accuse Him, saying, “We found this *fellow* perverting the[a] nation, and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, saying that He Himself is Christ, a King.”

[3]Then Pilate asked Him, saying, “Are You the King of the Jews?”

He answered him and said, “*It is as* you say.”

[4]So Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowd, “I find no fault in this Man.”

[5]But they were the more fierce, saying, “He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee to this place.”

## JESUS FACES HEROD

[6]When Pilate heard of Galilee,[a] he asked if the Man were a Galilean. [7]And as soon as he knew that He belonged to Herod’s jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at that time. [8]Now when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceedingly glad; for he had desired for a long *time* to see Him, because he had heard many things about Him, and he hoped to see some miracle done by Him. [9]Then he questioned Him with many words, but He answered him nothing. [10]And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused Him. [11]Then Herod, with his men of war, treated Him with contempt and mocked *Him,* arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him back to Pilate. [12]That very day Pilate and Herod became friends with each other, for previously they had been at enmity with each other.

## TAKING THE PLACE OF BARABBAS

[13]Then Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests, the rulers, and the people, [14]said to them, “You have brought this Man to me, as one who misleads the people. And indeed, having examined *Him* in your presence, I have found no fault in this Man concerning those things of which you accuse Him; [15]no, neither did Herod, for I sent you back to him;[a] and indeed nothing

deserving of death has been done by Him. [16]I will therefore chastise Him and release *Him*" [17](for it was necessary for him to release one to them at the feast).[a]

[18]And they all cried out at once, saying, "Away with this *Man,* and release to us Barabbas"-[19]who had been thrown into prison for a certain rebellion made in the city, and for murder.

[20]Pilate, therefore, wishing to release Jesus, again called out to them. [21]But they shouted, saying, "Crucify *Him,* crucify Him!"

[22]Then he said to them the third time, "Why, what evil has He done? I have found no reason for death in Him. I will therefore chastise Him and let *Him* go."

[23]But they were insistent, demanding with loud voices that He be crucified. And the voices of these men and of the chief priests prevailed.[a] [24]So Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they requested. [25]And he released to them[a] the one they requested, who for rebellion and murder had been thrown into prison; but he delivered Jesus to their will.

**THE KING ON A CROSS**

[26]Now as they led Him away, they laid hold of a certain man, Simon a Cyrenian, who was coming from the country, and on him they laid the cross that he might bear *it* after Jesus.

[27]And a great multitude of the people followed Him, and women who also mourned and lamented Him. [28]But Jesus, turning to them, said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. [29]For indeed the days are coming in which they will say, 'Blessed *are* the barren, wombs that never bore, and breasts which never nursed!' [30]Then they will begin 'to say to the mountains, "Fall on us!" and to the hills, "Cover us!" ' [a] [31]For if they do these things in the green wood, what will be done in the dry?"

[32]There were also two others, criminals, led with Him to be put to death. [33]And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left.

[34]Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.”[a]

And they divided His garments and cast lots. [35]And the people stood looking on. But even the rulers with them sneered, saying, “He saved others; let Him save Himself if He is the Christ, the chosen of God.”

[36]The soldiers also mocked Him, coming and offering Him sour wine, [37]and saying, “If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself.”

[38]And an inscription also was written over Him in letters of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew:[a]

THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

[39]Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, “If You are the Christ,[a] save Yourself and us.”

[40]But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, “Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? [41]And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong.” [42]Then he said to Jesus, “Lord,[a] remember me when You come into Your kingdom.”

[43]And Jesus said to him, “Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.”

## JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS

[44]Now it was[a] about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. [45]Then the sun was darkened,[a] and the veil of the temple was torn in two. [46]And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, “Father, ‘into Your hands I commit My spirit.’ ”[a] Having said this, He breathed His last.

[47]So when the centurion saw what had happened, he glorified God, saying, “Certainly this was a righteous Man!”

[48]And the whole crowd who came together to that sight, seeing what had been done, beat their breasts and returned. [49]But all His acquaintances, and the women who followed Him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching

these things.

**JESUS BURIED IN JOSEPH'S TOMB**

50 Now behold, *there was* a man named Joseph, a council member, a good
and just man. 51 He had not consented to their decision and deed. *He was* from
Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who himself was also waiting[a] for the kingdom
of God. 52 This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. 53 Then he
took it down, wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a tomb *that was* hewn out of
the rock, where no one had ever lain before. 54 That day was the Preparation,
and the Sabbath drew near.

55 And the women who had come with Him from Galilee followed after,
and they observed the tomb and how His body was laid. 56 Then they returned
and prepared spices and fragrant oils. And they rested on the Sabbath
according to the commandment.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# THE THIEF AND HIS SAVIOR

## (LUKE 23:42)

Jesus had company when He died. Two criminals shared His fate. Three crosses formed a small group on the brow called Calvary one afternoon. The brief and conversation between three dying men led to a change of eternal destination for one painful conversation between three dying men led to a change of eternal destination for one of them.

One thief mocked Jesus with a challenge, "If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us" (Luke 23:39). His words convey a desperate bitterness. He had no thought of responsibility or remorse. He died bitter, mocking, and unrepentant.

The other thief reached a different conclusion. He heard Jesus forgive His executioners. He sensed Jesus' innocence. Perhaps he had heard about Jesus elsewhere. He was shocked by the other thief's lack of conscience. "Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation?" he said (Luke 23:40). The second thief made a beautiful statement of faith that Jesus readily acknowledged. His words illustrate the heart of repentance:

- He accepted responsibility for his own sins. "We receive the due reward of our deeds" (Luke 23:41)
- He recognized the unique character and divinity of Christ. "This Man has done nothing wrong" (Luke 23:41). He called Jesus "Lord" and spoke of Jesus' kingdom (Luke 23:42). These phrases all reveal the thief's acceptance of Jesus' special role.
- He called out for salvation from his moral condition, not rescue from the cross. "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom" (Luke 23:42).
- His expression did not take forgiveness for granted, but placed his life at the mercy of Jesus.

Jesus' response to the faith of His dying companion is the same response that He gives to anyone who believes in Him whether or not the conversion occurs in the last moments of life. To those with a little longer to live, Jesus' words can be read with a slightly different punctuation. Instead of "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43), Jesus has the authority to declare to anyone who believes in Him, "Assuredly, I say to you today, you will be with Me in Paradise."

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about repentance The Blessing of a

Repentant Heart. See also the key passage note at 2 Corinthians 7:7-10.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Heavenly Promise** *(23:42, 43)* Contemplating one's death can cause anxiety and fear. For Jesus and the thief on the cross beside Him, death was imminent-only a few hours away. Instead of despairing, the thief put his trust in Jesus. In response, Jesus assured him, "Today you will be with Me in Paradise." Because of Jesus' death, eternal life and heaven are waiting for believers the moment they die. Even though the thought of death can make us sad or fearful, we know it is just the door through which we pass into heaven. There we will spend eternity with our Savior. **Topic: Eternal Life**

## HE IS RISEN

**24** Now on the first *day* of the week, very early in the morning, they, and
certain *other women* with them,[a] came to the tomb bringing the spices
which they had prepared. 2But they found the stone rolled away from the
tomb. 3Then they went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. 4And it
happened, as they were greatly[a] perplexed about this, that behold, two men
stood by them in shining garments. 5Then, as they were afraid and bowed
*their* faces to the earth, they said to them, "Why do you seek the living
among the dead? 6He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to
you when He was still in Galilee, 7saying, 'The Son of Man must be
delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise
again.' "

8And they remembered His words. 9Then they returned from the tomb and
told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. 10It was Mary
Magdalene, Joanna, Mary *the mother* of James, and the other *women* with
them, who told these things to the apostles. 11And their words seemed to
them like idle tales, and they did not believe them. 12But Peter arose and ran
to the tomb; and stooping down, he saw the linen cloths lying[a] by themselves;
and he departed, marveling to himself at what had happened.

## THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

13Now behold, two of them were traveling that same day to a village called
Emmaus, which was seven miles[a] from Jerusalem. 14And they talked together
of all these things which had happened. 15So it was, while they conversed and
reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. 16But their eyes
were restrained, so that they did not know Him.

17And He said to them, "What kind of conversation *is* this that you have
with one another as you walk and are sad?"[a]

18Then the one whose name was Cleopas answered and said to Him, "Are
You the only stranger in Jerusalem, and have You not known the things
which happened there in these days?"

19 And He said to them, “What things?”

So they said to Him, “The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, 20 and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him. 21 But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, today is the third day since these things happened. 22 Yes, and certain women of our company, who arrived at the tomb early, astonished us. 23 When they did not find His body, they came saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said He was alive. 24 And certain of those *who were* with us went to the tomb and found *it* just as the women had said; but Him they did not see.”

25 Then He said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?” 27 And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.

**THE DISCIPLES’ EYES OPENED**

28 Then they drew near to the village where they were going, and He indicated that He would have gone farther. 29 But they constrained Him, saying, “Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.” And He went in to stay with them.

30 Now it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, that He took bread, blessed and broke *it*, and gave it to them. 31 Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight.

32 And they said to one another, “Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?” 33 So they rose up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven and those *who were* with them gathered together, 34 saying, “The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!” 35 And they told about the things *that had happened* on the road, and how He was known to them in the breaking of bread.

## JESUS APPEARS TO HIS DISCIPLES

[36]Now as they said these things, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, “Peace to you.” [37]But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit. [38]And He said to them, “Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? [39]Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.”

[40]When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet.[a] [41]But while they still did not believe for joy, and marveled, He said to them, “Have you any food here?” [42]So they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and some honeycomb.[a] [43]And He took *it* and ate in their presence.

## THE SCRIPTURES OPENED

[44]Then He said to them, “These *are* the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and *the* Prophets and *the* Psalms concerning Me.” [45]And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.

[46]Then He said to them, “Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise[a] from the dead the third day, [47]and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. [48]And you are witnesses of these things. [49]Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem[a] until you are endued with power from on high.”

## THE ASCENSION

[50]And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. [51]Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven. [52]And they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, [53]and were continually in the temple praising and[a] blessing God. Amen.[b]

## SOUL NOTE

**Spiritual Power** *(24:49)* An automobile is useless without fuel; an electric light bulb cannot illuminate a room without electricity. Likewise, it is impossible to live the Christian life in our own strength. Even the disciples who had lived and walked with Jesus needed help. Jesus promised the most powerful help possible- the power of the Holy Spirit. Christians must have “power from on high” (the Holy Spirit) to live God-pleasing lives and to witness to others.
**Topic: Presence of the Holy Spirit**

# John



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# John

Humans are a churning, restless race with hungry hearts, thirsty souls, perplexed minds, and a yearning for real purpose and deep fulfillment. Want proof? Look at the faces during rush hour, in the mall, or at work. Read the paper. Better yet, look in the mirror! We may try to ignore such longings or bury them, but we cannot deny them.

Now look at the Gospel written by John, a close associate of Jesus, one of the original twelve disciples. Focus carefully on the One introduced as "the Word" (1:1), who "became flesh and dwelt among us" (1:14). Can this son of a carpenter, this itinerant preacher from Nazareth, really be God? What did Jesus mean-really-when He described Himself as "living water" (4:10), "the bread of life" (6:35), "the light of the world" (8:12), who has authority to give abundant life (10:10)?

John wrote his eyewitness account of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus for the express purpose of proclaiming (and proving) that Jesus is the Christ (the promised Messiah). He also wanted his readers to know that only trusting in Christ can bring eternal life (20:31). The result is a theological and literary masterpiece, loved by believers through the ages.

No matter what your soul needs-challenge, comfort, encouragement, or conviction-you will find it in abundance in the fourth Gospel. The living Christ stands ready to meet you and change you forever.

**SOUL CONCERNS IN**

## JOHN

KNOWING JESUS (1:29)

SALVATION (3:16)

PRESENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (16:5-15)

DOUBT (20:24-29)

RESTORATION (21:15-19)

## THE ETERNAL WORD

**1** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word
was God. [2]He was in the beginning with God. [3]All things were made
through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. [4]In Him
was life, and the life was the light of men. [5]And the light shines in the
darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend[a] it.

## JOHN'S WITNESS: THE TRUE LIGHT

[6]There was a man sent from God, whose name *was* John. [7]This man came
for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe.
[8]He was not that Light, but *was sent* to bear witness of that Light. [9]That was
the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world.[a]

[10]He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the
world did not know Him. [11]He came to His own,[a] and His own[b] did not
receive Him. [12]But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to
become children of God, to those who believe in His name: [13]who were born,
not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

## THE WORD BECOMES FLESH

[14]And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His
glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

[15]John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I
said, 'He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.'
"

[16]And[a] of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. [17]For the
law was given through Moses, *but* grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.
[18]No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son,[a] who is in the
bosom of the Father, He has declared *Him.*

## A VOICE IN THE WILDERNESS

[19]Now this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites

from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?”

[20]He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, “I am not the Christ.”

[21]And they asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?”

He said, “I am not.”

“Are you the Prophet?”

And he answered, “No.”

[22]Then they said to him, “Who are you, that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?”

[23]He said: “I *am*

‘The voice of one crying in the
wilderness:
“Make straight the way of the LORD,” ’[a]

as the prophet Isaiah said.”

[24]Now those who were sent were from the Pharisees. [25]And they asked him, saying, “Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?”

[26]John answered them, saying, “I baptize with water, but there stands One among you whom you do not know. [27]It is He who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose.”

[28]These things were done in Bethabara[a] beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

**THE LAMB OF GOD**

[29]The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! [30]This is He of whom I said, ‘After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me.’ [31]I did not know Him; but that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water.”

[32]And John bore witness, saying, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. [33]I did not know Him, but He who

sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ [34]And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.”

**THE FIRST DISCIPLES**

[35]Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples. [36]And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, “Behold the Lamb of God!”

[37]The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. [38]Then Jesus turned, and seeing them following, said to them, “What do you seek?”

They said to Him, “Rabbi” (which is to say, when translated, Teacher), “where are You staying?”

[39]He said to them, “Come and see.” They came and saw where He was staying, and remained with Him that day (now it was about the tenth hour).

[40]One of the two who heard John *speak,* and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. [41]He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which is translated, the Christ). [42]And he brought him to Jesus.

Now when Jesus looked at him, He said, “You are Simon the son of Jonah.[a] You shall be called Cephas” (which is translated, A Stone).

**PHILIP AND NATHANAEL**

[43]The following day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and He found Philip and said to him, “Follow Me.” [44]Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. [45]Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote-Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”

[46]And Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”

Philip said to him, “Come and see.”

[47]Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!”

[48]Nathanael said to Him, “How do You know me?”

Jesus answered and said to him, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.”

[49]Nathanael answered and said to Him, “Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!”

[50]Jesus answered and said to him, “Because I said to you, ‘I saw you under the fig tree,’ do you believe? You will see greater things than these.” [51]And He said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter[a] you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.”

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# NATHANAEL: FROM SKEPTIC TO DISCIPLE

## (JOHN 1:48)

Nathanael was honest and straightforward. He also was not easily impressed. When his friend Philip came to tell him that he and others had found the Messiah, a man named Jesus who came from Nazareth, Nathanael merely replied, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” (John 1:46). Obviously that low-class town couldn’t produce anything special, certainly not the Jews’ Messiah-or so Nathanael thought.

To his credit, however, when invited by Philip to “come and see” this man, Nathanael went. He was skeptical, but curious. Jesus’ first words to Nathanael reveal His insight into people’s character:

"Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!" (John 1:47). Jesus perceived Nathanael's straightforward honesty. He also had seen Nathanael's whereabouts when Philip found him. While on earth, Jesus used His miraculous powers for His kingdom's sake, and here He gained a disciple when Nathanael perceived that power in Jesus. Immediately, Nathanael realized that Jesus was indeed the Son of God, the King of Israel.

Nathanael had successfully moved from skeptic to disciple. Jesus gave him exactly the proof he needed to help him understand and believe. Jesus is always working in people's hearts, bringing them to exactly the right point-through inner turmoil, or serious questioning, or outward circumstances-to help them put it all together and see Jesus. When they accept Him, Jesus gives them salvation and eternal life.

Salvation is only a prayer away. Christ does not make it difficult to be saved, because He *wants* people to come to Him. Don't look for proof-look for Jesus.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Clothed with Garments of Salvation. See also the key passage note at John 3:16.

**WHO IS JESUS CHRIST?**

ED HINDSON

(John 1:29)

**J**esus is the primary figure of the Bible. The Old Testament promises His coming; the New Testament describes His arrival on the scene of humanity that changed the course of history. One cannot read the New Testament without being confronted by Jesus. His person is overwhelming. His character is irresistibly attractive. His teachings are life-changing. But many still ask: Is He simply to be admired, or is He to be worshiped? Is He a good man, or is He God?

The more closely we examine the person, character, and claims of Jesus, the more we are compelled to see that He was more than just a man. Jesus was born in obscurity, raised in poverty, and crucified in ignominy. Yet, His life transformed the world. His ministry was characterized by preaching the good news of God's grace to fallen humanity.

The name Jesus means "Savior"; Christ means "Messiah." Technically, He is Jesus, the Christ. The Bible emphasizes that He is the promised Messiah of the Old Testament who was born of a virgin and miraculously entered the human race as God in the flesh (Matt. 1:23; John 1:14).

More than anything else, Jesus brings hope to people's hopelessness. He is depicted as the Word of God (John 1:1), the Light of the World (John 1:7-9), the Lamb of God (John 1:29), and the Son of God (John 1:49). He meets us at our greatest points of need and offers us God's salvation, love, and grace.

## HIS DEITY AND HUMANITY

The Gospels paint four portraits of Jesus. Together, they give us a full picture of the person of Christ. Each focuses on a specific aspect of the same individual. Matthew pictures Him as the King of the Jews. Mark portrays Him as the Servant of the Lord. Luke displays Him as the Son of Man. John shows Him as the Son of God. By combining these portraits, we see the various facets of this incredible person-royalty, ministry, humanity, and deity-all in one.

John's Gospel in particular is woven around seven miracles, seven messages, and seven declarations of Jesus. The central statement being Jesus' declaration: "Before Abraham was, I AM" (John 8:58). His listeners immediately took this to be a claim of deity. Jesus was connecting Himself to the "I AM" declaration of God in Exodus 3:14. Around this central concept, John uses seven other "I am" statements by Jesus to give us a series of word pictures of the Savior:

- "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35)
- "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12)
- "I am the door of the sheep" (John 10:7)
- "I am the good shepherd" (John 10:11)
- "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25)
- "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6)
- "I am the true vine" (John 15:1)

The Gospel writers give us a picture of the most incredible man who ever lived. He healed the sick, raised the dead, fed the hungry, and loved the outcasts. His miracles were amazing. His teachings were brilliant. His insights into human nature were remarkable. Like a diamond, reflecting various streams of color and brilliance, Jesus shines as a perfect and complete picture of God. He looked like a man, but He talked like God. He lived among people, but He also lived above them. Indeed, in Him, God "became flesh" (John 1:14).

## HIS IRRESISTIBLE APPEAL

Jesus is the epitome of divine love, sufficient grace, and eternal hope. No one will ever love us like He loves us. No one will ever care for us like He cares. Ultimately, He died on the Cross for our sins (1 Cor. 15:1-4). The good news of the gospel compels us to believe that He died for us personally. He calls upon us to trust His death as a sufficient payment for our sins.

Faith is the act of believing that activates our commitment to Jesus Christ as our personal Savior. It is the key that personalizes our relationship to Him. Saving faith means that we believe Jesus died for our sins and offers us the gift of eternal life. All we have to do is believe it! Such an act of faith receives the free gift of this grace, believes this offer to be sincere, and trusts Him to keep His promises-forever.

Charles Spurgeon, the great British preacher, said it best over a century ago when he wrote: "You may study, look, and meditate, but Jesus is a greater Savior than you think Him to be, even when your thoughts are at their highest." Jesus Christ is more willing to love us, accept us, help us, and forgive us than we ourselves are. It is no wonder they call Him the Savior!

Jesus came so that we might know God personally. He suffered and died for our sins so that they might be "paid in full" (John 19:30; 1 Pet. 2:21-24). Then He rose from the dead to offer us the gift of eternal life (John 10:28). We can have that gift by receiving His gracious offer by faith. Believing in Jesus is an act of trust by which we affirm that what He did for us on the Cross is enough. On that basis, the Bible promises: "Whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved" (Rom. 10:13).

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of knowing Jesus include:

- Isaiah 53
- Acts 4:12; 9:3-6; 10:36-43
- Colossians 1:15-23
- Hebrews 1:1-4; 12:1, 2; 13:8
- Revelation 1:9-20; 3:20; 19:11-16; 22:20

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on knowing Jesus at John 14:6. See also the personality profile of Nicodemus: a Conversation with

Christ.

## WATER TURNED TO WINE

**2** On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of
Jesus was there. [2]Now both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the
wedding. [3]And when they ran out of wine, the mother of Jesus said to Him,
"They have no wine."

[4]Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me?
My hour has not yet come."

[5]His mother said to the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do *it.*"

[6]Now there were set there six waterpots of stone, according to the manner
of purification of the Jews, containing twenty or thirty gallons apiece. [7]Jesus
said to them, "Fill the waterpots with water." And they filled them up to the
brim. [8]And He said to them, "Draw *some* out now, and take *it* to the master of
the feast." And they took *it.* [9]When the master of the feast had tasted the
water that was made wine, and did not know where it came from (but the
servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the
bridegroom. [10]And he said to him, "Every man at the beginning sets out the
good wine, and when the *guests* have well drunk, then the inferior. You have
kept the good wine until now!"

[11]This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His
glory; and His disciples believed in Him.

[12]After this He went down to Capernaum, He, His mother, His brothers,
and His disciples; and they did not stay there many days.

## JESUS CLEANSES THE TEMPLE

[13]Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to
Jerusalem. [14]And He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and
doves, and the money changers doing business. [15]When He had made a whip
of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen,
and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables. [16]And He said
to those who sold doves, "Take these things away! Do not make My Father's
house a house of merchandise!" [17]Then His disciples remembered that it was

written, “Zeal for Your house has eaten[a] Me up.”[b]

18So the Jews answered and said to Him, “What sign do You show to us, since You do these things?”

19Jesus answered and said to them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”

20Then the Jews said, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?”

21But He was speaking of the temple of His body. 22Therefore, when He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this to them;[a] and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said.

## THE DISCERNER OF HEARTS

23Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name when they saw the signs which He did. 24But Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all *men,* 25and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man.

### SOUL NOTE

**Wedding Invitation** *(2:2)* Marriage was created by God for men and women to enjoy and to provide a solid environment for family. Jesus blessed the couple in Cana with His presence at their wedding celebration. Christian couples still invite Jesus to their wedding, making their personal relationships with Him the central part of the ceremony, as well as placing themselves in His hands for their future life together. Jesus’ presence in a marriage gives it a spiritual vitality that helps the couple make good decisions, resolve problems, and raise their children to honor God. Place Jesus at the center of your marriage. He will bless it with His presence. **Topic: Marriage**

**THE NEW BIRTH**

**3** There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.
2 This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, “Rabbi, we know that
You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do
unless God is with him.”

3 Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one
is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

4 Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he
enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?”

5 Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water
and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of
the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Do not marvel
that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ 8 The wind blows where it
wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and
where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

9 Nicodemus answered and said to Him, “How can these things be?”

10 Jesus answered and said to him, “Are you the teacher of Israel, and do
not know these things? 11 Most assuredly, I say to you, We speak what We
know and testify what We have seen, and you do not receive Our witness.
12 If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you
believe if I tell you heavenly things? 13 No one has ascended to heaven but He
who came down from heaven, *that is,* the Son of Man who is in heaven.[a]
14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son
of Man be lifted up, 15 that whoever believes in Him should not perish but[a]
have eternal life. 16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only
begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have
everlasting life. 17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn
the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

18 “He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe
is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only
begotten Son of God. 19 And this is the condemnation, that the light has come

into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. [20]For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. [21]But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."

**JOHN THE BAPTIST EXALTS CHRIST**

[22]After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and there He remained with them and baptized. [23]Now John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there. And they came and were baptized. [24]For John had not yet been thrown into prison.

[25]Then there arose a dispute between *some* of John's disciples and the Jews about purification. [26]And they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified-behold, He is baptizing, and all are coming to Him!"

> "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."
> JOHN 3:16

[27]John answered and said, "A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven. [28]You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ,' but, 'I have been sent before Him.' [29]He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled. [30]He must increase, but I *must* decrease. [31]He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all. [32]And what He has seen and heard, that He testifies; and no one receives His testimony. [33]He who has received His testimony has certified that God is true. [34]For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God does not give the Spirit by measure. [35]The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand. [36]He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son

shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# NICODEMUS: A CONVERSATION WITH CHRIST

## (JOHN 3:1)

As a member of the ruling Pharisee party, Nicodemus was in a very prestigious group. The Pharisees were the experts in the law. As zealous students of the Scriptures, they should have been the first to recognize the Messiah when He arrived on the scene. Unfortunately, they not only missed the truth about Jesus, but most of them actively sought, and accomplished, His death.

But Nicodemus *did* see something-Someone-he couldn't explain. He saw the glimmer of truth in what he had been observing about Jesus. So he sought out Jesus, going by night so as to be able to speak confidentially with this unusual Teacher.

Nicodemus started the conversation by explaining that he understood that God had to be with Jesus because of the miracles Jesus could do. Nicodemus was on the right track, and Jesus got right to the heart of the matter, explaining to Nicodemus that faith requires more than just understanding that Jesus is the Messiah-one has to be "born again." In the report of this conversation with Nicodemus, we read the words that have brought millions to their knees across the

centuries, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

Knowing Jesus means more than knowing about Him. To really know Jesus, we must be born all over again, experiencing spiritual regeneration. We’re born again when we repent of our sins and accept Jesus Christ as Savior. With that act, we embark on a lifetime of knowing more and more about Jesus Christ. As we walk with Him, as we deepen our relationship with Him, we get to know Him better and better as our Savior, our Lord, and our Friend.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Who Is Jesus Christ?. See also the key passage note at John 14:6.

**CLOTHED WITH GARMENTS OF SALVATION**

JAMES CLINTON

(John 3:16)

**“T**o be saved” means deliverance from impending destruction. In the Bible, the word “salvation” ultimately refers to deliverance from sin and its final consequences-death and eternity in hell. The most important decision we will ever make in this life is what we will do with God’s offer of salvation.

The heart of the gospel (“good news”) is expressed in John 3:16:

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." God's love is expressed in this willingness to send His Son, Jesus Christ, to die in our place and atone for our sins. His sacrificial death for our sins is the only basis of our acceptance by God. The apostle Peter said, "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

**SALVATION NEEDED**

Everyone needs to be saved. Romans 3:23 says that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Because of sinful nature and sinful actions, all have come short of the standard of spiritual perfection. All need God's grace and forgiveness to pardon sins and provide the gift of eternal life.

The Bible describes humanity's spiritual condition as "unclean" (Is. 64:6), "lost" (Luke 19:10), "condemned" (John 3:18), and "blind" (John 12:40). Spiritually, there is nothing to commend the lost to God. They are helpless to save themselves. The lost have no personal relationship with God. They are needy, and only He can meet the need. God alone can forgive sins, save souls, and bless lives. The lost can only ask, like the Philippian jailer, "What must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30).

**SALVATION PROVIDED**

God loves us so much that He sent His Son to be our Savior. "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). Jesus died for us that we might live with God forever. He took the punishment for our sins so that we might be saved. Second Corinthians 5:21 states that God "made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

The apostle John expressed this gift of salvation when he wrote, "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10). Jesus demonstrated God's love for us when He died for our sins on the Cross. The apostle Peter said, "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God" (1 Pet. 3:18).

The atoning death of Jesus Christ for our sins is the heart of the gospel. Paul said, "I declare to you the gospel . . . that Christ died for our sins according the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:1, 3, 4). The death of Christ secured our salvation; His resurrection guarantees our eternal life.

## SALVATION RECEIVED

The Hebrew term for "salvation" in the Old Testament is *yeshu'ah,* describing deliverance from distress as well as the state of well-being that results from being delivered. The New Testament uses the Greek word *soteria,* a term that includes not just deliverance, but God's forgiveness of sins. The apostle Paul said, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes" (Rom. 1:16). The Bible explains that salvation is based upon God's grace and accomplished by Christ's sacrificial death for sin: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8). Salvation includes *justification* (the act of being declared just or righteous by God) and *redemption* (being freed by the payment of Christ's blood for sin).

Salvation is a gift of God's grace. We don't deserve it and we can't earn it. It must be received as a gift. John 1:12 says, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name." As incredible as it sounds, salvation is the gift of God. It can only be received by faith. When we believe that Jesus died for *our* sin and in *our* place, we can only respond with love and gratitude. As the hymn writer said, "Jesus paid

it all; all to Him I owe."

The invitation of Scripture is clear. Romans 10:13 says, "Whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved." If you have never asked Jesus Christ to be your Savior, you can ask Him right now. In fact, you could pray something like this:

*Dear God, thank You for loving me so much that You sent Your Son to die for my sins. I admit that I need Your love and forgiveness. I believe that Jesus paid for my sins on the Cross, and I receive Him by faith as my personal Savior. I accept the free gift of salvation as my very own.*

Pray this from your heart. God will hear your prayer, forgive your sins, and give you the gift of eternal salvation. Now seek out a Bible-believing church and live for Christ for the rest of your life!

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of salvation include:

- Psalms 3:8; 119:155
- Zechariah 9:9, 10
- John 7:37, 38
- Romans 1:16; 10:10
- 2 Corinthians 5:17
- Philippians 1:6; 2:12, 13
- 2 Timothy 3:15
- Hebrews 2:3; 4:16

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on salvation at John 3:16. See also the personality profile note of Nathanael: From Skeptic To Disciple.

**KEY PASSAGE**

# GOD'S GREAT LOVE

# (3:16)

God created and loves us, but sin separates us from Him. For us to be saved, sin had to be removed, its penalty had to be paid. God, in His great love, sent His only Son to die on the Cross in our place (Rom. 5:8). Because of Jesus' death and resurrection, God offers salvation to all.

- Salvation comes through confessing and believing (Rom. 10:9).
- Salvation is a brand new start, a new birth (John 3:16; Titus 3:5).
- Salvation is a gift, not a reward (Eph. 2:8, 9).
- Salvation makes people new creations (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15).
- Salvation gives eternal life (Rom. 6:23).

To *be saved* means to trust in Christ alone for salvation. This happens when a person confesses to being a sinner, repents of it, and asks Christ to save them and take control of their life. Doing this isn't difficult, but it is by far the most important decision a person can ever make.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Clothed With Garments Of Salvation. See also the personality profile of Nathanael: From Skeptic To Disciple.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# JOHN THE BAPTIST: EVERYTHING FOR JESUS

## (JOHN 3:30)

John the Baptist was completely sold out for Jesus. John had been given a mission since before his birth, and he fulfilled that mission completely and wholeheartedly. John denied himself in order to see to it that people's hearts were prepared for the coming Messiah.

John had an urgent message, and a unique way of presenting it. John did not go to the temple and speak to the leadership; he went into the desert and spoke to the throngs who followed him there, irresistibly drawn by his message. John "was clothed in camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey" (Matt. 3:4). Although John himself was a fulfillment of Scripture (John 1:23), he did not consider himself to be of greater importance than Christ. He understood that his role was to be the messenger, to direct people to Someone else. "I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before Him . . . He must increase, but I must decrease," he said. When the time came for Christ to begin His ministry, John willingly stepped aside, sending his own followers to follow "the Lamb of God" (John 1:35, 36).

Self-denial is not refusing to enjoy life or have fulfillment. It's a willingness to set aside our own agenda in favor of following the Lamb of God. Self-denial means finding complete gratification in

life, for we are only denying ourselves some activities, possessions, or honors in order for God to give us greater opportunities to serve Him-and greater joy in the end.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about self-denial The Cost Of Commitment. See also the key passage note at Galatians 2:20.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Why Believe?** *(3:36)* John the Baptist pointed people to Jesus as the Messiah. John made it clear that people have only two options when it comes to making a decision about Christ. Those who believe in the Son have everlasting life. The moment they believe, they begin eternal life. Those who do not believe the Son, however, face the wrath of God. They have rejected God, and in the end He will reject them. The choice is clear. To not accept Christ is to reject Him. There is no middle ground. **Topic: Eternal Life**

## A SAMARITAN WOMAN MEETS HER MESSIAH

**4** Therefore, when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus
made and baptized more disciples than John [2](though Jesus Himself did
not baptize, but His disciples), [3]He left Judea and departed again to Galilee.
[4]But He needed to go through Samaria.

[5]So He came to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near the plot of
ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. [6]Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus
therefore, being wearied from *His* journey, sat thus by the well. It was about
the sixth hour.

[7]A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a
drink." [8]For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.

[9]Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, "How is it that You, being a
Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" For Jews have no dealings
with Samaritans.

[10]Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it
is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He
would have given you living water."

[11]The woman said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the
well is deep. Where then do You get that living water? [12]Are You greater
than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as
well as his sons and his livestock?"

[13]Jesus answered and said to her, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst
again, [14]but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never
thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of
water springing up into everlasting life."

[15]The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst,
nor come here to draw."

[16]Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here."

[17]The woman answered and said, "I have no husband."

Jesus said to her, "You have well said, 'I have no husband,' [18]for you have

had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly."

[19]The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. [20]Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you *Jews* say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship."

[21]Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. [22]You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. [23]But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. [24]God *is* Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

[25]The woman said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When He comes, He will tell us all things."

[26]Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am *He*."

**THE WHITENED HARVEST**

[27]And at this *point* His disciples came, and they marveled that He talked with a woman; yet no one said, "What do You seek?" or, "Why are You talking with her?"

[28]The woman then left her waterpot, went her way into the city, and said to the men, [29]"Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" [30]Then they went out of the city and came to Him.

[31]In the meantime His disciples urged Him, saying, "Rabbi, eat."

[32]But He said to them, "I have food to eat of which you do not know."

[33]Therefore the disciples said to one another, "Has anyone brought Him *anything* to eat?"

[34]Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work. [35]Do you not say, 'There are still four months and *then* comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest! [36]And he who reaps receives

wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. [37]For in this the saying is true: ‘One sows and another reaps.’ [38]I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labors.”

**THE SAVIOR OF THE WORLD**

[39]And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, “He told me all that I *ever* did.” [40]So when the Samaritans had come to Him, they urged Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days. [41]And many more believed because of His own word.

[42]Then they said to the woman, “Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard *Him* and we know that this is indeed the Christ,[a] the Savior of the world.”

**WELCOME AT GALILEE**

[43]Now after the two days He departed from there and went to Galilee. [44]For Jesus Himself testified that a prophet has no honor in his own country. [45]So when He came to Galilee, the Galileans received Him, having seen all the things He did in Jerusalem at the feast; for they also had gone to the feast.

**A NOBLEMAN’S SON HEALED**

[46]So Jesus came again to Cana of Galilee where He had made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman whose son was sick at Capernaum. [47]When he heard that Jesus had come out of Judea into Galilee, he went to Him and implored Him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death. [48]Then Jesus said to him, “Unless you *people* see signs and wonders, you will by no means believe.”

[49]The nobleman said to Him, “Sir, come down before my child dies!”

[50]Jesus said to him, “Go your way; your son lives.” So the man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him, and he went his way. [51]And as he was now going down, his servants met him and told *him*, saying, “Your son lives!”

[52]Then he inquired of them the hour when he got better. And they said to

him, “Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him.” [53]So the father knew that *it was* at the same hour in which Jesus said to him, “Your son lives.” And he himself believed, and his whole household.

[54]This again *is* the second sign Jesus did when He had come out of Judea into Galilee.

**KEY PASSAGE**

# TRUE WORSHIP

## (4:23, 24)

Worship has always been very important to God’s people. Sometimes, however, people are more concerned about the place, rituals, and ceremonies of worship than they are with its true meaning. And many worship with their mouths but not with their hearts. God doesn’t want that kind of worship (Amos 5:21-23).

We can worship God anywhere because He is Spirit. He isn’t confined to a building. God wants His people to “worship in spirit and truth.” Because Jesus is the truth (John 14:6), we worship God through our acceptance of Jesus’ sacrifice on our behalf. And we worship out of hearts made pure by His shed blood. We worship out of love and adoration for God, who reached out to us. We worship when we quiet ourselves before Him, thinking of all He has done for us. We worship also when we praise God with words and music. In whatever setting, we worship when we give God all the glory.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about The Importance Of Praise And Worship. See also the personality profile of Praising The Lord With Asaph.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Soulful Worship** *(4:24)* As Jesus spoke with the Samaritan woman about worshiping God, He emphasized that "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." The Samaritan woman described a conflict about *where* people should worship (4:20); Jesus pointed out *how* they should worship. The true nature of Christian worship is not about places or rituals; instead, it is the response of the soul when it encounters the living God. True worship of God involves opening up and surrendering our lives to Him.
**Topic: Knowing God**

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# THE WOMAN AT THE WELL: FOUND AND FORGIVEN

## (JOHN 4:16-18)

She came to the well in the heat of the day, most likely to avoid the crowds of women who came to get their water in the cool of the

morning. She was a social outcast, and she tried to avoid people as much as possible. One day, however, she could not avoid a Man who would not let her avoid her past!

Jesus sat at the well as she approached. Normally men did not speak to women in public. Jewish men did not speak to Samaritan men, let alone Samaritan women. Jewish men would have nothing to do with a woman known to be living in sin. Yet Jesus broke all these barriers to speak to this woman about eternal life.

Jesus dug down to this woman's heart and brought her sin into the noonday sun. She had been married five times and was currently living with a man who was not her husband. She had experienced love and loss, and it seems she had turned away from marriage completely, preferring to live in sin. But Jesus taught her about Himself, and how His living water could change her life.

Divorce is not an unforgivable sin. As painful as divorce is for all involved, and as heartbreaking as divorce is for those who face it without wanting it, God can touch broken hearts and lives and make them whole again. When possible, couples should seek every option they can to avoid divorce. At times, however, the unthinkable occurs. God is there to help us pick up the pieces. He revealed Himself to this sinful and heartbroken woman at the well, and He does the same for those today who seek Him out of their brokenness. He can put together the pieces of our lives and make us whole again.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Divorce Recovery. See also the key passage note at Matthew 19:3-8.

## A MAN HEALED AT THE POOL OF BETHESDA

**5** After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.
2 Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep *Gate* a pool, which is called in
Hebrew, Bethesda,[a] having five porches. 3 In these lay a great multitude of
sick people, blind, lame, paralyzed, waiting for the moving of the water. 4 For
an angel went down at a certain time into the pool and stirred up the water;
then whoever stepped in first, after the stirring of the water, was made well of
whatever disease he had.[a] 5 Now a certain man was there who had an
infirmity thirty-eight years. 6 When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that
he already had been *in that condition* a long time, He said to him, "Do you
want to be made well?"

7 The sick man answered Him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool
when the water is stirred up; but while I am coming, another steps down
before me."

8 Jesus said to him, "Rise, take up your bed and walk." 9 And immediately
the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked.

And that day was the Sabbath. 10 The Jews therefore said to him who was
cured, "It is the Sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your bed."

11 He answered them, "He who made me well said to me, 'Take up your
bed and walk.' "

12 Then they asked him, "Who is the Man who said to you, 'Take up your
bed and walk'?" 13 But the one who was healed did not know who it was, for
Jesus had withdrawn, a multitude being in *that* place. 14 Afterward Jesus
found him in the temple, and said to him, "See, you have been made well. Sin
no more, lest a worse thing come upon you."

15 The man departed and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him
well.

## HONOR THE FATHER AND THE SON

16 For this reason the Jews persecuted Jesus, and sought to kill Him,[a]
because He had done these things on the Sabbath. 17 But Jesus answered

them, “My Father has been working until now, and I have been working.”

[18]Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God. [19]Then Jesus answered and said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner. [20]For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does; and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel. [21]For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to *them,* even so the Son gives life to whom He will. [22]For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, [23]that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.

**LIFE AND JUDGMENT ARE THROUGH THE SON**

[24]“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life. [25]Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live. [26]For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, [27]and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man. [28]Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice [29]and come forth-those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation. [30]I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.

> “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.”
> JOHN 5:24

**THE FOURFOLD WITNESS**

[31]"If I bear witness of Myself, My witness is not true. [32]There is another who bears witness of Me, and I know that the witness which He witnesses of Me is true. [33]You have sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth. [34]Yet I do not receive testimony from man, but I say these things that you may be saved. [35]He was the burning and shining lamp, and you were willing for a time to rejoice in his light. [36]But I have a greater witness than John's; for the works which the Father has given Me to finish-the very works that I do-bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me. [37]And the Father Himself, who sent Me, has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form. [38]But you do not have His word abiding in you, because whom He sent, Him you do not believe. [39]You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. [40]But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.

[41]"I do not receive honor from men. [42]But I know you, that you do not have the love of God in you. [43]I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive. [44]How can you believe, who receive honor from one another, and do not seek the honor that *comes* from the only God? [45]Do not think that I shall accuse you to the Father; there is *one* who accuses you-Moses, in whom you trust. [46]For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me. [47]But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?"

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# THE MAN AT THE POOL: FREEDOM FROM PAIN

## (JOHN 5:6)

People in pain will do almost anything to feel better. They use medicines and drugs to deaden pain. People who live with pain face the daily battle with an enemy that won't go away and won't let up. People in pain long to be released.

The man beside the pool of Bethesda had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. He lay with many other sick people beside this pool, waiting for a stirring of the waters that would enable a miraculous cure for the first person to enter the water. He longed to be freed, but his infirmity made it impossible for him to get to the moving water in time.

Then along came Jesus. Out of all the sick people around the pool, Jesus selected this man. He must have seen an attitude of faith in this man, and so Jesus approached him with the question, "Do you want to be made well?" And Jesus made him well-immediately and completely. The man who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years "took up his bed, and walked" (John 5:9).

Jesus has the power to heal any pain, but His first priority is to heal people spiritually. He may take away a person's pain, as He did this man's. Or He may not take away the pain, as He would not remove Paul's physical difficulty (2 Cor. 12:7-10). Whatever the Lord does, however, it's because He understands the big picture and knows what He can accomplish either through healing a person's pain or through giving that person grace and peace in spite of the pain. We can pray for healing, but most of all, we need to pray for spiritual growth and maturity, and that God will work through people's lives for His glory.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Pain: Problem, Puzzle, Parable. See also the key passage note at Hebrews 4:14-16.

## FEEDING THE FIVE THOUSAND

**6** After these things Jesus went over the Sea of Galilee, which is *the Sea* of
Tiberias. [2]Then a great multitude followed Him, because they saw His
signs which He performed on those who were diseased. [3]And Jesus went up
on the mountain, and there He sat with His disciples.

[4]Now the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was near. [5]Then Jesus lifted up *His*
eyes, and seeing a great multitude coming toward Him, He said to Philip,
"Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" [6]But this He said to test
him, for He Himself knew what He would do.

[7]Philip answered Him, "Two hundred de-narii worth of bread is not
sufficient for them, that every one of them may have a little."

[8]One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to Him,
[9]"There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two small fish, but what
are they among so many?"

[10]Then Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." Now there was much grass
in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. [11]And
Jesus took the loaves, and when He had given thanks He distributed *them* to
the disciples, and the disciples[a] to those sitting down; and likewise of the
fish, as much as they wanted. [12]So when they were filled, He said to His
disciples, "Gather up the fragments that remain, so that nothing is lost."
[13]Therefore they gathered *them* up, and filled twelve baskets with the
fragments of the five barley loaves which were left over by those who had
eaten. [14]Then those men, when they had seen the sign that Jesus did, said,
"This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world."

## JESUS WALKS ON THE SEA

[15]Therefore when Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take
Him by force to make Him king, He departed again to the mountain by
Himself alone.

[16]Now when evening came, His disciples went down to the sea, [17]got into
the boat, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was already dark,

and Jesus had not come to them. [18]Then the sea arose because a great wind was blowing. [19]So when they had rowed about three or four miles,[a] they saw Jesus walking on the sea and drawing near the boat; and they were afraid. [20]But He said to them, “It is I; do not be afraid.” [21]Then they willingly received Him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land where they were going.

**THE BREAD FROM HEAVEN**

[22]On the following day, when the people who were standing on the other side of the sea saw that there was no other boat there, except that one which His disciples had entered,[a] and that Jesus had not entered the boat with His disciples, but His disciples had gone away alone- [23]however, other boats came from Tiberias, near the place where they ate bread after the Lord had given thanks- [24]when the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, nor His disciples, they also got into boats and came to Capernaum, seeking Jesus. [25]And when they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, “Rabbi, when did You come here?”

[26]Jesus answered them and said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. [27]Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him.”

[28]Then they said to Him, “What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?”

[29]Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.”

[30]Therefore they said to Him, “What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and believe You? What work will You do? [31]Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’ ”[a]

[32]Then Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from

heaven. [33]For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

[34]Then they said to Him, "Lord, give us this bread always."

[35]And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. [36]But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe. [37]All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. [38]For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. [39]This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. [40]And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day."

**REJECTED BY HIS OWN**

[41]The Jews then complained about Him, because He said, "I am the bread which came down from heaven." [42]And they said, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it then that He says, 'I have come down from heaven'?"

[43]Jesus therefore answered and said to them, "Do not murmur among yourselves. [44]No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. [45]It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.'[a] Therefore everyone who has heard and learned[b] from the Father comes to Me. [46]Not that anyone has seen the Father, except He who is from God; He has seen the Father. [47]Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me[a] has everlasting life. [48]I am the bread of life. [49]Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. [50]This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. [51]I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world."

[52]The Jews therefore quarreled among themselves, saying, "How can this

Man give us *His* flesh to eat?”

53 Then Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the
flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you.
54 Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will
raise him up at the last day. 55 For My flesh is food indeed,[a] and My blood is
drink indeed. 56 He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and
I in him. 57 As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so
he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. 58 This is the bread which came
down from heaven-not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who
eats this bread will live forever.”

59 These things He said in the synagogue as He taught in Capernaum.

## MANY DISCIPLES TURN AWAY

60 Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard *this*, said, “This is a
hard saying; who can understand it?”

61 When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples complained about this,
He said to them, “Does this offend you? 62 *What* then if you should see the
Son of Man ascend where He was before? 63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the
flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and *they* are
life. 64 But there are some of you who do not believe.” For Jesus knew from
the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray
Him. 65 And He said, “Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to
Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father.”

66 From that *time* many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no
more. 67 Then Jesus said to the twelve, “Do you also want to go away?”

68 But Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have
the words of eternal life. 69 Also we have come to believe and know that You
are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”[a]

70 Jesus answered them, “Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you
is a devil?” 71 He spoke of Judas Iscariot, *the son* of Simon, for it was he who
would betray Him, being one of the twelve.

## SOUL NOTE

**Secure** *(6:39, 40)* Jesus said that He would not lose even one person whom the Father had given Him. So how does that account for Judas, the disciple who committed suicide by hanging himself? Jesus didn't "lose" Judas, because he never believed in Jesus as the Messiah. Jesus later called Judas "the son of perdition" (17:12), because he was never saved. Everyone who believes in Jesus Christ as Savior *has* everlasting life, is secure in God's promise, and will be raised up at the last day. No one who has really trusted in Jesus Christ for their salvation will be lost. **Topic: Eternal Life**

## JESUS' BROTHERS DISBELIEVE

**7** After these things Jesus walked in Galilee; for He did not want to walk in
Judea, because the Jews[a] sought to kill Him. [2]Now the Jews' Feast of
Tabernacles was at hand. [3]His brothers therefore said to Him, "Depart from
here and go into Judea, that Your disciples also may see the works that You
are doing. [4]For no one does anything in secret while he himself seeks to be
known openly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world." [5]For
even His brothers did not believe in Him.

[6]Then Jesus said to them, "My time has not yet come, but your time is
always ready. [7]The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of
it that its works are evil. [8]You go up to this feast. I am not yet[a] going up to
this feast, for My time has not yet fully come." [9]When He had said these
things to them, He remained in Galilee.

## THE HEAVENLY SCHOLAR

[10]But when His brothers had gone up, then He also went up to the feast,
not openly, but as it were in secret. [11]Then the Jews sought Him at the feast,
and said, "Where is He?" [12]And there was much complaining among the
people concerning Him. Some said, "He is good"; others said, "No, on the
contrary, He deceives the people." [13]However, no one spoke openly of Him
for fear of the Jews.

[14]Now about the middle of the feast Jesus went up into the temple and
taught. [15]And the Jews marveled, saying, "How does this Man know letters,
having never studied?"

[16]Jesus[a] answered them and said, "My doctrine is not Mine, but His who
sent Me. [17]If any one wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the
doctrine, whether it is from God or *whether* I speak on My own *authority.*
[18]He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who seeks the
glory of the One who sent Him is true, and no unrighteousness is in Him.
[19]Did not Moses give you the law, yet none of you keeps the law? Why do
you seek to kill Me?"

[20]The people answered and said, “You have a demon. Who is seeking to kill You?”

[21]Jesus answered and said to them, “I did one work, and you all marvel. [22]Moses therefore gave you circumcision (not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath. [23]If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath, so that the law of Moses should not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made a man completely well on the Sabbath? [24]Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.”

## COULD THIS BE THE CHRIST?

[25]Now some of them from Jerusalem said, “Is this not He whom they seek to kill? [26]But look! He speaks boldly, and they say nothing to Him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is truly[a] the Christ? [27]However, we know where this Man is from; but when the Christ comes, no one knows where He is from.”

[28]Then Jesus cried out, as He taught in the temple, saying, “You both know Me, and you know where I am from; and I have not come of Myself, but He who sent Me is true, whom you do not know. [29]But[a] I know Him, for I am from Him, and He sent Me.”

[30]Therefore they sought to take Him; but no one laid a hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come. [31]And many of the people believed in Him, and said, “When the Christ comes, will He do more signs than these which this *Man* has done?”

## JESUS AND THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS

[32]The Pharisees heard the crowd murmuring these things concerning Him, and the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take Him. [33]Then Jesus said to them,[a] “I shall be with you a little while longer, and *then* I go to Him who sent Me. [34]You will seek Me and not find *Me*, and where I am you cannot come.”

[35]Then the Jews said among themselves, “Where does He intend to go that

we shall not find Him? Does He intend to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks? [36]What is this thing that He said, 'You will seek Me and not find Me, and where I am you cannot come'?"

**THE PROMISE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

[37]On the last day, that great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. [38]He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." [39]But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing[a] in Him would receive; for the Holy[b] Spirit was not yet *given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

**WHO IS HE?**

[40]Therefore many[a] from the crowd, when they heard this saying, said, "Truly this is the Prophet." [41]Others said, "This is the Christ."

But some said, "Will the Christ come out of Galilee? [42]Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the seed of David and from the town of Bethlehem, where David was?" [43]So there was a division among the people because of Him. [44]Now some of them wanted to take Him, but no one laid hands on Him.

**REJECTED BY THE AUTHORITIES**

[45]Then the officers came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, "Why have you not brought Him?"

[46]The officers answered, "No man ever spoke like this Man!"

[47]Then the Pharisees answered them, "Are you also deceived? [48]Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed in Him? [49]But this crowd that does not know the law is accursed."

[50]Nicodemus (he who came to Jesus by night,[a] being one of them) said to them, [51]"Does our law judge a man before it hears him and knows what he is doing?"

[52]They answered and said to him, "Are you also from Galilee? Search and

look, for no prophet has arisen[a] out of Galilee.”

## AN ADULTERESS FACES THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

53 And everyone went to his *own* house.[a]

**8** But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.

2 Now early[a] in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the
people came to Him; and He sat down and taught them. 3 Then the scribes and
Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had
set her in the midst, 4 they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman was caught[a] in
adultery, in the very act. 5 Now Moses, in the law, commanded[a] us that such
should be stoned.[b] But what do You say?"[c] 6 This they said, testing Him, that
they might have *something* of which to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down
and wrote on the ground with *His* finger, as though He did not hear.[a]

7 So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up[a] and said to
them, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first."
8 And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. 9 Then those who
heard *it*, being convicted by *their* conscience,[a] went out one by one,
beginning with the oldest *even* to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the
woman standing in the midst. 10 When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw
no one but the woman, He said to her,[a] "Woman, where are those accusers of
yours?[b] Has no one condemned you?"

11 She said, "No one, Lord."

And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and[a] sin no more."

12 Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He
who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."

**JESUS DEFENDS HIS SELF-WITNESS**

13 The Pharisees therefore said to Him, "You bear witness of Yourself;
Your witness is not true."

14 Jesus answered and said to them, "Even if I bear witness of Myself, My
witness is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going; but you
do not know where I come from and where I am going. 15 You judge
according to the flesh; I judge no one. 16 And yet if I do judge, My judgment
is true; for I am not alone, but I *am* with the Father who sent Me. 17 It is also
written in your law that the testimony of two men is true. 18 I am One who
bears witness of Myself, and the Father who sent Me bears witness of Me."

19 Then they said to Him, “Where is Your Father?”

Jesus answered, “You know neither Me nor My Father. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also.”

20 These words Jesus spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple; and no one laid hands on Him, for His hour had not yet come.

## JESUS PREDICTS HIS DEPARTURE

21 Then Jesus said to them again, “I am going away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin. Where I go you cannot come.”

22 So the Jews said, “Will He kill Himself, because He says, ‘Where I go you cannot come’?”

23 And He said to them, “You are from beneath; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. 24 Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am *He*, you will die in your sins.”

25 Then they said to Him, “Who are You?”

And Jesus said to them, “Just what I have been saying to you from the beginning. 26 I have many things to say and to judge concerning you, but He who sent Me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I heard from Him.”

> “And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”
> JOHN 8:32

27 They did not understand that He spoke to them of the Father.

28 Then Jesus said to them, “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am *He*, and *that* I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things. 29 And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him.” 30 As He spoke these words, many believed in Him.

## THE TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU FREE

[31]Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. [32]And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

[33]They answered Him, “We are Abraham’s descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How *can* You say, ‘You will be made free’?”

[34]Jesus answered them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. [35]And a slave does not abide in the house forever, *but* a son abides forever. [36]Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.

## ABRAHAM’S SEED AND SATAN’S

[37]“I know that you are Abraham’s descendants, but you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you. [38]I speak what I have seen with My Father, and you do what you have seen with[a] your father.”

[39]They answered and said to Him, “Abraham is our father.”

Jesus said to them, “If you were Abraham’s children, you would do the works of Abraham. [40]But now you seek to kill Me, a Man who has told you the truth which I heard from God. Abraham did not do this. [41]You do the deeds of your father.”

Then they said to Him, “We were not born of fornication; we have one Father-God.”

[42]Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me. [43]Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. [44]You are of *your* father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *resources,* for he is a liar and the father of it. [45]But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me. [46]Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me? [47]He who is of God hears God’s words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of

God.”

**BEFORE ABRAHAM WAS, I AM**

48 Then the Jews answered and said to Him, “Do we not say rightly that
You are a Samaritan and have a demon?”

49 Jesus answered, “I do not have a demon; but I honor My Father, and you
dishonor Me. 50 And I do not seek My *own* glory; there is One who seeks and
judges. 51 Most assuredly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he shall
never see death.”

52 Then the Jews said to Him, “Now we know that You have a demon!
Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and You say, ‘If anyone keeps My word
he shall never taste death.’ 53 Are You greater than our father Abraham, who
is dead? And the prophets are dead. Who do You make Yourself out to be?”

54 Jesus answered, “If I honor Myself, My honor is nothing. It is My Father
who honors Me, of whom you say that He is your[a] God. 55 Yet you have not
known Him, but I know Him. And if I say, ‘I do not know Him,’ I shall be a
liar like you; but I do know Him and keep His word. 56 Your father Abraham
rejoiced to see My day, and he saw *it* and was glad.”

57 Then the Jews said to Him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have
You seen Abraham?”

58 Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I
AM.”

59 Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and
went out of the temple,[a] going through the midst of them, and so passed by.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# THE WOMAN CAUGHT IN ADULTERY: SIN NO MORE

## (JOHN 8:1-11)

An odd scene greeted Jesus one day in the temple. As He was teaching, a commotion began as the religious leaders dragged before Jesus a woman caught in the very act of adultery. The religious leaders told Jesus that Moses' law demanded her death. Actually, the law demanded death for *both* the man and the woman, not just the woman (Deut. 22:22). Why the woman alone was brought is unclear; it is clear, however, that the leaders were interested in trapping Jesus into saying something for which they could condemn Him. For Jesus not to condemn her would be to go against Moses' law; yet these leaders doubted that Jesus would give the order to have her stoned. So they asked, "What do You say?" and then all involved awaited His answer with keen anticipation.

The unfolding scene pictures both condemnation of sin and redemption of sinners. Jesus did not condemn the woman, but neither did He let her off the hook. As the guilty leaders left, one by one, realizing that they were not without sin, the woman surely was incredulous at what Jesus had just done on her behalf. Jesus had saved her life, but He wanted to do more than that. When the woman answered Jesus' question saying that no one had condemned her, He answered, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."

Jesus offers forgiveness to all sinners. The sin of adultery is extremely painful-betraying trust and leading to broken hearts and lives. Those caught in the web of adultery-real or merely fantasized-need to get out as quickly as possible. The excitement is not worth the ultimate price. Jesus can give people the strength to avoid the temptation, to flee the sin. He says to those willing to repent and turn away, "Go and sin no more."

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Adultery. See also the key passage note at Proverbs 5:1-23.

## SOUL NOTE

**Unmistaken Identity** *(8:16-19)* The Pharisees were challenging Jesus' claim that He was the Messiah, believing that anyone who would make such claims would be either insane or a liar. Jesus provided them with a third alternative: He was telling the truth! Jesus emphasized that He was not acting alone, because He had a unique relationship with the Father. In fact, if people know Jesus, they know the Father. Elsewhere Jesus made His point even more clear, saying, "I and My Father are one" (10:30). To know Jesus is to know God. Jesus brings God into focus for our human eyes. **Topic: Knowing Jesus**

## KEY PASSAGE

# FREE INDEED!

# (8:31-36)

Prisoners yearn for freedom, as do people who are enslaved by sin. They want to be free of the sins that make their lives miserable. Jesus tells of a way to have that freedom-"know the truth."

Jesus is “the truth” (John 14:6). Truth is not an abstract concept; it’s a reality. When Pilate asked, “What is truth?” (John 18:38), the Truth was standing before him. Jesus came into the world to “bear witness to the truth” (John 18:37) and He was the Truth incarnate. The truth in Jesus frees us from the consequences of sin, from self-deception, and from deception by Satan. The truth in Jesus shows us the way to eternal life with God. The truth in Jesus will indeed set us free-free from sin’s death penalty and from the corrosive effects of sin in our lives.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Discovering Truth. See also the personality profile of Ananias-Caught In A Lie.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Final Answer** *(8:32)* Jesus told His followers that if they truly believed in Him as the Savior, they would know truth. Jesus is the source of truth, the perfect standard of what is right. “You shall know the truth,” Jesus said, “and the truth shall make you free.” When people discover the truth found in God’s Word, they free from sin. The world shouts its lies, and some are tempted to believe them. are set free from sin. The world shouts its lies, and some are tempted to believe them. Believers, however, can look to God’s Word and discern what is true and what is not. When we know Jesus and read His Word, we know the truth. **Topic: Truth**

## A MAN BORN BLIND RECEIVES SIGHT

**9** Now as *Jesus* passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. 2And His disciples asked Him, saying, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”

3Jesus answered, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him. 4I*a* must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; *the* night is coming when no one can work. 5As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”

6When He had said these things, He spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva; and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay. 7And He said to him, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” (which is translated, Sent). So he went and washed, and came back seeing.

8Therefore the neighbors and those who previously had seen that he was blind*a* said, “Is not this he who sat and begged?”

9Some said, “This is he.” Others *said,* “He is like him.”*a*

He said, “I am *he*.”

10Therefore they said to him, “How were your eyes opened?”

11He answered and said, “A Man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and said to me, ‘Go to the pool of*a* Siloam and wash.’ So I went and washed, and I received sight.”

12Then they said to him, “Where is He?”

He said, “I do not know.”

## THE PHARISEES EXCOMMUNICATE THE HEALED MAN

13They brought him who formerly was blind to the Pharisees. 14Now it was a Sabbath when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. 15Then the Pharisees also asked him again how he had received his sight. He said to them, “He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and I see.”

16Therefore some of the Pharisees said, “This Man is not from God,

because He does not keep the Sabbath."

Others said, "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" And there was a division among them.

[17]They said to the blind man again, "What do you say about Him because He opened your eyes?"

He said, "He is a prophet."

[18]But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind and received his sight, until they called the parents of him who had received his sight. [19]And they asked them, saying, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?"

[20]His parents answered them and said, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; [21]but by what means he now sees we do not know, or who opened his eyes we do not know. He is of age; ask him. He will speak for himself." [22]His parents said these *things* because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had agreed already that if anyone confessed *that* He *was* Christ, he would be put out of the synagogue. [23]Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

[24]So they again called the man who was blind, and said to him, "Give God the glory! We know that this Man is a sinner."

[25]He answered and said, "Whether He is a sinner *or not* I do not know. One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see."

[26]Then they said to him again, "What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?"

[27]He answered them, "I told you already, and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear *it* again? Do you also want to become His disciples?"

[28]Then they reviled him and said, "You are His disciple, but we are Moses' disciples. [29]We know that God spoke to Moses; *as for* this *fellow,* we do not know where He is from."

[30]The man answered and said to them, "Why, this is a marvelous thing, that you do not know where He is from; yet He has opened my eyes! [31]Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God

and does His will, He hears him. [32]Since the world began it has been unheard of that anyone opened the eyes of one who was born blind. [33]If this Man were not from God, He could do nothing."

[34]They answered and said to him, "You were completely born in sins, and are you teaching us?" And they cast him out.

**TRUE VISION AND TRUE BLINDNESS**

[35]Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when He had found him, He said to him, "Do you believe in the Son of God?"[a]

[36]He answered and said, "Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?"

[37]And Jesus said to him, "You have both seen Him and it is He who is talking with you."

[38]Then he said, "Lord, I believe!" And he worshiped Him.

[39]And Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind."

[40]Then *some* of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these words, and said to Him, "Are we blind also?"

[41]Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, 'We see.' Therefore your sin remains.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# THE BLIND MAN: REVEALING GOD'S GLORY

# (JOHN 9:1-7)

“Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” the disciples asked Jesus upon passing a man on the road who had been blind from birth. When people believe that problems are always the result of sin, then a person born blind must have sinned-or at least his parents must have sinned. That is not the case, however, as Jesus showed.

Genetic difficulties are hard to understand. Why does God allow some people to be born blind, deaf, or mentally disabled? While evil and imperfection were instigated by Satan, the presence of a genetic difficulty does not represent Satan specifically in the life of that person or that family. Instead, imperfection has touched all of creation. Actually, no one is perfect-we all are susceptible to illness, disability, and eventually death. Yet the all-powerful Creator is able to overrule imperfection and glorify Himself through it.

When questioned about the blind man, Jesus answered that it wasn’t about either him or his parents sinning, “but that the works of God should be revealed in him.” Jesus responded to this blind man by healing him and glorifying Himself in the process.

Jesus is the great Healer. Whether He heals miraculously through prayer, or by the hands of doctors, or by the effects of medication, He still heals. Sometimes He chooses not to heal. Either way, Jesus can always glorify Himself in the life of that person. Part of that glory is revealed in the way other people react to those with disabilities, showing Jesus’ love through their actions.

Someday all evil and impairment will be reversed after Christ returns and all believers are given perfect, glorified bodies. The ultimate glory will come when the blind see, the lame walk, the deaf hear, and all other disabilities are cast aside. All of us, however imperfect we may be now, can look forward to that great day.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about genetic issues Strength In Weakness. See also the key passage note at Isaiah 35:1-6.

## JESUS THE TRUE SHEPHERD

**10** “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by
the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.
2But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. 3To him the
doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep
by name and leads them out. 4And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes
before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. 5Yet they
will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not
know the voice of strangers.” 6Jesus used this illustration, but they did not
understand the things which He spoke to them.

## JESUS THE GOOD SHEPHERD

7Then Jesus said to them again, “Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the
door of the sheep. 8All who *ever* came before Me[a] are thieves and robbers,
but the sheep did not hear them. 9I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he
will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. 10The thief does not
come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may
have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly.

11“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.
12But a hireling, *he who is* not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep,
sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the
sheep and scatters them. 13The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does
not care about the sheep. 14I am the good shepherd; and I know My *sheep,*
and am known by My own. 15As the Father knows Me, even so I know the
Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. 16And other sheep I have which
are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and
there will be one flock *and* one shepherd.

17“Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may
take it again. 18No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have
power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have
received from My Father.”

19Therefore there was a division again among the Jews because of these

sayings. [20]And many of them said, “He has a demon and is mad. Why do you listen to Him?”

[21]Others said, “These are not the words of one who has a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?”

**THE SHEPHERD KNOWS HIS SHEEP**

[22]Now it was the Feast of Dedication in Jerusalem, and it was winter. [23]And Jesus walked in the temple, in Solomon’s porch. [24]Then the Jews surrounded Him and said to Him, “How long do You keep us in doubt? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly.”

[25]Jesus answered them, “I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father’s name, they bear witness of Me. [26]But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you.[a] [27]My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. [28]And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. [29]My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of My Father’s hand. [30]I and *My* Father are one.”

**RENEWED EFFORTS TO STONE JESUS**

[31]Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him. [32]Jesus answered them, “Many good works I have shown you from My Father. For which of those works do you stone Me?”

[33]The Jews answered Him, saying, “For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God.”

[34]Jesus answered them, “Is it not written in your law, ‘I said, “You are gods”’?[a] [35]If He called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), [36]do you say of Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’? [37]If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; [38]but if I do, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and believe[a] that the Father *is* in Me, and I in Him.” [39]Therefore they sought again to seize Him, but He escaped out of their hand.

**THE BELIEVERS BEYOND JORDAN**

40 And He went away again beyond the Jordan to the place where John was
baptizing at first, and there He stayed. 41 Then many came to Him and said,
“John performed no sign, but all the things that John spoke about this Man
were true.” 42 And many believed in Him there.

## THE DEATH OF LAZARUS

**11** Now a certain *man* was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the town of Mary and
her sister Martha. 2It was *that* Mary who anointed the Lord with fragrant
oil and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.
3Therefore the sisters sent to Him, saying, “Lord, behold, he whom You love
is sick.”

4When Jesus heard *that*, He said, “This sickness is not unto death, but for
the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it.”

5Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. 6So, when He heard
that he was sick, He stayed two more days in the place where He was. 7Then
after this He said to *the* disciples, “Let us go to Judea again.”

8*The* disciples said to Him, “Rabbi, lately the Jews sought to stone You,
and are You going there again?”

9Jesus answered, “Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks
in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. 10But
if one walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him.”
11These things He said, and after that He said to them, “Our friend Lazarus
sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up.”

12Then His disciples said, “Lord, if he sleeps he will get well.” 13However,
Jesus spoke of his death, but they thought that He was speaking about taking
rest in sleep.

14Then Jesus said to them plainly, “Lazarus is dead. 15And I am glad for
your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe. Nevertheless let us go
to him.”

16Then Thomas, who is called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, “Let
us also go, that we may die with Him.”

## I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE

17So when Jesus came, He found that he had already been in the tomb four
days. 18Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles[a] away. 19And
many of the Jews had joined the women around Martha and Mary, to comfort

them concerning their brother.

[20]Now Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met Him, but Mary was sitting in the house. [21]Now Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. [22]But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You.”

[23]Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.”

[24]Martha said to Him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”

[25]Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. [26]And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?”

[27]She said to Him, “Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.”

**JESUS AND DEATH, THE LAST ENEMY**

[28]And when she had said these things, she went her way and secretly called Mary her sister, saying, “The Teacher has come and is calling for you.” [29]As soon as she heard *that,* she arose quickly and came to Him. [30]Now Jesus had not yet come into the town, but was[a] in the place where Martha met Him. [31]Then the Jews who were with her in the house, and comforting her, when they saw that Mary rose up quickly and went out, followed her, saying, “She is going to the tomb to weep there.”[a]

[32]Then, when Mary came where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying to Him, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.”

[33]Therefore, when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled. [34]And He said, “Where have you laid him?”

They said to Him, “Lord, come and see.”

[35]Jesus wept. [36]Then the Jews said, “See how He loved him!”

"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"
JOHN 11:25, 26

37 And some of them said, "Could not this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind, also have kept this man from dying?"

**LAZARUS RAISED FROM THE DEAD**

38 Then Jesus, again groaning in Himself, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. 39 Jesus said, "Take away the stone."

Martha, the sister of him who was dead, said to Him, "Lord, by this time there is a stench, for he has been *dead* four days."

40 Jesus said to her, "Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?" 41 Then they took away the stone *from the place* where the dead man was lying.[a] And Jesus lifted up *His* eyes and said, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. 42 And I know that You always hear Me, but because of the people who are standing by I said *this*, that they may believe that You sent Me." 43 Now when He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth!" 44 And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Loose him, and let him go."

**THE PLOT TO KILL JESUS**

45 Then many of the Jews who had come to Mary, and had seen the things Jesus did, believed in Him. 46 But some of them went away to the Pharisees and told them the things Jesus did. 47 Then the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said, "What shall we do? For this Man works many signs. 48 If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation."

49 And one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all, 50 nor do you consider that it is expedient for us[a] that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should

perish.” [51]Now this he did not say on his own *authority;* but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, [52]and not for that nation only, but also that He would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad.

[53]Then, from that day on, they plotted to put Him to death. [54]Therefore Jesus no longer walked openly among the Jews, but went from there into the country near the wilderness, to a city called Ephraim, and there remained with His disciples.

[55]And the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went from the country up to Jerusalem before the Passover, to purify themselves. [56]Then they sought Jesus, and spoke among themselves as they stood in the temple, “What do you think-that He will not come to the feast?” [57]Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a command, that if anyone knew where He was, he should report *it,* that they might seize Him.

**SOUL NOTE**

**The Greatest Need** *(11:5)* Human beings need food, water, air, and shelter to stay alive. But to be truly alive and thriving, we also need love. Lack of love causes physical, emotional, and mental problems. Relationships often wither and die without love and caring. When Jesus lived on earth, He had a special relationship with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. They showed Him friendship and hospitality and were open to His message. Jesus nurtured that relationship with His interest in their lives and His love for them. God works through our human relationships to give us comfort and encouragement. Family and friends are blessings from God. **Topic: Relationships**

**KEY PASSAGE**

# HE UNDERSTANDS

# (11:35-44)

Because of sin, death comes to all (Rom. 5:12-14). Many try to ignore death, not wanting to think or talk about it. But feared or embraced, expected or not, death still occurs. The death of a loved one evokes many emotions: fear, sorrow, grief, anger, and a great sense of loss. Jesus experienced those emotions at the death of His good friend Lazarus. The fact that Jesus raised Lazarus back to life does not erase the reality of His compassion and sorrow. Jesus understands grief. He knows the pain of loss and uncontrollable sorrow. He knows the incredible power of death. In fact, He took on that power and defeated it through His death and resurrection.

It is natural to feel sad and mourn the death of a loved one. We deeply miss the close relationship we had with that person. But in our times of sorrow, we can let Jesus hold us in His compassionate arms, knowing that He understands.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Dealing With Loss And Grief. See also the personality profile of Job's Wife: Learning Of God And Grief.

## THE ANOINTING AT BETHANY

**12** Then, six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was who had been dead,[a] whom He had raised from the dead. [2]There they made Him a supper; and Martha served, but Lazarus was one of those who sat at the table with Him. [3]Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil.

[4]But one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's *son,* who would betray Him, said, [5]"Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii[a] and given to the poor?" [6]This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it.

[7]But Jesus said, "Let her alone; she has kept[a] this for the day of My burial. [8]For the poor you have with you always, but Me you do not have always."

## THE PLOT TO KILL LAZARUS

[9]Now a great many of the Jews knew that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead. [10]But the chief priests plotted to put Lazarus to death also, [11]because on account of him many of the Jews went away and believed in Jesus.

## THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY

[12]The next day a great multitude that had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, [13]took branches of palm trees and went out to meet Him, and cried out:

"Hosanna!
'Blessed *is* He who comes in the name of
the LORD! '[a]
The King of Israel!"

[14]Then Jesus, when He had found a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written:

15 “Fear not, daughter of Zion;
Behold, your King is coming,
Sitting on a donkey’s colt.”[a]
16 His disciples did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written about Him and *that* they had done these things to Him.

17 Therefore the people, who were with Him when He called Lazarus out of his tomb and raised him from the dead, bore witness. 18 For this reason the people also met Him, because they heard that He had done this sign. 19 The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, “You see that you are accomplishing nothing. Look, the world has gone after Him!”

## THE FRUITFUL GRAIN OF WHEAT

20 Now there were certain Greeks among those who came up to worship at the feast. 21 Then they came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him, saying, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.”

22 Philip came and told Andrew, and in turn Andrew and Philip told Jesus.

23 But Jesus answered them, saying, “The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. 24 Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain. 25 He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 26 If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him *My* Father will honor.

## JESUS PREDICTS HIS DEATH ON THE CROSS

27 “Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save Me from this hour’? But for this purpose I came to this hour. 28 Father, glorify Your name.”

“Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save Me from this hour’? But for this purpose I came to this hour.”

## JOHN 12:27

Then a voice came from heaven, *saying,* "I have both glorified *it* and will glorify *it* again."

29 Therefore the people who stood by and heard *it* said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to Him."

30 Jesus answered and said, "This voice did not come because of Me, but for your sake. 31 Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. 32 And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all *peoples* to Myself." 33 This He said, signifying by what death He would die.

34 The people answered Him, "We have heard from the law that the Christ remains forever; and how *can* You say, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up'? Who is this Son of Man?"

35 Then Jesus said to them, "A little while longer the light is with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you; he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going. 36 While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light." These things Jesus spoke, and departed, and was hidden from them.

### WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT?

37 But although He had done so many signs before them, they did not believe in Him, 38 that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke:

"Lord, who has believed our report?
And to whom has the arm of the LORD
been revealed?"[a]

39 Therefore they could not believe, because Isaiah said again:

40 "He has blinded their eyes and hardened
their hearts,
Lest they should see with *their* eyes,
Lest they should understand with *their*
hearts and turn,

So that I should heal them.”[a]
41These things Isaiah said when[a] he saw His glory and spoke of Him.

**WALK IN THE LIGHT**

42Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess *Him,* lest they should be put out of the synagogue; 43for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

44Then Jesus cried out and said, “He who believes in Me, believes not in Me but in Him who sent Me. 45And he who sees Me sees Him who sent Me. 46I have come *as* a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness. 47And if anyone hears My words and does not believe,[a] I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. 48He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him-the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day. 49For I have not spoken on My own *authority;* but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. 50And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak.”

## JESUS WASHES THE DISCIPLES' FEET

**13** Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.

2 And supper being ended,[a] the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's *son*, to betray Him, 3 Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God, 4 rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. 5 After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe *them* with the towel with which He was girded. 6 Then He came to Simon Peter. And *Peter* said to Him, "Lord, are You washing my feet?"

7 Jesus answered and said to him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this."

8 Peter said to Him, "You shall never wash my feet!"

Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me."

9 Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, not my feet only, but also *my* hands and *my* head!"

10 Jesus said to him, "He who is bathed needs only to wash *his* feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you." 11 For He knew who would betray Him; therefore He said, "You are not all clean."

12 So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? 13 You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for *so* I am. 14 If I then, *your* Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. 15 For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. 16 Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. 17 If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

## JESUS IDENTIFIES HIS BETRAYER

18 “I do not speak concerning all of you. I know whom I have chosen; but
that the Scripture may be fulfilled, ‘He who eats bread with Me[a] has lifted up
his heel against Me.’[b] 19 Now I tell you before it comes, that when it does
come to pass, you may believe that I am *He.* 20 Most assuredly, I say to you,
he who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me
receives Him who sent Me.”

21 When Jesus had said these things, He was troubled in spirit, and testified
and said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me.” 22 Then
the disciples looked at one another, perplexed about whom He spoke.

23 Now there was leaning on Jesus’ bosom one of His disciples, whom
Jesus loved. 24 Simon Peter therefore motioned to him to ask who it was of
whom He spoke.

25 Then, leaning back[a] on Jesus’ breast, he said to Him, “Lord, who is it?”

26 Jesus answered, “It is he to whom I shall give a piece of bread when I
have dipped *it.*” And having dipped the bread, He gave *it* to Judas Iscariot,
*the son* of Simon. 27 Now after the piece of bread, Satan entered him. Then
Jesus said to him, “What you do, do quickly.” 28 But no one at the table knew
for what reason He said this to him. 29 For some thought, because Judas had
the money box, that Jesus had said to him, “Buy *those things* we need for the
feast,” or that he should give something to the poor.

30 Having received the piece of bread, he then went out immediately. And it
was night.

**THE NEW COMMANDMENT**

31 So, when he had gone out, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man is glorified,
and God is glorified in Him. 32 If God is glorified in Him, God will also
glorify Him in Himself, and glorify Him immediately. 33 Little children, I
shall be with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the
Jews, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come,’ so now I say to you. 34 A new
commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you,
that you also love one another. 35 By this all will know that you are My
disciples, if you have love for one another.”

**JESUS PREDICTS PETER'S DENIAL**

36 Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, where are You going?"

Jesus answered him, "Where I am going you cannot follow Me now, but you shall follow Me afterward."

37 Peter said to Him, "Lord, why can I not follow You now? I will lay down my life for Your sake."

38 Jesus answered him, "Will you lay down your life for My sake? Most assuredly, I say to you, the rooster shall not crow till you have denied Me three times.

**SOUL NOTE**

**A New Commandment** *(13:34, 35)* God's Law tells people to love one another (Lev. 19:18). Jesus said that He was giving a "new commandment"-to love with a self-sacrificing love. Such love would set His followers apart from the rest of the world, helping them to serve God and build His kingdom. Such love would draw others to the Savior, and it would be the natural response of believers to the One who died for them. As John wrote later in his life, "We love Him because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19). **Topic: Love**

**THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE**

**14** “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.
2 In My Father’s house are many mansions;[a] if *it were* not *so,* I would
have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.[b] 3 And if I go and prepare a
place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am,
*there* you may be also. 4 And where I go you know, and the way you know.”

5 Thomas said to Him, “Lord, we do not know where You are going, and
how can we know the way?”

6 Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to
the Father except through Me.

> “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”
> JOHN 14:6

**THE FATHER REVEALED**

7 “If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from
now on you know Him and have seen Him.”

8 Philip said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us.”

9 Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not
known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you
say, ‘Show us the Father’? 10 Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and
the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own
*authority;* but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. 11 Believe Me that
I *am* in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the
works themselves.

**THE ANSWERED PRAYER**

12 “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do
he will do also; and greater *works* than these he will do, because I go to My
Father. 13 And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father
may be glorified in the Son. 14 If you ask[a] anything in My name, I will do *it.*

## JESUS PROMISES ANOTHER HELPER

15 "If you love Me, keep[a] My commandments. 16 And I will pray the Father,
and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever-
17 the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees
Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be
in you. 18 I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.

## INDWELLING OF THE FATHER AND THE SON

19 "A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will
see Me. Because I live, you will live also. 20 At that day you will know that I
*am* in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. 21 He who has My
commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves
Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to
him."

22 Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, "Lord, how is it that You will manifest
Yourself to us, and not to the world?"

23 Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My
word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our
home with him. 24 He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the
word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me.

## THE GIFT OF HIS PEACE

25 "These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. 26 But
the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will
teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to
you. 27 Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives
do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. 28 You
have heard Me say to you, 'I am going away and coming *back* to you.' If you
loved Me, you would rejoice because I said,[a] 'I am going to the Father,' for
My Father is greater than I.

29 "And now I have told you before it comes, that when it does come to
pass, you may believe. 30 I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of
this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me. 31 But that the world may

know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave Me commandment, so I do. Arise, let us go from here.

## SOUL NOTE

**A Resting Place** *(14:1-4)* The disciples were bewildered and discouraged. Jesus had said He was going away, that He would die, that one of the disciples was a traitor, and that Peter would deny Him. If so, it seemed that their great hopes had been in vain. “Let not your heart be troubled,” Jesus told them. Believers can rest their troubled hearts, knowing that Jesus is in control regardless of the circumstances. He relieves our anxiety about the future when we trust Him. **Topic: Anxiety**

## KEY PASSAGE

# ONE WAY

# (14:6)

Many routes and transportation options lead to a large city. Some people think it’s the same way with God. “All roads,” they say, all religions and belief systems, “lead to God.”

"Wrong!" says Jesus.

Contrary to what many people think, Jesus taught only *one* way to gain forgiveness and eternal life, not many ways.

- "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6).
- "There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).
- "For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all" (1 Tim. 2:5, 6).

God provided a way for us to be saved. We can praise Jesus for being that way!

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Who Is Jesus Christ?. See also the personality profile of Nicodemus: A Conversation With Christ.

**SOUL NOTE**

**The Only Way** *(14:6)* Jesus claimed to be "the way, the truth, and the life." Jesus is not one of the ways to God-He is the *only* way to God. Jesus is not one of many truths-He *is* truth. Jesus doesn't just show a way to live-He is the Giver of life, the One who gives meaning to life. If Jesus is our "way," then He is the only One who can save us and guide our lives. If Jesus is our "truth," then we study His word and live according to its truth. If Jesus is our "life," we trust that He is in control of our lives today and into eternity. **Topic: Truth**

## SOUL NOTE

**Another Helper** *(14:15-18)* Jesus' followers show their love for Christ by obeying His commandments. Jesus has set the pattern of love and obedience, and His disciples are expected to follow His example. Jesus reassured His followers, however, that they would not have to obey in their own power. He would send a helper-the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit lives in Jesus' followers, helping them to remember His commands and to obey them. We do not have to go it alone-the Holy Spirit in our hearts helps us to know what is right and then to do it. **Topic: Presence of the Holy Spirit**

## SOUL NOTE

**If You Love Me** *(14:21-23)* Jesus repeated the statement (14:15) that His followers show their love for Him by their obedience to His commands. Love is more than words-true love involves action. Whoever says he or she loves someone and then ignores that person or acts rudely doesn't know the meaning of love. Words of love are important, but actions and behavior provide the proof. Do we obey Christ's commandments or do we live as if He made no difference in our lives? Do we draw close to Him daily, or do we ignore Him? Our love is revealed by our desire to follow Him. **Topic: Love Languages**

## SOUL NOTE

**Spiritual Growth** *(14:26)* Jesus promised the disciples that the Holy Spirit would teach them, helping them to remember everything that Jesus had taught. Paul wrote, “We have received . . . the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God” (1 Cor. 2:12). The Holy Spirit is our source of spiritual understanding. We trust the writings of the New Testament, knowing that the Holy Spirit guided the writers. Then we allow the Holy Spirit to help us understand and apply God’s Word to our lives. **Topic: Presence of the Holy Spirit**

## THE TRUE VINE

**15** “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. 2Every branch in
Me that does not bear fruit He takes away;[a] and every *branch* that bears
fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. 3You are already clean because of
the word which I have spoken to you. 4Abide in Me, and I in you. As the
branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you,
unless you abide in Me.

5“I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him,
bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. 6If anyone does not
abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them
and throw *them* into the fire, and they are burned. 7If you abide in Me, and
My words abide in you, you will[a] ask what you desire, and it shall be done
for you. 8By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will
be My disciples.

## LOVE AND JOY PERFECTED

9“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. 10If
you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept
My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.

11“These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and
*that* your joy may be full. 12This is My commandment, that you love one
another as I have loved you. 13Greater love has no one than this, than to lay
down one’s life for his friends. 14You are My friends if you do whatever I
command you. 15No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not
know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things
that I heard from My Father I have made known to you. 16You did not choose
Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and
*that* your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name
He may give you. 17These things I command you, that you love one another.

## THE WORLD’S HATRED

18“If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before *it hated* you.

19 If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you
are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world
hates you. 20 Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater
than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they
kept My word, they will keep yours also. 21 But all these things they will do to
you for My name’s sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me. 22 If I
had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin, but now they have
no excuse for their sin. 23 He who hates Me hates My Father also. 24 If I had
not done among them the works which no one else did, they would have no
sin; but now they have seen and also hated both Me and My Father. 25 But *this
happened* that the word might be fulfilled which is written in their law, ‘They
hated Me without a cause.’[a]

**THE COMING REJECTION**

26 “But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father,
the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. 27 And
you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the
beginning.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Learning to Love** *(15:12, 13)* Jesus gave two commandments to His followers: “Love Me,” and “love each other.” He had previously told the Pharisees that these two commandments were the greatest because “on these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets” (Matt. 22:40). Jesus said that His followers should love each other as He loved them. So great was that love that Jesus would give His life for them. We are to love others as Jesus loved us. We probably won’t have to die for anyone, but we show our great love for others by listening, helping, encouraging, and giving. Christ’s humble,

sacrificial love is our example. **Topic: Love**

**16** “These things I have spoken to you, that you should not be made to
stumble. 2They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is
coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service. 3And
these things they will do to you[a] because they have not known the Father nor
Me. 4But these things I have told you, that when the[a] time comes, you may
remember that I told you of them.

“And these things I did not say to you at the beginning, because I was with
you.

### THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

5“But now I go away to Him who sent Me, and none of you asks Me,
‘Where are You going?’ 6But because I have said these things to you, sorrow
has filled your heart. 7Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage
that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if
I depart, I will send Him to you. 8And when He has come, He will convict the
world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: 9of sin, because they do
not believe in Me; 10of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see
Me no more; 11of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

12“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear *them* now.
13However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all
truth; for He will not speak on His own *authority*, but whatever He hears He
will speak; and He will tell you things to come. 14He will glorify Me, for He
will take of what is Mine and declare *it* to you. 15All things that the Father
has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare *it* to
you.[a]

### SORROW WILL TURN TO JOY

16“A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you
will see Me, because I go to the Father.”

17Then *some* of His disciples said among themselves, “What is this that He
says to us, ‘A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while,
and you will see Me’; and, ‘because I go to the Father’?” 18They said
therefore, “What is this that He says, ‘A little while’? We do not know what

He is saying.”

19 Now Jesus knew that they desired to ask Him, and He said to them, “Are you inquiring among yourselves about what I said, ‘A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me’? 20 Most assuredly, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy. 21 A woman, when she is in labor, has sorrow because her hour has come; but as soon as she has given birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world. 22 Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you.

23 “And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you. 24 Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.

## JESUS CHRIST HAS OVERCOME THE WORLD

25 “These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; but the time is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but I will tell you plainly about the Father. 26 In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I shall pray the Father for you; 27 for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God. 28 I came forth from the Father and have come into the world. Again, I leave the world and go to the Father.”

29 His disciples said to Him, “See, now You are speaking plainly, and using no figure of speech! 30 Now we are sure that You know all things, and have no need that anyone should question You. By this we believe that You came forth from God.”

31 Jesus answered them, “Do you now believe? 32 Indeed the hour is coming, yes, has now come, that you will be scattered, each to his own, and will leave Me alone. And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. 33 These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will[a] have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the

world."

> "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."
> JOHN 16:33

## HOLY SPIRIT, HEAVENLY DOVE

# ED HINDSON

## (John 16:5-15)

**J**esus promised His disciples that, although He was leaving this world, He would never abandon them. How would that be possible? Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would come to stay with them and help them through every difficulty they would face (John 14:16-18; 16:7). God the Holy Spirit is equal in power, wisdom, and love to God the Father and God the Son. The Holy Spirit infuses believers with the strength needed to live for Christ (Eph. 5:18) and to bear the fruit of Christian character (Gal. 5:22, 23).

The disciples were in dire need of a counselor, because Jesus would no longer be available to mentor them in person. The word *counselor* (Greek, *parakletos*) refers to someone who is "called alongside" to help. While God uses human counselors to minister to us and guide us, the ultimate Counselor is the Holy Spirit, who guides us into God's truth (John 16:13). He is always there prompting us,

prodding us, encouraging us, guiding us, and maturing us through all the challenges of our lives.

The Holy Spirit has a divine name-the "Spirit of God," (1 Cor. 2:11). He has divine attributes-omniscience (1 Cor. 2:10), omnipresence (Ps. 139:7), and omnipotence (Zech. 4:6). He creates, convicts, regenerates, baptizes, fills, and empowers believers. He indwells us (John 14:17), teaches us (John 14:26), guides us (John 16:13), and intercedes for us (Rom. 8:26).

## NAMES AND SYMBOLS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is called by several different names in Scripture. He is the "Spirit of God" (2 Chr. 15:1), the "Spirit of the LORD" (Is. 11:2), the "breath of the Almighty" (Job 32:8), the "Spirit of the Lord GOD" (Is. 61:1), the "Spirit of your Father" (Matt. 10:20), and the "Spirit of Christ" (Rom. 8:9).

The Holy Spirit is unseen, but is depicted by certain symbols: breath or wind (Gen. 2:7; Ezek. 37:9), the dove (Luke 3:22), oil (Luke 4:18; Heb. 1:9), fire (Mark 9:49; 1 Cor. 3:13-15), the seal (Eph. 1:13; 4:30), the guarantee (2 Cor. 1:21, 22; Eph. 1:14). These symbols help us understand the various aspects of the Holy Spirit's ministry in our lives. He moves sovereignly like the wind. He lights on us like a dove, anoints us like oil, and ignites us like fire. He also seals us to the heart and life of God. His presence in our lives is the guarantee (or down payment) of God's grace, and the assurance that He will keep all of His promises to us.

## MINISTRY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Jesus Himself was assisted by the Spirit during His earthly life and ministry. Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35), anointed by the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:18), filled with the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:1), led by the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:1, 2), offered to the Father through the Holy Spirit (Heb. 9:14), and raised to life through the

Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:11).

The Bible was inspired by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:21). He moved upon the writers of Scripture so that the words they wrote were the inspired truth of God. Jesus promised the disciples that the Holy Spirit would guide them into all truth (John 14:26; 16:13). Paul affirmed that the apostles of the New Covenant received the revelation of God's truth "through His Spirit" (1 Cor. 2:10). The same Holy Spirit who inspired the writing of Scripture guides us into the truth of God as we read Scripture today.

Christians experience the grace of God because the Holy Spirit calls us to Christ (Rom. 8:28; 1 Tim. 6:12). We are born again by the power of the Holy Spirit (John 3:3-7) who indwells our hearts and empowers us to serve the Lord with our lives (John 7:37-39; Acts 11:17; 1 Cor. 2:12). We are saved by God's grace (Greek, *charis*) and given spiritual gifts (Greek, *charisma*) by which the Holy Spirit empowers us to minister to God's people (Rom. 12:3-8).

## ASSURANCE OF THE SPIRIT

One of the greatest aspects of the Holy Spirit's ministry in our lives is the assurance He gives us about our relationship to God. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. . . . The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Rom. 8:14, 16). We accept this fact by faith, but we are assured of it in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

God loves us more than anybody loves us. He cares about us more than we care about ourselves. He speaks to us by His Holy Spirit. For those who have not yet believed in Him, He is calling. Softly and tenderly, the voice of God's Spirit calls people to find eternal life in Him. He invites unbelievers into a deep and personal relationship with Him-a relationship in which He promises He will never leave them nor forsake them. For new believers, God does not leave them on their own to figure out how to pray, read the Word, or grow

spiritually. The Holy Spirit personally guides them every step of the way. For those who have been believers for a long time, the Holy Spirit's continual presence is a source of comfort and guidance through every step of life.

As Christians, we are never alone. God dwells in us through His precious Holy Spirit.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of the presence of the Holy Spirit include:

- Genesis 1:2
- 1 Samuel 10:6
- Job 33:4
- Joel 2:28, 29
- Luke 12:12
- Acts 2:1-4
- 1 Corinthians 3:16; 12:13
- 1 Thessalonians 4:8

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on the presence of the Holy Spirit at Ephesians 4:30. See also the personality profile of The Holy Spirit In Believers' Lives.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Victorious and Joyous** *(16:33)* Jesus warned His followers that living as a Christian in the world would not be easy. Hardships, troubles, even

persecutions would come. Some tribulations are part of living in a fallen world and happen to everyone; others occur as Satan assaults people's faith. Believers are to be prepared for these tribulations but not overwhelmed or discouraged by them. The world gives tribulation, but Jesus gives peace. We can "be of good cheer" because we know that Jesus has overcome the world. Christ has already won the ultimate victory over Satan, sin, and evil. **Topic: Discouragement**

## JESUS PRAYS FOR HIMSELF

**17** Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: “Father,
the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify
You, 2as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should[a] give
eternal life to as many as You have given Him. 3And this is eternal life, that
they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have
sent. 4I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You
have given Me to do. 5And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself,
with the glory which I had with You before the world was.

## JESUS PRAYS FOR HIS DISCIPLES

6“I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out
of the world.

They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word.
7Now they have known that all things which You have given Me are from
You. 8For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and
they have received *them*, and have known surely that I came forth from You;
and they have believed that You sent Me.

9“I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have
given Me, for they are Yours. 10And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine,
and I am glorified in them. 11Now I am no longer in the world, but these are
in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those
whom You have given Me,[a] that they may be one as We *are*. 12While I was
with them in the world,[a] I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave
Me I have kept;[b] and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the
Scripture might be fulfilled. 13But now I come to You, and these things I
speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves. 14I
have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are
not of the world, just as I am not of the world. 15I do not pray that You should
take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one.
16They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. 17Sanctify them by
Your truth. Your word is truth. 18As You sent Me into the world, I also have

sent them into the world. [19]And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth.

**JESUS PRAYS FOR ALL BELIEVERS**

[20]"I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will[a] believe in Me through their word; [21]that they all may be one, as You, Father, *are* in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. [22]And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: [23]I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.

[24]"Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. [25]O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me. [26]And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare *it*, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them."

**SOUL NOTE**

**Talking to the Father** *(ch. 17)* This prayer recorded by the apostle John allows a glimpse into Jesus' heart. Jesus would be passing the mantle of His earthly mission to His disciples. Jesus prayed for them, knowing the opposition would be difficult-they would experience persecutions from without and temptation and doubt from within. He prayed for believers today as well, "those who will believe in Me through their word" (17:20). Believers across the centuries know about Jesus because of the faithfulness of these first followers. We can take great comfort in knowing that Jesus prayed for us that night, and that He still intercedes for us (Heb. 7:25). **Topic: Prayer**

## BETRAYAL AND ARREST IN GETHSEMANE

**18** When Jesus had spoken these words, He went out with His disciples
over the Brook Kidron, where there was a garden, which He and His
disciples entered. [2]And Judas, who betrayed Him, also knew the place; for
Jesus often met there with His disciples. [3]Then Judas, having received a
detachment *of troops,* and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, came
there with lanterns, torches, and weapons. [4]Jesus therefore, knowing all
things that would come upon Him, went forward and said to them, "Whom
are you seeking?"

[5]They answered Him, "Jesus of Nazareth."

Jesus said to them, "I am *He*." And Judas, who betrayed Him, also stood
with them. [6]Now when He said to them, "I am *He,*" they drew back and fell
to the ground.

[7]Then He asked them again, "Whom are you seeking?"

And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth."

[8]Jesus answered, "I have told you that I am *He.* Therefore, if you seek Me,
let these go their way," [9]that the saying might be fulfilled which He spoke,
"Of those whom You gave Me I have lost none."

[10]Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's
servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus.

[11]So Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword into the sheath. Shall I not drink
the cup which My Father has given Me?"

## BEFORE THE HIGH PRIEST

[12]Then the detachment *of troops* and the captain and the officers of the
Jews arrested Jesus and bound Him. [13]And they led Him away to Annas first,
for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas who was high priest that year.
[14]Now it was Caiaphas who advised the Jews that it was expedient that one
man should die for the people.

## PETER DENIES JESUS

[15]And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so *did* another[a] disciple. Now that disciple was known to the high priest, and went with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest. [16]But Peter stood at the door outside. Then the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to her who kept the door, and brought Peter in. [17]Then the servant girl who kept the door said to Peter, “You are not also *one* of this Man’s disciples, are you?”

He said, “I am not.”

[18]Now the servants and officers who had made a fire of coals stood there, for it was cold, and they warmed themselves. And Peter stood with them and warmed himself.

**JESUS QUESTIONED BY THE HIGH PRIEST**

[19]The high priest then asked Jesus about His disciples and His doctrine.

[20]Jesus answered him, “I spoke openly to the world. I always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where the Jews always meet,[a] and in secret I have said nothing. [21]Why do you ask Me? Ask those who have heard Me what I said to them. Indeed they know what I said.”

[22]And when He had said these things, one of the officers who stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, “Do You answer the high priest like that?”

[23]Jesus answered him, “If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why do you strike Me?”

[24]Then Annas sent Him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

**PETER DENIES TWICE MORE**

[25]Now Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. Therefore they said to him, “You are not also *one* of His disciples, are you?”

He denied *it* and said, “I am not!”

[26]One of the servants of the high priest, a relative *of him* whose ear Peter cut off, said, “Did I not see you in the garden with Him?” [27]Peter then denied again; and immediately a rooster crowed.

## IN PILATE'S COURT

[28]Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas to the Praetorium, and it was early morning. But they themselves did not go into the Praetorium, lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the Passover. [29]Pilate then went out to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this Man?"

[30]They answered and said to him, "If He were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered Him up to you."

[31]Then Pilate said to them, "You take Him and judge Him according to your law."

Therefore the Jews said to him, "It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death," [32]that the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled which He spoke, signifying by what death He would die.

[33]Then Pilate entered the Praetorium again, called Jesus, and said to Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?"

[34]Jesus answered him, "Are you speaking for yourself about this, or did others tell you this concerning Me?"

[35]Pilate answered, "Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered You to me. What have You done?"

[36]Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here."

[37]Pilate therefore said to Him, "Are You a king then?"

Jesus answered, "You say *rightly* that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."

[38]Pilate said to Him, "What is truth?" And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews, and said to them, "I find no fault in Him at all.

## TAKING THE PLACE OF BARABBAS

[39]"But you have a custom that I should release someone to you at the Passover. Do you therefore want me to release to you the King of the Jews?"

[40]Then they all cried again, saying, “Not this Man, but Barabbas!” Now Barabbas was a robber.

**THE SOLDIERS MOCK JESUS**

**19** So then Pilate took Jesus and scourged *Him.* 2And the soldiers twisted a crown of thorns and put *it* on His head, and they put on Him a purple robe. 3Then they said,[a] "Hail, King of the Jews!" And they struck Him with their hands.

4Pilate then went out again, and said to them, "Behold, I am bringing Him out to you, that you may know that I find no fault in Him."

**PILATE'S DECISION**

5Then Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And *Pilate* said to them, "Behold the Man!"

6Therefore, when the chief priests and officers saw Him, they cried out, saying, "Crucify *Him,* crucify *Him!*"

Pilate said to them, "You take Him and crucify *Him,* for I find no fault in Him."

7The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and according to our[a] law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God."

8Therefore, when Pilate heard that saying, he was the more afraid, 9and went again into the Praetorium, and said to Jesus, "Where are You from?" But Jesus gave him no answer.

10Then Pilate said to Him, "Are You not speaking to me? Do You not know that I have power to crucify You, and power to release You?"

11Jesus answered, "You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above. Therefore the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin."

12From then on Pilate sought to release Him, but the Jews cried out, saying, "If you let this Man go, you are not Caesar's friend. Whoever makes himself a king speaks against Caesar."

13When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus out and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called *The* Pavement, but in

Hebrew, Gabbatha. [14]Now it was the Preparation Day of the Passover, and about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, “Behold your King!”

[15]But they cried out, “Away with *Him,* away with *Him!* Crucify Him!”

Pilate said to them, “Shall I crucify your King?”

The chief priests answered, “We have no king but Caesar!”

[16]Then he delivered Him to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus and led *Him* away.[a]

**THE KING ON A CROSS**

[17]And He, bearing His cross, went out to a place called *the Place* of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha, [18]where they crucified Him, and two others with Him, one on either side, and Jesus in the center. [19]Now Pilate wrote a title and put *it* on the cross. And the writing was:

JESUS OF NAZARETH,
THE KING OF THE JEWS.

[20]Then many of the Jews read this title, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Greek, *and* Latin.

[21]Therefore the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, “Do not write, ‘The King of the Jews,’ but, ‘He said, “I am the King of the Jews.” ’ ”

[22]Pilate answered, “What I have written, I have written.”

[23]Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments and made four parts, to each soldier a part, and also the tunic. Now the tunic was without seam, woven from the top in one piece. [24]They said therefore among themselves, “Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be,” that the Scripture might be fulfilled which says:

“They divided My garments among them,
And for My clothing they cast lots.”[a]

Therefore the soldiers did these things.

**BEHOLD YOUR MOTHER**

[25]Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the *wife* of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. [26]When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold your son!" [27]Then He said to the disciple, "Behold your mother!" And from that hour that disciple took her to his own *home.*

**IT IS FINISHED**

[28]After this, Jesus, knowing[a] that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, "I thirst!" [29]Now a vessel full of sour wine was sitting there; and they filled a sponge with sour wine, put *it* on hyssop, and put *it* to His mouth. [30]So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.

**JESUS' SIDE IS PIERCED**

[31]Therefore, because it was the Preparation *Day*, that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and *that* they might be taken away. [32]Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who was crucified with Him. [33]But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. [34]But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out. [35]And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you may believe. [36]For these things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled, "Not *one* of His bones shall be broken."[a] [37]And again another Scripture says, "They shall look on Him whom they pierced."[a]

**JESUS BURIED IN JOSEPH'S TOMB**

[38]After this, Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate gave *him* permission. So he came and took the body of Jesus. [39]And Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds. [40]Then they took the

body of Jesus, and bound it in strips of linen with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury. [41]Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. [42]So there they laid Jesus, because of the Jews' Preparation *Day*, for the tomb was nearby.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Expensive** *(19:28-34)* If it weren't for being holy, God could have chosen to ignore sin. If it weren't for being loving, He could have condemned humanity to hell the moment Adam sinned. Being both holy and loving, God did neither of these. Instead, He chose to deal with the ultimate consequences of sin-death and separation from God-by having His Son take those consequences upon Himself. Jesus took our penalty, dying in our place. When we accept that sacrifice on our behalf, we are given salvation and eternal life. God looks at us and no longer sees our sins. Instead, He sees that His Son died so that we could be saved. **Topic: Salvation**

## THE EMPTY TOMB

**20** Now on the first *day* of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb
early, while it was still dark, and saw *that* the stone had been taken away
from the tomb. 2Then she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other
disciple, whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken away the
Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him.”

3Peter therefore went out, and the other disciple, and were going to the
tomb. 4So they both ran together, and the other disciple outran Peter and
came to the tomb first. 5And he, stooping down and looking in, saw the linen
cloths lying *there;* yet he did not go in. 6Then Simon Peter came, following
him, and went into the tomb; and he saw the linen cloths lying *there*, 7and the
handkerchief that had been around His head, not lying with the linen cloths,
but folded together in a place by itself. 8Then the other disciple, who came to
the tomb first, went in also; and he saw and believed. 9For as yet they did not
know the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. 10Then the
disciples went away again to their own homes.

## MARY MAGDALENE SEES THE RISEN LORD

11But Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept she
stooped down *and looked* into the tomb. 12And she saw two angels in white
sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had
lain. 13Then they said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?”

She said to them, “Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not
know where they have laid Him.”

14Now when she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing
*there,* and did not know that it was Jesus. 15Jesus said to her, “Woman, why
are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?”

She, supposing Him to be the gardener, said to Him, “Sir, if You have
carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him
away.”

16Jesus said to her, “Mary!”

She turned and said to Him,[a] “Rabboni!” (which is to say, Teacher).

17 Jesus said to her, “Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My
Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, ‘I am ascending to My Father
and your Father, and *to* My God and your God.’ ”

18 Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord,[a]
and *that* He had spoken these things to her.

## THE APOSTLES COMMISSIONED

19 Then, the same day at evening, being the first *day* of the week, when the
doors were shut where the disciples were assembled,[a] for fear of the Jews,
Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, “Peace *be* with you.”
20 When He had said this, He showed them *His* hands and His side. Then the
disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.

21 So Jesus said to them again, “Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I
also send you.” 22 And when He had said this, He breathed on *them*, and said
to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive the sins of any, they are
forgiven them; if you retain the *sins* of any, they are retained.”

## SEEING AND BELIEVING

24 Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them
when Jesus came. 25 The other disciples therefore said to him, “We have seen
the Lord.”

So he said to them, “Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put
my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not
believe.”

26 And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with
them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said,
“Peace to you!” 27 Then He said to Thomas, “Reach your finger here, and
look at My hands; and reach your hand *here*, and put *it* into My side. Do not
be unbelieving, but believing.”

28 And Thomas answered and said to Him, “My Lord and my God!”

29 Jesus said to him, “Thomas,[a] because you have seen Me, you have

believed. Blessed *are* those who have not seen and *yet* have believed."

**THAT YOU MAY BELIEVE**

30 And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples,
which are not written in this book; 31 but these are written that you may
believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may
have life in His name.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# THOMAS: FROM DOUBT TO FAITH

## (JOHN 20:24-29)

"Doubting Thomas" was really no different from the rest of the disciples-and no different from much of the modern world. He may have been skeptical by nature, but, in reality, none of the other disciples truly understood that Jesus would come back to life until they saw Him with their own eyes.

Thomas wasn't present when Jesus first appeared to the other disciples, and he refused to believe the astonishing news that Jesus had risen from the dead. Thomas insisted that unless he touched the wounds of Jesus, he would not believe. Thomas wanted proof. When he got that proof, however, he had no trouble believing.

John the Baptist also faced a moment of doubt. Sitting in prison, John sent his disciples to ask Jesus if He was really the Messiah (Matt. 11:1-6). Jesus did not condemn John for His doubt, but merely

gave him the proof he needed, just as He did with Thomas. Both men understood the truth and believed.

Doubt is not wrong if it leads us on a search for the truth, and if we are willing to accept the truth once we find it. Jesus said to Thomas, "Because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." That includes believers across the centuries who have never seen God and never walked physically with Christ. They have trusted in Christ based on the truth of God's Word and the reality of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

Those who doubt the Christian faith can put it to the test. Those who are believers but find themselves faced with situations that cause them to doubt can do the same. Christ will provide the answer we need. Keep on believing, even through the doubt, for we are blessed when we have not seen and yet still believe.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about The Thomas Factor: Treating Doubt. See also the key passage note at Matthew 11:1-6.

## THE THOMAS FACTOR: TREATING DOUBT

GARY R. HABERMAS

(John 20:24-29)

**D**oubt is a common experience. Unfortunately, it's been given a bad rap. Doubt is often referred to as the opposite of faith-unbelief or

the unpardonable sin. It is also erroneously defined as something one ought not to admit. Questioning God can be sinful, but it is not always so. When properly handled, doubt can be the first step to a positive, strong, and dynamic faith.

## BIBLICAL EXAMPLES OF DOUBT

During his severe suffering, Job began to doubt God. He learned a tremendous lesson, however, when he realized that he knew enough about God to trust Him in the many things he did not understand (Job 42:1-6). Abraham is known as the man of faith, and yet on many occasions he showcased his doubts. In spite of the promise that all people would be blessed through him, Abraham still asked for assurance (Gen. 15:8). Later, when God repeated His promise, Abraham went so far as to laugh at God (Gen. 17:15-17). He even lied twice about his wife, Sarah, in order to save his life-indicating that he was unsure about God keeping His promises to protect him (Gen. 12:10-20; 20:1-8)

The New Testament provides still other instances. John the Baptist wanted to know if Jesus was really the Messiah, or if he should look for someone else (Luke 7:18-30). Thomas questioned the Lord's resurrection (John 20:24-29). Paul related his struggle with unanswered prayer (2 Cor. 12:7-10).

## DIFFERENT TYPES OF DOUBT

There are three primary types of religious doubt: factual, emotional, and volitional. *Factual doubt* is identified by questions concerning one's grounds for belief-whether or not Christianity is based on a solid foundation. *Emotional doubt* stems from passions and moods. It is intensified by other struggles in one's life such as loss or depression. *Volitional doubt* is concerned with the will. It is mainly related to issues like weak faith, forsaking sin, and one's motivation to follow God.

Doubt sometimes follows a pattern including all three types of doubt. For example, people's unanswered factual questions may bother them, affecting their emotions. They grow upset with God for not meeting their needs. Later, this may also attack their motivation as they wonder why they should follow the Lord any longer.

## RESPONDING TO DOUBT

It is important to be able to correctly identify the type of doubt. If people are mistaken about the nature of their sickness and take the wrong medicine, they should not be surprised if it does not work. Doubt can be the same way. If people do not properly diagnose the type of doubt, they should not be surprised if their misguided response fails to bring relief.

*Factual doubt* can often be handled by pointing out the many evidences for Christian truth. When Thomas expressed his doubt, Jesus said, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing" (John 20:27).

*Volitional doubt* is the most dangerous type. At that point, people may have little desire to follow the Lord, and that sometimes makes them unwilling to listen to reason, to study the facts, or to care about the truth. People who have volitional doubt may need help from those who understand the issues involved and are concerned enough to lovingly confront them. In particular, volitional doubters need to be challenged in terms of their loss of motivation.

The middle one, e*motional doubt*, is the most common type. It is often the most painful, frequently distinguished by tattered feelings and distraught emotions. Emotional doubters usually judge the facts surrounding their beliefs based on how they *feel* about those beliefs. They often think they are asking about the truth of Christianity when in fact they are merely reflecting on their feelings. Rather than giving in to one's emotions, Scripture teaches people to think and practice

truth. In Philippians 4:6-9, Paul tells believers to pray, give thanks and praise, change their thinking, and practice these teachings regularly. Similarly, Peter tells Christians to give their concerns to God (1 Pet. 5:7). The psalms promote praise and thanksgiving as the antidotes to unruly emotions, for it is almost impossible to praise or give thanks to God without one's moods changing almost immediately (Ps. 42:5, 6). Changing one's thinking patterns is also a key to victory. Paul commands Christians to "be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Rom. 12:2).

Finally, Christians dealing with emotional doubt must continually practice truth. They must center their hearts on God and His kingdom, laying up treasures in heaven in order to nullify worry (Matt. 6:19-34). Before their emotions get involved, Christians must deliberately change their thought pattern at the very moment of doubt, substituting God's truth. Christians must constantly practice God's truth until it soothes the doubt. This can be done in many ways: repeating the truth, writing it on cards, meditating on it, thanking and praising God, giving Him our worries in prayer, and recalling His promises to us.

## OVERCOMING DOUBT

The believer who doubts God because of personal pain needs to internalize the same lesson that Job learned. We also know enough about God to trust Him in those painful areas that we do not understand. Since God raised Jesus from the dead, thereby insuring heaven (1 Pet. 1:3-5), we have an *ultimate* answer to suffering. The victory comes as a process. Much like medicine that must be taken for one to feel better, these biblical principles can provide victory over struggles with doubt.

## FURTHER MEDITATION:

Other passages to study about the issue of doubt include:

- Psalms 43:5; 55:4-8, Psalms 16-18, 22

- Lamentations 3:19-24
- Matthew 12:38-40
- Luke 7:18-30; 24:36-43
- 2 Corinthians 4:8, 16-18
- Philippians 4:6-9

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on doubt at Matthew 11:1-6. See also the personality profile of Thomas: From Doubt To Faith.

**BREAKFAST BY THE SEA**

**21** After these things Jesus showed Himself again to the disciples at the Sea
of Tiberias, and in this way He showed *Himself*:[2]Simon Peter, Thomas
called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the *sons* of Zebedee, and two
others of His disciples were together. [3]Simon Peter said to them, "I am going
fishing."

They said to him, "We are going with you also." They went out and
immediately[a] got into the boat, and that night they caught nothing. [4]But when
the morning had now come, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not
know that it was Jesus. [5]Then Jesus said to them, "Children, have you any
food?" They answered Him, "No."

[6]And He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you
will find *some*." So they cast, and now they were not able to draw it in
because of the multitude of fish.

[7]Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!"
Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on *his* outer
garment (for he had removed it), and plunged into the sea. [8]But the other
disciples came in the little boat (for they were not far from land, but about
two hundred cubits), dragging the net with fish. [9]Then, as soon as they had
come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid on it, and bread.
[10]Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish which you have just caught."

[11]Simon Peter went up and dragged the net to land, full of large fish, one
hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, the net was not
broken. [12]Jesus said to them, "Come *and* eat breakfast." Yet none of the
disciples dared ask Him, "Who are You?"- knowing that it was the Lord.
[13]Jesus then came and took the bread and gave it to them, and likewise the
fish.

[14]This *is* now the third time Jesus showed Himself to His disciples after He
was raised from the dead.

**JESUS RESTORES PETER**

15 So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, *son* of Jonah,[a] do you love Me more than these?”

He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.”

He said to him, “Feed My lambs.”

16 He said to him again a second time, “Simon, *son* of Jonah,[a] do you love Me?”

He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.”

He said to him, “Tend My sheep.”

17 He said to him the third time, “Simon, *son* of Jonah,[a] do you love Me?” Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, “Do you love Me?”

And he said to Him, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.”

Jesus said to him, “Feed My sheep. 18 Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry *you* where you do not wish.” 19 This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, “Follow Me.”

## THE BELOVED DISCIPLE AND HIS BOOK

20 Then Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following, who also had leaned on His breast at the supper, and said, “Lord, who is the one who betrays You?” 21 Peter, seeing him, said to Jesus, “But Lord, what *about* this man?”

22 Jesus said to him, “If I will that he remain till I come, what *is that* to you? You follow Me.”

23 Then this saying went out among the brethren that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but, “If I will that he remain till I come, what *is that* to you?”

24 This is the disciple who testifies of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his testimony is true.

[25]And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. Amen.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# PETER: A JOB TO DO

## (JOHN 21:15)

Peter had denied Christ and wept bitterly upon realizing what he had done (Matt. 26:75). Sorrowful, sick, and hurting, Peter could have separated himself from the other disciples; he could have killed himself (as Judas did). But somehow he swallowed his pride and returned to his fellow disciples-meeting with them behind closed doors and fishing with them on that early morning when Jesus appeared on the shore.

Jesus had special words for Peter, because Peter had a special need to be healed and restored from his sin. Surely Peter's heart had been broken by his own weakness in denying his friend and Savior. Three times, Peter had denied knowing Jesus; and three times, Jesus asked him, "Do you love Me?" Jesus forgave Peter and restored him to ministry. The three charges, "Feed My lambs . . . . Tend My sheep . . . . Feed My sheep," reveal the ministry Peter would have in helping the believers who would join them. Clearly Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost and the addition of three thousand believers to the church gave Peter a lot of sheep to tend and feed with spiritual food!

No matter how deep the stain of our sin, Christ can forgive and heal us. He also can restore us to service for Him.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Healing And Recovery. See also the key passage note at James 5:14-16.

**RESTORATION**

# EARL AND SANDRA WILSON

## (John 21:15-19)

**I**t's a wonderful experience to be restored in a relationship that has been broken because of sin. Peter experienced this. The story in John 21:15-19 describes how Jesus restored Peter to fellowship with Himself after Peter had sinned by denying His Savior. Three times Christ asked if Peter loved Him; three times Peter responded that he did; three times Christ responded by giving Peter the responsibility to care for His flock-the believers. When Jesus spoke to Peter with the words, "Follow Me," He restored Peter to fellowship and reinstated him as a disciple. What a glorious moment that must have been for Peter!

David also experienced the blessing of being restored. After he had committed the sins of adultery and murder (2 Sam. 11), he repented and faced the consequences of his sin (Ps. 51). He concluded his repentance with the prayer, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me" (Ps. 51:10). David longed to be restored to fellowship with God.

## RESULTS OF RESTORATION

Restoration comes when believers:

1. Admit their sin (confession).

2. Turn from their sin (repentance).

3. Accept responsibility for the consequences of their sin (restitution).

4. Face the truth about what they have done and learn to live with truth as a focus of their life.

5. Allow God to replace their powerlessness with His power (humility).

6. Walk in the light of their renewed relationship with God, their family, and their brothers and sisters in Christ.

But how do believers who have fallen into sin get to this point? It often happens through the intercession of caring brothers or sisters in Christ who are called by God to be "restorers."

## A PATTERN FOR RESTORATION

Galatians 6:1-6 emphasizes the responsibility of Christians to be involved in the restoration of others who are "overtaken in any trespass." Restoration is God's work carried out by brothers or sisters who are mature in the faith, watchful, and caring.

*Revealing the Fruit of Gentleness*

When it comes to participating in the restoration of a fallen brother or sister, believers should "restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness" (Gal. 6:1). The biblical balance is gentleness toward the sinner and firmness against the sin. Note the careful warning in that same verse: "considering yourself lest you also be tempted." Believers must be

careful because they might be tempted to feel that they are better than the one needing restoration. The sin of pride could leave them in need of restoration themselves.

*Bearing One Another's Burdens*

The next verse says that believers must "bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2). Carrying one another's burdens means to be actively involved in helping. Luke 5:17-19 gives an example of a man's friends who literally carried another's burden-the man him self, because he was paralyzed-and brought him to Jesus for healing. They acted, Jesus responded, and the man was made whole. The formerly paralyzed man experienced the joy of restoration-both physically and spiritually-and his friends had the joy of seeing God work.

Restoring sinners is not an option. It is a responsibility. When believers are involved as restorers, they are fulfilling the law of Christ. It follows that to ignore a brother or sister caught in sin is to disobey the law of Christ.

*Remaining Humble*

God really knows every human being inside out. He knows how easy it is for people to become proud, especially when they are used to help another person. Helping others to be restored must never become a source of pride. "For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself" (Gal. 6:3). The work of restoration is given to some people as a blessing from God Himself. And they should see it as a gift from Him. It allows them to be blessed by God as they do a special work. They get to see God's love, grace, and mercy in action. It can be a life-changing experience. Even so, Paul gave a strong warning against pride, reminding his readers that God does the changing. People are just His instruments.

*Examining Ourselves*

Galatians 6:4, 5 calls each restorer to "examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For each one shall bear his own load." These verses provide important teaching about two very confusing questions. The first question is, "Do I have to downplay my ability or deny what God has done through me in order to avoid the sin of pride?" Clearly the answer is no. The text says people should examine their own work, and then they will have rejoicing in themselves alone. Looking carefully inside themselves can help people to understand their weaknesses and vulnerability, even as they also see the abilities God has given them to do what He asks them to do.

The second question, "How do I avoid pride if I acknowledge the good I have done?" also has a clear answer: Believers must not compare themselves with others. Their concern isn't whether or not they are better than another person. Their concern should be to keep in step with the Spirit (Gal. 5:25) so that God can continue to show His power in them.

Galatians 6:6 says, "Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches." This verse indicates a partnership between the believer and the Holy Spirit. The Spirit instructs His people; He also produces the blessing that results from their obedient, caring efforts.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of restoration include:

- Leviticus 19:18
- Matthew 18:15-17
- Romans 12:17-21
- 2 Corinthians 7:10
- 2 Timothy 2:24-26

- Philemon 10-12

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on restoration at Galatians 6:1-5. See also the personality profile of David Restored.

# Acts



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# Acts

An engagement, a job promotion, a new baby-the nature of good news is that we want to share it with everyone we meet. When good news touches our lives it naturally and joyfully bubbles from our lips.

This certainly was the case with the first generation of Christians. Luke, the author of the Gospel that bears his name, meticulously records in the Book of Acts how the followers of Jesus shared the news of a living Savior "in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (1:8).

Luke uses that geographical progression as a kind of outline for his record of the beginning of the early church. Chapters 1-7 document the church's initial impact under the leadership of Peter and John (primarily among Jews) in Jerusalem. Chapters 8-12 detail the spread of the gospel into the regions of Judea and Samaria. The balance of the book focuses on the apostle Paul and his missionary exploits throughout the known world. Acts is a book of major transitions-from Judaism to Christianity, from law to grace.

Filled with undeniable manifestations of the power of God, dotted with changed lives, and offering unique glimpses into church life as God intended it, this is as exciting a record as you'll ever read. Let Acts (and the passionate believers that fill its pages) renew your soul by reminding you that as a Christian you do indeed possess the best of all possible news.

**SOUL CONCERNS IN**

## ACTS

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES (ACTS 2:46, 47)

COMMUNICATION (ACTS 15:7)

## PROLOGUE

**1** The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to
do and teach, [2]until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the
Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen,
[3]to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many
infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the
things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

## THE HOLY SPIRIT PROMISED

[4]And being assembled together with *them,* He commanded them not to
depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," *He
said,* "you have heard from Me; [5]for John truly baptized with water, but you
shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." [6]Therefore,
when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at
this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" [7]And He said to them, "It is not for
you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.
[8]But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and
you shall be witnesses to Me[a] in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and
to the end of the earth."

## JESUS ASCENDS TO HEAVEN

[9]Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken
up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. [10]And while they looked
steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in
white apparel, [11]who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up
into heaven? This *same* Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will
so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven."

## THE UPPER ROOM PRAYER MEETING

[12]Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is
near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey. [13]And when they had entered, they
went up into the upper room where they were staying: Peter, James, John,

and Andrew; Philip and Thomas; Bartholomew and Matthew; James *the son* of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot; and Judas *the son* of James. [14]These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication,[a] with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

**MATTHIAS CHOSEN**

[15]And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples[a] (altogether the number of names was about a hundred and twenty), and said, [16]"Men *and* brethren, this Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus; [17]for he was numbered with us and obtained a part in this ministry."

[18](Now this man purchased a field with the wages of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his entrails gushed out. [19]And it became known to all those dwelling in Jerusalem; so that field is called in their own language, Akel Dama, that is, Field of Blood.)

[20]"For it is written in the Book of Psalms:

'Let his dwelling place be desolate,

And let no one live in it';[a]

and,

'Let[b] another take his office.'[c]

[21]"Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, [22]beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection."

[23]And they proposed two: Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. [24]And they prayed and said, "You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen [25]to take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place." [26]And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

## COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

**2** When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord[a]
in one place. [2]And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a
rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.
[3]Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and *one* sat upon
each of them. [4]And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to
speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

## THE CROWD'S RESPONSE

[5]And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every
nation under heaven. [6]And when this sound occurred, the multitude came
together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own
language. [7]Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another,
"Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? [8]And how *is it that* we hear,
each in our own language in which we were born? [9]Parthians and Medes and
Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and
Asia, [10]Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining
Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, [11]Cretans and Arabs-
we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God."
[12]So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "Whatever
could this mean?"

[13]Others mocking said, "They are full of new wine."

## PETER'S SERMON

[14]But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them,
"Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and
heed my words. [15]For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is *only* the
third hour of the day. [16]But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

[17] 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God,
That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh;
Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
Your young men shall see visions,

Your old men shall dream dreams.
18 And on My menservants and on My maidservants
I will pour out My Spirit in those days;
And they shall prophesy.
19 I will show wonders in heaven above
And signs in the earth beneath:
Blood and fire and vapor of smoke.
20 The sun shall be turned into darkness,
And the moon into blood,
Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD.
21 And it shall come to pass
*That* whoever calls on the name of the LORD
Shall be saved.'[a]
22"Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know-23Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken[a] by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; 24whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it. 25For David says concerning Him:

'I foresaw the LORD always before my face,
For He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken.
26 Therefore my heart rejoiced, and my tongue was glad;
Moreover my flesh also will rest in hope.
27 For You will not leave my soul in Hades,
Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.
28 You have made known to me the ways of life;
You will make me full of joy in Your presence.'[a]

29"Men *and* brethren, let *me* speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. 30Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne,[a] 31he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His

flesh see corruption. [32]This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. [33]Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear.

[34]"For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself:

'The LORD said to my Lord,

"Sit at My right hand,

[35] Till I make Your enemies Your footstool." ' [a]

[36]"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

[37]Now when they heard *this*, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men *and* brethren, what shall we do?"

[38]Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. [39]For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

## A VITAL CHURCH GROWS

[40]And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation." [41]Then those who gladly[a] received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added *to them*. [42]And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. [43]Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. [44]Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, [45]and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.

[46]So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, [47]praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church[a] daily those who were being saved.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# THE HOLY SPIRIT IN BELIEVERS' LIVES

**(ACTS 2:1)**

During the Last Supper, Jesus gave His disciples an extended introduction to the work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus promised that He and the Father would send a Helper (Comforter) to dwell in them. Among the Holy Spirit's tasks would be the following:

• To dwell with them and be in them (John 14:17).

• To teach the disciples all things (John 14:26).

• To bring to their remembrance what Jesus said (John 14:26).

• To testify of Jesus (John 15:26).

• To convict the world of sin because they do not believe in Jesus (John 16:8-11).

• To convict the world of righteousness because Jesus has gone to His Father and can be seen here no longer (John 16:8-11).

• To convict the world of judgment because the ruler of this world is judged (John 16:8-11).

• To guide the disciples into all truth (John 16:13).

After His resurrection, Jesus added to the Holy Spirit's job

description. He told the disciples they would soon be baptized with the Holy Spirit and receive power to be witnesses throughout the world (Acts 1:5-8).

The arrival of the Holy Spirit in the early church certainly created an audio-visual impact. Sounds like wind, sights like fire, and people speaking languages they did not learn announced the age of the church. Thousands heard in their own languages about the "wonderful works of God" (Acts 2:11).

The Holy Spirit has continued His ministry of conviction and conversion throughout history. Every believer is "sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise" (Eph. 1:13) when he or she believes the good news about Jesus. From that point on, the Holy Spirit remains a constant Helper, Comforter, and Companion of believers. He may not choose to make Himself known in such obvious ways, but those who live their lives in dependence on God's Spirit will discover that what they need in the way of power and guidance to accomplish God's will shall be provided. By His Spirit, God lives in those who trust Jesus.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Holy Spirit, Heavenly Dove. See also the key passage note at Ephesians 4:30.

**SOUL NOTE**

**The Best Gift** *(2:38, 39)* Peter called his listeners to repent, be baptized, and "receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." To repent means to turn from sin, to turn the direction of one's life away from rebellion and selfishness, and to live for Christ. Baptism is the public confession of one's commitment to Christ. It identifies that person with the Christian community. The Holy Spirit enters a believer's life, helping them to know and do God's will. Jesus had said, "I will

pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper" (John 14:16). Believers have the Holy Spirit dwelling within, and that helps them to live for God. **Topic: Presence of the Holy Spirit**

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# THE EARLY CHRISTIANS: UNITED IN CHRIST

**(ACTS 2:42-47)**

The Lord was moving mightily! A small group of believers waited in the Upper Room for the power Jesus promised from the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8), and the Holy Spirit came upon this group of 120 believers, who went out and told the message of salvation. After Peter's Pentecost sermon, three thousand people believed (Acts 2:41). As the believers rejoiced in their newfound faith, they worshiped and had fellowship together, "and the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved."

The early church was powerful and purposeful, and people responded. What made this early church so vibrant? Six characteristics give some insight, for the early church had: (1) apostolic doctrine, (2) loving fellowship, (3) powerful prayer, (4) prayerful power, (5) compassion for the needy, and (6) unity.

The early church was a vibrant group of believers seeking to learn more about the faith and desiring to act out their faith in love for one another. We may long for such a fellowship-one not riddled by

doctrinal infighting, opinions over church buildings and decor, or preferences of Bible versions. We cannot go back to such a fellowship, for, thankfully, the church grew and spread across the world, and each congregation then faced its own concerns, both culturally and among its individuals. Thankfully, the Bible has been made available in many languages, and we have our choice of many versions. But the truth and the Word never change. Churches are spread across the world, with different worship styles and doctrines, but most can celebrate what they have in common-what could be called the "spiritual disciplines" of the faith.

Churches that believe and teach the Bible as God's holy Word are teaching their members to love God's Word as well. The worldwide body of Christ is united by His truth, and can join together in the corporate disciplines of prayer, worship, fellowship, compassion, and witnessing. Unity comes not from agreement on every matter, but from agreement on what matters-the essentials of the faith. As we join with believers across the globe in the spiritual disciplines that build our faith, we reveal the unity and power of the body of Christ.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Spiritual Disciplines. See also the key passage note at Daniel 10:12.

**SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES**

ED HINDSON

(Acts 2:46, 47)

**M**any people feel cut off from God. Many would like to know Him more intimately. The process of growing intimacy with God begins by knowing that spiritual transformation is the work of God. He alone can change the human heart, regenerate the soul, and ignite spiritual passions. By contrast, the spiritual disciplines are activities believers do in order to draw ever closer to God. These disciplines are the practical expressions of our longings for God (Ps. 42:1, 2).

In Richard Foster's classic work, *Celebration of Discipline*, he cautions that spiritual disciplines are an inward and spiritual reality. The inner attitude of the heart, writes Foster, "is far more crucial than the mechanics for coming into the reality of the spiritual life."

The connection between the concepts of discipline and discipleship is more than a linguistic similarity. Disciples are disciplined "learners" whose lives are being conformed to the life of the Master Himself. When we look at the commands Jesus gave His disciples, we see them falling into basic categories: (1) Love God; (2) deny self; (3) love others; (4) trust His Word.

These characteristics build on each other. We can't love others until we have learned to deny ourselves. We won't have a supreme devotion to God's Word until we have a supreme love for God Himself. In one of our Lord's most convicting challenges, He warned, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me" (Luke 9:23).

## PUTTING GOD FIRST

In Luke 14:25-33, Jesus gave three conditions for Christian discipleship. He claimed authority over our relationships, our rights, and our riches. In each case, Jesus said one "cannot be My disciple" if he or she refuses these commands. In so doing, He reminds us of the seriousness of Christian discipleship. The earliest believers were called "disciples" long before they were called "Christians" (Acts 11:26). They received the latter designation only after they succeeded

in emulating the life and character of Christ to the point that others called them Christians.

In relation to the priorities of the Christian life, Jesus said, “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matt. 6:33). This is the direct contrast to the selfishness of most human beings. Even in Christian circles, a lot of selfish behavior passes as spirituality when it is not spiritual at all. Superficial piety can never replace the genuine desire to be like Christ. God and God alone must produce that desire in our lives.

## FOCUSING ON THE THINGS OF GOD

One cannot read the Bible without observing the attention that is given to the spiritual disciplines of *prayer* (Mark 1:35), *fasting* (Acts 13:3), *meditation* (Psalm 1:2) and *study* (Phil. 4:8). Each of these is designed by God to draw us into personal communion with Him. They are the spiritual avenues of His grace by which He transforms our lives and makes us into what He created us to be-His dear children.

If the original disciples had to ask, “Lord, teach us to pray” (Luke 11:1), then how much more do we? Prayer, like all the spiritual disciplines, is an automatic response of God’s work in the depth of our souls. But it is also a discipline that must be learned and practiced. Jesus’ own disciples fell asleep in the Garden of Gethsemane when they should have been praying. “What? Could you not watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matt. 26:40, 41).

Jesus expected His disciples to pray and was disappointed when they didn’t. He expected believers to fast, but chided them when they did it for the wrong reasons (Matt. 6:16-18). He condemned the scribes and Pharisees for not knowing the scriptures (Matt. 19:4) and urged His disciples to study the scriptures, for they spoke of Him

(Luke 24:44-49).

## DEVELOPING A HEART FOR GOD

The spiritual disciplines help us focus on the things of God so that we might truly worship Him. Worship is our human response to the love of God, the expression of the heart set free by His grace. Worship is the highest expression of the human soul. It draws us into the presence of God and captures our hearts and minds for Him.

Jesus said, "You shall worship the LORD your God" (Matt. 4:10). He also said, "Love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength" (Mark 12:30). Worship always precedes service. It is the holy expectancy that propels us to serve God with all our strength. We can give Him our lives only when we have truly given Him our hearts. Obedience flows from submission, which is expressed in worship.

God must get us on our knees before He can get us on our feet. Attempts to serve without worship will result in the futility of self-effort. Such vain attempts will defeat God's work in our lives rather than enhance it. He does not need us to defend Him. He can do that Himself! But He wants us to worship Him and love Him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. For then, and only then, will we be ready to serve Him effectively.

## FURTHER MEDITATION:

Other passages to study about the issue of spiritual disciplines include:

- 1 Samuel 16:7
- Psalm 104:34
- Matthew 6:16-18

- Romans 12:1, 2
- 1 Corinthians 9:26, 27
- 2 Corinthians 10:3-6
- Ephesians 4:20-24
- Colossians 3:16, 17
- 1 Timothy 4:7-11
- Hebrews 10:24, 25

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on spiritual disciplines at Daniel 10:12. See also the personality profile of The Early Christians: United In Christ.

## A LAME MAN HEALED

**3** Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer,
the ninth *hour*. [2]And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was
carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called
Beautiful, to ask alms from those who entered the temple; [3]who, seeing Peter
and John about to go into the temple, asked for alms. [4]And fixing his eyes on
him, with John, Peter said, "Look at us." [5]So he gave them his attention,
expecting to receive something from them. [6]Then Peter said, "Silver and gold
I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of
Nazareth, rise up and walk." [7]And he took him by the right hand and lifted
*him* up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. [8]So he,
leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them-walking,
leaping, and praising God. [9]And all the people saw him walking and praising
God. [10]Then they knew that it was he who sat begging alms at the Beautiful
Gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what
had happened to him.

## PREACHING IN SOLOMON'S PORTICO

[11]Now as the lame man who was healed held on to Peter and John, all the
people ran together to them in the porch which is called Solomon's, greatly
amazed. [12]So when Peter saw *it*, he responded to the people: "Men of Israel,
why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though by our
own power or godliness we had made this man walk? [13]The God of
Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant
Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he
was determined to let *Him* go. [14]But you denied the Holy One and the Just,
and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, [15]and killed the Prince of life,
whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses. [16]And His name,
through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and
know. Yes, the faith which *comes* through Him has given him this perfect
soundness in the presence of you all.

[17]"Yet now, brethren, I know that you did *it* in ignorance, as *did* also your

rulers. [18]But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. [19]Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, [20]and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before,[a] [21]whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. [22]For Moses truly said to the fathers, 'The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you. [23]And it shall be *that* every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.'[a] [24]Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold[a] these days. [25]You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.'[a] [26]To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one *of you* from your iniquities."

## PETER AND JOHN ARRESTED

**4** Now as they spoke to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and
the Sadducees came upon them, [2]being greatly disturbed that they taught
the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. [3]And they
laid hands on them, and put *them* in custody until the next day, for it was
already evening. [4]However, many of those who heard the word believed; and
the number of the men came to be about five thousand.

## ADDRESSING THE SANHEDRIN

[5]And it came to pass, on the next day, that their rulers, elders, and scribes,
[6]as well as Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and as
many as were of the family of the high priest, were gathered together at
Jerusalem. [7]And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, "By what
power or by what name have you done this?"

[8]Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people
and elders of Israel: [9]If we this day are judged for a good deed *done* to a
helpless man, by what means he has been made well, [10]let it be known to you
all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of
Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this
man stands here before you whole. [11]This is the 'stone which was rejected by
you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.'[a] [12]Nor is there
salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among
men by which we must be saved."

## THE NAME OF JESUS FORBIDDEN

[13]Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that
they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized
that they had been with Jesus. [14]And seeing the man who had been healed
standing with them, they could say nothing against it. [15]But when they had
commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among
themselves, [16]saying, "What shall we do to these men? For, indeed, that a
notable miracle has been done through them *is* evident to all who dwell in

Jerusalem, and we cannot deny *it.* [17]But so that it spreads no further among the people, let us severely threaten them, that from now on they speak to no man in this name."

[18]So they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. [19]But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. [20]For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." [21]So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way of punishing them, because of the people, since they all glorified God for what had been done. [22]For the man was over forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed.

**PRAYER FOR BOLDNESS**

[23]And being let go, they went to their own *companions* and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. [24]So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: "Lord, You *are* God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them, [25]who by the mouth of Your servant David[a] have said:

> 'Why did the nations rage,
> And the people plot vain things?
>
> [26] The kings of the earth took their stand,
> And the rulers were gathered together
> Against the LORD and against His
> Christ.'[a]

[27]"For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together [28]to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done. [29]Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, [30]by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus."

[31]And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they

spoke the word of God with boldness.

**SHARING IN ALL THINGS**

32 Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul;
neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but
they had all things in common. 33 And with great power the apostles gave
witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them
all. 34 Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were
possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the
things that were sold, 35 and laid *them* at the apostles' feet; and they
distributed to each as anyone had need.

> Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common.
> ACTS 4:32

36 And Joses,[a] who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is
translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus,
37 having land, sold *it*, and brought the money and laid *it* at the apostles' feet.

**SOUL NOTE**

**His Name Is Life** *(4:12)* Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world-His is the *only* name on which people can call for salvation. Many people have difficulty believing that Jesus is the only way (see also John 14:6). But to doubt that is to doubt God's Word-for Scripture tells us, by way of the apostle Peter's sermon, that "there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." No other religious teacher, no matter how wise or good, could die for our

sins and then rise from the dead to save all who believe in Him. **Topic: Salvation**

**SOUL NOTE**

**Praise Priority** *(4:23-31)* Peter and John had been told by the religious leaders to stop teaching about Jesus. The apostles reported back to the believers, and then they all gathered to pray and to praise God for His great works. They didn't ask for the threat to be removed, but that they would be bold in spite of it. Caught up in life's daily problems, we often forget to begin our prayer time with praise and thanksgiving. We may ask God to remove our problem, but we should also ask for wisdom, guidance, and boldness to deal with it. God will provide the strength we need. **Topic: Prayer**

## LYING TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

**5** But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a
possession. 2And he kept back *part* of the proceeds, his wife also being
aware *of it,* and brought a certain part and laid *it* at the apostles' feet. 3But
Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit
and keep back *part* of the price of the land for yourself? 4While it remained,
was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control?
Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men
but to God."

5Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So
great fear came upon all those who heard these things. 6And the young men
arose and wrapped him up, carried *him* out, and buried *him.*

7Now it was about three hours later when his wife came in, not knowing
what had happened. 8And Peter answered her, "Tell me whether you sold the
land for so much?"

She said, "Yes, for so much."

9Then Peter said to her, "How is it that you have agreed together to test the
Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband *are*
at the door, and they will carry you out." 10Then immediately she fell down at
his feet and breathed her last. And the young men came in and found her
dead, and carrying *her* out, buried *her* by her husband. 11So great fear came
upon all the church and upon all who heard these things.

## CONTINUING POWER IN THE CHURCH

12And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were
done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's
Porch. 13Yet none of the rest dared join them, but the people esteemed them
highly. 14And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of
both men and women, 15so that they brought the sick out into the streets and
laid *them* on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by
might fall on some of them. 16Also a multitude gathered from the
surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were

tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed.

**IMPRISONED APOSTLES FREED**

17 Then the high priest rose up, and all those who *were* with him (which is
the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with indignation, 18 and laid
their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison. 19 But at night
an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said,
20 "Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life."

21 And when they heard *that,* they entered the temple early in the morning
and taught. But the high priest and those with him came and called the
council together, with all the elders of the children of Israel, and sent to the
prison to have them brought.

**APOSTLES ON TRIAL AGAIN**

22 But when the officers came and did not find them in the prison, they
returned and re ported, 23 saying, "Indeed we found the prison shut securely,
and the guards standing outside[a] before the doors; but when we opened them,
we found no one inside!" 24 Now when the high priest,[a] the captain of the
temple, and the chief priests heard these things, they wondered what the
outcome would be. 25 So one came and told them, saying,[a] "Look, the men
whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people!"

26 Then the captain went with the officers and brought them without
violence, for they feared the people, lest they should be stoned. 27 And when
they had brought them, they set *them* before the council. And the high priest
asked them, 28 saying, "Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this
name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to
bring this Man's blood on us!"

29 But Peter and the *other* apostles answered and said: "We ought to obey
God rather than men. 30 The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you
murdered by hanging on a tree. 31 Him God has exalted to His right hand *to be*
Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. 32 And
we are His witnesses to these things, and *so* also *is* the Holy Spirit whom God
has given to those who obey Him."

**GAMALIEL'S ADVICE**

[33]When they heard *this,* they were furious and plotted to kill them. [34]Then one in the council stood up, a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in respect by all the people, and commanded them to put the apostles outside for a little while. [35]And he said to them: "Men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what you intend to do regarding these men. [36]For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody. A number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was slain, and all who obeyed him were scattered and came to nothing. [37]After this man, Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census, and drew away many people after him. He also perished, and all who obeyed him were dispersed. [38]And now I say to you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; [39]but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it-lest you even be found to fight against God."

[40]And they agreed with him, and when they had called for the apostles and beaten *them,* they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. [41]So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His[a] name. [42]And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus *as* the Christ.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# ANANIAS-CAUGHT IN A LIE

## (ACTS 5:1-11)

Some people have trouble with the truth, whether telling little "white"

lies or being almost pathological in their inability to be truthful. Christians, however, base their entire faith on the God who is truth. Their lives, therefore, should be characterized by truth. God made that very clear in an incident that occurred in the early church.

Ananias and his wife, Sapphira, were among the believers in the early church. The believers were selling land and houses in order to give the money to the apostles, who then distributed it among the needy. A man named Barnabas apparently received praise for selling some land and bringing all the money from the sale to the apostles (4:32-37). Ananias and Sapphira seem to have been motivated by that praise. So they too sold a possession and brought money to the apostles. The problem was not that they did not give all the money to the apostles. It was their prerogative to bring whatever amount they wanted to. The problem was that they claimed to have brought all the money when they had kept back some of it for themselves. In short, they lied. Ananias and Sapphira conspired together to try to foist their lie on the church leadership.

The Holy Spirit revealed their lie to Peter, however. In his lie, Ananias had "not lied to men but to God," and God cannot be fooled. He *is* the truth, and He always *knows* the truth. Ananias, and later his wife, paid the ultimate price for their attempted deception. God dealt harshly with this sin because dishonesty, greed, and desire for acclaim will threaten a body of believers and undermine their witness for Christ.

Are we truthful people? We should daily examine our lives, words, actions, and motives to make sure that we are truly being honest before God and before others. Truthfulness pleases God. Even if we think we can get away with a lie-God knows the truth.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Discovering Truth. See also the key passage note at John 8:31-36.

## SOUL NOTE

**God First** *(5:29)* The apostles had their priorities straight. When the religious leaders demanded that they stop preaching about Jesus, the apostles answered, “We ought to obey God rather than men.” People are required to obey the laws of their country, workplace, etc. Believers should honor and pray for their leaders (1 Tim. 2:1-4) and submit to the governmental authorities and laws (Rom. 13:1-7). But if a law conflicts with God’s Word, believers must obey God first, trusting that He will give them strength to stand firm in their faith.
**Topic: Obedience**

## SEVEN CHOSEN SERVE

**6** Now in those days, when *the number of* the disciples was multiplying,
there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists,[a] because
their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. [2]Then the twelve
summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, “It is not desirable that we
should leave the word of God and serve tables. [3]Therefore, brethren, seek out
from among you seven men of *good* reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and
wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; [4]but we will give
ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”

[5]And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a
man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon,
Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch, [6]whom they set before the
apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them.

[7]Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied
greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the
faith.

## STEPHEN ACCUSED OF BLASPHEMY

[8]And Stephen, full of faith[a] and power, did great wonders and signs among
the people. [9]Then there arose some from what is called the Synagogue of the
Freedmen (Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and those from Cilicia and Asia),
disputing with Stephen. [10]And they were not able to resist the wisdom and
the Spirit by which he spoke. [11]Then they secretly induced men to say, “We
have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God.” [12]And
they stirred up the people, the elders, and the scribes; and they came upon
*him,* seized him, and brought *him* to the council. [13]They also set up false
witnesses who said, “This man does not cease to speak blasphemous[a] words
against this holy place and the law; [14]for we have heard him say that this
Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs which
Moses delivered to us.” [15]And all who sat in the council, looking steadfastly
at him, saw his face as the face of an angel.

## SOUL NOTE

**God's Work** *(6:1-4)* The Jerusalem believers were becoming divided over culture, language, and distribution of food to widows. So the church found men to put in charge of that job. These were likely the first deacons. While their job was to do the administrative work so the apostles could focus on preaching, that did not make their work any less important. They served well. Whatever jobs we do, we should do them knowing that we serve Christ above all others (Col. 3:23, 24).
**Topic: Work**

## STEPHEN'S ADDRESS: THE CALL OF ABRAHAM

**7** Then the high priest said, "Are these things so?"

2 And he said, "Brethren and fathers, listen: The God of glory appeared
to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in
Haran, 3 and said to him, 'Get out of your country and from your relatives,
and come to a land that I will show you.'[a] 4 Then he came out of the land of
the Chaldeans and dwelt in Haran. And from there, when his father was dead,
He moved him to this land in which you now dwell. 5 And *God* gave him no
inheritance in it, not even *enough* to set his foot on. But even when *Abraham*
had no child, He promised to give it to him for a possession, and to his
descendants after him. 6 But God spoke in this way: that his descendants
would dwell in a foreign land, and that they would bring them into bondage
and oppress *them* four hundred years. 7 'And the nation to whom they will be
in bondage I will judge,'[a] said God, 'and after that they shall come out and
serve Me in this place.'[b] 8 Then He gave him the covenant of circumcision;
and so *Abraham* begot Isaac and circumcised him on the eighth day; and
Isaac *begot* Jacob, and Jacob *begot* the twelve patriarchs.

## THE PATRIARCHS IN EGYPT

9 "And the patriarchs, becoming envious, sold Joseph into Egypt. But God
was with him 10 and delivered him out of all his troubles, and gave him favor
and wisdom in the presence of Pharaoh, king of Egypt; and he made him
governor over Egypt and all his house. 11 Now a famine and great trouble
came over all the land of Egypt and Canaan, and our fathers found no
sustenance. 12 But when Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent out
our fathers first. 13 And the second *time* Joseph was made known to his
brothers, and Joseph's family became known to the Pharaoh. 14 Then Joseph
sent and called his father Jacob and all his relatives to *him*, seventy-five[a]
people. 15 So Jacob went down to Egypt; and he died, he and our fathers.
16 And they were carried back to Shechem and laid in the tomb that Abraham
bought for a sum of money from the sons of Hamor, *the father* of She-chem.

## GOD DELIVERS ISRAEL BY MOSES

17 "But when the time of the promise drew near which God had sworn to
Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt 18 till another king arose
who did not know Joseph. 19 This man dealt treacherously with our people,
and oppressed our forefathers, making them expose their babies, so that they
might not live. 20 At this time Moses was born, and was well pleasing to God;
and he was brought up in his father's house for three months. 21 But when he
was set out, Pharaoh's daughter took him away and brought him up as her
own son. 22 And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and
was mighty in words and deeds.

23 "Now when he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his
brethren, the children of Israel. 24 And seeing one of *them* suffer wrong, he
defended and avenged him who was oppressed, and struck down the
Egyptian. 25 For he supposed that his brethren would have understood that
God would deliver them by his hand, but they did not understand. 26 And the
next day he appeared to two of them as they were fighting, and *tried to*
reconcile them, saying, 'Men, you are brethren; why do you wrong one
another?' 27 But he who did his neighbor wrong pushed him away, saying,
'Who made you a ruler and a judge over us? 28 Do you want to kill me as you
did the Egyptian yesterday?'[a] 29 Then, at this saying, Moses fled and became
a dweller in the land of Midian, where he had two sons.

30 "And when forty years had passed, an Angel of the Lord[a] appeared to
him in a flame of fire in a bush, in the wilderness of Mount Sinai. 31 When
Moses saw *it,* he marveled at the sight; and as he drew near to observe, the
voice of the Lord came to him, 32 *saying,* 'I *am* the God of your fathers-the
God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.'[a] And Moses
trembled and dared not look. 33 'Then the LORD said to him, "Take your
sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground. 34 I have
surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt; I have heard their
groaning and have come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send
you to Egypt." '[a]

35 "This Moses whom they rejected, saying, 'Who made you a ruler and a
judge?'[a] is the one God sent *to be* a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the

Angel who appeared to him in the bush. [36]He brought them out, after he had shown wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red Sea, and in the wilderness forty years.

## ISRAEL REBELS AGAINST GOD

[37]"This is that Moses who said to the children of Israel,[a] 'The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear.'[b]

[38]"This is he who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the Angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and *with* our fathers, the one who received the living oracles to give to us, [39]whom our fathers would not obey, but rejected. And in their hearts they turned back to Egypt, [40]saying to Aaron, 'Make us gods to go before us; *as for* this Moses who brought us out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.'[a] [41]And they made a calf in those days, offered sacrifices to the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands. [42]Then God turned and gave them up to worship the host of heaven, as it is written in the book of the Prophets:

> 'Did you offer Me slaughtered animals and sacrifices *during* forty years in the wilderness,
> O house of Israel?
>
> [43] You also took up the tabernacle of Moloch,
> And the star of your god Remphan, Images which you made to worship;
> And I will carry you away beyond Babylon.'[a]

## GOD'S TRUE TABERNACLE

[44]"Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as He appointed, instructing Moses to make it according to the pattern that he had seen, [45]which our fathers, having received it in turn, also brought with Joshua into the land possessed by the Gentiles, whom God drove out before the face of our fathers until the days of David, [46]who found favor before God and asked to find a dwelling for the God of Jacob. [47]But Solomon built Him a house.

[48]"However, the Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands, as the prophet says:

49 ‘Heaven *is* My throne, And earth *is* My footstool.
What house will you build for Me? says the LORD,
Or what *is* the place of My rest?

50 Has My hand not made all these things?’[a]

## ISRAEL RESISTS THE HOLY SPIRIT

51“*You* stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers *did*, so *do* you. 52Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers, 53who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept *it.* ”

## STEPHEN THE MARTYR

54When they heard these things they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him with *their* teeth. 55But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, 56and said, “Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!”

57Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord; 58and they cast *him* out of the city and stoned *him.* And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. 59And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on *God* and saying, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” 60Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not charge them with this sin.” And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

## SAUL PERSECUTES THE CHURCH

**8** Now Saul was consenting to his death.

At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. [2]And devout men carried Stephen *to his burial*, and made great lamentation over him.

[3]As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing *them* to prison.

## CHRIST IS PREACHED IN SAMARIA

[4]Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word. [5]Then Philip went down to the[a] city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. [6]And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. [7]For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed. [8]And there was great joy in that city.

## THE SORCERER'S PROFESSION OF FAITH

[9]But there was a certain man called Simon, who previously practiced sorcery in the city and astonished the people of Samaria, claiming that he was someone great, [10]to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, "This man is the great power of God." [11]And they heeded him because he had astonished them with his sorceries for a long time. [12]But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized. [13]Then Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs which were done.

## THE SORCERER'S SIN

[14]Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, [15]who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit.

16For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 17Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

18And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, 19saying, "Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit."

20But Peter said to him, "Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money! 21You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God. 22Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. 23For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity."

24Then Simon answered and said, "Pray to the Lord for me, that none of the things which you have spoken may come upon me."

25So when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.

## CHRIST IS PREACHED TO AN ETHIOPIAN

26Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, "Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." This is desert. 27So he arose and went. And behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace the queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasury, and had come to Jerusalem to worship, 28was returning. And sitting in his chariot, he was reading Isaiah the prophet. 29Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go near and overtake this chariot."

30So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?"

31And he said, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him. 32The place in the Scripture which he read was this:

"He was led as a sheep to the slaughter;

And as a lamb before its shearer *is* silent,

So He opened not His mouth.

33 In His humiliation His justice was taken away,

And who will declare His generation?
For His life is taken from the earth."[a]

34So the eunuch answered Philip and said, "I ask you, of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?" 35Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him. 36Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, "See, *here is* water. What hinders me from being baptized?"

37Then Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may."

And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."[a]

38So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. 39Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing. 40But Philip was found at Azotus. And passing through, he preached in all the cities till he came to Caesarea.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# SIMON THE SORCERER-
# THE TRAP OF FALSE RELIGION

## (ACTS 8:9)

Many of the people who first heard the gospel of Jesus Christ were

very religious. Strange pagan religions were plentiful. Cults whose power relied on demonic forces held many people in spiritual bondage. When the Gentiles began to believe in Jesus by the thousands, they brought with them an understanding about God that lacked the insights of the Jewish faith. Among these pagan believers was a cult leader named Simon the Sorcerer.

Philip the apostle traveled through Samaria as a one-man gospel army. He spoke and acted with God's power. The current popular religious figure was Simon, who had impressed people with his sorcery for some time. The term "sorcery" may have referred to Simon's practice of magic, use of drugs, or involvement in the occult. But even he believed Philip's message and was baptized.

When the other apostles visited and laid hands on the new believers, they received the Holy Spirit. Scripture does not report that Simon allowed the apostles to lay hands on him. Instead, he offered money in exchange for the power to lay hands on others and produce the effects of the Holy Spirit's presence.

Simon's interest in following Christ apparently revolved around what might be best for Simon's popularity. He planned to add Christ's power to his other "powers." Peter confronted Simon's ignorance and attitude, and challenged him to repent. Peter's words frightened Simon enough for him to ask for prayer, but he did not repent.

Simon represents those in every generation who think that spiritual power is simply another area of influence they can control. These self-centered people often form religious groups called cults. Cults tend to lure people into believing they can have some kind of spiritual edge or superiority over others. They are often thinly veiled efforts by evil to further corrupt humanity. Peter's words to Simon apply to cultists today, since their "heart is not right in the sight of God" (Acts 8:21). The use of Christian words and practices does not mean that a group or person is faithful to Christ.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about cults Sweet Equilibrium: A Healthy, Balanced Christian Faith. See also the key passage note at Titus 1:16.

## SOUL NOTE

**Better, Not Bitter** *(8:20-24)* Peter pointed at Simon's wickedness and need for repentance. "You are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity," Peter said. Simon responded, "Pray to the Lord for me." Bitterness is indeed like apoison, eating away at a person's soft heart, turning it into stone-hard and unyielding. Simon first had to deal with his bitterness and sin. People poisoned by bitterness, whatever the cause, can be touched by God's grace, and so we pray for them.
**Topic: Bitterness**

## PERSONALITY PROFILE

# THE ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH'S SEARCH FOR GOD

**(ACTS 8:26-38)**

Sometimes good reading material can make all the difference on a long trip. This man from Ethiopia, called a "eunuch" (the term may simply have been a government title), was on his way back from Jerusalem and spent his time reading.

That may not seem so unusual, except that in these days, books were hard to come by. For a person to have a scroll of Isaiah meant a certain degree both of wealth and position. The Bible says that this man was "a eunuch of great authority under Candace the queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasury" (Acts 8:27). Because he had been worshiping in Jerusalem, we can assume that he was a Gentile convert to Judaism and had traveled there for one of the great festivals.

In the meantime, Philip, one of the deacons in the Jerusalem church (Acts 6:3-5), had been having a great ministry in Samaria. But then God sent him on a special assignment-out to a desert road. It was there that God placed the Ethiopian and Philip for a divine appointment.

Philip approached the chariot and discovered the man reading from the prophet Isaiah, chapter 53. The prophet was describing the Suffering Servant, the Messiah. The man did not understand what Isaiah was describing, but Philip knew. As Philip explained about Jesus, suddenly the pieces fell into place. "Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him" (Acts 8:35). The Ethiopian believed, was baptized right then and there, and went back to his home with a message of salvation!

Sometimes we find God in the strangest places. Sometimes divine appointments come when we least expect one. As people search for God, you may be the one whom God sends to explain a passage, offer a word of truth or encouragement, or simply be a friend. We must be open for those appointments. God may want to use us to make Himself known to someone!

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Knowing God. See also the key passage note at Leviticus 26:9-13.

## THE DAMASCUS ROAD: SAUL CONVERTED

**9** Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the
Lord, went to the high priest [2]and asked letters from him to the synagogues
of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or
women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

[3]As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone
around him from heaven. [4]Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice
saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?”

[5]And he said, “Who are You, Lord?”

Then the Lord said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.[a] It *is* hard for
you to kick against the goads.”

[6]So he, trembling and astonished, said, “Lord, what do You want me to
do?”

Then the Lord *said* to him, “Arise and go into the city, and you will be told
what you must do.”

[7]And the men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice
but seeing no one. [8]Then Saul arose from the ground, and when his eyes were
opened he saw no one. But they led him by the hand and brought *him* into
Damascus. [9]And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

## ANANIAS BAPTIZES SAUL

[10]Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and to
him the Lord said in a vision, “Ananias.”

And he said, “Here I am, Lord.”

[11]So the Lord *said* to him, “Arise and go to the street called Straight, and
inquire at the house of Judas for *one* called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is
praying. [12]And in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and
putting *his* hand on him, so that he might receive his sight.”

[13]Then Ananias answered, “Lord, I have heard from many about this man,
how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem. [14]And here he has

authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name."

15 But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear
My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. 16 For I will show
him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake."

17 And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands
on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus,[a] who appeared to you on the
road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled
with the Holy Spirit." 18 Immediately there fell from his eyes *something* like
scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized.

19 So when he had received food, he was strengthened. Then Saul spent
some days with the disciples at Damascus.

**SAUL PREACHES CHRIST**

20 Immediately he preached the Christ[a] in the synagogues, that He is the
Son of God.

21 Then all who heard were amazed, and said, "Is this not he who destroyed
those who called on this name in Jerusalem, and has come here for that
purpose, so that he might bring them bound to the chief priests?"

22 But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews
who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this *Jesus* is the Christ.

**SAUL ESCAPES DEATH**

23 Now after many days were past, the Jews plotted to kill him. 24 But their
plot became known to Saul. And they watched the gates day and night, to kill
him. 25 Then the disciples took him by night and let *him* down through the
wall in a large basket.

**SAUL AT JERUSALEM**

26 And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but
they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple. 27 But
Barnabas took him and brought *him* to the apostles. And he declared to them
how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and

how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. [28]So he was with them at Jerusalem, coming in and going out. [29]And he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus and disputed against the Hellenists, but they attempted to kill him. [30]When the brethren found out, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him out to Tarsus.

**THE CHURCH PROSPERS**

[31]Then the churches[a] throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.

**AENEAS HEALED**

[32]Now it came to pass, as Peter went through all *parts of the country*, that he also came down to the saints who dwelt in Lydda. [33]There he found a certain man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden eight years and was paralyzed. [34]And Peter said to him, "Ae-neas, Jesus the Christ heals you. Arise and make your bed." Then he arose immediately. [35]So all who dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord.

**DORCAS RESTORED TO LIFE**

[36]At Joppa there was a certain disciple named Tabitha, which is translated Dorcas. This woman was full of good works and charitable deeds which she did. [37]But it happened in those days that she became sick and died. When they had washed her, they laid *her* in an upper room. [38]And since Lydda was near Jop-pa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent two men to him, imploring *him* not to delay in coming to them. [39]Then Peter arose and went with them. When he had come, they brought *him* to the upper room. And all the widows stood by him weeping, showing the tunics and garments which Dorcas had made while she was with them. [40]But Peter put them all out, and knelt down and prayed. And turning to the body he said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up. [41]Then he gave her *his* hand and lifted her up; and when he had called the saints and widows, he presented her alive. [42]And it became known

throughout all Joppa, and many believed on the Lord. [43]So it was that he stayed many days in Joppa with Simon, a tanner.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# PAUL'S CHANGE FOR THE BETTER

## (ACTS 9:22)

Saul (who later was called Paul) probably thought he had it made. As a young and zealous Pharisee, he knew God's Word thoroughly. He had studied under a well-known Jewish rabbi, Gamaliel, and had apparently learned his lessons well. So well, in fact, that when the sect of the Nazarene-people who believed that Jesus was the Messiah-began to grow and flourish, Saul did all he could to stop it. Along with many of his fellow Pharisees, Saul thought that Jesus of Nazareth was a deceived man, certainly not the promised Messiah. Therefore, Jews who became Christians were considered traitors and deserved to be rounded up, locked up, and even killed.

That all changed one day on the road to Damascus. Saul was on his way to find and arrest more Christians who had fled from Jerusalem. On the road that day, Saul met Christ and was never the same again. Paul's early training took on a whole new aspect. The Scriptures he had so diligently studied opened up with a brand-new understanding. He saw Christ throughout God's Word, and he saw Him as the fulfillment of the prophecies.

It would be correct to say that Paul changed. Yet he merely made

the logical move from being a Jew to accepting the Messiah of Israel and becoming a Christian. His belief system found its completion in Christ. As Paul restudied the Scriptures, God opened his mind to see Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of all of God's promises.

As people come to Christ, many find Him to be the logical answer to their deepest questions. Others are surprised by who He is and what He has done for them. God has no set pattern or time frame for changing people's lives with His presence. Some will be convinced immediately; others will take more time; some will be slow to change. But we can know for sure that when Christ enters people's lives, they will never be the same!

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Maturity And Change. See also the key passage note at Ephesians 4:22-24.

**SOUL NOTE**

**A Work of Heart** *(9:26, 27)* No wonder the believers in Jerusalem were afraid of Paul-they knew the terror he had inflicted on the church (9:1, 2). His alleged conversion may have seemed like a sneaky way to find them out. When Barnabas went with Paul and verified his story, however, the believers accepted Paul as a brother in Christ. Barnabas, whose name means "Son of Encouragement" (4:36), lived up to his name by his positive attitude. Fellow believers need encouragement (1 Thess. 3:2-5). What can you do to be a "Barnabas" toward others? **Topic: Attitudes**

## CORNELIUS SENDS A DELEGATION

**10** There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of
what was called the Italian Regiment, 2a devout *man* and one who feared
God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and
prayed to God always. 3About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a
vision an angel of God coming in and saying to him, "Cornelius!"

4And when he observed him, he was afraid, and said, "What is it, lord?"

So he said to him, "Your prayers and your alms have come up for a
memorial before God. 5Now send men to Joppa, and send for Simon whose
surname is Peter. 6He is lodging with Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the
sea.[a] He will tell you what you must do." 7And when the angel who spoke to
him had departed, Cornelius called two of his household servants and a
devout soldier from among those who waited on him continually. 8So when
he had explained all *these* things to them, he sent them to Joppa.

## PETER'S VISION

9The next day, as they went on their journey and drew near the city, Peter
went up on the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour. 10Then he became very
hungry and wanted to eat; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance
11and saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four
corners, descending to him and let down to the earth. 12In it were all kinds of
four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the
air. 13And a voice came to him, "Rise, Peter; kill and eat."

14But Peter said, "Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common
or unclean."

15And a voice *spoke* to him again the second time, "What God has
cleansed you must not call common." 16This was done three times. And the
object was taken up into heaven again.

## SUMMONED TO CAESAREA

17Now while Peter wondered within himself what this vision which he had

seen meant, behold, the men who had been sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate. [18]And they called and asked whether Simon, whose surname was Peter, was lodging there.

[19]While Peter thought about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are seeking you. [20]Arise therefore, go down and go with them, doubting nothing; for I have sent them."

[21]Then Peter went down to the men who had been sent to him from Cornelius,[a] and said, "Yes, I am he whom you seek. For what reason have you come?"

[22]And they said, "Cornelius *the* centurion, a just man, one who fears God and has a good reputation among all the nation of the Jews, was divinely instructed by a holy angel to summon you to his house, and to hear words from you." [23]Then he invited them in and lodged *them.*

On the next day Peter went away with them, and some brethren from Joppa accompanied him.

**PETER MEETS CORNELIUS**

[24]And the following day they entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was waiting for them, and had called together his relatives and close friends. [25]As Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped *him.* [26]But Peter lifted him up, saying, "Stand up; I myself am also a man." [27]And as he talked with him, he went in and found many who had come together. [28]Then he said to them, "You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean. [29]Therefore I came without objection as soon as I was sent for. I ask, then, for what reason have you sent for me?"

[30]So Cornelius said, "Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour[a] I prayed in my house, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, [31]and said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard, and your alms are remembered in the sight of God. [32]Send therefore to Joppa and call Simon here, whose surname is Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, a

tanner, by the sea.[a] When he comes, he will speak to you.' [33]So I sent to you immediately, and you have done well to come. Now therefore, we are all present before God, to hear all the things commanded you by God."

## PREACHING TO CORNELIUS' HOUSEHOLD

[34]Then Peter opened *his* mouth and said: "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality.[35]But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him. [36]The word which *God* sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ-He is Lord of all-[37]that word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached: [38]how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him. [39]And we are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they[a] killed by hanging on a tree. [40]Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly, [41]not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before by God, *even* to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead. [42]And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God *to be* Judge of the living and the dead.

[43]To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins."

## THE HOLY SPIRIT FALLS ON THE GENTILES

[44]While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. [45]And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. [46]For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God.

Then Peter answered, [47]"Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we *have?* " [48]And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days.

## SOUL NOTE

**No Barriers** *(10:28)* At this point in the early church, it was hard for Jewish believers to comprehend that Gentiles might also become Christians. Through a vision, God revealed to Peter that he must take the Good News to Cornelius, a Gentile (10:19, 20). At this critical time in the growth of the early church, God made it clear that the Good News would be for everyone. Today, we must not allow any prejudice-concerning such things as race, language, economic status, education, or geography-to keep us from sharing the message of salvation with the world. **Topic: Prejudice**

## PETER DEFENDS GOD'S GRACE

**11** Now the apostles and brethren who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles
had also received the word of God. [2]And when Peter came up to
Jerusalem, those of the circumcision contended with him, [3]saying, "You went
in to uncircumcised men and ate with them!"

[4]But Peter explained *it* to them in order from the beginning, saying: [5]"I
was in the city of Joppa praying; and in a trance I saw a vision, an object
descending like a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it
came to me. [6]When I observed it intently and considered, I saw four-footed
animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. [7]And I
heard a voice saying to me, 'Rise, Peter; kill and eat.' [8]But I said, 'Not so,
Lord! For nothing common or unclean has at any time entered my mouth.'
[9]But the voice answered me again from heaven, 'What God has cleansed you
must not call common.' [10]Now this was done three times, and all were drawn
up again into heaven. [11]At that very moment, three men stood before the
house where I was, having been sent to me from Caesarea. [12]Then the Spirit
told me to go with them, doubting nothing. Moreover these six brethren
accompanied me, and we entered the man's house. [13]And he told us how he
had seen an angel standing in his house, who said to him, 'Send men to
Joppa, and call for Simon whose surname is Peter, [14]who will tell you words
by which you and all your household will be saved.' [15]And as I began to
speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning. [16]Then I
remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, 'John indeed baptized with
water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' [17]If therefore God gave
them the same gift as *He gave* us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ,
who was I that I could withstand God?"

[18]When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God,
saying, "Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life."

## BARNABAS AND SAUL AT ANTIOCH

[19]Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over
Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the

word to no one but the Jews only. [20]But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus. [21]And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord.

[22]Then news of these things came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch. [23]When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord. [24]For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord.

[25]Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul. [26]And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.

**RELIEF TO JUDEA**

[27]And in these days prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch. [28]Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar. [29]Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea. [30]This they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

## HEROD'S VIOLENCE TO THE CHURCH

**12** Now about that time Herod the king stretched out *his* hand to harass
some from the church. 2Then he killed James the brother of John with
the sword. 3And because he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further
to seize Peter also. Now it was *during* the Days of Unleavened Bread. 4So
when he had arrested him, he put *him* in prison, and delivered *him* to four
squads of soldiers to keep him, intending to bring him before the people after
Passover.

## PETER FREED FROM PRISON

5Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant[a] prayer was offered to
God for him by the church. 6And when Herod was about to bring him out,
that night Peter was sleeping, bound with two chains between two soldiers;
and the guards before the door were keeping the prison. 7Now behold, an
angel of the Lord stood by *him,* and a light shone in the prison; and he struck
Peter on the side and raised him up, saying, "Arise quickly!" And his chains
fell off *his* hands. 8Then the angel said to him, "Gird yourself and tie on your
sandals"; and so he did. And he said to him, "Put on your garment and follow
me." 9So he went out and followed him, and did not know that what was
done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision. 10When they
were past the first and the second guard posts, they came to the iron gate that
leads to the city, which opened to them of its own accord; and they went out
and went down one street, and immediately the angel departed from him.

11And when Peter had come to himself, he said, "Now I know for certain
that the Lord has sent His angel, and has delivered me from the hand of
Herod and *from* all the expectation of the Jewish people."

12So, when he had considered *this,* he came to the house of Mary, the
mother of John whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered
together praying. 13And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a girl named
Rhoda came to answer. 14When she recognized Peter's voice, because of *her*
gladness she did not open the gate, but ran in and announced that Peter stood
before the gate. 15But they said to her, "You are beside yourself!" Yet she

kept insisting that it was so. So they said, “It is his angel.”

16 Now Peter continued knocking; and when they opened *the door* and saw
him, they were astonished. 17 But motioning to them with his hand to keep
silent, he declared to them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison.
And he said, “Go, tell these things to James and to the brethren.” And he
departed and went to another place.

18 Then, as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers
about what had become of Peter. 19 But when Herod had searched for him and
not found him, he examined the guards and commanded that *they* should be
put to death.

And he went down from Judea to Caesarea, and stayed *there.*

**HEROD’S VIOLENT DEATH**

20 Now Herod had been very angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon; but
they came to him with one accord, and having made Blastus the king’s
personal aide their friend, they asked for peace, because their country was
supplied with food by the king’s *country.*

21 So on a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat on his throne and
gave an oration to them. 22 And the people kept shouting, “The voice of a god
and not of a man!” 23 Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck him,
because he did not give glory to God. And he was eaten by worms and died.

24 But the word of God grew and multiplied.

**BARNABAS AND SAUL APPOINTED**

25 And Barnabas and Saul returned from[a] Jerusalem when they had fulfilled
*their* ministry, and they also took with them John whose surname was Mark.

**SOUL NOTE**

**A Powerful Force** *(12:5)* Intercessory prayer-prayer on behalf of others-is a powerful force. When Peter was in prison, believers were praying for his safety. Herod had planned to execute Peter, but God thwarted those plans in response to prayer. When we pray for others, we always pray for the best possible outcome, but we also pray for God's will to be done. Prayer makes a difference, so we know we can pray often and with confidence. **Topic: Prayer**

**13** Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and
teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene,
Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. 2As they
ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, “Now separate to Me
Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” 3Then, having
fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent *them* away.

**PREACHING IN CYPRUS**

4So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and
from there they sailed to Cyprus. 5And when they arrived in Salamis, they
preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. They also had John
as *their* assistant.

6Now when they had gone through the island[a] to Paphos, they found a
certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew whose name *was* Bar-Jesus, 7who was
with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man. This man called for
Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God. 8But Elymas the
sorcerer (for so his name is translated) withstood them, seeking to turn the
proconsul away from the faith. 9Then Saul, who also *is called* Paul, filled
with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him 10and said, “O full of all deceit
and all fraud, *you* son of the devil, *you* enemy of all righteousness, will you
not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord? 11And now, indeed, the
hand of the Lord *is* upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a
time.”

And immediately a dark mist fell on him, and he went around seeking
someone to lead him by the hand. 12Then the proconsul believed, when he
saw what had been done, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord.

**AT ANTIOCH IN PISIDIA**

13Now when Paul and his party set sail from Paphos, they came to Perga in
Pamphylia; and John, departing from them, returned to Jerusalem. 14But
when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went
into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and sat down. 15And after the reading
of the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent to them, saying,

“Men *and* brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say on.”

16Then Paul stood up, and motioning with *his* hand said, “Men of Israel,
and you who fear God, listen: 17The God of this people Israel[a] chose our
fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of
Egypt, and with an uplifted arm He brought them out of it. 18Now for a time
of about forty years He put up with their ways in the wilderness. 19And when
He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He distributed their
land to them by allotment.

20“After that He gave *them* judges for about four hundred and fifty years,
until Samuel the prophet. 21And afterward they asked for a king; so God gave
them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years.
22And when He had removed him, He raised up for them David as king, to
whom also He gave testimony and said, ‘I have found David[a] the *son* of
Jesse, a man after My *own* heart, who will do all My will.’[b] 23From this
man’s seed, according to *the* promise, God raised up for Israel a Savior-
Jesus-[a] 24after John had first preached, before His coming, the baptism of
repentance to all the people of Israel. 25And as John was finishing his course,
he said, ‘Who do you think I am? I am not *He.* But behold, there comes One
after me, the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to loose.’

26“Men *and* brethren, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you
who fear God, to you the word of this salvation has been sent. 27For those
who dwell in Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they did not know Him, nor
even the voices of the Prophets which are read every Sabbath, have fulfilled
*them* in condemning *Him.* 28And though they found no cause for death *in*
*Him,* they asked Pilate that He should be put to death. 29Now when they had
fulfilled all that was written concerning Him, they took *Him* down from the
tree and laid *Him* in a tomb. 30But God raised Him from the dead. 31He was
seen for many days by those who came up with Him from Galilee to
Jerusalem, who are His witnesses to the people. 32And we declare to you glad
tidings-that promise which was made to the fathers. 33God has fulfilled this
for us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus. As it is also written in the
second Psalm:

‘ You are My Son,
Today I have begotten You.’[a]

34And that He raised Him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, He has spoken thus:

‘I will give you the sure mercies of David. ’[a]

35Therefore He also says in another *Psalm:*

‘ You will not allow Your Holy One to see corruption.’[a]

36“For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep, was buried with his fathers, and saw corruption; 37but He whom God raised up saw no corruption. 38Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; 39and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses. 40Beware therefore, lest what has been spoken in the prophets come upon you:

41 ‘Behold, you despisers,
Marvel and perish!
For I work a work in your days,
A work which you will by no means believe,

Though one were to declare it to you.’ ”[a]

## BLESSING AND CONFLICT AT ANTIOCH

42So when the Jews went out of the synagogue,[a] the Gentiles begged that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath. 43Now when the congregation had broken up, many of the Jews and devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.

44On the next Sabbath almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God. 45But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy; and contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed the things spoken by Paul. 46Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, “It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles. 47For so the Lord has commanded us:

‘I have set you as a light to the Gentiles,
That you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth.’ ”[a]

48 Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word
of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.

49 And the word of the Lord was being spread throughout all the region.
50 But the Jews stirred up the devout and prominent women and the chief men
of the city, raised up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled
them from their region. 51 But they shook off the dust from their feet against
them, and came to Iconium. 52 And the disciples were filled with joy and with
the Holy Spirit.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# MARK-GOD’S WORK IN WEAKNESS

## (ACTS 13:13)

God takes special delight in turning those who fail into faithful disciples. He is apparently not so concerned about helping those who help themselves as He is about helping those who realize how helpless they really are! One glowing example of God’s work can be seen in the life of John Mark-the assistant of Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey (Acts 13:5).

Barnabas probably invited Mark, his cousin, to join the team. Barnabas had an eye for people who needed encouragement. He had helped Paul prove to the other apostles that he really was a follower of Jesus, not a persecutor working under cover (Acts 9:26-30). Barnabas may have also known about Mark’s shameful cowardice on

the night when Jesus was arrested, if indeed Mark was the young man who had fled in such a hurry that he left his clothes behind (Mark 14:51, 52).

Paul, Barnabas, and Mark made the island of Cyprus their first missionary destination. When they traveled on to Pamphylia (southern Turkey), Mark left the team and returned to Jerusalem. Paul concluded that Mark was unreliable. Later, when Barnabas and Paul were about to depart on their second missionary journey, Barnabas insisted on giving Mark another chance. Paul refused. The team split and Barnabas took Mark with him back to Cyprus.

Events proved that Barnabas's approach with Mark worked. He became a dependable disciple. He eventually wrote the Gospel that bears his name, probably recording Peter's account. Even Paul later recognized Mark's maturity. Three times in letters, Paul mentioned his appreciation for Mark's ministry in his life (Col. 4:10; 2 Tim. 4:11; Philem. 24). God doesn't give up on weak people. Christians ought not to give up on one another. As Paul discovered, those who are weak today may become those on whom we lean tomorrow.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about My Weakness, His Strength. See also the key passage note at 2 Corinthians 12:9, 10.

**AT ICONIUM**

**14** Now it happened in Iconium that they went together to the synagogue of
the Jews, and so spoke that a great multitude both of the Jews and of the
Greeks believed. [2]But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and
poisoned their minds against the brethren. [3]Therefore they stayed there a long
time, speaking boldly in the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of
His grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands.

[4]But the multitude of the city was divided: part sided with the Jews, and
part with the apostles. [5]And when a violent attempt was made by both the
Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to abuse and stone them, [6]they became
aware of it and fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and to the
surrounding region. [7]And they were preaching the gospel there.

**IDOLATRY AT LYSTRA**

[8]And in Lystra a certain man without strength in his feet was sitting, a
cripple from his mother's womb, who had never walked. [9]*This* man heard
Paul speaking. Paul, observing him intently and seeing that he had faith to be
healed, [10]said with a loud voice, "Stand up straight on your feet!" And he
leaped and walked. [11]Now when the people saw what Paul had done, they
raised their voices, saying in the Lycaonian *language*, "The gods have come
down to us in the likeness of men!" [12]And Barnabas they called Zeus, and
Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. [13]Then the priest of Zeus,
whose temple was in front of their city, brought oxen and garlands to the
gates, intending to sacrifice with the multitudes.

[14]But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard this, they tore their
clothes and ran in among the multitude, crying out [15]and saying, "Men, why
are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you,
and preach to you that you should turn from these useless things to the living
God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them,
[16]who in bygone generations allowed all nations to walk in their own ways.
[17]Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did
good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with

food and gladness.” [18]And with these sayings they could scarcely restrain the multitudes from sacrificing to them.

**STONING, ESCAPE TO DERBE**

[19]Then Jews from Antioch and Iconium came there; and having persuaded the multitudes, they stoned Paul *and* dragged *him* out of the city, supposing him to be dead. [20]However, when the disciples gathered around him, he rose up and went into the city. And the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.

**STRENGTHENING THE CONVERTS**

[21]And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, [22]strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting *them* to continue in the faith, and *saying*, “We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.” [23]So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed. [24]And after they had passed through Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia. [25]Now when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia. [26]From there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work which they had completed.

[27]Now when they had come and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. [28]So they stayed there a long time with the disciples.

> And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned . . . strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, “We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.”
> ACTS 14:21, 22

## CONFLICT OVER CIRCUMCISION

**15** And certain *men* came down from Judea and taught the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." [2]Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question.

[3]So, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, describing the conversion of the Gentiles; and they caused great joy to all the brethren. [4]And when they had come to Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders; and they reported all things that God had done with them. [5]But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command *them* to keep the law of Moses."

## THE JERUSALEM COUNCIL

[6]Now the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter. [7]And when there had been much dispute, Peter rose up and said to them: "Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. [8]So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as *He did* to us, [9]and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. [10]Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? [11]But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ[a] we shall be saved in the same manner as they."

[12]Then all the multitude kept silent and listened to Barnabas and Paul declaring how many miracles and wonders God had worked through them among the Gentiles. [13]And after they had become silent, James answered, saying, "Men *and* brethren, listen to me: [14]Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. [15]And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written:

16 ‘After this I will return
And will rebuild the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down;
I will rebuild its ruins,
And I will set it up;

17 So that the rest of mankind may seek the LORD,
Even all the Gentiles who are called by My name,
Says the LORD who does all these things.’ [a]

18 “Known to God from eternity are all His works.[a] 19 Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God, 20 but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, *from* sexual immorality,[a] *from* things strangled, and *from* blood. 21 For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath.”

## THE JERUSALEM DECREE

22 Then it pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, *namely,* Judas who was also named Barsabas,[a] and Silas, leading men among the brethren.

23 They wrote this *letter* by them:
The apostles, the elders, and the brethren,
To the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia:
Greetings.

24 Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, “*You must* be circumcised and keep the law”[a] -to whom we gave no *such* commandment- 25 it seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, 26 men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. 27 We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who will also report the same things by word of mouth. 28 For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: 29 that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality.[a] If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well.

Farewell.

## CONTINUING MINISTRY IN SYRIA

30 So when they were sent off, they came to Antioch; and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the letter.

31 When they had read it, they rejoiced over its encouragement. 32 Now Judas and Silas, themselves being prophets also, exhorted and strengthened the brethren with many words. 33 And after they had stayed *there* for a time, they were sent back with greetings from the brethren to the apostles.[a]

34 However, it seemed good to Silas to remain there.[a] 35 Paul and Barnabas also remained in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.

## DIVISION OVER JOHN MARK

36 Then after some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, *and see* how they are doing." 37 Now Barnabas was determined to take with them John called Mark. 38 But Paul insisted that they should not take with them the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work. 39 Then the contention became so sharp that they parted from one another. And so Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus; 40 but Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by the brethren to the grace of God. 41 And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# PAUL AND BARNABAS-

# COMMUNICATING TRUTH IN LIFE

## (ACTS 15:36)

Paul and Barnabas formed a powerful missionary team. They met because Barnabas saw Christ in Paul's life before other people did. Barnabas, whose name means "Son of Encouragement" (Acts 4:36), believed God actually could transform someone like Paul into a genuine disciple. Until the end of their first missionary journey, Paul (the former Saul) still needed Barnabas as a character witness. But their partnership was temporary because their reasons for participating were different. Paul was called to a worldwide mission; Barnabas was called to recognize and encourage those who needed it.

Eventually, their different purposes took them in different directions. A dispute over the young disciple John Mark became the occasion of their separation. Paul thought Mark had proven himself unreliable; Barnabas believed Mark was worth another chance. They settled their honest difference of opinion with a solution that allowed each of them to continue to pursue his calling from God. Something important would have been lost if either had given in to the other. The missionary task might have been affected if Paul had agreed to allow someone he did not trust to accompany them. Mark's life might have taken a far different course if Barnabas had agreed to leave him behind.

People sometimes believe that communication and action are separate parts of life. They wrongly assume that we can communicate one way and live another. But if what we say and what we do contradict each other, one of them is a lie. Both Paul and Barnabas acted consistently with what they honestly believed to be true. They parted as brothers on different missions. They didn't make staying together more important than obeying God. The Lord, in turn, blessed each one of them.

Christians throughout history have repeatedly failed to apply this lesson about obedience to God. Believers have separated or stayed together too often for the wrong reasons. When we decide to win an argument rather than obey God, we have already taken a wrong turn.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Four Laws Of Communication. See also the key passage note at Ephesians 4:15.

## FOUR LAWS OF COMMUNICATION

# HOWARD EYRICH

# (Acts 15:7)

**C**ommunication is the key to successful relationships. We get along best with those we understand the most. Learning to communicate our thoughts and feelings is vital to understanding one another. It helps us see into the minds and hearts of our spouse, children, parents, friends, and coworkers. Expectations are clarified and problems are solved when we learn to communicate our deepest needs, feelings, and frustrations.

God models communication for us in His character and in His Word. From the very beginning, God created us with a capacity for interpersonal communication. He has spoken to us in His Word and He teaches us how to communicate with one another. God's rules of communication are expressed in four basic commands found in Ephesians 4:25-32 and illustrated numerous times in the Book of Acts.

**Law One**-*Stop lying and start telling the truth (Eph. 4:25*). Most Christian couples will stare in disbelief if their counselor suggests they might be lying to each other. But lies can be as simple as refusals to tell the truth. For example, when people ask us how we are doing, we almost always say that we are "fine." But sometimes that is a lie because we are not fine. When someone asks: "Is anything wrong?" we will often say, "Oh, nothing."

Lying is a constant problem in human conversation and it keeps us from genuine communication. If we are obviously upset, but insist that we are all right, others will assume we just don't want to talk about it. Instead of gaining their compassion, we often push them away altogether.

People lie to protect themselves from the stress they perceive will come from a confrontation. When we insist that we are OK or that nothing is bothering us, we actually erect barriers to communication. Our facial expressions, body language, and verbal communication are all saying, "Go away, I don't want to talk about it."

**Law Two**-*Keep current (Eph. 4:26, 27).* God clearly says that going to bed angry with each other is a sure way to allow the devil to drive a wedge into a relationship. Anger not dealt with is anger saved for future use. It is possible that the problem that was the occasion for the anger cannot be solved so quickly. However, the anger can be put to rest by agreeing to address the issue at a later time. The relationship can be reestablished even though the issue cannot be immediately settled. The point of the passage is the *relationship,* not the particular *issue*. Taking responsibility for offending each other, attempting to deal with the issues, and seeking and granting forgiveness is necessary. Since initiating reconciliation is the responsibility of both the offended and the offender, neither can use a ruptured relationship as an excuse to "let the sun go down" on their wrath. The sooner we deal with it, the better!

**Law Three**-*Tackle the issue, not the individual (Eph. 4:29, 30).* This

rule focuses upon the control and intent of our speech. Following his pattern of put off and put on, Paul indicates that we must choose the content of our speech. “Cutting words” are to be put off. In their place we must express words that build up the other person(s) in the relationship. Some may object by saying, “That’s not how I feel!” To help us, the apostle uses God Himself as our example. God was the offended party and certainly did not feel kindly disposed toward us, yet “God in Christ forgave” us (Eph. 4:32). He spoke and acted for our benefit! He tackled the issue of our sin, not us.

Proverbs 18:6 says, “A fool’s lips enter into contention, and his mouth calls for blows.” One cutting remark leads to another. Communication ceases and character defamation often develops, destroying respect and love. Little wonder that the injunction not to grieve the Holy Spirit is given between this law and the next. The use of our mouths directly affects the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our lives and in the lives of others.

**Law Four**-*Proact, don’t react (Eph. 4:31, 32).* All the emotions listed in Ephesians 4:31 are reactionary and retaliatory. They destroy communication. They force defensiveness because they directly attack the other person. On the other hand, the instruction of verse 32 is positive proaction that leads to a solution, not further conflict. To be kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving means being understanding of the other person’s frustrations. It is listening to another viewpoint. It is gently considering another’s feelings. It is letting love cover a multitude of sins. In short, it is acting in the very practical matter of daily living as God has acted toward us through Christ.

The Ephesians 4 passage provides a biblical frame of reference for communication. Nothing illustrates a principle better than learning how to apply it to one’s own experience. We can give various psychological reasons for not communicating. In fact, developing all the “games people play” will tend to detract from change and encourage the excusing of attitudes and behaviors. If we will learn to practice the biblical behavior suggested in this passage, we will learn

to communicate more effectively. In many instances this focus on positive change will not only enhance the communication process, but it will begin effecting lasting thinking and attitude adjustments in us as well. We become what we communicate, so let us learn to speak the truth with love and grace.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of communication include:

• Psalms 19:14; 31:18

• Proverbs 10:8, 31, 32; 12:14-19; 15:1

• Ecclesiastes 5:2

• Matthew 5:37

• Ephesians 5:4

• James 4:11

• 1 Peter 3:10

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on communication at Ephesians 4:15. See also the personality profile of Paul And Barnabas-Communicating Truth In Life.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# PAUL AND MARK-SETTLING THEIR

# DIFFERENCES

## (ACTS 15:37)

The apostle Paul probably intimidated most people he met. His reputation as a former fierce persecutor, his success as a brilliant debater, or his tireless passion for the gospel may have unnerved his companions. Paul's boldness often got him in trouble, along with his partners. Silas spent time with him in prison. Others suffered with Paul. A number of companions proved unable to keep up. John Mark started out in this last group.

Mark joined Paul and Barnabas on the first missionary team sent from the church in Antioch. They sailed to Cyprus and traveled across the island, preaching the gospel in various cities. Then they moved on to the north, to Pamphylia (modern Turkey). Acts simply notes that Mark left the team and returned to Jerusalem (Acts 13:13). Later, Paul refused to let Mark join him on another journey because he thought Mark had abandoned the team and the work on the previous trip (Acts 15:37-39).

This particular conflict had a deadline. By the time the team departed, Barnabas had decided to take Mark on a different outreach and Silas became Paul's new missionary partner. Later biblical comments make it clear that neither Mark nor Paul saw this conflict as a permanent rift. Possibly Mark wasn't ready for Paul's style, and Barnabas could accomplish more helping Mark than he could if he traveled with Paul.

Conflicts can be opportunities to clarify ideas, expectations, and goals. They may bring into the open what needs to be changed. Even good change rarely happens without conflict. Mark probably didn't enjoy the fact that Barnabas and Paul separated over him, but he had to appreciate that someone believed he was worth another chance. Mark eventually grew into a godly disciple whom Paul counted as a

trusted friend. Conflicts can lead to good endings.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about conflict Restoring Broken Relationships: Hope For The Heart. See also the key passage note at Matthew 18:15-17.

## TIMOTHY JOINS PAUL AND SILAS

**16** Then he came to Derbe and Lystra. And behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, *the* son of a certain Jewish woman who believed, but his father *was* Greek. 2He was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium. 3Paul wanted to have him go on with him. And he took *him* and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in that region, for they all knew that his father was Greek. 4And as they went through the cities, they delivered to them the decrees to keep, which were determined by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem. 5So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily.

## THE MACEDONIAN CALL

6Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. 7After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit[a] did not permit them. 8So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. 9And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” 10Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them.

## LYDIA BAPTIZED AT PHILIPPI

11Therefore, sailing from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and the next *day* came to Neapolis, 12and from there to Philippi, which is the foremost city of that part of Macedonia, a colony. And we were staying in that city for some days. 13And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met *there.* 14Now a certain woman named Lydia heard *us.* She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul. 15And when she and her household were baptized, she begged *us,* saying, “If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.” So she persuaded us.

## PAUL AND SILAS IMPRISONED

16 Now it happened, as we went to prayer, that a certain slave girl possessed
with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by
fortune-telling. 17 This girl followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying,
"These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the
way of salvation." 18 And this she did for many days.

But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And he came out that very hour. 19 But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged *them* into the marketplace to the authorities.

20 And they brought them to the magistrates, and said, "These men, being
Jews, exceedingly trouble our city; 21 and they teach customs which are not
lawful for us, being Romans, to receive or observe." 22 Then the multitude
rose up together against them; and the magistrates tore off their clothes and
commanded *them* to be beaten with rods. 23 And when they had laid many
stripes on them, they threw *them* into prison, commanding the jailer to keep
them securely. 24 Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner
prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

## THE PHILIPPIAN JAILER SAVED

25 But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God,
and the prisoners were listening to them. 26 Suddenly there was a great
earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and
immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed.
27 And the keeper of the prison, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison
doors open, supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword and was about
to kill himself. 28 But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, "Do yourself no
harm, for we are all here."

29 Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul
and Silas. 30 And he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be
saved?"

31 So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved,

you and your household." [32]Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. [33]And he took them the same hour of the night and washed *their* stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized.

[34]Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household.

**PAUL REFUSES TO DEPART SECRETLY**

[35]And when it was day, the magistrates sent the officers, saying, "Let those men go."

[36]So the keeper of the prison reported these words to Paul, saying, "The magistrates have sent to let you go. Now therefore depart, and go in peace."

[37]But Paul said to them, "They have beaten us openly, uncondemned Romans, *and* have thrown *us* into prison. And now do they put us out secretly? No indeed! Let them come themselves and get us out."

[38]And the officers told these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Romans. [39]Then they came and pleaded with them and brought *them* out, and asked *them* to depart from the city. [40]So they went out of the prison and entered *the house of* Lydia; and when they had seen the brethren, they encouraged them and departed.

**SOUL NOTE**

**What You Can Do** *(16:30-34)* When the jailer saw the prison walls crumbled around him, he fell trembling before Paul and Silas, and asked, "What must I do to be saved?" That's the question! So often people ask, "What must I do to be happy?" or "What must I do to be successful?" But only one question makes a difference for eternity. As Paul told the jailer, there's only one answer to the question "What must I do to be saved?" and that's "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ."

## Topic: Salvation

## PREACHING CHRIST AT THESSALONICA

**17** Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they
came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. 2Then
Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned
with them from the Scriptures, 3explaining and demonstrating that the Christ
had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and *saying*, "This Jesus whom I
preach to you is the Christ." 4And some of them were persuaded; and a great
multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women, joined
Paul and Silas.

## ASSAULT ON JASON'S HOUSE

5But the Jews who were not persuaded, becoming envious,[a] took some of
the evil men from the marketplace, and gathering a mob, set all the city in an
uproar and attacked the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the
people. 6But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some
brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, "These who have turned the
world upside down have come here too. 7Jason has harbored them, and these
are all acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king-
Jesus." 8And they troubled the crowd and the rulers of the city when they
heard these things. 9So when they had taken security from Jason and the rest,
they let them go.

## MINISTERING AT BEREA

10Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to
Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. 11These
were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the
word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily *to find out* whether
these things were so. 12Therefore many of them believed, and also not a few
of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men. 13But when the Jews from
Thessalonica learned that the word of God was preached by Paul at Berea,
they came there also and stirred up the crowds. 14Then immediately the
brethren sent Paul away, to go to the sea; but both Silas and Timothy
remained there. 15So those who conducted Paul brought him to Athens; and

receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him with all speed, they departed.

## THE PHILOSOPHERS AT ATHENS

16 Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked
within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols. 17 Therefore he
reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with the *Gentile* worshipers,
and in the marketplace daily with those who happened to be there. 18 Then[a]
certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him. And some said,
"What does this babbler want to say?"

Others said, "He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign gods," because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection. 19 And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new doctrine *is* of which you speak? 20 For you are bringing some strange things to our ears. Therefore we want to know what these things mean." 21 For all the Athenians and the foreigners who were there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing.

## ADDRESSING THE AREOPAGUS

22 Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens,
I perceive that in all things you are very religious; 23 for as I was passing
through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar
with this inscription:

TO THE UNKNOWN GOD.

Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you: 24 God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. 25 Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. 26 And He has made from one blood[a] every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, 27 so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; 28 for in Him we live and

move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, ‘For we are also His offspring.’ [29]Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man’s devising. [30]Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, [31]because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.”

[32]And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, while others said, “We will hear you again on this *matter*.” [33]So Paul departed from among them. [34]However, some men joined him and believed, among them Dionysius the Areopagite, a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

## MINISTERING AT CORINTH

**18** After these things Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth. 2And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla (because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome); and he came to them. 3So, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked; for by occupation they were tentmakers. 4And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks.

5When Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, Paul was compelled by the Spirit, and testified to the Jews *that* Jesus *is* the Christ. 6But when they opposed him and blasphemed, he shook *his* garments and said to them, "Your blood *be* upon your *own* heads; I *am* clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles." 7And he departed from there and entered the house of a certain *man* named Justus,[a] *one* who worshiped God, whose house was next door to the synagogue. 8Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized.

9Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, "Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; 10for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city." 11And he continued *there* a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

> Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, "Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city."
> ACTS 18:9, 10

12When Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him to the judgment seat, 13saying, "This *fellow* persuades men to worship God contrary to the law."

14And when Paul was about to open *his* mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, "If

it were a matter of wrongdoing or wicked crimes, O Jews, there would be
reason why I should bear with you. 15But if it is a question of words and
names and your own law, look *to it* yourselves; for I do not want to be a
judge of such *matters.*" 16And he drove them from the judgment seat. 17Then
all the Greeks[a] took Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat *him*
before the judgment seat. But Gallio took no notice of these things.

**PAUL RETURNS TO ANTIOCH**

18So Paul still remained a good while. Then he took leave of the brethren
and sailed for Syria, and Priscilla and Aquila *were* with him. He had *his* hair
cut off at Cenchrea, for he had taken a vow. 19And he came to Ephesus, and
left them there; but he himself entered the synagogue and reasoned with the
Jews. 20When they asked *him* to stay a longer time with them, he did not
consent, 21but took leave of them, saying, "I must by all means keep this
coming feast in Jerusalem;[a] but I will return again to you, God willing." And
he sailed from Ephesus.

22And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up and greeted the
church, he went down to Antioch. 23After he had spent some time *there,* he
departed and went over the region of Galatia and Phrygia in order,
strengthening all the disciples.

**MINISTRY OF APOLLOS**

24Now a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man
*and* mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus. 25This man had been
instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and
taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of
John. 26So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and
Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God
more accurately. 27And when he desired to cross to Achaia, the brethren
wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him; and when he arrived, he greatly
helped those who had believed through grace; 28for he vigorously refuted the
Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# THE TEAMWORK OF AQUILA AND PRISCILLA

## (ACTS 18:2)

Aquila and Priscilla were united both in marriage and in ministry. Their ability to communicate enabled them to minister effectively. Never mentioned separately in Scripture, these two became close friends of the apostle Paul. They met the traveling apostle when he was in Corinth on his second missionary journey. Aquila and Priscilla had moved from Rome after the emperor Claudius had issued a decree expelling all Jews from the city. They had moved to Corinth and taken up their tentmaking business. When Paul, a fellow tentmaker, also arrived in the city, they worked together and doubtless learned much from Paul.

Later, when a young orator named Apollos began to preach what he had heard from John the Baptist's followers, Aquila and Priscilla brought him home and told him the whole story. When Apollos went back to preaching, he had the full gospel message and had great impact in Corinth and beyond (1 Cor. 1:12). Aquila and Priscilla's quiet ministry in their home surely influenced many. Later, upon their return to Rome, one of the house churches met in their home (Rom. 16:3-5).

Couples who are united in Christ can have a great impact together for His kingdom. God can work mightily through a couple who are

devoted to Christ and willing to use their time, efforts, and resources to build God's kingdom. A Christ-centered home can be a haven for many who need to hear the gospel message. A devoted couple can minister together to both men and women. As they seek God together, their united front and solid faith can be a positive example to many. But they will only be as effective as their ability to communicate with each other. Often married couples are busy serving separately in churches. While their various gifts are needed in different places, they should not ignore the impact they can have together.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about marital communication Talking Sense. See also the key passage note at 1 Peter 3:8.

## PAUL AT EPHESUS

**19** And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples
2 he said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?”

So they said to him, “We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.”

3 And he said to them, “Into what then were you baptized?”

So they said, “Into John’s baptism.”

4 Then Paul said, “John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.”

5 When they heard *this,* they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.
6 And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. 7 Now the men were about twelve in all.

8 And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God. 9 But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. 10 And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.

## MIRACLES GLORIFY CHRIST

11 Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, 12 so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them. 13 Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, “We[a] exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches.” 14 Also there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who did so.

15 And the evil spirit answered and said, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know;
but who are you?”

16 Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered[a]
them, and prevailed against them,[b] so that they fled out of that house naked
and wounded. 17 This became known both to all Jews and Greeks dwelling in
Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was
magnified. 18 And many who had believed came confessing and telling their
deeds. 19 Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books
together and burned *them* in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of
them, and *it* totaled fifty thousand *pieces* of silver. 20 So the word of the Lord
grew mightily and prevailed.

**THE RIOT AT EPHESUS**

21 When these things were accomplished, Paul purposed in the Spirit, when
he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying,
“After I have been there, I must also see Rome.” 22 So he sent into Macedonia
two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, but he himself
stayed in Asia for a time.

23 And about that time there arose a great commotion about the Way. 24 For
a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of
Diana,[a] brought no small profit to the craftsmen. 25 He called them together
with the workers of similar occupation, and said: “Men, you know that we
have our prosperity by this trade. 26 Moreover you see and hear that not only
at Ephesus, but throughout almost all Asia, this Paul has persuaded and
turned away many people, saying that they are not gods which are made with
hands. 27 So not only is this trade of ours in danger of falling into disrepute,
but also the temple of the great goddess Diana may be despised and her
magnificence destroyed,[a] whom all Asia and the world worship.”

28 Now when they heard *this,* they were full of wrath and cried out, saying,
“Great *is* Diana of the Ephesians!” 29 So the whole city was filled with
confusion, and rushed into the theater with one accord, having seized Gaius
and Aristarchus, Macedonians, Paul’s travel companions. 30 And when Paul
wanted to go in to the people, the disciples would not allow him. 31 Then

some of the officials of Asia, who were his friends, sent to him pleading that he would not venture into the theater. [32]Some therefore cried one thing and some another, for the assembly was confused, and most of them did not know why they had come together. [33]And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander motioned with his hand, and wanted to make his defense to the people. [34]But when they found out that he was a Jew, all with one voice cried out for about two hours, "Great *is* Diana of the Ephesians!"

[35]And when the city clerk had quieted the crowd, he said: "Men of Ephesus, what man is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is temple guardian of the great goddess Diana, and of the *image* which fell down from Zeus? [36]Therefore, since these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rashly. [37]For you have brought these men here who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of your[a] goddess. [38]Therefore, if Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen have a case against anyone, the courts are open and there are proconsuls. Let them bring charges against one another. [39]But if you have any other inquiry to make, it shall be determined in the lawful assembly. [40]For we are in danger of being called in question for today's uproar, there being no reason which we may give to account for this disorderly gathering." [41]And when he had said these things, he dismissed the assembly.

## JOURNEYS IN GREECE

**20** After the uproar had ceased, Paul called the disciples to *himself,* embraced *them,* and departed to go to Macedonia. 2Now when he had gone over that region and encouraged them with many words, he came to Greece 3and stayed three months. And when the Jews plotted against him as he was about to sail to Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia. 4And Sopater of Berea accompanied him to Asia-also Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians, and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia. 5These men, going ahead, waited for us at Troas. 6But we sailed away from Philippi after the Days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days joined them at Troas, where we stayed seven days.

## MINISTERING AT TROAS

7Now on the first *day* of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight. 8There were many lamps in the upper room where they[a] were gathered together. 9And in a window sat a certain young man named Eutychus, who was sinking into a deep sleep. He was overcome by sleep; and as Paul continued speaking, he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead. 10But Paul went down, fell on him, and embracing *him* said, "Do not trouble yourselves, for his life is in him." 11Now when he had come up, had broken bread and eaten, and talked a long while, even till daybreak, he departed. 12And they brought the young man in alive, and they were not a little comforted.

## FROM TROAS TO MILETUS

13Then we went ahead to the ship and sailed to Assos, there intending to take Paul on board; for so he had given orders, intending himself to go on foot. 14And when he met us at Assos, we took him on board and came to Mitylene. 15We sailed from there, and the next *day* came opposite Chios. The following *day* we arrived at Samos and stayed at Trogyllium. The next *day* we came to Miletus. 16For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be at Jerusalem,

if possible, on the Day of Pentecost.

**THE EPHESIAN ELDERS EXHORTED**

17 From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church.
18 And when they had come to him, he said to them: “You know, from the
first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you,
19 serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which
happened to me by the plotting of the Jews; 20 how I kept back nothing that
was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house
to house, 21 testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and
faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. 22 And see, now I go bound in the spirit to
Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, 23 except that
the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await
me. 24 But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to
myself,[a] so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I
received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

25 “And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone
preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more. 26 Therefore I
testify to you this day that I *am* innocent of the blood of all *men.* 27 For I have
not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. 28 Therefore take
heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has
made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God[a] which He purchased
with His own blood. 29 For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves
will come in among you, not sparing the flock. 30 Also from among
yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the
disciples after themselves. 31 Therefore watch, and remember that for three
years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.

32 “So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace,
which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those
who are sanctified. 33 I have coveted no one’s silver or gold or apparel.
34 Yes,[a] you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my
necessities, and for those who were with me. 35 I have shown you in every
way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember

the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’ ”

> “I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’ ”
> ACTS 20:35

36 And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them
all. 37 Then they all wept freely, and fell on Paul’s neck and kissed him,
38 sorrowing most of all for the words which he spoke, that they would see his
face no more. And they accompanied him to the ship.

## WARNINGS ON THE JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM

**21** Now it came to pass, that when we had departed from them and set sail,
running a straight course we came to Cos, the following *day* to Rhodes,
and from there to Patara. 2And finding a ship sailing over to Phoenicia, we
went aboard and set sail. 3When we had sighted Cyprus, we passed it on the
left, sailed to Syria, and landed at Tyre; for there the ship was to unload her
cargo. 4And finding disciples,[a] we stayed there seven days. They told Paul
through the Spirit not to go up to Jerusalem. 5When we had come to the end
of those days, we departed and went on our way; and they all accompanied
us, with wives and children, till *we were* out of the city. And we knelt down
on the shore and prayed. 6When we had taken our leave of one another, we
boarded the ship, and they returned home.

7And when we had finished *our* voyage from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais,
greeted the brethren, and stayed with them one day. 8On the next *day* we who
were Paul's companions[a] departed and came to Caesarea, and entered the
house of Philip the evangelist, who was *one* of the seven, and stayed with
him. 9Now this man had four virgin daughters who prophesied. 10And as we
stayed many days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea.
11When he had come to us, he took Paul's belt, bound his *own* hands and feet,
and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the
man who owns this belt, and deliver *him* into the hands of the Gentiles.' "

12Now when we heard these things, both we and those from that place
pleaded with him not to go up to Jerusalem. 13Then Paul answered, "What do
you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be
bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

14So when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, "The will of the
Lord be done."

## PAUL URGED TO MAKE PEACE

15And after those days we packed and went up to Jerusalem. 16Also some
of the disciples from Caesarea went with us and brought with them a certain
Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple, with whom we were to lodge.

17 And when we had come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly.
18 On the following *day* Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were
present. 19 When he had greeted them, he told in detail those things which
God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. 20 And when they
heard *it*, they glorified the Lord. And they said to him, "You see, brother,
how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all
zealous for the law; 21 but they have been informed about you that you teach
all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they
ought not to circumcise *their* children nor to walk according to the customs.
22 What then? The assembly must certainly meet, for they will[a] hear that you
have come. 23 Therefore do what we tell you: We have four men who have
taken a vow. 24 Take them and be purified with them, and pay their expenses
so that they may shave *their* heads, and that all may know that those things of
which they were informed concerning you are nothing, but *that* you yourself
also walk orderly and keep the law. 25 But concerning the Gentiles who
believe, we have written *and* decided that they should observe no such thing,
except[a] that they should keep themselves from *things* offered to idols, from
blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality."

**ARRESTED IN THE TEMPLE**

26 Then Paul took the men, and the next day, having been purified with
them, entered the temple to announce the expiration of the days of
purification, at which time an offering should be made for each one of them.

27 Now when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews from Asia, seeing
him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd and laid hands on him, 28 crying
out, "Men of Israel, help! This is the man who teaches all *men* everywhere
against the people, the law, and this place; and furthermore he also brought
Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place." 29 (For they had
previously[a] seen Trophimus the Ephesian with him in the city, whom they
supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.)

30 And all the city was disturbed; and the people ran together, seized Paul,
and dragged him out of the temple; and immediately the doors were shut.
31 Now as they were seeking to kill him, news came to the commander of the

garrison that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. [32]He immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down to them. And when they saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. [33]Then the commander came near and took him, and commanded *him* to be bound with two chains; and he asked who he was and what he had done. [34]And some among the multitude cried one thing and some another.

So when he could not ascertain the truth because of the tumult, he commanded him to be taken into the barracks. [35]When he reached the stairs, he had to be carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the mob. [36]For the multitude of the people followed after, crying out, “Away with him!”

**ADDRESSING THE JERUSALEM MOB**

[37]Then as Paul was about to be led into the barracks, he said to the commander, “May I speak to you?”

He replied, “Can you speak Greek? [38]Are you not the Egyptian who some time ago stirred up a rebellion and led the four thousand assassins out into the wilderness?”

[39]But Paul said, “I am a Jew from Tarsus, in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city; and I implore you, permit me to speak to the people.”

[40]So when he had given him permission, Paul stood on the stairs and motioned with his hand to the people. And when there was a great silence, he spoke to *them* in the Hebrew language, saying,

**22** “Brethren and fathers, hear my defense before you now.” [2]And when they heard that he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, they kept all the more silent.

Then he said: [3]“I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers’ law, and was zealous toward God as you all are today. [4]I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women, [5]as also the high priest bears me witness, and all the council of the elders, from whom I also received letters to the brethren, and went to Damascus to bring in chains even those who were there to Jerusalem to be punished.

[6]“Now it happened, as I journeyed and came near Damascus at about noon, suddenly a great light from heaven shone around me. [7]And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?’ [8]So I answered, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ And He said to me, ‘I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.’

[9]“And those who were with me indeed saw the light and were afraid,[a] but they did not hear the voice of Him who spoke to me. [10]So I said, ‘What shall I do, Lord?’ And the Lord said to me, ‘Arise and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all things which are appointed for you to do.’ [11]And since I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of those who were with me, I came into Damascus.

[12]“Then a certain Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good testimony with all the Jews who dwelt *there,* [13]came to me; and he stood and said to me, ‘Brother Saul, receive your sight.’ And at that same hour I looked up at him. [14]Then he said, ‘The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will, and see the Just One, and hear the voice of His mouth. [15]For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard. [16]And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.’

[17]“Now it happened, when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I was in a trance [18]and saw Him saying to me, ‘Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, for they will not receive your testimony

concerning Me.’ [19]So I said, ‘Lord, they know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believe on You. [20]And when the blood of Your martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by consenting to his death,[a] and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.’ [21]Then He said to me, ‘Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles.’ ”

**PAUL’S ROMAN CITIZENSHIP**

[22]And they listened to him until this word, and *then* they raised their voices and said, “Away with such a *fellow* from the earth, for he is not fit to live!” [23]Then, as they cried out and tore off *their* clothes and threw dust into the air, [24]the commander ordered him to be brought into the barracks, and said that he should be examined under scourging, so that he might know why they shouted so against him. [25]And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said to the centurion who stood by, “Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman, and uncondemned?”

[26]When the centurion heard *that*, he went and told the commander, saying, “Take care what you do, for this man is a Roman.”

[27]Then the commander came and said to him, “Tell me, are you a Roman?”

He said, “Yes.”

[28]The commander answered, “With a large sum I obtained this citizenship.”

And Paul said, “But I was born *a citizen.* ”

[29]Then immediately those who were about to examine him withdrew from him; and the commander was also afraid after he found out that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him.

**THE SANHEDRIN DIVIDED**

[30]The next day, because he wanted to know for certain why he was accused by the Jews, he released him from *his* bonds, and commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down and set him before them.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# PAUL'S IMPERFECT PERFECTION

## (ACTS 22:3, 4)

Paul could have been considered a "perfect" Jew. He had the right pedigree, the right training, the right desires, the right enthusiasm. But being "perfect" in one's own eyes doesn't make somebody saved before God.

When God got hold of him, Paul understood two very important facts. First, he realized that God could use every part of a person's background and upbringing for His glory. Nothing is wasted with God. As God fashioned his future servant, the events of Paul's life would be brought together into a perfect "package" that could accomplish God's great purposes. Paul's training under Gamaliel gave him command of the Old Testament Scriptures. When Christ revealed Himself, Paul, unlike many of his fellow Pharisees, saw how Christ had fulfilled every prophecy regarding the Messiah. Paul's logical mind saw the truth, and there was no turning back. In addition, Paul's Roman citizenship allowed him free travel across the empire, and spared him at least one beating at the hands of Roman soldiers.

Second, Paul realized that his perfect pedigree was ultimately worthless for salvation. He wrote to the Philippian church: "If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness

which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ" (Phil. 3:4-7).

Paul's Jewish "perfection" counted for nothing. No one's pedigree, training, background, wealth, abilities, gifts, appearance, or anything else can be perfect enough to earn salvation. We must not be enslaved to the "perfectionism" of this world that is ultimately worthless. Only when we cast ourselves before God and allow *Him* to use our backgrounds, training, and gifts for His glory will we find complete fulfillment. Only when we repent of our sins and accept Him as our Savior does He do His perfect work in us.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Perfectionism. See also the key passage note at Hebrews 10:12-14.

**23** Then Paul, looking earnestly at the council, said, “Men *and* brethren, I
have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.” [2]And the
high priest Ananias commanded those who stood by him to strike him on the
mouth. [3]Then Paul said to him, “God will strike you, *you* whitewashed wall!
For you sit to judge me according to the law, and do you command me to be
struck contrary to the law?”

[4]And those who stood by said, “Do you revile God’s high priest?”

[5]Then Paul said, “I did not know, brethren, that he was the high priest; for
it is written, ‘ You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.’ ”[a]

[6]But when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other
Pharisees, he cried out in the council, “Men *and* brethren, I am a Pharisee, the
son of a Pharisee; concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am
being judged!”

[7]And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and
the Sadducees; and the assembly was divided. [8]For Sadducees say that there
is no resurrection-and no angel or spirit; but the Pharisees confess both.
[9]Then there arose a loud outcry. And the scribes of the Pharisees’ party arose
and protested, saying, “We find no evil in this man; but if a spirit or an angel
has spoken to him, let us not fight against God.”[a]

[10]Now when there arose a great dissension, the commander, fearing lest
Paul might be pulled to pieces by them, commanded the soldiers to go down
and take him by force from among them, and bring *him* into the barracks.

**THE PLOT AGAINST PAUL**

[11]But the following night the Lord stood by him and said, “Be of good
cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also
bear witness at Rome.”

[12]And when it was day, some of the Jews banded together and bound
themselves under an oath, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till
they had killed Paul. [13]Now there were more than forty who had formed this
conspiracy. [14]They came to the chief priests and elders, and said, “We have
bound ourselves under a great oath that we will eat nothing until we have

killed Paul. [15]Now you, therefore, together with the council, suggest to the commander that he be brought down to you tomorrow,[a] as though you were going to make further inquiries concerning him; but we are ready to kill him before he comes near."

[16]So when Paul's sister's son heard of their ambush, he went and entered the barracks and told Paul. [17]Then Paul called one of the centurions to *him* and said, "Take this young man to the commander, for he has something to tell him." [18]So he took him and brought *him* to the commander and said, "Paul the prisoner called me to *him* and asked *me* to bring this young man to you. He has something to say to you."

[19]Then the commander took him by the hand, went aside, and asked privately, "What is it that you have to tell me?"

[20]And he said, "The Jews have agreed to ask that you bring Paul down to the council tomorrow, as though they were going to inquire more fully about him. [21]But do not yield to them, for more than forty of them lie in wait for him, men who have bound themselves by an oath that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him; and now they are ready, waiting for the promise from you."

[22]So the commander let the young man depart, and commanded *him,* "Tell no one that you have revealed these things to me."

**SENT TO FELIX**

[23]And he called for two centurions, saying, "Prepare two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen, and two hundred spearmen to go to Caesarea at the third hour of the night; [24]and provide mounts to set Paul on, and bring *him* safely to Felix the governor." [25]He wrote a letter in the following manner:

[26] Claudius Lysias,
To the most excellent governor Felix:
Greetings.
[27] This man was seized by the Jews and was about to be killed by them. Coming with the troops I rescued him, having learned that he was a Roman. [28]And when I wanted to know the reason they accused him, I brought him before their council.

[29]I found out that he was accused concerning questions of their law, but had nothing charged against him deserving of death or chains. [30]And when it was told me that the Jews lay in wait for the man,[a] I sent him immediately to you, and also commanded his accusers to state before you the charges against him.

Farewell.

[31]Then the soldiers, as they were commanded, took Paul and brought *him* by night to Antipatris. [32]The next day they left the horsemen to go on with him, and returned to the barracks. [33]When they came to Caesarea and had delivered the letter to the governor, they also presented Paul to him. [34]And when the governor had read *it*, he asked what province he was from. And when he understood that *he was* from Cilicia, [35]he said, “I will hear you when your accusers also have come.” And he commanded him to be kept in Herod’s Praetorium.

## ACCUSED OF SEDITION

**24** Now after five days Ananias the high priest came down with the elders
and a certain orator *named* Tertullus. These gave evidence to the
governor against Paul.

2 And when he was called upon, Tertullus began his accusation, saying:
"Seeing that through you we enjoy great peace, and prosperity is being
brought to this nation by your foresight, 3 we accept *it* always and in all
places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness. 4 Nevertheless, not to be
tedious to you any further, I beg you to hear, by your courtesy, a few words
from us. 5 For we have found this man a plague, a creator of dissension among
all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the
Nazarenes. 6 He even tried to profane the temple, and we seized him,[a] and
wanted to judge him according to our law. 7 But the commander Lysias came
by and with great violence took *him* out of our hands, 8 commanding his
accusers to come to you. By examining him yourself you may ascertain all
these things of which we accuse him." 9 And the Jews also assented,[a]
maintaining that these things were so.

## THE DEFENSE BEFORE FELIX

10 Then Paul, after the governor had nodded to him to speak, answered:
"Inasmuch as I know that you have been for many years a judge of this
nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself, 11 because you may
ascertain that it is no more than twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem to
worship. 12 And they neither found me in the temple disputing with anyone
nor inciting the crowd, either in the synagogues or in the city. 13 Nor can they
prove the things of which they now accuse me. 14 But this I confess to you,
that according to the Way which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my
fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets.
15 I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be a
resurrection of *the* dead,[a] both of *the* just and *the* unjust. 16 This *being* so, I
myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and
men.

17 “Now after many years I came to bring alms and offerings to my nation,
18 in the midst of which some Jews from Asia found me purified in the
temple, neither with a mob nor with tumult. 19 They ought to have been here
before you to object if they had anything against me. 20 Or else let those who
are *here* themselves say if they found any wrongdoing[a] in me while I stood
before the council, 21 unless *it is* for this one statement which I cried out,
standing among them, ‘Concerning the resurrection of the dead I am being
judged by you this day.’ ”

**FELIX PROCRASTINATES**

22 But when Felix heard these things, having more accurate knowledge of
*the* Way, he adjourned the proceedings and said, “When Lysias the
commander comes down, I will make a decision on your case.” 23 So he
commanded the centurion to keep Paul and to let *him* have liberty, and told
him not to forbid any of his friends to provide for or visit him.

24 And after some days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was
Jewish, he sent for Paul and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. 25 Now
as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come,
Felix was afraid and answered, “Go away for now; when I have a convenient
time I will call for you.” 26 Meanwhile he also hoped that money would be
given him by Paul, that he might release him.[a] Therefore he sent for him
more often and conversed with him.

27 But after two years Porcius Festus succeeded Felix; and Felix, wanting to
do the Jews a favor, left Paul bound.

## PAUL APPEALS TO CAESAR

**25** Now when Festus had come to the province, after three days he went up
from Caesarea to Jerusalem. [2]Then the high priest[a] and the chief men of
the Jews informed him against Paul; and they petitioned him, [3]asking a favor
against him, that he would summon him to Jerusalem-while *they* lay in
ambush along the road to kill him. [4]But Festus answered that Paul should be
kept at Caesarea, and that he himself was going *there* shortly. [5]"Therefore,"
he said, "let those who have authority among you go down with *me* and
accuse this man, to see if there is any fault in him."

[6]And when he had remained among them more than ten days, he went
down to Caesarea. And the next day, sitting on the judgment seat, he
commanded Paul to be brought. [7]When he had come, the Jews who had come
down from Jerusalem stood about and laid many serious complaints against
Paul, which they could not prove, [8]while he answered for himself, "Neither
against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I
offended in anything at all."

[9]But Festus, wanting to do the Jews a favor, answered Paul and said, "Are
you willing to go up to Jerusalem and there be judged before me concerning
these things?"

[10]So Paul said, "I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be
judged. To the Jews I have done no wrong, as you very well know. [11]For if I
am an offender, or have committed anything deserving of death, I do not
object to dying; but if there is nothing in these things of which these men
accuse me, no one can deliver me to them. I appeal to Caesar."

[12]Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, "You
have appealed to Caesar? To Caesar you shall go!"

## PAUL BEFORE AGRIPPA

[13]And after some days King Agrippa and Bernice came to Caesarea to
greet Festus. [14]When they had been there many days, Festus laid Paul's case
before the king, saying: "There is a certain man left a prisoner by Felix,
[15]about whom the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed *me,* when

I was in Jerusalem, asking for a judgment against him. [16]To them I answered,
‘It is not the custom of the Romans to deliver any man to destruction[a] before
the accused meets the accusers face to face, and has opportunity to answer for
himself concerning the charge against him.’ [17]Therefore when they had come
together, without any delay, the next day I sat on the judgment seat and
commanded the man to be brought in. [18]When the accusers stood up, they
brought no accusation against him of such things as I supposed, [19]but had
some questions against him about their own religion and about a certain
Jesus, who had died, whom Paul affirmed to be alive. [20]And because I was
uncertain of such questions, I asked whether he was willing to go to
Jerusalem and there be judged concerning these matters. [21]But when Paul
appealed to be reserved for the decision of Augustus, I commanded him to be
kept till I could send him to Caesar.”

[22]Then Agrippa said to Festus, “I also would like to hear the man myself.”

“Tomorrow,” he said, “you shall hear him.” [23]So the next day, when
Agrippa and Bernice had come with great pomp, and had entered the
auditorium with the commanders and the prominent men of the city, at
Festus’ command Paul was brought in. [24]And Festus said: “King Agrippa and
all the men who are here present with us, you see this man about whom the
whole assembly of the Jews petitioned me, both at Jerusalem and here, crying
out that he was not fit to live any longer. [25]But when I found that he had
committed nothing deserving of death, and that he himself had appealed to
Augustus, I decided to send him. [26]I have nothing certain to write to my lord
concerning him. Therefore I have brought him out before you, and especially
before you, King Agrippa, so that after the examination has taken place I may
have something to write. [27]For it seems to me unreasonable to send a prisoner
and not to specify the charges against him.”

## PAUL'S EARLY LIFE

**26** Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You are permitted to speak for yourself." So Paul stretched out his hand and answered for himself: 2"I think myself happy, King Agrippa, because today I shall answer for myself before you concerning all the things of which I am accused by the Jews, 3especially because you are expert in all customs and questions which have to do with the Jews. Therefore I beg you to hear me patiently.

4"My manner of life from my youth, which was spent from the beginning among my own nation at Jerusalem, all the Jews know. 5They knew me from the first, if they were willing to testify, that according to the strictest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee. 6And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers. 7To this *promise* our twelve tribes, earnestly serving *God* night and day, hope to attain. For this hope's sake, King Agrippa, I am accused by the Jews. 8Why should it be thought incredible by you that God raises the dead?

9"Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. 10This I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against *them.* 11And I punished them often in every synagogue and compelled *them* to blaspheme; and being exceedingly enraged against them, I persecuted *them* even to foreign cities.

## PAUL RECOUNTS HIS CONVERSION

12"While thus occupied, as I journeyed to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, 13at midday, O king, along the road I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining around me and those who journeyed with me. 14And when we all had fallen to the ground, I heard a voice speaking to me and saying in the Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? *It is* hard for you to kick against the goads.' 15So I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. 16But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which

you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you. [17]I will deliver you from the *Jewish* people, as well as *from* the Gentiles, to whom I now[a] send you, [18]to open their eyes, *in order* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.'

**PAUL'S POST-CONVERSION LIFE**

[19]"Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, [20]but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and *then* to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance. [21]For these reasons the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill *me*. [22]Therefore, having obtained help from God, to this day I stand, witnessing both to small and great, saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come-[23]that the Christ would suffer, that He would be the first to rise from the dead, and would proclaim light to the *Jewish* people and to the Gentiles."

**AGRIPPA PARRIES PAUL'S CHALLENGE**

[24]Now as he thus made his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, "Paul, you are beside yourself! Much learning is driving you mad!"

[25]But he said, "I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak the words of truth and reason. [26]For the king, before whom I also speak freely, knows these things; for I am convinced that none of these things escapes his attention, since this thing was not done in a corner.

[27]King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you do believe."

[28]Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You almost persuade me to become a Christian."

[29]And Paul said, "I would to God that not only you, but also all who hear me today, might become both almost and altogether such as I am, except for these chains."

[30]When he had said these things, the king stood up, as well as the governor and Bernice and those who sat with them;[31]and when they had gone aside,

they talked among themselves, saying, “This man is doing nothing deserving of death or chains.”

32 Then Agrippa said to Festus, “This man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.”

**SOUL NOTE**

**Called Out of Darkness** *(26:17, 18)* Jesus had told Paul of his mission to the Gentiles-to turn them from darkness and away from the power of Satan. Many people are involved in Satan worship and or various forms of the occult. Satan’s powerful hold can be broken only by the power of Jesus Christ. No matter what someone’s past is, they can “receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith.” We can trust in Christ’s power over Satan-the victory has already been won. **Topic: Occult**

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# KING AGRIPPA’S REFUSAL TO BELIEVE

# (ACTS 26:28)

King Agrippa was the youngest of five Herods who participated in biblical events. Roman emperors gave the Herods authority over various parts of Israel even though the family did not come from

Jewish stock. They ruled over a conquered but resentful people.

During its glory years, Rome practiced a remarkable system of justice. Conquered people had few rights, but citizens, like Paul, could appeal to Caesar as their ultimate judge. The apostle Paul exercised this right when he was imprisoned in Jerusalem at the end of his third missionary journey. By law, the local political leaders had to send him to Rome. Along the way, Agrippa interviewed Paul. Paul's powerful spiritual autobiography and his challenge to Agrippa are recorded in Acts 25:13-26:32.

King Agrippa realized that the apostle Paul's argument required a response. He used a question to avoid a decision. "You almost persuade me to become a Christian" (Acts 26:28) actually translates better as "Do you think you can convince me to become a Christian so quickly?" The king's tactic reveals his unbelief. He didn't argue against the truth of Paul's words. He couldn't. He was simply unwilling to believe.

Becoming a Christian has little to do with speed. It has nothing to do with political position or intellectual insight. Many different kinds of people come to faith in Christ while many others reject the gospel. God has given people enough reasons to believe in Christ. Those like Agrippa who reject Christ do so not because they are unpersuaded, but because they do not want to believe.

Questions make effective tools when we use them to find the truth. But questions can also be used to avoid facing the truth. Agrippa had a clear opportunity to meet the Truth Himself. Instead, he used a question to turn away from Christ. Sadly, his mistake gets repeated every day.

When given the opportunity, some will refuse to believe. We can continue to pray for them and live Christ before them, hoping that one day they will decide for Christ. Ultimately, their decision rests in God's hands.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about belief Renewing Our Minds. See also the key passage note at Romans 10:9, 10.

## THE VOYAGE TO ROME BEGINS

**27** And when it was decided that we should sail to Italy, they delivered Paul and some other prisoners to *one* named Julius, a centurion of the Augustan Regiment. [2]So, entering a ship of Adramyttium, we put to sea, meaning to sail along the coasts of Asia. Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, was with us. [3]And the next *day* we landed at Sidon. And Julius treated Paul kindly and gave *him* liberty to go to his friends and receive care. [4]When we had put to sea from there, we sailed under *the shelter of* Cyprus, because the winds were contrary. [5]And when we had sailed over the sea which is off Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra, *a city* of Lycia. [6]There the centurion found an Alexandrian ship sailing to Italy, and he put us on board. [7]When we had sailed slowly many days, and arrived with difficulty off Cnidus, the wind not permitting us to proceed, we sailed under *the shelter of* Crete off Salmone. [8]Passing it with difficulty, we came to a place called Fair Havens, near the city *of* Lasea.

## PAUL'S WARNING IGNORED

[9]Now when much time had been spent, and sailing was now dangerous because the Fast was already over, Paul advised them, [10]saying, "Men, I perceive that this voyage will end with disaster and much loss, not only of the cargo and ship, but also our lives." [11]Nevertheless the centurion was more persuaded by the helmsman and the owner of the ship than by the things spoken by Paul. [12]And because the harbor was not suitable to winter in, the majority advised to set sail from there also, if by any means they could reach Phoenix, a harbor of Crete opening toward the southwest and northwest, *and* winter *there.*

## IN THE TEMPEST

[13]When the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained *their* desire, putting out to sea, they sailed close by Crete. [14]But not long after, a tempestuous head wind arose, called Euroclydon.[a] [15]So when the ship was caught, and could not head into the wind, we let *her* drive. [16]And running

under *the shelter of* an island called Clauda,[a] we secured the skiff with
difficulty. [17]When they had taken it on board, they used cables to undergird
the ship; and fearing lest they should run aground on the Syrtis[a] *Sands,* they
struck sail and so were driven. [18]And because we were exceedingly
tempesttossed, the next *day* they lightened the ship. [19]On the third *day* we
threw the ship's tackle overboard with our own hands. [20]Now when neither
sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small tempest beat on *us,* all
hope that we would be saved was finally given up.

[21]But after long abstinence from food, then Paul stood in the midst of them
and said, "Men, you should have listened to me, and not have sailed from
Crete and incurred this disaster and loss. [22]And now I urge you to take heart,
for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. [23]For there
stood by me this night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I
serve, [24]saying, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar;
and indeed God has granted you all those who sail with you.' [25]Therefore
take heart, men, for I believe God that it will be just as it was told me.
[26]However, we must run aground on a certain island."

[27]Now when the fourteenth night had come, as we were driven up and
down in the Adriatic *Sea,* about midnight the sailors sensed that they were
drawing near some land. [28]And they took soundings and found *it* to be twenty
fathoms; and when they had gone a little farther, they took soundings again
and found *it* to be fifteen fathoms. [29]Then, fearing lest we should run aground
on the rocks, they dropped four anchors from the stern, and prayed for day to
come. [30]And as the sailors were seeking to escape from the ship, when they
had let down the skiff into the sea, under pretense of putting out anchors from
the prow, [31]Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, "Unless these men
stay in the ship, you cannot be saved." [32]Then the soldiers cut away the ropes
of the skiff and let it fall off.

[33]And as day was about to dawn, Paul implored *them* all to take food,
saying, "Today is the fourteenth day you have waited and continued without
food, and eaten nothing. [34]Therefore I urge you to take nourishment, for this
is for your survival, since not a hair will fall from the head of any of you."
[35]And when he had said these things, he took bread and gave thanks to God

in the presence of them all; and when he had broken *it* he began to eat. [36]Then they were all encouraged, and also took food themselves. [37]And in all we were two hundred and seventy-six persons on the ship. [38]So when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship and threw out the wheat into the sea.

**SHIPWRECKED ON MALTA**

[39]When it was day, they did not recognize the land; but they observed a bay with a beach, onto which they planned to run the ship if possible. [40]And they let go the anchors and left *them* in the sea, meanwhile loosing the rudder ropes; and they hoisted the mainsail to the wind and made for shore. [41]But striking a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground; and the prow stuck fast and remained immovable, but the stern was being broken up by the violence of the waves.

[42]And the soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim away and escape. [43]But the centurion, wanting to save Paul, kept them from *their* purpose, and commanded that those who could swim should jump *overboard* first and get to land, [44]and the rest, some on boards and some on *parts* of the ship. And so it was that they all escaped safely to land.

## PAUL'S MINISTRY ON MALTA

**28** Now when they had escaped, they then found out that the island was
called Malta. [2]And the natives showed us unusual kindness; for they
kindled a fire and made us all welcome, because of the rain that was falling
and because of the cold. [3]But when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and
laid *them* on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat, and fastened on
his hand. [4]So when the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand, they
said to one another, "No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he has
escaped the sea, yet justice does not allow to live." [5]But he shook off the
creature into the fire and suffered no harm. [6]However, they were expecting
that he would swell up or suddenly fall down dead. But after they had looked
for a long time and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds and
said that he was a god.

[7]In that region there was an estate of the leading citizen of the island,
whose name was Publius, who received us and entertained us courteously for
three days. [8]And it happened that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and
dysentery. Paul went in to him and prayed, and he laid his hands on him and
healed him. [9]So when this was done, the rest of those on the island who had
diseases also came and were healed. [10]They also honored us in many ways;
and when we departed, they provided such things as were necessary.

## ARRIVAL AT ROME

[11]After three months we sailed in an Alexandrian ship whose figurehead
was the Twin Brothers, which had wintered at the island. [12]And landing at
Syracuse, we stayed three days. [13]From there we circled round and reached
Rhegium. And after one day the south wind blew; and the next day we came
to Puteoli, [14]where we found brethren, and were invited to stay with them
seven days. And so we went toward Rome. [15]And from there, when the
brethren heard about us, they came to meet us as far as Appii Forum and
Three Inns. When Paul saw them, he thanked God and took courage.

[16]Now when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the
captain of the guard; but Paul was permitted to dwell by himself with the

soldier who guarded him.

**PAUL'S MINISTRY AT ROME**

17 And it came to pass after three days that Paul called the leaders of the
Jews together. So when they had come together, he said to them: "Men *and*
brethren, though I have done nothing against our people or the customs of our
fathers, yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the
Romans, 18 who, when they had examined me, wanted to let *me* go, because
there was no cause for putting me to death. 19 But when the Jews[a] spoke
against *it,* I was compelled to appeal to Caesar, not that I had anything of
which to accuse my nation. 20 For this reason therefore I have called for you,
to see *you* and speak with *you,* because for the hope of Israel I am bound with
this chain."

21 Then they said to him, "We neither received letters from Judea
concerning you, nor have any of the brethren who came reported or spoken
any evil of you. 22 But we desire to hear from you what you think; for
concerning this sect, we know that it is spoken against everywhere."

23 So when they had appointed him a day, many came to him at *his* lodging,
to whom he explained and solemnly testified of the kingdom of God,
persuading them concerning

Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets, from morning till
evening. 24 And some were persuaded by the things which were spoken, and
some disbelieved. 25 So when they did not agree among themselves, they
departed after Paul had said one word: "The Holy Spirit spoke rightly
through Isaiah the prophet to our[a] fathers, 26 saying,

'Go to this people and say:
"Hearing you will hear, and shall not understand;
And seeing you will see, and not perceive;
27 For the hearts of this people have grown dull.
*Their* ears are hard of hearing,
And their eyes they have closed,
Lest they should see with *their* eyes and hear with *their* ears,
Lest they should understand with *their* hearts and turn,

So that I should heal them.” ’ [a]

28 “Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent
to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!” 29 And when he had said these words,
the Jews departed and had a great dispute among themselves.[a]

30 Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received
all who came to him, 31 preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things
which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding
him.

**SOUL NOTE**

**The Power to Heal** *(28:7-10)* Even as a shipwrecked prisoner, Paul continued to minister to others. On the island of Malta, many were affected by the gospel, including Publius’s father, who was healed from his illness. Even though Paul had just experienced several difficult weeks at sea and then a frightening shipwreck, he was never too self-focused to see a need and seek to meet it. He was always willing to share the message of the Good News with anyone he met. Paul’s compassion on Publius changed his life. We never know what results our compassion might have on others. **Topic: Compassion**

# Romans



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# Romans

Chicken soup is fine for the soul that is merely under the weather, but what about the soul that is terminally ill?

That, in so many words, is the question the apostle Paul answers in Romans. Many consider Romans to be the most important of all the New Testament letters because it explains what the Christian life is all about. The central theme of Romans is the gospel of Jesus Christ. But Paul realized that any good news of salvation is meaningless until people first come to terms with their lostness and need for God (ch. 1-3). From there Paul demonstrates how faith makes people right with God (ch. 3-5), how to gain victory over sin (ch. 7), and how to find grace and assurance in our darkest hours (ch. 8). Romans also deals with such matters as our relationship to the community and the state (ch. 12, 13) and knowing the will of God when dealing with complicated interpersonal issues (ch. 14, 15).

Paul felt no shame in boldly proclaiming the liberating message of Jesus, because he knew firsthand its power to turn a life upside down. No wonder he declared that the gospel is "the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes" (1:16).

Whatever the condition of your soul, you can be sure that Paul's *magnum opus* offers you more than just a warm feeling. Read Romans as though your life depended on it-because in a very real sense, it does.

**SOUL CONCERNS IN**

## ROMANS

HOMOSEXUALITY (1:27)

BELIEF (10:9, 10)

DECISION MAKING (12:2)

## GREETING

**1** Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called *to be* an apostle, separated to
the gospel of God [2]which He promised before through His prophets in the
Holy Scriptures, [3]concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of
the seed of David according to the flesh, [4]*and* declared *to be* the Son of God
with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the
dead. [5]Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to
the faith among all nations for His name, [6]among whom you also are the
called of Jesus Christ;

[7]To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called *to be* saints:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

## DESIRE TO VISIT ROME

[8]First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is
spoken of throughout the whole world. [9]For God is my witness, whom I serve
with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention
of you always in my prayers, [10]making request if, by some means, now at last
I may find a way in the will of God to come to you. [11]For I long to see you,
that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established-
[12]that is, that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both
of you and me.

[13]Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to
come to you (but was hindered until now), that I might have some fruit
among you also, just as among the other Gentiles. [14]I am a debtor both to
Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise. [15]So, as much as is in
me, *I am* ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also.

> For in it the righteousness of God is
> revealed from faith to faith; as it is
> written, “The just shall live by faith.”
> ROMANS 1:17

## THE JUST LIVE BY FAITH

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ,[a] for it is the power of God
to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the
Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as
it is written, *"The just shall live by faith."*[a]

## GOD'S WRATH ON UNRIGHTEOUSNESS

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness
and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,
19 because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has
shown *it* to them. 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes*
are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* His
eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, 21 because,
although they knew God, they did not glorify *Him* as God, nor were thankful,
but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.
22 Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 and changed the glory of the
incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man-and birds and
four-footed animals and creeping things.

24 Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their
hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, 25 who exchanged the truth
of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the
Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

26 For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women
exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. 27 Likewise also the men,
leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another,
men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the
penalty of their error which was due.

28 And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave
them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; 29 being
filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality,[a] wickedness,
covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-
mindedness; *they are* whisperers, 30 back-biters, haters of God, violent, proud,
boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, 31 undiscerning,

untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving,[a] unmerciful; [32]who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Not Ashamed** *(1:16)* Paul had not yet been to Rome when he wrote this letter, and he longed to visit the church there (see 1:10-13; 15:22-29). In this letter, written to believers Paul had never met, he says he is not ashamed of the gospel message. It is "the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes." All who believe and accept the message of Christ dying on the Cross for their sins will be saved. So we too should be bold about sharing that message. Like Paul, we praise God for providing a way for people to be saved. **Topic: Salvation**

**KEY PASSAGE**

# THE WAY OUT

# (1:18-32)

There is no way around it-homosexuality is abhorred by God. Some say that homosexuality is a lifestyle choice or a genetic

predisposition-and when confronted with this passage in Romans, some say that these words were meant only for the culture of that day. When dealing with the Old Testament passages condemning homosexual activity (Lev. 18:22; 20:13), the same argument is often made. But what is clearly a moral issue in both the Old and New Testaments cannot be relegated to the past as just a cultural law. The Bible condemns homosexual conduct because it goes against God's plan for a natural sexual relationship between a man and a woman in marriage.

As with any sin, the actions of homosexuality can be forgiven, and its powerful temptations can be overcome. God will forgive and accept anyone who desires to be set free from homosexuality. And one believer can accept another one no matter what their background, as they seek to change their lifestyle and live for God.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about homosexuality Understanding And Addressing Homosexuality. See also the personality profile of the Sodomites Sodom's Fearful Fate.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Against God's Plan** *(1:26, 27)* Paul says homosexuality is "against nature," against what God planned for sexual relations. God created marriage and sexual relations to be between a man and a woman: "A man shall . . . be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" (Gen. 2:24). Homosexual acts are called shameful, and those who live that lifestyle will receive "the penalty of their error." Yet God will forgive and strengthen those who turn away from homosexuality and seek to honor Him with their lives. **Topic: Homosexuality**

# UNDERSTANDING AND ADDRESSING HOMOSEXUALITY

JOE DALLAS

(Romans 1:27)

**B**oth the church and modern culture are divided in their understanding of what homosexuality is, how homosexual people should be treated, and how God views this behavior. When a subject generates such an emotional response, many are tempted to avoid it altogether. However, while controversy for its own sake is a sin, controversy for the sake of the truth is a divine mandate.

## WHAT IS HOMOSEXUALITY?

"Homosexuality" refers to a condition and a behavior. The homosexual condition, commonly referred to as an orientation, is one in which a person is sexually attracted to members of the same sex. Any form of sexual activity between members of the same sex is homosexual behavior.

People do not generally choose the homosexual condition. Like many sinful tendencies, it is often deeply ingrained and shows itself early in life. But while the homosexual condition might not be chosen, homosexual behavior *is* a matter of choice. People choose what to do with their desires.

## WHAT CAUSES HOMOSEXUALITY?

Though some studies have suggested that homosexuality is inborn, or genetic, there is no convincing evidence of that. It will almost certainly never be proven that homosexuality is an inborn condition. Yet even if such proof were forthcoming, it would not negate the biblical prohibitions against homosexual behavior. It would, in fact, simply prove what is already known. People are all fallen creatures-physically, spiritually, and emotionally imperfect. An inborn tendency toward a particular sin does not justify the sin; it only reinforces the need for a Savior.

Studies indicate that the homosexual condition represents a need for intimacy with members of the same sex that has taken on a sexual nature. A faulty relationship with the same sex parent, lack of bonding with peers, or sexual abuse can all be contributing factors. The need that led to this condition is likely legitimate, but fulfillment of that need is being sought in an illegitimate way.

The idea that homosexuality is "demonic," or caused by demon possession, is also questionable. When the Bible mentions this behavior, it does so in the context of human, carnal temptations. Homosexuality in Scripture is seen as one of the many problems of the flesh-problems that cannot simply be "cast out" as if they were demonic. Instead, they require confession, repentance, and the discipline of a godly life.

## HOW DOES THE BIBLE ADDRESS HOMOSEXUALITY?

God's created intent for sexual expression is confined within the protection of marriage between a man and woman (Gen. 2:24; Heb. 13:4). All forms of sexual activity apart from marriage-adultery and fornication, for example-are as roundly condemned in the Bible as is homosexuality.

In the Old Testament, homosexuality is condemned in both

Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 as being an “abomination.” In Romans 1:24-27, Paul refers to homosexual attractions between men or women as being an unnatural state resulting from fallen nature; he further condemns homosexual behavior as “vile” and “shameful.” In 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10, he lists sexual practices between members of the same gender along with drunkenness, fornication, and other vices that exclude people from God’s kingdom. In 1 Timothy 1:9-11, Paul calls homosexuals “sodomites” and places their sin along with murder, pointing out God’s clear condemnation of it.

The good news, however, is that in 1 Corinthians 6:11, Paul says of the former homosexuals who had become believers: “Such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.” Even in Paul’s time, God was delivering people from this sin. The idea of someone who has been homosexual living a Christ-centered life is nothing new.

## WHAT IF SOMEONE I LOVE IS HOMOSEXUAL?

Generally, there are three types of homosexual people: militant, moderate, and repentant. Militant homosexuals, the minority, have an agenda to normalize homosexuality in modern culture through laws, education, and the media. They are highly visible, leading many to assume that they are the majority. Moderate homosexuals, the actual majority, live their lives as most people do: paying taxes, working, and contributing to society. Their appearance and behavior are not necessarily noticeable. Repentant homosexuals have repented of their homosexual behavior and are seeking to overcome their aberrant sexual desires.

When someone we love is caught up in this sin, we are reminded more than ever of our own limitations. No matter how deeply we love someone, we cannot force that person to do what is right. God has created free will; we cannot override it, even with someone we love.

We can, however, remind our loved one of two unchangeable truths: God's standards and our love. We must remember that there is a difference between acceptance and approval. We can continue to accept someone we love and, as much as possible, keep our relationship with that person intact. We cannot, however, approve of something that God clearly disapproves of. It is entirely possible to accept a person without approving of everything that person does or believes. God loves His creation, yet disapproves of the sins that the people He loves practice.

To address the issue of homosexuality, then, is to enter deeply into God's experience: loving the person, hating the sin, and remaining steadfast to God's standards. We know that even when our best efforts to persuade the people we love have failed, God's power is still more than able to accomplish His purposes.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of homosexuality include:

- Genesis 2:18-25; 19:1-29
- Psalm 81:12
- 1 Thessalonians 4:3-7

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on homosexuality at Romans 1:18-32. See also the personality profile of the Sodomites Sodom's Fearful Fate.

## GOD’S RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT

**2** Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in
whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge
practice the same things. [2]But we know that the judgment of God is
according to truth against those who practice such things. [3]And do you think
this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same,
that you will escape the judgment of God? [4]Or do you despise the riches of
His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness
of God leads you to repentance? [5]But in accordance with your hardness and
your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of
wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, [6]who “will render to
each one according to his deeds”:[a] [7]eternal life to those who by patient
continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; [8]but to
those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey
unrighteousness-indignation and wrath, [9]tribulation and anguish, on every
soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; [10]but glory,
honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and
also to the Greek. [11]For there is no partiality with God.

[12]For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and
as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law [13](for not the
hearers of the law *are* just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be
justified; [14]for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the
things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves,
[15]who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also
bearing witness, and between themselves *their* thoughts accusing or else
excusing *them*) [16]in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus
Christ, according to my gospel.

## THE JEWS GUILTY AS THE GENTILES

[17]Indeed[a] you are called a Jew, and rest on the law, and make your boast in
God, [18]and know *His* will, and approve the things that are excellent, being
instructed out of the law, [19]and are confident that you yourself are a guide to

the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, [20]an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, having the form of knowledge and truth in the law. [21]You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal? [22]You who say, "Do not commit adultery," do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? [23]You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law? [24]For "the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you,"[a] as it is written.

> Or do you despise the riches
> of His goodness, forbearance,
> and longsuffering, not knowing
> that the goodness of God leads
> you to repentance?
> ROMANS 2:4

**CIRCUMCISION OF NO AVAIL**

[25]For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law; but if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. [26]Therefore, if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision? [27]And will not the physically uncircumcised, if he fulfills the law, judge you who, *even* with *your* written *code* and circumcision, *are* a transgressor of the law? [28]For he is not a Jew who *is one* outwardly, nor *is* circumcision that which *is* outward in the flesh; [29]but *he is* a Jew who *is one* inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise *is* not from men but from God.

## GOD'S JUDGMENT DEFENDED

**3** What advantage then has the Jew, or what *is* the profit of circumcision?
2 Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles
of God. 3 For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the
faithfulness of God without effect? 4 Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true but
every man a liar. As it is written:

"That You may be justified in Your words,
And may overcome when You are
judged."[a]

5 But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what
shall we say?

*Is* God unjust who inflicts wrath? (I speak as a man.) 6 Certainly not! For then
how will God judge the world?

7 For if the truth of God has increased through my lie to His glory, why am
I also still judged as a sinner? 8 And *why* not *say,* "Let us do evil that good
may come"?-as we are slanderously reported and as some affirm that we say.
Their condemnation is just.

## ALL HAVE SINNED

9 What then? Are we better *than they?* Not at all. For we have previously
charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin.

10 As it is written:

"There is none righteous, no, not one;
11 There is none who understands;
There is none who seeks after God.
12 They have all turned aside;
They have together become unprofitable;
There is none who does good, no, not one."[a]
13 "Their throat *is* an open tomb;
With their tongues they have practiced deceit";[a]
"The poison of asps *is* under their lips";[b]

14 “Whose mouth *is* full of cursing and bitterness.”[a]
15 “Their feet *are* swift to shed blood;
16 Destruction and misery *are* in their ways;
17 And the way of peace they have not known.”[a]
18 “There is no fear of God before their eyes.”[a]
19 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. 20 Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin.

## GOD’S RIGHTEOUSNESS THROUGH FAITH

21 But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all[a] who believe. For there is no difference; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God set forth *as* a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, 26 to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

## BOASTING EXCLUDED

27 Where *is* boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith. 28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law. 29 Or *is He* the God of the Jews only? *Is He* not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also, 30 since *there is* one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. 31 Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law.

## SOUL NOTE

**All** *(3:23)* It's a fact-"All have sinned." Except for Jesus, not one person can claim to be sinless. We are born in sin because we inherited the sin nature from our father Adam. We all make choices that violate God's law and desires and break His heart. We can do nothing to save ourselves. No amount of good works, compassion on others, or self-sacrifice can earn salvation. Sin separates us from a holy God, but we are not left hopeless. God reached out to us, sending His Son to die for us (5:8). Because of God's great love and mercy, He offers a gift-"eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (6:23).
**Topic: Sin**

## ABRAHAM JUSTIFIED BY FAITH

**4** What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh?[a] 2For if Abraham was justified by works, he has *something* to boast about, but not before God. 3For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."[a] 4Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt.

## DAVID CELEBRATES THE SAME TRUTH

5But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, 6just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works:

7 "Blessed *are those* whose lawless deeds are forgiven, And whose sins are covered;
8 Blessed *is the* man to whom the LORD shall not impute sin."[a]

## ABRAHAM JUSTIFIED BEFORE CIRCUMCISION

9*Does* this blessedness then *come* upon the circumcised *only*, or upon the uncircumcised also? For we say that faith was accounted to Abraham for righteousness. 10How then was it accounted? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised. 11And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which *he had while still* uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also, 12and the father of circumcision to those who not only *are* of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham *had while still* uncircumcised.

## THE PROMISE GRANTED THROUGH FAITH

13For the promise that he would be the heir of the world *was* not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. 14For if those who are of the law *are* heirs, faith is made void and the

promise made of no effect, [15]because the law brings about wrath; for where there is no law *there is* no transgression.

[16]Therefore *it is* of faith that *it might be* according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all [17](as it is written, "I have made you a father of many nations"[a] ) in the presence of Him whom he believed-God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did; [18]who, contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, "So shall your descendants be."[a] [19]And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb. [20]He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, [21]and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. [22]And therefore "it was accounted to him for righteousness."[a]

[23]Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, [24]but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, [25]who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification.

## SOUL NOTE

**Fully Convinced** *(4:20-22)* Paul wanted his readers to understand salvation by faith. Many Jews thought that they would be saved simply because they were Jews and had the Law from Moses. Paul explained, however, that obeying laws can't save anyone because no one can keep God's laws perfectly. Instead, salvation is by faith. Abraham lived before Moses, and so he could not obey the laws of Moses. Yet when God promised Abraham a son, Abraham believed

God. That belief “was accounted to him for righteousness.” We cannot earn our salvation; we accept God’s promise fully convinced that He will keep it. **Topic: God’s Promises**

## FAITH TRIUMPHS IN TROUBLE

**5** Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have[a] peace with God
through our Lord Jesus Christ, [2]through whom also we have access by
faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of
God. [3]And not only *that,* but we also glory in tribulations, knowing in
tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; [4]and
perseverance, character; and character, hope. [5]Now hope does not disappoint,
because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit
who was given to us.

## CHRIST IN OUR PLACE

[6]For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the
ungodly. [7]For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a
good man someone would even dare to die. [8]But God demonstrates His own
love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. [9]Much
more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from
wrath through Him. [10]For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to
God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we
shall be saved by His life. [11]And not only *that,* but we also rejoice in God
through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the
reconciliation.

## DEATH IN ADAM, LIFE IN CHRIST

[12]Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death
through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned-[13](For until
the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law.
[14]Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had
not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a
type of Him who was to come. [15]But the free gift *is* not like the offense. For
if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the
gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many. [16]And the
gift *is* not like *that which came* through the one who sinned. For the judgment

*which came* from one *offense resulted* in condemnation, but the free gift *which came* from many offenses *resulted* in justification. [17]For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.)

> Therefore, having been justified by
> faith, we have peace with God
> through our Lord Jesus Christ.
> ROMANS 5:1

[18]Therefore, as through one man's offense *judgment* came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act *the free gift came* to all men, resulting in justification of life. [19]For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.

[20]Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, [21]so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

## DEAD TO SIN, ALIVE TO GOD

**6** What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?
2 Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? 3 Or do
you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were
baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we were buried with Him through
baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory
of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

5 For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly
we also shall be *in the likeness* of *His* resurrection, 6 knowing this, that our old
man was crucified with *Him*, that the body of sin might be done away with,
that we should no longer be slaves of sin. 7 For he who has died has been
freed from sin. 8 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live
with Him, 9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no
more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. 10 For *the death* that He died,
He died to sin once for all; but *the life* that He lives, He lives to God.
11 Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to
God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey
it in its lusts. 13 And do not present your members *as* instruments of
unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the
dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness to God. 14 For sin
shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

## FROM SLAVES OF SIN TO SLAVES OF GOD

15 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace?
Certainly not! 16 Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves
to obey, you are that one’s slaves whom you obey, whether of sin *leading* to
death, or of obedience *leading* to righteousness? 17 But God be thanked that
*though* you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of
doctrine to which you were delivered. 18 And having been set free from sin,
you became slaves of righteousness. 19 I speak in human *terms* because of the
weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members *as* slaves of

uncleanness, and of lawlessness *leading* to *more* lawlessness, so now present your members *as* slaves *of* righteousness for holiness.

[20]For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. [21]What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things *is* death. [22]But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. [23]For the wages of sin *is* death, but the gift of God *is* eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

For sin shall not have dominion over
you, for you are not under
law but under grace.
ROMANS 6:14

For the wages of sin is death,
but the gift of God is eternal life
in Christ Jesus our Lord.
ROMANS 6:23

**SOUL NOTE**

**Crucified with Christ** *(6:6-11)* Rome was filled with slaves, many of whom had been brought from conquered lands. To be a slave means to serve another and to have one's entire life controlled by them. All people are "slaves of sin" because we are born in sin. But in a transaction that we cannot completely comprehend, God took our sin (our "old man") and crucified it with Jesus on the Cross. Thus believers can consider themselves dead to sin and freed from its tyranny. The struggle against sin and temptation will continue until death, but believers can trust Christ to help them win their battles.
**Topic: Sin**

**FREED FROM THE LAW**

7 Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that
the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives? 2For the woman who
has a husband is bound by the law to *her* husband as long as he lives. But if
the husband dies, she is released from the law of *her* husband. 3So then if,
while *her* husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an
adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no
adulteress, though she has married another man. 4Therefore, my brethren, you
also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may
be married to another-to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should
bear fruit to God. 5For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which
were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death.
6But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were
held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not *in* the
oldness of the letter.

**SIN'S ADVANTAGE IN THE LAW**

7What shall we say then? *Is* the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I
would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have
known covetousness unless the law had said, "You shall not covet."[a] 8But
sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all *manner of*
evil desire. For apart from the law sin *was* dead. 9I was alive once without the
law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. 10And the
commandment, which *was* to *bring* life, I found to *bring* death. 11For sin,
taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed *me.*
12Therefore the law *is* holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.

**LAW CANNOT SAVE FROM SIN**

13Has then what is good become death to me? Certainly not! But sin, that it
might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good, so that
sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful. 14For we
know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. 15For what I am
doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but

what I hate, that I do. [16]If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that *it is* good. [17]But now, *it is* no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. [18]For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but *how* to perform what is good I do not find. [19]For the good that I will *to do,* I do not do; but the evil I will not *to do,* that I practice. [20]Now if I do what I will not *to do,* it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.

[21]I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. [22]For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. [23]But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. [24]O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? [25]I thank God-through Jesus Christ our Lord!

So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.

**KEY PASSAGE**

# ENSLAVED TO RULES

## (7:6-14)

As a defense against sin, some find stability in obeying a list of rules. But people encounter serious problems when they attempt to order their lives by rule-keeping. The law exposes shortcomings, but it doesn't inspire holy living. Through the law, we discern how truly wicked the world is and how sinful we are. Like a roadmap, the law shows us where we ought to be. It also shows us the impossibility of

obeying any set of laws perfectly. Yet legalists will do their best-which is never good enough-and that leads them to intense guilt over their own sinfulness, and judgmentalism against others who do not keep all of their rules and thus are not as “holy” as they are. The legalist fails to comprehend the magnitude of God’s grace, refusing to believe that God is trustworthy, generous, and forgiving. The antidote to legalism is recognition of God’s gracious love. We are delivered from sin not by our own effort, but by His unmerited favor.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about legalism Legalism-focusing On The Law. See also the personality profile of The Pharisees: Living By The Rules.

## FREE FROM INDWELLING SIN

**8** *There is* therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus,[a]
who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. [2]For
the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of
sin and death. [3]For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the
flesh, God *did* by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on
account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, [4]that the righteous requirement
of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but
according to the Spirit. [5]For those who live according to the flesh set their
minds on the things of the flesh, but those *who live* according to the Spirit,
the things of the Spirit. [6]For to be carnally minded *is* death, but to be
spiritually minded *is* life and peace. [7]Because the carnal mind *is* enmity
against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. [8]So
then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

[9]But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God
dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.
[10]And if Christ *is* in you, the body *is* dead because of sin, but the Spirit *is* life
because of righteousness. [11]But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the
dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to
your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

## SONSHIP THROUGH THE SPIRIT

[12]Therefore, brethren, we are debtors-not to the flesh, to live according to
the flesh. [13]For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the
Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. [14]For as many as
are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. [15]For you did not receive
the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by
whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.” [16]The Spirit Himself bears witness with
our spirit that we are children of God, [17]and if children, then heirs-heirs of
God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him*, that we may
also be glorified together.

## FROM SUFFERING TO GLORY

18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us. 19 For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected *it* in hope; 21 because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. 23 Not only *that*, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. 24 For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for *it* with perseverance.

26 Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us[a] with groanings which cannot be uttered. 27 Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit *is*, because He makes intercession for the saints according to *the will of* God.

28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose. 29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

## GOD'S EVERLASTING LOVE

31 What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *can be* against us? 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? 33 Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? *It is* God who justifies. 34 Who *is* he who condemns? *It is* Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. 35 Who shall

separate us from the love of Christ? *Shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? [36]As it is written:

"For Your sake we are killed all day long;

We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter."[a]

[37]Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. [38]For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, [39]nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**KEY PASSAGE**

# FREE!

## (8:1)

No truth is more glorious to imprisoned people than to be told that they are no longer condemned but are set free! Christ brings that good news. When people accept Christ's sacrifice on their behalf, they are freed from the tyranny of sin. "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." Condemnation means an eternity apart from God. No condemnation means living *with* Him, now and forever.

Often, however, believers who have been set free still keep themselves behind bars. They feel guilty about their past, or guilty that they cannot be perfect in this life. Guilt can be good when it helps us to know when we have done something wrong. But guilt can

also keep people from being able to rejoice in their new life or to bring others to Christ. That kind of guilt is a prison. We needn't stay locked up if Christ has set us free.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about guilt/shame Dealing With Guilt. See also the personality profile of Adam's Guilt; Adam's Shame.

**SOUL NOTE**

**No Longer Condemned** *(8:1)* Not keeping the law perfectly leads to condemnation. Since no one can keep God's law perfectly, all people are condemned. The law brings guilt because people realize they are powerless to keep it. Christ's death on the sinner's behalf, however, sets them free. "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus" because they have been forgiven and are promised eternal life. If Christ no longer condemns us, then neither should we condemn ourselves. Beating ourselves up over sins that we have brought to God only keeps us imprisoned in our guilt. Christ has set us free. **Topic: Guilt/Shame**

**SOUL NOTE**

**Count On It** *(8:18)* Suffering was very real for the early believers. Persecution was part of the package when someone became a Christian. Jews who became believers faced persecution from fellow Jews who did not believe in Jesus as the Messiah. Gentiles who became believers faced charges of treason for refusing to worship the

emperor. Persecution has continued throughout the centuries, and today's believers are not immune. Our suffering may seem to have a stranglehold on us, but in eternity's perspective, it loses its grip. God promises glory-we can count on it! **Topic: Suffering**

**SOUL NOTE**

**Groaning Bodies** *(8:20-23)* In heaven, God will make everything perfect. He promises believers new and perfect bodies that will never get sick and never die (1 Cor. 15:35-49; Rev. 21:4). Our earthly bodies face genetic problems that sometimes cannot be reversed or cured. Many people live in darkness, in silence, or bound to a wheelchair. Yet many love Christ and serve Him faithfully even through difficult life challenges. How wonderful will be that day, especially for those who now face physical burdens, when Christ returns and all believers will be given brand new bodies-seeing, hearing, running, jumping-in "the glorious liberty of the children of God." **Topic: Genetic Issues**

**SOUL NOTE**

**Always with Us** *(8:38, 39)* Painful separations happen constantly-friends move away; loved ones die; marriages break up. When people have trusted Christ for salvation, however, nothing can separate them from the love of God. Death cannot separate, for we will be in God's presence. And nothing in life is powerful enough to take God away. Nothing in the realm of the unseen, nothing in time, and nothing in all

of the vast universe can separate believers from God’s love. When we feel alone or far from God, we must remember His promise that He is with us always, even to the end of the world (Matt. 28:20). **Topic: God’s Promises**

## ISRAEL'S REJECTION OF CHRIST

**9** I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me
witness in the Holy Spirit, [2]that I have great sorrow and continual grief in
my heart. [3]For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my
brethren, my countrymen[a] according to the flesh, [4]who are Israelites, to
whom *pertain* the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law,
the service *of God,* and the promises; [5]of whom *are* the fathers and from
whom, according to the flesh, Christ *came,* who is over all, *the* eternally
blessed God. Amen.

## ISRAEL'S EJECTION AND GOD'S PURPOSE

[6]But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they *are* not all
Israel who *are* of Israel, [7]nor *are they* all children because they are the seed
of Abraham; but, *"In Isaac your seed shall be called."*[a] [8]That is, those who
*are* the children of the flesh, these *are* not the children of God; but the
children of the promise are counted as the seed. [9]For this *is* the word of
promise: *"At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son."*[a]

[10]And not only *this,* but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man,
*even* by our father Isaac [11](for *the children* not yet being born, nor having
done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might
stand, not of works but of Him who calls), [12]it was said to her, *"The older
shall serve the younger."*[a] [13]As it is written, *"Jacob I have loved, but Esau I
have hated."*[a]

## ISRAEL'S REJECTION AND GOD'S JUSTICE

[14]What shall we say then? *Is there* unrighteousness with God? Certainly
not! [15]For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have
mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion."[a]
[16]So then *it is* not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who
shows mercy. [17]For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, "For this very purpose
I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name
may be declared in all the earth."[a] [18]Therefore He has mercy on whom He

wills, and whom He wills He hardens.

19 You will say to me then, “Why does He still find fault? For who has
resisted His will?” 20 But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God?
Will the thing formed say to him who formed *it*, “Why have you made me
like this?” 21 Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same
lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?

22 *What* if God, wanting to show *His* wrath and to make His power known,
endured with much long suffering the vessels of wrath prepared for
destruction, 23 and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the
vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, 24 *even* us
whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

25 As He says also in Hosea:

“I will call them My people, who were not My people,
And her beloved, who was not beloved.”[a]
26 “And it shall come to pass in the place
where it was said to them,
‘*You are* not My people,
’ There they shall be called sons of the
living God.”[a]
27 Isaiah also cries out concerning Israel:[a]
“Though the number of the children of
Israel be as the sand of the sea,
The remnant will be saved.
28 For He will finish the work and cut *it*
short in righteousness,
Because the LORD will make a short work
upon the earth.”[a]
29 And as Isaiah said before:
“Unless the LORD of Sabaoth[a] had left us a seed,
We would have become like Sodom,
And we would have been made like Gomorrah.”[b]

## PRESENT CONDITION OF ISRAEL

30 What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue
righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith;
31 but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of
righteousness.[a] 32 Why? Because *they did* not *seek it* by faith, but as it were,
by the works of the law.[a] For they stumbled at that stumbling stone. 33 As it is
written:

"Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone
and rock of offense,
And whoever believes on Him will not be
put to shame."[a]

## ISRAEL NEEDS THE GOSPEL

**10** Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel[a] is that they may
be saved. [2]For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not
according to knowledge. [3]For they being ignorant of God's righteousness,
and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the
righteousness of God. [4]For Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to
everyone who believes.

[5]For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, "The man
who does those things shall live by them."[a] [6]But the righteousness of faith
speaks in this way, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' "[a] (that is, to bring Christ down *from above*) [7]or, " 'Who will descend into
the abyss?' "[a] (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). [8]But what does it
say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart"[a] (that is, the
word of faith which we preach): [9]that if you confess with your mouth the
Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead,
you will be saved. [10]For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and
with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. [11]For the Scripture says,
"Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame."[a] [12]For there is no
distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all
who call upon Him. [13]For "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be
saved."[a]

## ISRAEL REJECTS THE GOSPEL

[14]How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And
how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall
they hear without a preacher? [15]And how shall they preach unless they are
sent? As it is written:

"How beautiful are the feet of those who
preach the gospel of peace,[a]
Who bring glad tidings of good things!"[b]

[16]But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "LORD, who has
believed our report?"[a] [17]So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the

word of God.

18 But I say, have they not heard? Yes indeed:

"Their sound has gone out to all the earth,
And their words to the ends of the
world."[a]

19 But I say, did Israel not know? First Moses says:
"I will provoke you to jealousy by *those*
*who are* not a nation,
*I* will move you to anger by a foolish
nation."[a]

20 But Isaiah is very bold and says:
"I was found by those who did not seek Me;
I was made manifest to those who did not ask for Me."[a]

21 But to Israel he says:
"All day long I have stretched out My hands
To a disobedient and contrary people."[a]

**KEY PASSAGE**

# IN YOUR HEART

# (10:9, 10)

What is belief, as defined by God? To be saved, people must believe in Jesus as Savior and Lord, but what exactly does that mean?

It isn't enough to say that we believe in God-even the demons believe that much (James 2:19). It is not enough to believe that Jesus

lived as some great teacher or miracle worker. True belief begins in the heart as the Holy Spirit opens a person to the truth of the gospel message that God sent His Son Jesus, who died for our sins and rose again. Those who believe in Jesus simply move beyond intellectual assent that He lived to heartfelt gratitude that He cares for them personally. Belief then reveals itself in actions. People who believe in what Christ has done for them will desire to live for Him. If we confess with our mouths that Jesus is Lord, and believe in our hearts that God raised Him from the dead, we will be saved.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about belief Renewing Our Minds. See also the personality profile of King Agrippa's Refusal To Believe.

## RENEWING OUR MINDS

CHRIS THURMAN

(Romans 10:9, 10)

**O**ne of the main causes of emotional and spiritual problems in life is faulty thinking. Thinking untruthfully, unrealistically, and irrationally leads to damaged emotions, destructive actions, and failure to mature as Christians. For us to experience the abundant life that Christ offers, we must believe the truth and live it out in our daily lives.

The Bible talks a great deal about our thinking. Romans 12:2 exhorts us to renew our minds, while Philippians 4:8 offers us guidelines for correct patterns of thought. Isaiah 26:3 promises peace to those whose minds are steadfastly focused on God, and Colossians

3:2 challenges us to set our minds "on things above." The biblical message is clear: What we think plays a critical role in determining emotional and spiritual health. God, who *is* truth, wants us to think and believe the truth because doing so sets us free to have an abundant life.

## WHEN WE BELIEVE LIES

Satan, the deceiver and "father of lies," wants us to believe lies because they destroy us and put us in bondage to emotional and spiritual problems. Satan has many lies in his arsenal, all of them destructive. Here are some examples:

- *"I must be perfect."* Believing this lie results in feeling anxious about making mistakes and in self-condemnation when we do. God wants His people to be holy (1 Pet. 1:16), but we need to accept that growing in Christ is a process that will involve making mistakes along the way.
- *"I must have everyone's love and approval."* This lie leads us to focus on pleasing people rather than pleasing God (Gal. 1:10). We cannot afford to make the love and approval of others more important to us than the love and approval of God.
- *"Things have to go my way for me to be happy."* This unbiblical belief causes us to focus our attention on circumstances rather than God, and on being happy rather than being mature. Our peace and contentment should not be based on the situations we find ourselves in (Phil. 4:11), but on being unconditionally loved and cared for by God.
- *"Life should be easy."* Life is not easy. The effects of sin on us and the world we live in are pervasive and have made living life difficult. Christ promised that we would face troubles in life (John 16:33). The false belief in an easy life only sets us up for bitterness and resentment when life proves to be difficult.
- *"God hates the sin and the sinner."* Believing this lie causes us

to run from God when we sin, even though God is the only One who loves us unconditionally. God, being holy, hates sin (Prov. 6:16-19), but He died for and loves us even when we sin (Rom. 5:8).

These and many other lies create emotional and spiritual difficulties and slow our progress toward being mature in Christ. What can we do to replace these lies with the truth in order to be transformed into the people God meant us to be?

**WHEN WE BELIEVE THE TRUTH**

It must first be understood that people cannot properly renew their minds apart from God. Believing and applying the truth need to be done within the context of a relationship with Christ. Only then can people develop the beliefs and attitudes that lead to true emotional health and spiritual maturity.

But what can believers do to help the process of renewing their minds in order to live out God's truth?

First, they can keep a "self-talk" journal in order to identify the lies they tell themselves. This involves spending time each day writing down what they mentally say to themselves when reacting to various life events. In their journal, they record the event that "triggered" them, what they privately thought about it, and their feelings and reactions. Once they have written down their thoughts about the situation that occurred, they ask themselves, "Are any of the thoughts I had lies?" Doing this is a very important step toward better understanding what lies are in their minds each day and how they are negatively impacting their emotions and behavior.

Next, once they have identified the lies that they tell themselves, those lies can be analyzed in light of God's Word. For each lie they believe, they must find biblical truth that contradicts it. Then they can memorize that truth, meditate on it, and apply it in real life situations as often as possible. The threefold process of memorizing, meditating

on, and applying truth will transform their thought patterns and their life.

**LIVINGWHAT WE BELIEVE**

Knowing, believing, and applying biblical truth are the three key steps toward having a renewed mind and experiencing the transforming power of a relationship with God. God's thoughts are perfectly true, and He is more than willing to help us believe the truth. Our emotions and actions will be transformed as we replace lies with truth. This is a difficult, lifelong process that involves challenges at every turn. As we grow in our awareness of the unbiblical beliefs we hold and commit ourselves to taking a biblical view, our minds will be renewed and we can experience true freedom in Christ. The abundant life Christ promised is ours if we will commit ourselves to a life lived in truth.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of belief include:

- Genesis 15:6
- Psalm 27:13
- Daniel 6:23
- Jonah 3:5
- Mark 9:23; 11:24
- John 14:10, 11
- Acts 16:31
- Romans 10:9

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on belief at Romans 10:9, 10. See also the personality profile of King Agrippa's Refusal To Believe.

## ISRAEL'S REJECTION NOT TOTAL

**11** I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not! For I also am
an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, *of* the tribe of Benjamin. 2God has
not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the
Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying,
3"LORD, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars, and I
alone am left, and they seek my life"?[a] 4But what does the divine response
say to him? "I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not
bowed the knee to Baal."[a] 5Even so then, at this present time there is a
remnant according to the election of grace. 6And if by grace, then *it is* no
longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace.[a] But if *it is* of works, it is
no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work.

7What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have
obtained it, and the rest were blinded. 8Just as it is written:

"God has given them a spirit of stupor,
Eyes that they should not see
And ears that they should not hear,
To this very day."[a]

9And David says:

"Let their table become a snare and a trap,
A stumbling block and a recompense to them.
10 Let their eyes be darkened, so that they do not see,
And bow down their back always."[a]

## ISRAEL'S REJECTION NOT FINAL

11I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! But
through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation *has come* to the
Gentiles. 12Now if their fall *is* riches for the world, and their failure riches for
the Gentiles, how much more their fullness!

13For I speak to you Gentiles; inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles,
I magnify my ministry, 14if by any means I may provoke to jealousy *those
who are* my flesh and save some of them. 15For if their being cast away *is* the

reconciling of the world, what *will* their acceptance *be* but life from the dead?

16 For if the firstfruit *is* holy, the lump *is* also *holy;* and if the root *is* holy,
so *are* the branches. 17 And if some of the branches were broken off, and you,
being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a
partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, 18 do not boast against the
branches. But if you do boast, *remember that* you do not support the root, but
the root supports you.

19 You will say then, "Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in."
20 Well *said.* Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by
faith. Do not be haughty, but fear. 21 For if God did not spare the natural
branches, He may not spare you either. 22 Therefore consider the goodness
and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness,[a]
if you continue in *His* goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off. 23 And
they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is
able to graft them in again. 24 For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is
wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive
tree, how much more will these, who *are* natural *branches,* be grafted into
their own olive tree?

25 For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery,
lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has
happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. 26 And so all
Israel will be saved,[a] as it is written:

"The Deliverer will come out of Zion,
And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob;
27 For this *is* My covenant with them,
When I take away their sins."[a]

28 Concerning the gospel *they are* enemies for your sake, but concerning
the election *they are* beloved for the sake of the fathers. 29 For the gifts and
the calling of God *are* irrevocable. 30 For as you were once disobedient to
God, yet have now obtained mercy through their disobedience, 31 even so
these also have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown you they
also may obtain mercy. 32 For God has committed them all to disobedience,
that He might have mercy on all.

33 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!
How unsearchable *are* His judgments and His ways past finding out!

34 “For who has known the mind of the LORD?
Or who has become His counselor?”[a]

35 “Or who has first given to Him
And it shall be repaid to him?”[a]

36 For of Him and through Him and to Him *are* all things, to whom *be* glory forever. Amen.

## LIVING SACRIFICES TO GOD

**12** I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you
present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is*
your reasonable service. 2And do not be conformed to this world, but be
transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that
good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

## SERVE GOD WITH SPIRITUAL GIFTS

3For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you,
not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think, but to think
soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. 4For as we have
many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same
function, 5so we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and individually
members of one another. 6Having then gifts differing according to the grace
that is given to us, *let us use them:* if prophecy, *let us prophesy* in proportion
to our faith; 7or ministry, *let us use it* in *our* ministering; he who teaches, in
teaching; 8he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he
who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

## BEHAVE LIKE A CHRISTIAN

9*Let* love *be* without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.
10*Be* kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving
preference to one another; 11not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving
the Lord; 12rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in
prayer; 13distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality.

14Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. 15Rejoice with
those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. 16Be of the same mind
toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with
the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.

17Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all
men. 18If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all
men. 19Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but *rather* give place to wrath; for

it is written, “Vengeance *is* Mine, I will repay,”[a] says the Lord. [20]Therefore

“If your enemy is hungry, feed him;
If he is thirsty, give him a drink;
For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.”[a]

[21]Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

**KEY PASSAGE**

# THE CHOICE

## (12:1, 2)

People’s attitudes reflect their perspective on life. And attitudes are formed in the mind-every attitude begins with a choice to look at the world in a certain way. Therefore, people can change their attitudes.

Believers must not be “conformed to this world,” allowing the world’s outlook to rule them, entice them, or decide their attitudes. Instead, Paul says, “Be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” With a transformed mind, we can allow God to help us choose to have attitudes that are honoring to Him. He helps us to stay positive in any situation, as we see His plan unfold.

Those who struggle with negative attitudes should renew their mind and choose attitudes that honor and reveal God’s work in their lives. God’s Word is the best place to start.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about attitudes How To Have A Positive

Attitude. See also the personality profile of Michal-Watch Your Attitude.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Living Sacrifices** *(12:1, 2)* The Jews had a system of sacrifices, prepared by God and recorded in the Law of Moses, by which their sins were forgiven. Paul used that picture to describe how believers should live, offering *themselves* to God as living sacrifices. Thus they could be transformed by the Holy Spirit and have renewed minds. This transformation and renewal helps God's people know His good, acceptable, and perfect will. We are promised that we can know God's will for us when making tough decisions. We must humbly pray and seek His guidance, knowing that He will answer. **Topic: Decision Making**

**SOUL NOTE**

**Like Oil and Water** *(12:3)* God is against arrogance. Like oil and water, pride and faith don't mix. God created each person with great care. Every believer is valuable and needed by God. Each has gifts, uniquely given by God, to use in furthering the interests of His kingdom. Believers should humbly serve with those gifts in whatever circumstances God has put them. No one should "think of himself more highly than he ought to think," but "think soberly." We should thank God for His great love and serve Him with all our hearts. **Topic: Pride**

## SOUL NOTE

**Guidelines** *(12:9-13)* Christ had said that the two greatest commandments were to love God and love one's neighbor (Luke 10:27). We should run every aspect of every decision through the filter of whether it is loving toward God or loving toward another person. In these verses, Paul gives further advice, warning people against hypocritical love and hanging on to evil ways. He advises kindness, diligence, fervent service, joy, patience, and prayer. In addition, believers should be known for giving and for hospitality. Following this advice through the guidance of the Holy Spirit will help believers live to glorify God. **Topic: Spiritual Growth**

## SOUL NOTE

**Careful in Conflict** *(12:14-21)* Conflict is inevitable. Paul advised believers to be careful in conflicts with those outside the faith. Christians must resist the temptation to retaliate against evil; instead, they should bless their persecutors, refuse to repay evil for evil, and "overcome evil with good." That's because God care of the vengeance, the repayment, and the punishment. As much as we might will take care of the vengeance, the repayment, and the punishment. As much as we might like to take matters into our own hands, God will handle the situation for us, in His time and in His way. Following Paul's advice can keep us out of worse situations, and may even help bring the perpetrators to Christ. **Topic: Conflict**

**DECISION MAKING AND THE WILL OF GOD**

# CHARLES R. SWINDOLL

## (Romans 12:2)

**T**hinking theologically is difficult. We much prefer to live in the here-and-now realm, seeing life as others see it, dealing with realities we can touch, analyze, prove, and explain. We are much more comfortable with the tactile, the familiar, the logic shaped by our culture.

But God offers a better way to live-one requiring faith that lifts us above the drag and grind of our immediate little world, opens new dimensions of thought, and introduces a perspective without human limitations. In order to enter this better way, we must train ourselves to think theologically. This turns our focus away from ourselves and opens our minds to a God-centered frame of reference, where all things begin and end with Him.

### KNOWING GOD'S WILL

What is God's will and what is not God's will? How can we know God's will? Is it common to miss God's will or is that even possible? Can I really know that I am doing God's will? That I am in His will? All these and more are common questions every thoughtful believer grapples with at one time or another in life.

Much of the confusion goes back to not understanding God and

how He does His inscrutable work in our lives. The Christian life is not merely a matter of getting from here to there . . . from point A to point B. Instead, God's will for us in this life is more about the journey itself.

Our human tendency is to focus solely on our calling-where we should go, how we should get there, and what we should do. God's concern is the process that will mature us and make us more like His Son. God is the Potter; we are the clay. Not one of us is qualified to grasp the first particle of why God does what He does when He does it and how He chooses to do it (Rom. 11:33, 34).

## GOD'S DECRETIVE WILL

The first facet of God's will is His "de-cretive" will: His sovereign, determined, immutable will. This determined, decreed dimension of God's will has four qualities: (1) It is absolute. (2) It is immutable, which means "unchangeable." (3) It is unconditional. (4) It is always in complete harmony with His plan and His nature. In other words, the decreed will of God will be holy, just, good, and righteous; therefore, it will be best. And it will all work toward those ends.

While we may not know the will of God for the future, He has given us a whole list of requirements that are in His will for all believers:

- Obey and honor parents (Eph. 6:1, 2).
- Marry only another Christian (2 Cor. 6:14).
- Support our families (1 Tim. 5:8).
- Raise our children by God's standards (Eph. 6:4).
- Meditate on the Scriptures (Ps. 1:2).
- Pray (1 Thess. 5:17).
- Assemble for worship (Heb. 10:25).
- Proclaim Christ (Acts 1:8).

• Display love (1 Cor. 13).

And the list goes on and on. This is the will of God for our lives as children of God, no matter who we are or where we live.

## GOD'S PERMISSIVE WILL

The second facet of God's will is His permissive will, which represents what God allows. For example, God allowed Job to go through suffering. God didn't cause the suffering; He permitted it. This is where the whole matter of evil comes into play. And this is one of the irreconcilable difficulties in our theology-the tension between the determined will of God and the responsibility of humanity. We need to make Christ known to the whole world, knowing all the while that not everyone in the world will believe. God does not cause sin, but He does permit it. He is not pleased when His creation yields to temptation, but He uses even that to accomplish His purposes.

God's leading in our lives generally follows basic principles that can help us in deciding His will for our lives.

1. *His written Word.* As the psalmist said, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Ps. 119:105).

2. *The prompting of the Holy Spirit.* Paul reminds us, "It is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13).

3. *The counsel of wise, qualified, trustworthy people.* At critical moments of life, it is helpful to seek the counsel of seasoned individuals. But we must choose our counselors very carefully. "Where there is no counsel, the people fall; but in the multitude of counselors there is safety" (Prov. 11:14).

4. *An inner assurance of peace.* "And let the peace of God rule in

your hearts," Paul wrote (Col. 3:15). God's inner assurance of peace will act as an umpire in our hearts.

Ultimately, God's Word provides all the light we will ever need on our journey through this life. It brings light to our darkened minds. It helps us think theologically. Strange and mysterious though His leading may seem, when we derive our understanding from a serious investigation of the written Word of God, we will not be led astray. And we will continue to stand on the solid rock of God's Word of truth.

All other ground is sinking sand.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of decision making include:

- Joshua 1:8, 9
- Psalm 32:8
- Proverbs 2:3-8; 3:5, 6; 12:15
- Luke 14:28
- Galatians 5:22-26
- 2 Timothy 3:14-17

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on decision making at 1 John 5:14. See also the personality profile of Joshua The Godly Decision Making Of Joshua.

## SUBMIT TO GOVERNMENT

**13** Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no
authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed
by God. 2Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of
God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. 3For rulers are
not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the
authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. 4For he
is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does
not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to *execute*
wrath on him who practices evil. 5Therefore *you* must be subject, not only
because of wrath but also for conscience' sake. 6For because of this you also
pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very
thing. 7Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes *are due,*
customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.

## LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR

8Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another
has fulfilled the law. 9For the commandments, "You shall not commit
adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not bear
false witness,"[a] "You shall not covet,"[b] and if *there is* any other
commandment, are *all* summed up in this saying, namely, "You shall love
your neighbor as yourself."[c]10Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore
love *is* the fulfillment of the law.

## PUT ON CHRIST

11And *do* this, knowing the time, that now *it is* high time to awake out of
sleep; for now our salvation *is* nearer than when we *first* believed. 12The
night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of
darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. 13Let us walk properly, as in
the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife
and envy. 14But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the
flesh, to *fulfill its* lusts.

## SOUL NOTE

**All the King's Men** *(13:1-7)* Governments are put in place by God. At times they are peaceful and helpful to their subjects; at other times they are harmful. Rome under the Caesars was no exception. The *paxromana* (Roman peace) created outward tranquility in the empire, but at times people would be persecuted or dealt with unjustly. Today's situation is much the same, and so is Paul's advice: "Be subject to the governing authorities." Obey the laws; pay taxes; honor leaders. This does not mean following the law of the land when it is against God's will, but it does mean being a respectful, law-abiding citizen. After all, our witness for Christ is at stake. **Topic: Honor**

## THE LAW OF LIBERTY

**14** Receive one who is weak in the faith, *but* not to disputes over doubtful
things. 2For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats
*only* vegetables. 3Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let
not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him.
4Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or
falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.

5One person esteems *one* day above an other; another esteems every day
*alike*. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. 6He who observes the
day, observes *it* to the Lord;[a] and he who does not observe the day, to the
Lord he does not observe *it*. He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God
thanks; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives God
thanks. 7For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. 8For if
we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore,
whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. 9For to this end Christ died and
rose[a] and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living.
10But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for
your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.[a] 11For
it is written:

"*As* I live, says the LORD,
Every knee shall bow to Me,
And every tongue shall confess to God."[a]

12So then each of us shall give account of himself to God. 13Therefore let
us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a
stumbling block or a cause to fall in *our* brother's way.

## THE LAW OF LOVE

14I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that *there is* nothing unclean
of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him *it is*
unclean. 15Yet if your brother is grieved because of *your* food, you are no
longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your food the one for whom
Christ died. 16Therefore do not let your good be spoken of as evil; 17for the

kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. [18]For he who serves Christ in these things[a] *is* acceptable to God and approved by men.

[19]Therefore let us pursue the things *which make* for peace and the things by which one may edify another. [20]Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed *are* pure, but *it is* evil for the man who eats with offense. [21]*It is* good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor *do anything* by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak.[a] [22]Do you have faith? Have[a] *it* to yourself before God. Happy *is* he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. [23]But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because *he does* not *eat* from faith; for whatever *is* not from faith is sin.[a]

**KEY PASSAGE**

# BEFORE THE THRONE

## (14:12)

The sobering words of this verse describe a day when each individual will stand alone before God Almighty to “give account.” At that moment, there will be no excuses, no hidden agendas, no chance to lie and get away with it.

Each person is ultimately accountable to Christ, not to others. The context of this verse speaks of the diversity in the Christian fellowship, encouraging believers to allow for differences of opinion in matters that do not conflict with God’s Word. Elsewhere Paul

encourages believers in this diversity, saying, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil. 2:12).

We must each seek to grow in our faith, on our own before God. Accountability to others can help this process, but ultimately we will be accountable to God for how we have lived. Follow God’s Word-it is a sure guide.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about accountability Personal Growth Through Personal Accountability. See also the personality profile of David and Nathan Nathan-An Honest Friend.

## BEARING OTHERS' BURDENS

**15** We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and
not to please ourselves. 2Let each of us please *his* neighbor for *his* good,
leading to edification. 3For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is
written, "The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me."[a] 4For
whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we
through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. 5Now
may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one
another, according to Christ Jesus, 6that you may with one mind *and* one
mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

## GLORIFY GOD TOGETHER

7Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us,[a] to the
glory of God. 8Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the
circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises *made* to the
fathers, 9and that the Gentiles might glorify God for *His* mercy, as it is
written:

"For this reason I will confess to You
among the Gentiles,
And sing to Your name."[a]

10And again he says:
"Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people!"[a]

11And again:
"Praise the LORD, all you Gentiles!
Laud Him, all you peoples!"[a]

12And again, Isaiah says:
"There shall be a root of Jesse;
And He who shall rise to reign over the Gentiles,
In Him the Gentiles shall hope."[a]

13Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing,
that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

## FROM JERUSALEM TO ILLYRICUM

14 Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also
are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one
another.[a] 15 Nevertheless, brethren, I have written more boldly to you on *some*
points, as reminding you, because of the grace given to me by God, 16 that I
might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of
God, that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the
Holy Spirit. 17 Therefore I have reason to glory in Christ Jesus in the things
*which pertain* to God. 18 For I will not dare to speak of any of those things
which Christ has not accomplished through me, in word and deed, to make
the Gentiles obedient- 19 in mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the
Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum I have
fully preached the gospel of Christ. 20 And so I have made it my aim to preach
the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man's
foundation, 21 but as it is written:

"To whom He was not announced, they shall see;
And those who have not heard shall understand."[a]

## PLAN TO VISIT ROME

22 For this reason I also have been much hindered from coming to you.
23 But now no longer having a place in these parts, and having a great desire
these many years to come to you, 24 whenever I journey to Spain, I shall come
to you.[a] For I hope to see you on my journey, and to be helped on my way
there by you, if first I may enjoy your *company* for a while. 25 But now I am
going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints. 26 For it pleased those from
Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the
saints who are in Jerusalem. 27 It pleased them indeed, and they are their
debtors. For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their
duty is also to minister to them in material things. 28 Therefore, when I have
performed this and have sealed to them this fruit, I shall go by way of you to
Spain. 29 But I know that when I come to you, I shall come in the fullness of
the blessing of the gospel[a] of Christ.

30 Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the

love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me, [31]that I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, [32]that I may come to you with joy by the will of God, and may be refreshed together with you. [33]Now the God of peace *be* with you all. Amen.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Hope So** *(15:13)* God is described in many ways throughout the Bible-powerful, glorious, angry at sin, and merciful toward His people. Paul described Him as “the God of hope.” The word *hope* means more than wishing for something; it means having a confident expectation. God is the author of hope, for what He promises always happens. Believers *hope* for heaven because they *know* it will one day be their home. The God of hope helps His people to “abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Where do we place our hope? We can put our hope in God. He will never disappoint us. **Topic: Hope**

## SISTER PHOEBE COMMENDED

**16** I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church in
Cenchrea, [2]that you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of
the saints, and assist her in whatever business she has need of you; for indeed
she has been a helper of many and of myself also.

## GREETING ROMAN SAINTS

[3]Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, [4]who
risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also
all the churches of the Gentiles. [5]Likewise *greet* the church that is in their
house.

Greet my beloved Epaenetus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia[a] to Christ.
[6]Greet Mary, who labored much for us. [7]Greet Andronicus and Junia, my
countrymen and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles,
who also were in Christ before me.

[8]Greet Amplias, my beloved in the Lord. [9]Greet Urbanus, our fellow
worker in Christ, and Stachys, my beloved. [10]Greet Apelles, approved in
Christ. Greet those who are of the *household* of Aristobulus. [11]Greet
Herodion, my countryman.[a] Greet those who are of the *household* of
Narcissus who are in the Lord.

[12]Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, who have labored in the Lord. Greet the
beloved Persis, who labored much in the Lord. [13]Greet Rufus, chosen in the
Lord, and his mother and mine. [14]Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patro-
bas, Hermes, and the brethren who are with them. [15]Greet Philologus and
Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with
them.

[16]Greet one another with a holy kiss. The[a] churches of Christ greet you.

## AVOID DIVISIVE PERSONS

[17]Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses,
contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. [18]For those who

are such do not serve our Lord Jesus[a] Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple. [19]For your obedience has become known to all. Therefore I am glad on your behalf; but I want you to be wise in what is good, and simple concerning evil. [20]And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you. Amen.

**GREETINGS FROM PAUL'S FRIENDS**

[21]Timothy, my fellow worker, and Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater, my countrymen, greet you.

[22]I, Tertius, who wrote *this* epistle, greet you in the Lord.

[23]Gaius, my host and *the host* of the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the treasurer of the city, greets you, and Quartus, a brother. [24]The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen.[a]

**BENEDICTION**

[25]Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began [26]but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith-[27]to God, alone wise, *be* glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen.[a]

**SOUL NOTE**

**Irreconcilable Differences** *(16:17)* Some conflicts cannot be resolved. The believers were not to reconcile with those who came into their fellowship and attempted to "cause divisions and offenses." False teachers would come into a church and teach a doctrine

contrary to Paul’s teaching of salvation by faith in Christ alone. Such doctrine is serious error, and such teachers should be avoided. The best resolution to that conflict is to send the one in error away, knowing that he or she will not be persuaded and will only cause harm if allowed to stay. Taking a stand for Christ means taking a stand against teaching that conflicts with God’s Word. **Topic: Conflict**

# 1 Corinthians



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# 1 Corinthians

How can a person be a committed follower of Jesus Christ in a world that scoffs at-and increasingly opposes-Christian beliefs? This is not just a modern question. It also concerned the first-century believers of Corinth in southern Greece. The apostle Paul's first letter to the Corinthians (written about A.D. 56) is a source of godly wisdom for saints who are called to live in a godless culture.

Corinth was the most important city of ancient Greece, famous for its commercial prosperity and notorious for its immorality. The city was so known for its decadence that the Greeks even coined the verb *korinthiazomai*-to Corinthianize-meaning "to live a life of debauchery."

In addition to unceasing temptations from the pagan culture that surrounded them, the church at Corinth also struggled with internal conflict. It's no wonder that Paul begins his letter with stern warnings against sin. Unlike the highly theological Book of Romans, 1 Corinthians addresses more practical matters such as church unity, humility, church discipline, marriage, divorce, remarriage, singleness, temptation, modesty, love, spiritual gifts, and worship. Though he begins his letter harshly, Paul ends with words of wisdom, grace, and hope.

Perhaps the main idea undergirding 1 Corinthians is that "instant spirituality" is a myth. Discipleship is the arduous process of pursuing holiness in the midst of a hostile culture. Long-term faithfulness is what leads to fruitfulness.

As you read, ask God to give you wisdom from both the positive and negative examples in the pages that follow.

**SOUL CONCERNS IN**

## 1 CORINTHIANS

WEAKNESS (2:1-5)
SEX IN MARRIAGE (7:1-9)
LOVE (CH. 13)

## GREETING

**1** Paul, called *to be* an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and
Sos-thenes *our* brother,

2 To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in
Christ Jesus, called *to be* saints, with all who in every place call on the name
of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:

3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

## SPIRITUAL GIFTS AT CORINTH

4 I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was
given to you by Christ Jesus, 5 that you were enriched in everything by Him in
all utterance and all knowledge, 6 even as the testimony of Christ was
confirmed in you, 7 so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the
revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, 8 who will also confirm you to the end,
*that you may be* blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 God *is*
faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus
Christ our Lord.

## SECTARIANISM IS SIN

10 Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,
that you all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you,
but *that* you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same
judgment. 11 For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by
those of Chloe's *household*, that there are contentions among you. 12 Now I
say this, that each of you says, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am
of Cephas," or "I am of Christ." 13 Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for
you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

14 I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, 15 lest
anyone should say that I had baptized in my own name. 16 Yes, I also baptized
the household of Stephanas. Besides, I do not know whether I baptized any
other. 17 For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not
with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect.

## CHRIST THE POWER AND WISDOM OF GOD

18 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing,
but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 19 For it is written:

> "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, And bring to nothing the
> understanding of the prudent."[a]

20 Where *is* the wise? Where *is* the scribe? Where *is* the disputer of this
age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? 21 For since, in the
wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God
through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.
22 For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; 23 but we preach
Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks[a]
foolishness, 24 but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the
power of God and the wisdom of God. 25 Because the foolishness of God is
wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

## GLORY ONLY IN THE LORD

26 For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the
flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called.* 27 But God has chosen
the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen
the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty;
28 and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has
chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are,
29 that no flesh should glory in His presence. 30 But of Him you are in Christ
Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God-and righteousness and
sanctification and redemption-31 that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him
glory in the LORD."[a]

## CHRIST CRUCIFIED

**2** And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of
speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony[a] of God. [2]For I
determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him
crucified. [3]I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. [4]And
my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human[a]
wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, [5]that your faith
should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God

## SPIRITUAL WISDOM

[6]However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the
wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing.
[7]But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which
God ordained before the ages for our glory, [8]which none of the rulers of this
age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of
glory

[9]But as it is written:

"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man
The things which God has prepared for those who love Him."[a]

[10]But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches
all things, yes, the deep things of God. [11]For what man knows the things of a
man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the
things of God except the Spirit of God. [12]Now we have received, not the
spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the
things that have been freely given to us by God.

[13]These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches
but which the Holy[a] Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.
[14]But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for
they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are
spiritually discerned. [15]But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he
himself is rightly judged by no one. [16]For "who has known the mind of the
LORD that he may instruct Him?"[a] But we have the mind of Christ.

## SOUL NOTE

**Perfect Strength** *(2:1-4)* Paul had not come to Corinth to impress anyone with great oratory. Instead, he had come "in weakness," seeking to demonstrate only the power of the Holy Spirit so that people would put their faith in God. When God calls people to serve Him, He will often use their areas of strength, but He sometimes surprises them by working through their weaknesses, even their pain. When we have a task to do for God but feel too weak or fearful, we might remember that His strength "is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9). **Topic: Weakness**

## SOUL NOTE

**Future Vision***(2:9, 10)* The promise of verse 9 would seem impossible without the fact of verse 10. The "things which God has prepared" for His people-the future blessings in heaven with Him-are not seen, heard, or even imagined by ordinary humans. Yet believers can see, hear, and imagine these blessings because "God has revealed them to us through His Spirit." The presence of the Holy Spirit in believers' lives gives comfort and guidance as we live on this earth; His presence also gives solid assurance of our future in heaven. **Topic: Presence of the Holy Spirit**

## MY WEAKNESS, HIS STRENGTH

# GEORGE OHLSCHLAGER & TIM CLINTON

## (1 Corinthians 2:1-5)

**F**amed preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon wrote of God, “When you can’t trace his hand, you can always trace his heart.” These have been words of comfort to countless Christians during times of weakness, times when God’s presence is not clear. Our weakness-which shows itself in our natural human frailty, doubt, and fear-usually brings us to the end of ourselves. This either causes anxiety or it can be the beginning of a special life with God.

### GOING ON TO MATURITY

Possibly the greatest paradox of the Christian life is the way God’s power comes alive in our weakness. Living out this sometimes confounding spiritual truth requires that we set aside our normal orientation in living-using and emphasizing our own personal strengths-and concentrate instead on admitting and living in our vulnerability.

Living out this truth is a major marker of spiritual maturity. When we live where we are weak in order that God may be strong, miracles happen and lives are changed for the sake of the kingdom. Furthermore, it is God who is seen doing the work-He is the One who is glorified.

On the other hand, this truth is often quite maddening to the

spiritual novice, as it makes no logical sense according to the way of the world. We spend far too much of our lives thinking carnally rather than spiritually-believing that we will give our best to God and do the work of His kingdom all by our own powers. This is, in fact, a good and zealous thing to some degree, and God uses it. The problem is that we tend to cave in when our own effort is exhausted during times of serious trial. We forget that during those times of weakness, God can still work mightily. And, if we succeed, we realize that the feat was accomplished by God.

## LEARNING BY LIVING

God is able to take every effort, no matter what the motivation, and make it work to His glory. Giving ourselves to the work of the kingdom, for instance, is the way that we learn that our best efforts often don't get the job done. We must depend on God.

Why are so many Christians so much like the world when we should be ablaze with the light of God and alive with His power? The answer, of course, is human weakness. Weakness in our love, devotion, and desire for Him; weakness that is all too human; weakness that cannot be overcome without the Spirit of God working in and through us.

Worse yet, we become weakest when we don't admit, or won't admit, that we have any weaknesses. The desire to be strong blinds us to our need to see and admit those weaknesses. So we end up trapped in a paradox-we stay weak because of our denial of our weakness. We remain weak in our false projection of strength.

## PAUL'S EXAMPLE

The apostle Paul struggled mightily with this confounding trap. He hated the "thorn in the flesh" that afflicted him. He begged God over and over to remove it (2 Cor. 12:7-10). God did not. Instead, God told Paul that he would be just fine living in God's presence, and that His

power would come alive in Paul's weakness.

You know how most of us respond when we are in Paul's position. We whine, we bargain, we curse, we turn away, we keep begging God to do it our way instead of His. We would prefer not to hear God say, "Live with it by living deeper in Me."

What did Paul do? Paul realized that God was not going to remove his weakness, despite his best efforts to convince Him to do so. Paul surely told God that he would be much more effective at preaching and teaching, and much more effective for the kingdom without his weakness. But God said no. So Paul changed his approach, realizing that he could be glad about his weakness and even boast about it, knowing that through it, Christ would be glorified. Therefore, he would be content in the midst of his "thorny" suffering.

Paul was so full of the Holy Spirit, so imbued with the presence and power of Christ, that no experience of pain and suffering could dent its delightful impact. He did the counter-intuitive thing-he embraced what he, and we, would normally reject. Not only weakness, but insults, hardships, disasters, and persecution could be embraced. Nothing adverse or painful could overcome the power of living fully in Christ. Instead, those difficulties became the very doors to a life of intimacy with God.

Paul grasped something that few of us know: God's grace was, in fact, fully sufficient for the trial of suffering he was facing-in fact, it was sufficient for any trial he faced. And this knowledge changed Paul's life, made him delight in the Lord, and filled him with praise and thanksgiving. It brought to life the truth that the joy of the Lord-not good circumstances, not good health, not lots of money, and not spiritual perfection-is our strength.

Make this your fervent prayer: "Lord, You are so great that Your mere presence is sufficient for me-that alone will change my life completely." When I am weak, then I am most strong in Christ.

Nothing will ever be the same again.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of weakness include:

- Joshua 1:8, 9
- Psalms 28:7; 31:7; 46:1; 138:7
- Isaiah 43:2
- Nahum 1:7
- 2 Corinthians 4:8, 9
- Philippians 4:13
- Hebrews 4:15, 16; 12:3

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on weakness at 2 Corinthians 12:9, 10. See also the personality profile of Mark-God's Work In Weakness.

## SECTARIANISM IS CARNAL

**3** And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual *people* but as to
carnal, as to babes in Christ. 2I fed you with milk and not with solid food;
for until now you were not able *to receive it,* and even now you are still not
able; 3for you are still carnal. For where *there are* envy, strife, and divisions
among you, are you not carnal and behaving like *mere* men? 4For when one
says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I *am* of Apollos," are you not carnal?

## WATERING, WORKING, WARNING

5Who then is Paul, and who *is* Apollos, but ministers through whom you
believed, as the Lord gave to each one? 6I planted, Apollos watered, but God
gave the increase. 7So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who
waters, but God who gives the increase. 8Now he who plants and he who
waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his
own labor.

9For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, *you are* God's
building. 10According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise
master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let
each one take heed how he builds on it. 11For no other foundation can anyone
lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12Now if anyone builds on
this foundation *with* gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 13each
one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be
revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. 14If
anyone's work which he has built on *it* endures, he will receive a reward. 15If
anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet
so as through fire.

16Do you not know that you are the temple of God and *that* the Spirit of
God dwells in you? 17If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy
him. For the temple of God is holy, which *temple* you are.

Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

# 1 CORINTHIANS 3:16

## AVOID WORLDLY WISDOM

18 Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in
this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. 19 For the wisdom
of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise
in their *own* craftiness";[a] 20 and again, "The LORD knows the thoughts of the
wise, that they are futile."[a] 21 Therefore let no one boast in men. For all things
are yours: 22 whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, or the world or life or death,
or things present or things to come-all are yours. 23 And you *are* Christ's, and
Christ *is* God's.

## STEWARDS OF THE MYSTERIES OF GOD

**4** Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the
mysteries of God. 2Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found
faithful. 3But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you
or by a human court.[a] In fact, I do not even judge myself. 4For I know of
nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me
is the Lord. 5Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes,
who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the
counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God.

## FOOLS FOR CHRIST'S SAKE

6Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and
Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is
written, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other.
7For who makes you differ *from another?* And what do you have that you did
not receive? Now if you did indeed receive *it,* why do you boast as if you had
not received *it?*

8You are already full! You are already rich! You have reigned as kings
without us-and indeed I could wish you did reign, that we also might reign
with you! 9For I think that God has displayed us, the apostles, last, as
mencondemned to death; for we have been made a spectacle to the world,
both to angels and to men. 10We *are* fools for Christ's sake, but you *are* wise
in Christ! We *are* weak, but you *are* strong! You *are* distinguished, but we
*are* dishonored! 11To the present hour we both hunger and thirst, and we are
poorly clothed, and beaten, and homeless. 12And we labor, working with our
own hands. Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure; 13being
defamed, we entreat. We have been made as the filth of the world, the
offscouring of all things until now.

## PAUL'S PATERNAL CARE

14I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I
warn *you.* 15For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet

*you do* not *have* many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. [16]Therefore I urge you, imitate me. [17]For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.

[18]Now some are puffed up, as though I were not coming to you. [19]But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord wills, and I will know, not the word of those who are puffed up, but the power. [20]For the kingdom of God *is* not in word but in power. [21]What do you want? Shall I come to you with a rod, or in love and a spirit of gentleness?

## IMMORALITY DEFILES THE CHURCH

**5** It is actually reported *that there is* sexual immorality among you, and such
sexual immorality as is not even named[a] among the Gentiles-that a man
has his father's wife! [2]And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned,
that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you. [3]For I
indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged (as though
I were present) him who has so done this deed. [4]In the name of our Lord
Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the
power of our Lord Jesus Christ, [5]deliver such a one to Satan for the
destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord
Jesus.[a]

[6]Your glorying *is* not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens
the whole lump? [7]Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new
lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was
sacrificed for us.[a] [8]Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor
with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened *bread* of
sincerity and truth.

## IMMORALITY MUST BE JUDGED

[9]I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral
people. [10]Yet *I* certainly *did* not *mean* with the sexually immoral people of
this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you
would need to go out of the world. [11]But now I have written to you not to
keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or
covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner-not even
to eat with such a person.

[12]For what *have* I *to do* with judging those also who are outside? Do you
not judge those who are inside? [13]But those who are outside God judges.
Therefore "put away from yourselves the evil person."[a]

## SOUL NOTE

**In the World** *(5:9-11)* When Paul urged the Corinthian believers "not to keep company with sexually immoral people," he was referring not to sinning unbelievers, but to sinning fellow believers. Believers should avoid immoral people who continue in their sin and yet claim to be Christians. Some believers attempt to rationalize sinful behavior, but when they do so they dishonor Christ, who died for their sins. Sexual sin in the church must never be rationalized. Condoning such behavior harms the church's reputation and damages its witness. **Topic: Sexual Sin**

## DO NOT SUE THE BRETHREN

**6** Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the
unrighteous, and not before the saints? 2Do you not know that the saints
will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you
unworthy to judge the smallest matters? 3Do you not know that we shall
judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life? 4If then you
have judgments concerning things pertaining to this life, do you appoint those
who are least esteemed by the church to judge? 5I say this to your shame. Is it
so, that there is not a wise man among you, not even one, who will be able to
judge between his brethren? 6But brother goes to law against brother, and that
before unbelievers!

7Now therefore, it is already an utter failure for you that you go to law
against one another. Why do you not rather accept wrong? Why do you not
rather *let yourselves* be cheated? 8No, you yourselves do wrong and cheat,
and *you do* these things *to your* brethren! 9Do you not know that the
unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither
fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals,[a] nor sodomites,
10nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will
inherit the kingdom of God. 11And such were some of you. But you were
washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the
Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

## GLORIFY GOD IN BODY AND SPIRIT

12All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are
lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. 13Foods for
the stomach and the stomach for foods, but God will destroy both it and
them. Now the body *is* not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the
Lord for the body. 14And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us
up by His power.

15Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then
take the members of Christ and make *them* members of a harlot? Certainly
not! 16Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body *with*

*her?* For “the two,” He says, “shall become one flesh.”[a] [17]But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit *with Him.*

[18]Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. [19]Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *who is* in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? [20]For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body[a] and in your spirit, which are God’s.

> For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.
> 1 CORINTHIANS 6:20

**KEY PASSAGE**

# THE FORCE

## (6:9-12)

God gave people “richly all things to enjoy,” but Satan works tirelessly to take God’s blessings and twist them into evil. The beauty of sex in marriage is corrupted by the sin of sex in other relationships. The enjoyment of a wide variety of delicious foods is corrupted by gluttony, the addiction of eating too much-not to mention other eating disorders. The provision of material blessing is corrupted by greed and love of wealth.

Paul explained that “all things are lawful,” meaning that believers are allowed to enjoy many things as long as they are not forbidden by

Scripture. But they must never allow themselves to be controlled or "brought under the power of any." An addiction is powerful. If a believer is moving toward an addiction in some area of life, the Holy Spirit will make them aware of it. We must seek God's guidance to maintain balance.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about addictions Principled Pleasure. See also the personality profile of Gomer: Addicted To Adultery.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Balanced Meals** *(6:12, 13)* Some who face a difficult eating disorder-whether it be an addiction to food, or an addiction to going without food-understand the power of that addiction. God provided food for the animals and people He created in order to sustain them. Food is meant for sustenance-"foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods." A food addiction takes the focus off God and puts it on one's food or stomac1h-both of which will eventually no longer be needed. People who struggle with eating disorders should seek Christian professional guidance to gain a proper perspective and pattern for eating. **Topic: Eating Disorders**

**KEY PASSAGE**

# ONE FLESH (6:15)

Sex is more than a physical act. When God created sex, He said that in that moment, the two people "become one flesh" (6:16; Gen. 2:24). Sex is meant by God to be a holy union in which a man and a woman share a deep bond. But in the Corinthian culture, sex outside of marriage was not viewed as evil. It was even part of their "worship," as the temple of Aphrodite employed thousands of temple prostitutes. Paul wanted the Corinthian believers to understand that because they had become the body of Christ, they needed to separate themselves from all forms of sexual immorality. This did not mean that married couples should become celibate-sex itself is not evil, for God created it. It is people who pervert it. Instead, believers must practice sexual integrity. God's people must abstain from sex outside of marriage; but within the bonds of marriage, a husband and wife should be faithful, always seeking to lovingly meet each other's needs (7:2-5).

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about sexual integrity Obedience Or Mere Excellence?. See also the personality profile of Ruth & Boaz — Sexual Integrity In Premarital Relationships.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Premarital Purity** *(6:18-20)* Often movies and television shows portray couples having sex outside of marriage as normal and common. Often people seem to have no concern that this is sin according to God. He does not ask believers to "flee sexual immorality" because He wants to ruin their fun. Sex was God's idea; He created it as a holy union that binds two people together. Experiencing that union with many different people cheapens what God intends as a lifelong bond between a husband and wife. Believers must keep their premarital relationships pure. But if they have not done so, they can begin anew, knowing that God will

forgive past sins. **Topic: Premarital Relationships**

## PRINCIPLES OF MARRIAGE

7 Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me:

*It is* good for a man not to touch a woman. 2 Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband. 3 Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. 4 The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband *does.* And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife *does.* 5 Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. 6 But I say this as a concession, not as a commandment. 7 For I wish that all men were even as I myself. But each one has his own gift from God, one in this manner and another in that.

8 But I say to the unmarried and to the widows: It is good for them if they remain even as I am; 9 but if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn *with passion.*

## KEEP YOUR MARRIAGE VOWS

10 Now to the married I command, *yet* not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from *her* husband. 11 But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to *her* husband. And a husband is not to divorce *his* wife.

12 But to the rest I, not the Lord, say: If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her. 13 And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him. 14 For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy. 15 But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such *cases.* But God has called us to peace. 16 For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save *your* husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save *your* wife?

## LIVE AS YOU ARE CALLED

17 But as God has distributed to each one, as the Lord has called each one, so
let him walk. And so I ordain in all the churches. 18 Was anyone called while
circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Was anyone called while
uncircumcised? Let him not be circumcised. 19 Circumcision is nothing and
uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God *is what
matters.* 20 Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called.
21 Were you called *while* a slave? Do not be concerned about it; but if you can
be made free, rather use *it.* 22 For he who is called in the Lord *while* a slave is
the Lord's freedman. Likewise he who is called *while* free is Christ's slave.
23 You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men. 24 Brethren, let
each one remain with God in that *state* in which he was called.

## TO THE UNMARRIED AND WIDOWS

25 Now concerning virgins: I have no commandment from the Lord; yet I
give judgment as one whom the Lord in His mercy *has made* trustworthy. 26 I
suppose therefore that this is good because of the present distress-that *it is*
good for a man to remain as he is: 27 Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to
be loosed. Are you loosed from a wife? Do not seek a wife. 28 But even if you
do marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned.
Nevertheless such will have trouble in the flesh, but I would spare you.

29 But this I say, brethren, the time *is* short, so that from now on even those
who have wives should be as though they had none, 30 those who weep as
though they did not weep, those who rejoice as though they did not rejoice,
those who buy as though they did not possess, 31 and those who use this world
as not misusing *it.* For the form of this world is passing away.

32 But I want you to be without care. He who is unmarried cares for the
things of the Lord-how he may please the Lord. 33 But he who is married
cares about the things of the world-how he may please *his* wife. 34 There is[a]
a difference between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman cares about
the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit. But
she who is married cares about the things of the world-how she may please
*her* husband. 35 And this I say for your own profit, not that I may put a leash

on you, but for what is proper, and that you may serve the Lord without distraction.

[36]But if any man thinks he is behaving improperly toward his virgin, if she is past the flower of youth, and thus it must be, let him do what he wishes. He does not sin; let them marry. [37]Nevertheless he who stands steadfast in his heart, having no necessity, but has power over his own will, and has so determined in his heart that he will keep his virgin,[a] does well. [38]So then he who gives *her* [a] in marriage does well, but he who does not give *her* in marriage does better.

[39]A wife is bound by law as long as her husband lives; but if her husband dies, she is at liberty to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord. [40]But she is happier if she remains as she is, according to my judgment-and I think I also have the Spirit of God.

## SEX IN MARRIAGE

CLIFFORD L. PENNER AND JOYCE J. PENNER

(1 Corinthians 7:1-9)

**W**e live in a world saturated with sex, yet we may find ourselves confused in our pursuit of sexual joy and mutual fulfillment in marriage. Diminished sexual appetite is likely for spouses who are uncomfortable with their sexuality or reluctant to embrace a vigorous sex life. Marital tension builds as the consequence of lack of sexual desire or differing desires between spouses.

Even though sexual satisfaction has been highly linked to marriage

and strong religious commitment, many believers do not connect God or their faith with their sex lives. Affirming the Bible's teaching about sex in marriage and adopting helpful sexual attitudes toward men, women, and sex can help couples experience full sexual potential.

## SEX IN MARRIAGE-PERFECTLY DESIGNED BY GOD

Whether our sexuality has brought us energy and deep fulfillment or led us into pain and despair, we are created as sexual people in God's image-male and female. Genesis 2:24, 25 shows God's design for a man and woman to be united as one flesh. What people may not be aware of, however, is that this sexual union occurred *before* mankind fell into sin. Thus, people were created to be free to share their bodies openly with their spouses in marriage, delight in each other sexually, and honor God with their pleasure.

## SEXUAL PLEASURE-A BIBLICAL EXPECTATION

Sex in marriage was intended not only for procreation, but also for unity and pleasure. Husbands and wives are to be fruitful and multiply (Gen. 9:7), to become one (Gen. 2:24) and to be free and unashamed (Gen. 2:25).

Sexual pleasure is endorsed throughout the Old and the New Testaments. "Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice with the wife of your youth. . . . Let her breasts satisfy you at all times; and always be enraptured with her love" (Prov. 5:18, 19). Sexual passion as an expectation for marriage is also evidenced by the fact that the marriage bed is "undefiled" (Heb. 13:4). Sexual passion is not only demonstrated by the lovers in the Song of Solomon but is also implied by Scripture's guidelines for handling our sexual passion. If God had not designed us with passion, He would not have needed to teach us how to manage that passion.

The Bible instructs both the husband and wife to delight in giving

themselves to each other. First Corinthians 7:3-5 teaches that married couples are to be sexual together, regularly enjoying each other for pleasure. In Ephesians 5:21-33, Paul instructs husbands and wives to be mutually submissive. Through Christ, we have the potential to reestablish the original design of creation-to be completely open and free sexually in marriage.

## DISCOVERING MUTUAL FULFILLMENT

Husbands and wives must highly regard and consistently practice the concept of mutuality-mutual respect and mutual responsibility-in their sexual relationships. Passion will be expressed, sexual freedom discovered, and true "oneness" fulfilled.

Men and women are different. Women function on two tracks: the emotional and the physical. These must be connected for a woman to be interested sexually. Men function on one track; when physically aroused, men will usually be emotionally ready to have sex. Women desire sex and open up sexually when they feel loved by and connected with their husbands. Men connect and feel loved through sex.

Because of these differences, the man must start the process of discovering mutual sexual fulfillment by connecting with his wife. By selflessly loving her, a man loves his wife like Christ loved the Church. A husband's love, adoration, and connection with his wife allows her to open up sexually. His affirmation ignites her passion and she responds. He feels loved by her response and they both end up fulfilled.

A woman's responsibility is to take in sexual pleasure, receive her husband's affirmation, and lead by invitation, as did the bride in the Song of Solomon. For a woman to do this, she has to believe she is worthy and has a right to be sexual. She has to know that her body was designed not only for reproduction, but also for her sexual pleasure and satisfaction. Once a woman accepts her God-given

sexuality, she leads, not by control or demand, but by listening to her body's desires, taking in the good feelings of being touched, and inviting her husband to enjoy her body as she enjoys his.

When the husband lovingly connects with his wife and the wife embraces her sexuality and shares it with her husband, mutual fulfillment is experienced.

## DISCOVERING MUTUAL PLEASURE

To experience long-lasting passion in marriage, couples must accept their differences as men and women and focus their sexual times together on delighting in each others' bodies. Arousal, intercourse, and orgasm do not measure sexual satisfaction, but result when pleasure is the focus.

For pleasure to be the focus of sex in marriage, the couple has to accept both the husband's more predictable constancy and the ever-changing complexity of the woman. Sex will then be more interesting, less goal-oriented, less pressure-filled, and more deeply satisfying.

Our culture promotes spontaneity. The expectation is that great sex should just happen. But for most couples, the anticipation of planned times builds quality, and the allotment of those times increases quantity. True passion and great sex do not just happen. But by affirming God's design and pursuing mutual pleasure and fulfillment through the practice of the model of the husband loving his wife as Christ loved the Church, couples will discover the sexual satisfaction God intended for them in marriage.

## FURTHER MEDITATION:

Other passages to study about the issue of sex in marriage include:

- Exodus 20:14

- Proverbs 5:15-20
- 1 Corinthians 6:12-20

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on sex in marriage at Hebrews 13:4. See also the personality profile of Solomon And The Shulamite: The Language Of True Love.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Don't Go** *(7:10-16)* Divorce was not a part of God's plan but was allowed as a concession to people's sinfulness (Matt. 19:8, 9). When one spouse becomes a Christian and the other doesn't, the believing spouse should stay in the marriage. Paul explained that the marriage bond is so strong that a believer should not willingly break it. Through that union, the unbeliever may become a Christian. In any event, the believer can have a positive influence on their spouse and children. **Topic: Divorce/Separation**

**KEY PASSAGE**

# SINGLED OUT

# (7:26-35)

Some have understood this passage to mean that all single people should remain that way. But Paul's words must be balanced against

both the cultural context and his mission. Paul, as a single man, understood the need for people to be able to do whatever it took to share the gospel with unbelievers. He knew that persecution could come at any time. His words reveal his total commitment to his call. He encouraged single people not to apologize for their singleness. They should not seek to be married as if that were all that mattered. God has an important calling for single people, since they can "serve the Lord without distraction" (7:35). A married person has many responsibilities, while a single person can be freer to work for the gospel. Neither state is better than the other; different circumstances create different opportunities. Single people can rejoice in their singleness, knowing that God can do great things through them.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about singleness More Than Being Unmarried. See also the personality profile of Paul: Single And Not Alone .

**SOUL NOTE**

**Enjoy** *(7:2-5)* Because of the immorality in Corinth, many believers may have thought that all sex was evil; so they began to refrain from sex even in their marriages. Paul explained that God created sex for the enjoyment of a man and woman in marriage and for procreation. Sex in marriage binds a husband and wife together. A healthy sex life also helps the couple to withstand any outside temptations. Sex in marriage should be fulfilling, intimate, and sensual. A believer can and should enjoy the sexual relationship of marriage and the bond it brings them and their spouse. **Topic: Sex in Marriage**

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# PAUL: SINGLE AND NOT ALONE

## (1 COR. 7:8)

Paul was one of the greatest missionaries who ever lived-tirelessly traveling the known world with the gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ. He told the Corinthian believers, in the context of their questions about marriage, “I say to the unmarried and to the widows: It is good for them if they remain even as I am,” meaning single. Why such advice? And what’s wrong with marriage?

Nothing is wrong with marriage. In fact, throughout this section, Paul also told the married people to stay married, even if they were married to unbelievers. The situation in Corinth needed to be handled carefully. The rampant immorality of the city meant that believers needed to learn how God would have them live pure lives. The specter of persecution from the Roman Empire meant that Paul felt an urgency to share the gospel with as few hindrances as possible. Paul advised those already single to remain that way-not seeking to get married as if getting married was to be their goal. Their focus should first be on God; then, if marriage presented itself as a possibility, they could certainly marry.

Paul also explained, realistically, how a married person’s priorities are different. A single believer has different service opportunities than a married believer. Paul, passionate for the gospel to spread, simply wished that more people were like him.

Singleness can be used for God’s glory. Whether a person has never been married or has become single by way of divorce or bereavement, single people are not set aside by God. He has great things for single people to accomplish for His kingdom. Single people must get their own priorities straight-seeking God and His will above

all. Single believers are never alone, because God is always with them.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about singleness More Than Being Unmarried. See also the key passage note at 1 Corinthians 7:26-35.

**BE SENSITIVE TO CONSCIENCE**

**8** Now concerning things offered to idols: We know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies. [2]And if anyone thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know. [3]But if anyone loves God, this one is known by Him.

[4]Therefore concerning the eating of things offered to idols, we know that an idol *is* nothing in the world, and that *there is* no other God but one. [5]For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as there are many gods and many lords), [6]yet for us *there is* one God, the Father, of whom *are* all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom *are* all things, and through whom we *live*.

[7]However, *there is* not in everyone that knowledge; for some, with consciousness of the idol, until now eat *it* as a thing offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. [8]But food does not commend us to God; for neither if we eat are we the better, nor if we do not eat are we the worse.

[9]But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak. [10]For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things offered to idols? [11]And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? [12]But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. [13]Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.

## A PATTERN OF SELF-DENIAL

**9** Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our
Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? 2If I am not an apostle to others,
yet doubtless I am to you. For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

3My defense to those who examine me is this: 4Do we have no right to eat
and drink? 5Do we have no right to take along a believing wife, as *do* also the
other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas? 6Or *is it* only Barnabas
and I *who* have no right to refrain from working? 7Who ever goes to war at
his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its fruit? Or who
tends a flock and does not drink of the milk of the flock?

8Do I say these things as a *mere* man? Or does not the law say the same
also? 9For it is written in the law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox
while it treads out the grain."[a] Is it oxen God is concerned about? 10Or does
He say *it* altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, *this* is written,
that he who plows should plow in hope, and he who threshes in hope should
be partaker of his hope. 11If we have sown spiritual things for you, *is it* a
great thing if we reap your material things? 12If others are partakers of *this*
right over you, *are* we not even more?

Nevertheless we have not used this right, but endure all things lest we
hinder the gospel of Christ. 13Do you not know that those who minister the
holy things eat *of the things* of the temple, and those who serve at the altar
partake of *the offerings of* the altar? 14Even so the Lord has commanded that
those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel.

15But I have used none of these things, nor have I written these things that
it should be done so to me; for it *would be* better for me to die than that
anyone should make my boasting void. 16For if I preach the gospel, I have
nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not
preach the gospel! 17For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if against
my will, I have been entrusted with a stewardship. 18What is my reward then?
That when I preach the gospel, I may present the gospel of Christ[a] without
charge, that I may not abuse my authority in the gospel.

**SERVING ALL MEN**

19 For though I am free from all *men,* I have made myself a servant to all,
that I might win the more; 20 and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might
win Jews; to those *who are* under the law, as under the law,[a] that I might win
those *who are* under the law; 21 to those *who are* without law, as without law
(not being without law toward God,[a] but under law toward Christ[b] ), that I
might win those *who are* without law; 22 to the weak I became as[a] weak, that I
might win the weak. I have become all things to all *men,* that I might by all
means save some. 23 Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be
partaker of it with *you.*

**STRIVING FOR A CROWN**

24 Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives
the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain *it.* 25 And everyone who
competes *for the prize* is temperate in all things. Now they *do it* to obtain a
perishable crown, but we *for* an imperishable *crown.* 26 Therefore I run thus:
not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as *one who* beats the air. 27 But I
discipline my body and bring *it* into subjection, lest, when I have preached to
others, I myself should become disqualified.

**SOUL NOTE**

**The Way of Love** *(9:22)* Chapter 8 discusses "weak" believers who would not enjoy certain freedoms of the Christian life because they felt uncomfortable doing so. With these people, Paul "became as weak" in order to help them grow deeper in the faith. Some believers may, for example, not feel comfortable with a certain activity because of past associations. Paul says that when we are with such people, we don't try to convince them to change, nor do we flaunt our freedom. Instead, we avoid that activity and enjoy time with them in other

ways. In this way we show the love of Christ. **Topic: Self-Denial**

## OLD TESTAMENT EXAMPLES

**10** Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers
were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, 2all were baptized into
Moses in the cloud and in the sea, 3all ate the same spiritual food, 4and all
drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that
followed them, and that Rock was Christ. 5But with most of them God was
not well pleased, for *their bodies* were scattered in the wilderness.

6Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not
lust after evil things as they also lusted. 7And do not become idolaters as
*were* some of them. As it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink,
and rose up to play."[a] 8Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them
did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; 9nor let us tempt Christ, as
some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; 10nor complain,
as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer.
11Now all[a] these things happened to them as examples, and they were written
for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

12Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. 13No
temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God *is*
faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but
with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to
bear *it.*

> Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do,
> do all to the glory of God.
> 1 CORINTHIANS 10:31

## FLEE FROM IDOLATRY

14Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. 15I speak as to wise men;
judge for yourselves what I say. 16The cup of blessing which we bless, is it
not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it
not the communion of the body of Christ? 17For we, *though* many, are one
bread *and* one body; for we all partake of that one bread.

[18]Observe Israel after the flesh: Are not those who eat of the sacrifices
partakers of the altar? [19]What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or
what is offered to idols is anything? [20]Rather, that the things which the
Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want
you to have fellowship with demons. [21]You cannot drink the cup of the Lord
and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the
table of demons. [22]Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger
than He?

## ALL TO THE GLORY OF GOD

[23]All things are lawful for me,[a] but not all things are helpful; all things are
lawful for me,[b] but not all things edify. [24]Let no one seek his own, but each
one the other's *well-being.*

[25]Eat whatever is sold in the meat market, asking no questions for
conscience' sake; [26]for "the earth *is* the LORD's, and all its fullness."[a]

[27]If any of those who do not believe invites you *to dinner,* and you desire
to go, eat whatever is set before you, asking no question for conscience' sake.
[28]But if anyone says to you, "This was offered to idols," do not eat it for the
sake of the one who told you, and for conscience' sake;[a] for "the earth *is* the
LORD's, and all its fullness."[b] [29]"Conscience," I say, not your own, but that of
the other. For why is my liberty judged by another *man's* conscience? [30]But
if I partake with thanks, why am I evil spoken of for *the food* over which I
give thanks?

[31]Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the
glory of God. [32]Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the
church of God, [33]just as I also please all *men* in all *things,* not seeking my
own profit, but the *profit* of many, that they may be saved.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Escape Hatch** *(10:13)* Believers should never be shocked or discouraged by encountering temptation. Satan fights against believers and will mount an assault at every opportunity. God knows that all human beings are tempted, and that different people will be tempted by different things. Being tempted is not a sin; giving in, however, is. God promises that He will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we can bear. He also provides "the way of escape." Every time we face temptation, we can know that God will help us through it. We should look for His way of escape and then run for the door! **Topic: Temptation**

## SOUL NOTE

**Assorted Scruples** *(10:23-33)* Christian freedom does not mean that believers can live as they please. Christians have freedom *with* responsibility to live according to the guidelines found in God's Word. Some Christians make guidelines for themselves based on their own scruples. These guidelines should not be upon others, but believers should respect one another's guidelines. To force others to forced upon others, but believers should respect one another's guidelines. To force others to live according to our scruples is legalism; to show respect for another's scruples exhibits Christian love. **Topic: Legalism**

**11** Imitate me, just as I also *imitate* Christ.

## HEAD COVERINGS

2 Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep
the traditions just as I delivered *them* to you. 3 But I want you to know that the
head of every man is Christ, the head of woman *is* man, and the head of
Christ *is* God. 4 Every man praying or prophesying, having *his* head covered,
dishonors his head. 5 But every woman who prays or prophesies with *her* head
uncovered dishonors her head, for that is one and the same as if her head
were shaved. 6 For if a woman is not covered, let her also be shorn. But if it is
shameful for a woman to be shorn or shaved, let her be covered. 7 For a man
indeed ought not to cover *his* head, since he is the image and glory of God;
but woman is the glory of man. 8 For man is not from woman, but woman
from man. 9 Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man.
10 For this reason the woman ought to have *a symbol of* authority on *her* head,
because of the angels. 11 Nevertheless, neither *is* man independent of woman,
nor woman independent of man, in the Lord. 12 For as woman *came* from
man, even so man also *comes* through woman; but all things are from God.

13 Judge among yourselves. Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with
her head uncovered? 14 Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has
long hair, it is a dishonor to him? 15 But if a woman has long hair, it is a glory
to her; for *her* hair is given to her[a] for a covering. 16 But if anyone seems to be
contentious, we have no such custom, nor *do* the churches of God.

## CONDUCT AT THE LORD'S SUPPER

17 Now in giving these instructions I do not praise *you,* since you come
together not for the better but for the worse. 18 For first of all, when you come
together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and in part I
believe it. 19 For there must also be factions among you, that those who are
approved may be recognized among you. 20 Therefore when you come
together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper. 21 For in eating, each
one takes his own supper ahead of *others;* and one is hungry and another is
drunk. 22 What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you

despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise *you.*

**INSTITUTION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER**

[23]For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the *same* night in which He was betrayed took bread; [24]and when He had given thanks, He broke *it* and said, "Take, eat;[a] this is My body which is broken[b] for you; do this in remembrance of Me." [25]In the same manner *He* also *took* the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink *it,* in remembrance of Me."

[26]For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.

**EXAMINE YOURSELF**

[27]Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks *this* cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood[a] of the Lord. [28]But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. [29]For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner[a] eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's[b] body. [30]For this reason many *are* weak and sick among you, and many sleep. [31]For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. [32]But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.

[33]Therefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. [34]But if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, lest you come together for judgment. And the rest I will set in order when I come.

**SOUL NOTE**

**R and R** *(11:2-6)* The concern over head coverings for women was most likely a cultural need in order to keep harmony in the church in Corinth. While head coverings may not be required in many cultures today, the principles behind Paul's words are timeless. Christian women should show respect for Christian men and exhibit reverent behavior in worship. Reverence and respect are always important to maintain the church's witness to the watching world. **Topic: Women's Issues**

## SPIRITUAL GIFTS: UNITY IN DIVERSITY

**12** Now concerning spiritual *gifts,* brethren, I do not want you to be
ignorant: [2]You know that[a] you were Gentiles, carried away to these
dumb idols, however you were led. [3]Therefore I make known to you that no
one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say
that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.

[4]There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. [5]There are differences of
ministries, but the same Lord. [6]And there are diversities of activities, but it is
the same God who works all in all. [7]But the manifestation of the Spirit is
given to each one for the profit *of all:* [8]for to one is given the word of
wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the
same Spirit, [9]to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings
by the same[a] Spirit, [10]to another the working of miracles, to another
prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another *different* kinds of
tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. [11]But one and the same
Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.

## UNITY AND DIVERSITY IN ONE BODY

[12]For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of
that one body, being many, are one body, so also *is* Christ. [13]For by one
Spirit we were all baptized into one body-whether Jews or Greeks, whether
slaves or free-and have all been made to drink into[a] one Spirit. [14]For in fact
the body is not one member but many.

[15]If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body,”
is it therefore not of the body? [16]And if the ear should say, “Because I am not
an eye, I am not of the body,” is it therefore not of the body? [17]If the whole
body *were* an eye, where *would be* the hearing? If the whole *were* hearing,
where *would be* the smelling? [18]But now God has set the members, each one
of them, in the body just as He pleased. [19]And if they *were* all one member,
where *would* the body *be?*

[20]But now indeed *there are* many members, yet one body. [21]And the eye
cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you”; nor again the head to the

feet, “I have no need of you.” [22]No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. [23]And those *members* of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable *parts* have greater modesty, [24]but our presentable *parts* have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that *part* which lacks it, [25]that there should be no schism in the body, but *that* the members should have the same care for one another. [26]And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with *it;* or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with *it.*

[27]Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. [28]And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. [29]*Are* all apostles? *Are* all prophets? *Are* all teachers? *Are* all workers of miracles? [30]Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? [31]But earnestly desire the best[a] gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way.

**THE GREATEST GIFT**

**13** Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not
love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. 2And though I
have *the gift of* prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge,
and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not
love, I am nothing. 3And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor,* and
though I give my body to be burned,[a] but have not love, it profits me nothing.

4Love suffers long *and* is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade
itself, is not puffed up; 5does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not
provoked, thinks no evil; 6does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the
truth; 7bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

> [Love] bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.
> 1 CORINTHIANS 13:7

8Love never fails. But whether *there are* prophecies, they will fail; whether
*there are* tongues, they will cease; whether *there is* knowledge, it will vanish
away. 9For we know in part and we prophesy in part. 10But when that which
is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.

11When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought
as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. 12For now
we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then
I shall know just as I also am known.

13And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these *is*
love.

**KEY PASSAGE**

# BEARS, BELIEVES, HOPES, ENDURES

## (13:1-7)

Following in context after Paul's discussion of the many spiritual gifts in the church is a treatise on the meaning of love. Spiritual gifts ultimately have no value if the gifted person does not treat others with love. What does love look like?

Love . . .

• *suffers long,* bearing annoyances and inconveniences, not losing its temper.

• *is kind,* taking the initiative to be considerate and helpful.

• *does not envy* but rejoices when others succeed.

• *does not parade itself, is not puffed up* but instead draws others to it.

• *does not behave rudely* or impolitely but acts in a manner worthy of Christ.

• *does not seek its own* but always seeks to benefit others.

• *is not provoked* but will allow differences of opinion in minor matters.

• *thinks no evil* but makes allowances for people's flaws.

• *does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth.*

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about love Bold Love. See also the personality profile of Hosea: A Lesson In Love.

## SOUL NOTE

**The Gift of Love** *(13:7)* “Bears all things” means that love shelters or covers. “Believes all things” means that love never loses faith in others and is willing to think the best of them. “Hopes all things” means that love looks forward with optimism, knowing that God works all things together for good. “Endures all things” means that love holds on. In the end, love never fails and it never ends. When we love, we take part in eternity. We can ask God to perfect our love for Him and for others. **Topic: Love**

## SOUL NOTE

**Grown Up** *(13:11)* Adults have “put away childish things” when they no longer need bottles or teddy bears. The same is true in the Christian life. New believers need care and guidance to help them learn how to grow in their faith. As we mature, we know how to look to God for guidance for ourselves. As we feed on God’s Word, we develop muscles and increase our strength. Even so, our faith will not be complete until we see Christ face to face. Then we will understand everything clearly. In the meantime, we should aim to grow and develop, seeking to be more like Christ every day. **Topic: Life Transitions**

# BOLD LOVE

## DAN ALLENDER

## (1 Corinthians 13)

**B**old love is the courageous, costly gift of doing good to those who sin against us. When we give that gift, we get a taste of the character of God. Love is forgiveness with feet, the kind that moves toward the one who harmed us, willingly serving that person for the sake of God. Bold love is the active, unnerving pursuit of the offender to wisely and winsomely incite reconciliation by exposing the need for confession, repentance, and restoration.

### DESCRIBING LOVE

First Corinthians 13 describes several characteristics of love: "Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails" (1 Cor. 13:4-8).

Paul also described several characteristics of love in Romans 12:9-21. He wrote, "Let love be without hypocrisy. . . . Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love." In his description, Paul was not concerned about being systematic, but he romped around the concept of love with exuberance and intensity. He fleshed out the evidence of a heart that is neither hypocritical nor weak. Love

is passionate; it is joyful and laughs; it suffers and weeps. It is neither vengeful nor demanding; indeed, love humbles those who injure, by doing good. Bold love is doing good to those who do harm, in order to destroy evil and redeem the heart. These are love's remarkable qualities as described in this passage:

- Bold love is fervent in spirit and service, strong and intense.
- Bold love is joyful, patient, prayerful, generous, and hospitable.
- Bold love blesses persecutors, refusing revenge.
- Bold love is compassionate and humble.
- Bold love is peaceable.
- Bold love overcomes and destroys evil.

The Romans passage begins, however, with a force of energy that is disturbing. Love hates. In order to truly love without hypocrisy, we must "abhor what is evil" (Rom. 12:9). To love without hypocrisy, to abhor evil, means to not be polluted and divided. It is not hypocritical to both love and hate, as long as we hold onto that which is good as if it were a life preserver in the middle of the ocean. We love good; we hate evil.

## DOING GOOD

We are not merely to forgive others by ignoring or letting go of the harm; we are called to serve those who have violated us. We are to provide them with their most basic needs. We are to give them bread and water. The whole context implies that the core "basic need" is to be pursued in spite of our needs, emotions, or sin. We are to offer to everyone (and anyone) a taste of passionate empathy, humble care, hospitality, and joyful generosity.

Doing good offers others the food that their souls crave and would

die without. But love is far more than merely being nice or offering insipid, dutiful care. Paul ties doing good to pouring burning coals onto someone's head. This means that we are not to flee from or fight against those who have sinned against us. Instead, we are to unnerve them by disarming them with bold love.

## DESTROYING EVIL

Love is God's weapon to destroy the power of darkness. We live in a day where we think our only viable weapon against evil in our world is to expose it, attack it, and legislate against it. Those who advocate the violence of abortion, for example, are sometimes hunted down, picketed, harassed, even harmed by Christians. Those who advocate the homosexual lifestyle are often derided and blamed for the sufferings of AIDS. When AIDS was spreading in the mid-1980s, many Christians said that it was a plague from God, the homosexuals' deserved punishment for sin. Whether justifiable or not, these attacks do not show bold love, nor do they really destroy evil. Such adversarial attitudes and actions merely foster Christian self-righteousness.

Bold love, however, destroys evil by empathy. It destroys evil by hospitality. It destroys evil by generously offering care for what is needed. It is that very power we have from God *not* to succumb to the provocation of evil that surprises and shames those who harm us or others. Their profound surprise that their evil has not been repaid with evil opens their hearts to redemption.

## REDEEMING THE HEART

Love offers a taste of the character of God. God is strong and tender. Our love is to be equal parts strength and tenderness. Strength disarms false power; tenderness invites the heart to rest when it is defenseless. Strength reveals that God is holy and hates sin; tenderness reveals God's grace and reconciliation. The goal of love is to give a taste of God. Bold love seeks reconciliation with all as far as

it is possible for us to go. Paul implicitly acknowledges that we will not be able to be at peace with everyone, but if there is any room to move toward reconciliation, then we are to do so. The result is changed hearts-ours and theirs.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of love include:

- Proverbs 3:12; 10:12
- Matthew 5:44; 22:34-40
- Mark 12:28-34
- Luke 10:26-28
- John 13:34, 35; 15:13
- Romans 5:5
- Galatians 5:13-15
- Ephesians 5:21-32
- 1 Peter 4:8
- 1 John 4:7-12

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on love at 1 Corinthians 13:1-7. See also the personality profile of Hosea: A Lesson In Love.

**PROPHECY AND TONGUES**

**14** Pursue love, and desire spiritual *gifts*, but especially that you may
prophesy. 2For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to
God, for no one understands *him;* however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries.
3But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to
men. 4He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies
edifies the church. 5I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you
prophesied; for[a] he who prophesies *is* greater than he who speaks with
tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive edification.

> Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel.
> 1 CORINTHIANS 14:12

**TONGUES MUST BE INTERPRETED**

6But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking with tongues, what shall I
profit you unless I speak to you either by revelation, by knowledge, by
prophesying, or by teaching? 7Even things without life, whether flute or harp,
when they make a sound, unless they make a distinction in the sounds, how
will it be known what is piped or played? 8For if the trumpet makes an
uncertain sound, who will prepare for battle? 9So likewise you, unless you
utter by the tongue words easy to understand, how will it be known what is
spoken? For you will be speaking into the air. 10There are, it may be, so many
kinds of languages in the world, and none of them *is* without significance.
11Therefore, if I do not know the meaning of the language, I shall be a
foreigner to him who speaks, and he who speaks *will be* a foreigner to me.
12Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual *gifts, let it be* for the
edification of the church *that* you seek to excel.

13Therefore let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret.
14For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is
unfruitful. 15What is *the conclusion* then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will
also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also

sing with the understanding. [16]Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit, how will he who occupies the place of the uninformed say “Amen” at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say? [17]For you indeed give thanks well, but the other is not edified.

[18]I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all; [19]yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue.

## TONGUES A SIGN TO UNBELIEVERS

[20]Brethren, do not be children in understanding; however, in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature.

[21]In the law it is written:

> “With *men of* other tongues and other lips I will speak to this people; And yet, for all that, they will not hear Me,”[a]

says the Lord.

[22]Therefore tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but prophesying is not for unbelievers but for those who believe. [23]Therefore if the whole church comes together in one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in *those who are* uninformed or unbelievers, will they not say that you are out of your mind? [24]But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an uninformed person comes in, he is convinced by all, he is convicted by all. [25]And thus[a] the secrets of his heart are revealed; and so, falling down on *his* face, he will worship God and report that God is truly among you.

## ORDER IN CHURCH MEETINGS

[26]How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification. [27]If anyone speaks in a tongue, *let there be* two or at the most three, *each* in turn, and let one interpret. [28]But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God. [29]Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge. [30]But if *anything* is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent. [31]For you

can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged. [32]And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. [33]For God is not *the author* of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

[34]Let your[a] women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but *they are* to be submissive, as the law also says. [35]And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church.

[36]Or did the word of God come *originally* from you? Or *was it* you only that it reached? [37]If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord. [38]But if anyone is ignorant, let him be ignorant.[a]

[39]Therefore, brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak with tongues. [40]Let all things be done decently and in order.

**THE RISEN CHRIST, FAITH'S EALITY**

**15** Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you,
which also you received and in which you stand, 2by which also you are
saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you-unless you believed
in vain.

3For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ
died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4and that He was buried, and
that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, 5and that He was
seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. 6After that He was seen by over five
hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but
some have fallen asleep. 7After that He was seen by James, then by all the
apostles. 8Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due
time.

9For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an
apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 10But by the grace of God I
am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more
abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God *which was* with me.
11Therefore, whether *it was* I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

**THE RISEN CHRIST, OUR HOPE**

12Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do
some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? 13But if there
is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. 14And if Christ is not
risen, then our preaching *is* empty and your faith *is* also empty. 15Yes, and we
are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He
raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up-if in fact the dead do not rise.
16For if *the* dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. 17And if Christ is not
risen, your faith *is* futile; you are still in your sins! 18Then also those who
have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. 19If in this life only we have hope
in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.

**THE LAST ENEMY DESTROYED**

[20]But now Christ is risen from the dead, *and* has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. [21]For since by man *came* death, by Man also *came* the resurrection of the dead. [22]For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. [23]But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those *who are* Christ's at His coming. [24]Then *comes* the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. [25]For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. [26]The last enemy *that* will be destroyed *is* death. [27]For "He has put all things under His feet."[a] But when He says "all things are put under *Him*," *it is* evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted. [28]Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.

## EFFECTS OF DENYING THE RESURRECTION

[29]Otherwise, what will they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead do not rise at all? Why then are they baptized for the dead? [30]And why do we stand in jeopardy every hour? [31]I affirm, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. [32]If, in the manner of men, I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantage *is it* to me? If *the* dead do not rise, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!"[a]

[33]Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits." [34]Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak *this* to your shame.

## A GLORIOUS BODY

[35]But someone will say, "How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?" [36]Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies. [37]And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain-perhaps wheat or some other *grain.* [38]But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body.

[39]All flesh *is* not the same flesh, but *there is* one *kind of* flesh[a] of men, another flesh of animals, another of fish, *and* another of birds.

40 *There are* also celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the
celestial *is* one, and the *glory* of the terrestrial *is* another. 41 *There is* one glory
of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for *one*
star differs from *another* star in glory.

42 So also *is* the resurrection of the dead. *The body* is sown in corruption, it
is raised in incorruption. 43 It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is
sown in weakness, it is raised in power. 44 It is sown a natural body, it is
raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.
45 And so it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being."[a] The last
Adam *became* a life-giving spirit.

46 However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the
spiritual. 47 The first man *was* of the earth, *made* of dust; the second Man *is*
the Lord[a] from heaven. 48 As *was* the *man* of dust, so also *are* those *who are*
*made* of dust; and as *is* the heavenly *Man*, so also *are* those *who are*
heavenly. 49 And as we have borne the image of the *man* of dust, we shall also
bear[a] the image of the heavenly *Man.*

**OUR FINAL VICTORY**

50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom
of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. 51 Behold, I tell you a
mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed-52 in a moment, in
the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and
the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 53 For this
corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality.
54 So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on
immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is
swallowed up in victory."[a]

55 "O Death, where *is* your sting?[a] O Hades, where *is* your victory?"[b]

56 The sting of death *is* sin, and the strength of sin *is* the law. 57 But thanks
*be* to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always
abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in

the Lord.

**KEY PASSAGE**

# THE LAST ENEMY

## (15:20-22)

Death entered the world because of sin. When Adam sinned, death came to all human beings. As Paul wrote, “The wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). One Adam, caused sin to enter the human race, and so death from sin. And one Man, Jesus, man, Adam, caused sin to enter the human race, and so death from sin. And one Man, Jesus, brought the promise of resurrection from the dead. He accomplished this by becoming human, dying, and then rising again.

Someday in God’s new creation, death itself will be destroyed: “The last enemy that will be destroyed is death” (1 Cor. 15:26). Until then, all human beings will die, but for believers, death is not to be feared, for it is a gateway to eternal life with God. First-century believers were persecuted for their faith and faced death continually. Like them, we must always be ready to die, ready to stand before God, and ready to thank Him for all He has done in giving us salvation.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about death Finally Home. See also the personality profile of Hezekiah The Unwelcome Visitor.

## COLLECTION FOR THE SAINTS

**16** Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to
the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: 2On the first *day* of the
week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper,
that there be no collections when I come. 3And when I come, whomever you
approve by *your* letters I will send to bear your gift to Jerusalem. 4But if it is
fitting that I go also, they will go with me.

## PERSONAL PLANS

5Now I will come to you when I pass through Macedonia (for I am passing
through Macedonia). 6And it may be that I will remain, or even spend the
winter with you, that you may send me on my journey, wherever I go. 7For I
do not wish to see you now on the way; but I hope to stay a while with you, if
the Lord permits.

8But I will tarry in Ephesus until Pentecost. 9For a great and effective door
has opened to me, and *there are* many adversaries.

10And if Timothy comes, see that he may be with you without fear; for he
does the work of the Lord, as I also *do.* 11Therefore let no one despise him.
But send him on his journey in peace, that he may come to me; for I am
waiting for him with the brethren.

12Now concerning *our* brother Apollos, I strongly urged him to come to
you with the brethren, but he was quite unwilling to come at this time;
however, he will come when he has a convenient time.

## FINAL EXHORTATIONS

13Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. 14Let all *that* you *do* be
done with love.

15I urge you, brethren-you know the household of Stephanas, that it is the
firstfruits of Achaia, and *that* they have devoted themselves to the ministry of
the saints-16that you also submit to such, and to everyone who works and
labors with *us.*

[17]I am glad about the coming of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, for what was lacking on your part they supplied. [18]For they refreshed my spirit and yours. Therefore acknowledge such men.

Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. Let all that you do be done with love.
1 CORINTHIANS 16:13, 14

**GREETINGS AND A SOLEMN FAREWELL**

[19]The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Priscilla greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house. [20]All the brethren greet you.

Greet one another with a holy kiss.

[21]The salutation with my own hand-Paul's.

[22]If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed.[a] O Lord, come![b]

[23]The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you. [24]My love *be* with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.

# 2 Corinthians



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# 2 Corinthians

Someone once quipped, “The church is like Noah’s ark . . . if it weren’t for the storm on the outside, we would never be able to stand the stench on the inside.” Such a wisecrack may be overly harsh, but it still makes us wince because it reminds us of the glaring foibles and failings of the household of faith.

Second Corinthians was written probably late in A.D. 56 when the apostle Paul learned that some fast-talking false teachers had infiltrated the struggling church at Corinth and had stirred the congregation against him. Titus, Paul’s associate, was quickly dispatched to rebut these allegations. While many changed their minds, a few continued to challenge Paul’s authority, sincerity, and ministry.

Paul’s next attempt to counter the attacks of his critics is this letter, 2 Corinthians, by far the apostle’s most intimate letter. These 13 chapters are somewhat distressing to read. Here is possibly the greatest, most influential Christian ever, put in the awkward position of having to defend himself and his noble, selfless actions. But the result is encouraging-a wonderful glimpse into the heart of a man who is fully devoted to serving God and others. Second Corinthians contains classic passages on the nature of ministry (ch. 4), eternal rewards (5:10), reconciliation (5:17-21), holy living (6:14-18), true generosity (ch. 8, 9), and perseverance (ch. 12).

Whether you’re a chronic critic (let’s hope not!) or a conscientious member, 2 Corinthians is guaranteed to speak powerfully to your soul.

**SOUL CONCERNS IN**

## 2 CORINTHIANS

FORGIVENESS (2:5-11)

CHANGE/MATURITY (5:17)

PAIN (12:9)

## GREETING

**1** Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy *our* brother,

To the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints who are in all Achaia:

2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

## COMFORT IN SUFFERING

3 Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. 5 For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ. 6 Now if we are afflicted, *it is* for your consolation and salvation, which is effective for enduring the same sufferings which we also suffer. Or if we are comforted, *it is* for your consolation and salvation. 7 And our hope for you *is* steadfast, because we know that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so also *you will partake* of the consolation.

## DELIVERED FROM SUFFERING

8 For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life. 9 Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead, 10 who delivered us from so great a death, and does[a] deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver *us,* 11 you also helping together in prayer for us, that thanks may be given by many persons on our[a] behalf for the gift *granted* to us through many.

## PAUL'S SINCERITY

12 For our boasting is this: the testimony of our conscience that we conducted ourselves in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with

fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God, and more abundantly toward you. [13]For we are not writing any other things to you than what you read or understand. Now I trust you will understand, even to the end [14](as also you have understood us in part), that we are your boast as you also *are* ours, in the day of the Lord Jesus.

**SPARING THE CHURCH**

[15]And in this confidence I intended to come to you before, that you might have a second benefit- [16]to pass by way of you to Macedonia, to come again from Macedonia to you, and be helped by you on my way to Judea. [17]Therefore, when I was planning this, did I do it lightly? Or the things I plan, do I plan according to the flesh, that with me there should be Yes, Yes, and No, No? [18]But *as* God *is* faithful, our word to you was not Yes and No. [19]For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us-by me, Silvanus, and Timothy-was not Yes and No, but in Him was Yes. [20]For all the promises of God in Him *are* Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us. [21]Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us *is* God, [22]who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.

[23]Moreover I call God as witness against my soul, that to spare you I came no more to Corinth. [24]Not that we have dominion over your faith, but are fellow workers for your joy; for by faith you stand.

**KEY PASSAGE**

# SHARED COMFORT

# (1:3-5)

In times of trouble and difficulty, people long for comfort. The church in Corinth was facing severe problems. Clearly, those problems needed to be handled, but the “God of all comfort” would give needed comfort and encouragement.

God never wastes a wound. Through them, we learn the ability to empathize with others who suffer, and we learn firsthand the comforting power of God. Then we can come alongside the sufferer, knowing exactly what they need. We can also assure them of God’s comfort, for we have experienced it ourselves. God comforts us so that “we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.” What a glorious picture of the body of believers, comforting one another as difficult times arise! When facing difficulty, we should trust God and rest in His compassionate arms. Then we will be ready to offer compassion to those in need.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about compassion Comfort And Compassion. See also the personality profile of The Good Samaritan: Above And Beyond.

**2** But I determined this within myself, that I would not come again to you in
sorrow. [2]For if I make you sorrowful, then who is he who makes me glad
but the one who is made sorrowful by me?

**FORGIVE THE OFFENDER**

[3]And I wrote this very thing to you, lest, when I came, I should have
sorrow over those from whom I ought to have joy, having confidence in you
all that my joy is *the joy* of you all. [4]For out of much affliction and anguish of
heart I wrote to you, with many tears, not that you should be grieved, but that
you might know the love which I have so abundantly for you.

[5]But if anyone has caused grief, he has not grieved me, but all of you to
some extent-not to be too severe. [6]This punishment which *was inflicted* by
the majority *is* sufficient for such a man, [7]so that, on the contrary, you *ought*
rather to forgive and comfort *him,* lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up
with too much sorrow. [8]Therefore I urge you to reaffirm *your* love to him.
[9]For to this end I also wrote, that I might put you to the test, whether you are
obedient in all things. [10]Now whom you forgive anything, I also *forgive.* For
if indeed I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven that one[a] for your sakes in
the presence of Christ, [11]lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are
not ignorant of his devices.

**TRIUMPH IN CHRIST**

[12]Furthermore, when I came to Troas to *preach* Christ's gospel, and a door
was opened to me by the Lord, [13]I had no rest in my spirit, because I did not
find Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I departed for
Macedonia.

[14]Now thanks *be* to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and
through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. [15]For we
are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and
among those who are perishing. [16]To the one *we are* the aroma of death
*leading* to death, and to the other the aroma of life *leading* to life. And who *is*
sufficient for these things? [17]For we are not, as so many,[a] peddling the word
of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in

Christ.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Forgive and Comfort** *(2:7, 8)* The man in the church who had been disciplined had repented of his sin. Therefore, Paul encouraged the believers to “forgive and comfort him” so that he would not be “swallowed up with too much sorrow.” The church can find it difficult to discipline its own, but that may be needed in order to bring a sinner to repentance. Once that repentance is seen, however, restoration is important. Forgiveness and comfort can return the person to the fellowship so he or she can return to spiritual health and service for God. **Topic: Health/Spirituality**

# FORGIVENESS

EVERETT L. WORTHINGTON, JR.

(2 Corinthians 2:5-11)

**T**he concept of forgiveness is as slippery as a greased watermelon in a swimming pool. The harder you squeeze it, the more slippery it becomes. People use the term “forgiveness” loosely and mean different things.

First, what is *unforgiveness*? Unforgiveness is a set of delayed

emotions that consists of resentment, bitterness, hatred, hostility, anger, and fear. These emotions arise in a person because of a transgression that has wounded them psychologically or physically. Unforgiveness consumes the heart like a cancer. The wounded person responds with hot emotions of anger, and fear of being wounded again. The emotions of anger and fear are not unforgiveness. But when these emotions are continually replayed mentally, the resulting delayed emotions are unforgiveness.

So what is *forgiveness*? People think of forgiveness as what we do to get rid of unforgiveness. But forgiveness is more than relinquishing judgment to God or simply accepting the hurt and letting it pass. True forgiveness occurs when those cold emotions of unforgiveness are changed to warm, loving, compassionate, caring, altruistic emotions resulting from a heartfelt transformation. Forgiveness is both an act and a process. It could be compared to canceling a debt. Forgiveness is not the same as reconciliation. It takes two to reconcile; it takes only one to forgive.

God's forgiveness of humans and our forgiveness of one another are different, although related. Both involve an altruistic, emotional response by the forgiver toward another who *needs* forgiveness. But there's a difference in the one doing the forgiving. Whereas God has an infinite perspective on us, we do not have that same perspective on others. God knows our hearts and motives, so He can legitimately demand our repentance prior to forgiving. Humans, however, cannot demand repentance before granting forgiveness.

**THE EXAMPLE IN MATTHEW 18**

Matthew 18 gives clear teaching about forgiveness. Jesus described divine forgiveness and love in the parable of the lost sheep. He encouraged reconciliation and said that forgiveness should be unlimited. He then told the parable of the unforgiving servant, tying together God's forgiveness of us with our forgiveness of others (Matt. 18:21-35).

Forgiveness is often thought of as a Christian duty. Forgiveness can rarely be achieved when practiced as a duty, however. The positive, loving emotions of forgiveness that replace the delayed emotions of unforgiveness rarely flow from willful duty. Instead, they flow from a heart that is transformed by having experienced God's love and forgiveness (Eph. 4:31, 32).

**HOW TO FORGIVE**

There are many ways to forgive a person who has harmed us, any one of which can be effective. In soul care, we should attempt to help people experience *empathy* for the person who harmed them, *humility* about their own sinfulness, and *gratitude* over having themselves been forgiven by God and by others.

Helping people experience forgiving emotions is not easy and requires time. I use a five-step acrostic to help people experience forgiveness, which I call the Pyramid Model to REACH forgiveness:

*R = Recall* the hurt. To heal, you must not deny that you have been hurt or offended. However, you should not recall the hurt in whiny victimization or as finger-pointing blame. Instead, you should recall the hurt calmly and try to remember objectively what happened.

*E = Empathize* with the person who hurt you. Empathy means attempting to understand what the transgressor might have been going through. It helps to attempt to feel with the person who caused the hurt.

*A* = Give an *Altruistic* gift of forgiveness. Try to recall a time when you harmed someone who later forgave you. Remember specifically what happened and how you received the offer of forgiveness. Then you can more easily envision yourself giving that gift back to another.

*C = Commit* publicly to forgive. You can truly forgive in your heart, but you might doubt that forgiveness if you recall the incident and re-experience some of the hot emotions. By speaking aloud or writing

down your forgiveness, by telling a trusted friend, or, in some cases, by writing a follow-up letter to the person who harmed you, you can solidify the act of forgiveness.

*H = Hold on* to forgiveness. When you doubt whether the forgiveness was real, you can hold onto the forgiveness by remembering that there is a difference between remembering the event and experiencing the cold emotions.

For help in experiencing and granting forgiveness, we might need to talk with the person who hurt us about the transgression and forgiveness. We must make a *reproach*, or request for an explanation. A reproach must not be made harshly, however, but gently.

The transgressor responds with an *account*. Accounts can be denials, excuses, or confessions. A confession should be followed by a sincere apology, statement of an intent not to transgress in the same way again, an offer of restitution, and a request for forgiveness.

We must decide whether we can experience the emotions that lead to the changed heart of forgiveness. Forgiving cannot be summoned at will; therefore, often when we are asked to forgive, it will take time to experience the new emotions.

Talking about forgiveness is often a major step on the way to reconciliation between two parties who have had a trust broken. Parties must decide whether they can reconcile and if so, how to work this process. For reconciliation to be complete, however, both parties need to reverse the damage that was done in the relationship, decide to give each other mercy at an occasional failure, and take active steps to build love in their relationship by valuing each other.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of forgiveness include:

• Jeremiah 31:34; 33:8

- Micah 7:18, 19
- Matthew 6:12
- Mark 11:25, 26
- Luke 6:37; 17:3; 23:34
- John 8:1-11
- Romans 12:19
- 1 John 1:9

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on forgiveness at Matthew 18:21-35. See also the personality profile of Joseph's Forgiveness.

## CHRIST'S EPISTLE

**3** Do we begin again to commend ourselves? Or do we need, as some *others,* epistles of commendation to you or *letters* of commendation from you? [2]You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men; [3]clearly *you are* an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, *that is,* of the heart.

## THE SPIRIT, NOT THE LETTER

[4]And we have such trust through Christ toward God. [5]Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as *being* from ourselves, but our sufficiency *is* from God, [6]who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit;[a] for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

> Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.
> 2 CORINTHIANS 3:17

## GLORY OF THE NEW COVENANT

[7]But if the ministry of death, written *and* engraved on stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which *glory* was passing away, [8]how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious? [9]For if the ministry of condemnation *had* glory, the ministry of righteousness exceeds much more in glory. [10]For even what was made glorious had no glory in this respect, because of the glory that excels. [11]For if what is passing away *was* glorious, what remains *is* much more glorious.

[12]Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech- [13]unlike Moses, *who* put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away. [14]But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the

reading of the Old Testament, because the *veil* is taken away in Christ. [15]But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. [16]Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. [17]Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord *is*, there *is* liberty. [18]But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

## THE LIGHT OF CHRIST'S GOSPEL

**4** Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do
not lose heart. [2]But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not
walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by
manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience
in the sight of God. [3]But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who
are perishing, [4]whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not
believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of
God, should shine on them. [5]For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus
the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake. [6]For it is the God
who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts
to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus
Christ.

## CAST DOWN BUT UNCONQUERED

[7]But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the
power may be of God and not of us. [8]*We are* hard-pressed on every side, yet
not crushed; *we are* perplexed, but not in despair; [9]persecuted, but not
forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed-[10]always carrying about in the body
the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in
our body. [11]For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake,
that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. [12]So then
death is working in us, but life in you.

[13]And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written,
"I believed and therefore I spoke,"[a] we also believe and therefore speak,
[14]knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with
Jesus, and will present *us* with you. [15]For all things *are* for your sakes, that
grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to
the glory of God.

## SEEING THE INVISIBLE

[16]Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is

perishing, yet the inward *man* is being renewed day by day. [17]For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory, [18]while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen *are* temporary, but the things which are not seen *are* eternal.

**KEY PASSAGE**

# STRESS TEST

**(4:9)**

Paul knew about stress. Hard pressed, perplexed, persecuted, abandoned-these situations were part of Paul's everyday life.

For us, each day is filled with different levels of stress. Regardless of occupation, age, social status, or lifestyle, we experience stress. Some we bring on ourselves-from poor planning, saying "yes" too often, or being disorganized. Hopefully we learn our lesson so it won't happen again. Stress also arises from factors outside our control-the weather, a broken computer, an unexpected difficulty or sorrow. At those times, we can control only our reactions to the stress. Our reactions reveal our character and our trust in God.

We should not be swallowed up or "lose heart" in the stresses of life, because God can renew us on the inside day by day (2 Cor. 4:16). This life is temporary. Our home in heaven is eternal. In the meantime, we can lean on God. He promises peace in the midst of the stress.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about stress Stress Management. See also the personality profile of James: Grace Under Fire.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Light in the Darkness** *(4:8, 9)* Paul did not have an easy life-exciting perhaps-but not easy. The words "hard-pressed . . . perplexed . . . persecuted . . . struck down" reveal pain and suffering. We may feel this way as we attempt to live out our faith in an unbelieving world. Like Paul, however, we can take comfort in God's provision in times of trauma. No matter what the difficulty, we are "not crushed, not in despair, not forsaken, not destroyed." We must keep our perspective in times of great difficulty, knowing that through us, "the life of Jesus also may be manifested" (4:10). His light can shine out from any darkness. **Topic: Trauma**

## ASSURANCE OF THE RESURRECTION

**5** For we know that if our earthly house, *this* tent, is destroyed, we have a
building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.
2For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation
which is from heaven, 3if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found
naked. 4For we who are in *this* tent groan, being burdened, not because we
want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up
by life. 5Now He who has prepared us for this very thing *is* God, who also
has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

6So *we are* always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the
body we are absent from the Lord. 7For we walk by faith, not by sight. 8We
are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be
present with the Lord.

## THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

9Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well
pleasing to Him. 10For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ,
that each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he
has done, whether good or bad. 11Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord,
we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well
known in your consciences.

## BE RECONCILED TO GOD

12For we do not commend ourselves again to you, but give you opportunity
to boast on our behalf, that you may have *an answer* for those who boast in
appearance and not in heart. 13For if we are beside ourselves, *it is* for God; or
if we are of sound mind, *it is* for you. 14For the love of Christ compels us,
because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; 15and He died
for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him
who died for them and rose again.

16Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even
though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know *Him*

*thus* no longer. [17]Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. [18]Now all things *are* of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, [19]that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

[20]Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore *you* on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. [21]For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Present with the Lord** *(5:6-8)* Exactly what happens after someone dies? The Bible doesn't go into much detail, but it does say that believers who die-that is, are "absent from the body"-will be "present with the Lord" (see also Phil. 1:23). They will experience a state of blessedness with God. When Christ returns, the believers who have died will be raised and the living believers will be changed, and all will receive glorified, eternal bodies (1 Cor. 15:51-54; 1 Thess. 4:16-18). God has promised that His people will be with Him forever. Death is a defeated enemy. Christ has bought eternal life. We can take hope in God's sure promise. **Topic: Death**

**SOUL NOTE**

**A Rewarding Wait** *(5:10)* A future judgment will finalize the destiny of all who have not known Christ (Rev. 20:11-15). Believers will not need to fear this judgment, for they will have been guaranteed salvation and eternal life in heaven. However, the saved do have a judgment awaiting them that will determine their rewards. At this judgment, Christians will account for how they have lived and served, and how well they have used their gifts for the sake of the gospel. If you had to stand before the Lord this very day, what would you say? God holds us accountable. **Topic: Accountability**

## MATURITY AND CHANGE

RON HAWKINS

(2 Corinthians 5:17)

**C**an people really change? Even more, can believers actually become more like Christ? Scripture affirms that people can change, doesn't make change an option, and offers guidance for producing positive change. Believers are told, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Cor. 5:17).

### CHANGE . . . TOWHAT?

Scripture identifies a common goal for all who are in the upward cycle toward maturity: coming to "the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13). Paul reminded Timothy

that every believer must study Scripture "that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:17). We have achieved maturity when we help edify others, contribute to the body of Christ, and are filled with Christ so that we are equipped for every good work.

**CHANGE . . . WHY AND HOW?**

In our close relationships with others, we may be called upon to help one another change for the better. "As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend" (Proverbs 27:17). Our goal is not to have a judgmental spirit by which we pick out people's faults and then set out to change them. Jesus said, "Judge not, that you be not judged" (Matt. 7:1). While we do not need to be perfect before we can help others, we should be mature and loving if we are to help engage others in the process of change. Paul wrote, "Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another" (Rom. 15:14). Following are some questions we should ask our-selves:

*What is our authority for guiding change in ourselves and others?*

Our authority is the word of truth from God that sets the standards for our behaviors. When we challenge ourselves and one another with the truth of God's Word, then we know what direction we need to go in. We should not make a move toward helping another person until we have sought God in prayer and received His guidance for when and how to handle the situation. If He has chosen us to help this person, then He will provide time, the needed corrective, and insight into the approach we should use to help.

*What should we not seek to change in others?*

People have core personality traits-such as being extroverted or introverted-that are part of their uniqueness as God's creations (Ps. 139:13-16). We should not try to change people's personalities. The

focus should be on helping people conform to standards of behavior found in Scripture.

*What should we seek to change in others?*

When beliefs and behaviors do not correspond to the truth in Scripture, we need to reprove the unbiblical behaviors and beliefs. Many behaviors and beliefs are rooted in the old life and are incompatible with maturity in Christ (Eph. 5:1-11). We are to carefully expose sin, encourage repentance, and patiently instruct believers in the ways of righteousness (1 Thess. 5:14).

*How will we know if the change we desire to see has really occurred?*

Jesus Christ will become visible in them as they respond to biblical truth and conform their behavior to biblical standards. We will notice that they desire less of the flesh and more of Him. We will see victories in their life and hear reports from others about victories they are seeing in the one who has embraced change. Remember, however, change takes time!

*What motivation should control us as we seek to help people with the process of change?*

Christ's love, a spirit of optimism, and a "can-do" attitude should dominate our words and behaviors as we seek to lead others to embrace changes that will lead them to maturity in Christ (1 Cor. 13:4-13).

**CHANGE . . . TRYING VS. TRAINING**

Frequently we see the need for change in ourselves and others. For example, we may talk to a friend about a need for change in a certain aspect of his or her life. That person may understand and realize the need, saying, "I'll try to change." The problem is, after a few days, people who say they'll "try to change" will crash and burn. Why? Because they are *trying*, and trying almost always ends in failure.

When people try to change, they are merely hoping that they will find the inner strength to behave differently.

The biblical model is *training*, not *trying*. Paul teaches that maturity and change come with training: “Exercise yourself toward godliness” (1 Tim. 4:7). There is an enormous difference between *trying* to meet a goal and *training* to meet a goal. People may try all they want to win the big 5K race, but the winner will be the one who has been in training.

In order to truly change, people must ask the Holy Spirit to help them. They must repent of their failures, be accountable to other believers for the consistent practice of disciplines that foster spiritual growth, and, in the power provided by the Holy Spirit, habitually train themselves in godly behaviors.

Change can happen; maturity is attainable. Growth means change. Therefore, every growing believer is constantly changing-for the better. May God change us so that we can be mature in Him!

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of change/maturity include:

• Jeremiah 13:23

• John 8:1-11

• Romans 8:1, 9; 12:1, 2

• 1 Corinthians 6:9-11

• Philippians 4:13

• Colossians 3:1-3, 8-10

• 1 Peter 2:1-5

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on change/maturity at Ephesians 4:22-24. See also the personality profile of Paul's Change For The Better.

## MARKS OF THE MINISTRY

**6** We then, *as* workers together *with Him* also plead with *you* not to receive
the grace of God in vain. [2]For He says:

> *"In an acceptable time I have heard you,*
> *And in the day of salvation I have*
> *helped you."*[a]

Behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation.

[3]We give no offense in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed.
[4]But in all *things* we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much
patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses, [5]in stripes, in imprisonments,
in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fastings; [6]by purity, by knowledge,
by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love, [7]by the
word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the
right hand and on the left, [8]by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good
report; as deceivers, and *yet* true; [9]as unknown, and *yet* well known; as dying,
and behold we live; as chastened, and *yet* not killed; [10]as sorrowful, yet
always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and *yet*
possessing all things.

## BE HOLY

[11]O Corinthians! We have spoken openly to you, our heart is wide open.
[12]You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted by your *own* affections.
[13]Now in return for the same (I speak as to children), you also be open.

[14]Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what
fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has
light with darkness? [15]And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part
has a believer with an unbeliever? [16]And what agreement has the temple of
God with idols? For you[a] are the temple of the living God. As God has said:

> *"I will dwell in them*
> *And walk amongthem.*
> *I will be their God,*
> *And they shall be My people. "*[b]

17 Therefore

*"Come out from among them*
*And be separate, says the Lord.*
*Do not touch what is unclean,*
*And I will receive you."*[a]
18 *"I will be a Father to you,*
*And you shall be My sons and*
*daughters,*
*Says the* LORD *Almighty."*[a]

**KEY PASSAGE**

# PULLING TOGETHER

# (6:14)

Jesus told His followers to "make disciples" (Matt. 28:19). Clearly, Christians are not to hide from unbelievers, but should be having an impact for God in their sphere of influence. God needs people everywhere who are ready to serve Him.

Paul does set a boundary line, however. As much as we are to seek to influence the unbelieving world, we must not be "unequally yoked together with unbelievers." To be "yoked" pictures harnessing two animals together. It was against God's law to yoke together animals of different strength, for they would pull against each other and would not accomplish anything worthwhile. Believers who are "yoked" with unbelievers-through close partnerships such as business or marriage-will find that they are pulling in different ways toward different goals. Believers should seek to "be yoked" only with other

believers, so that they can strive together toward glorifying God and then achieving other common purposes.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about boundaries Setting Healthy Boundaries. See also the personality profile of Lot's Blurred Boundaries.

7 Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from
all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

**THE CORINTHIANS' REPENTANCE**

2 Open *your hearts* to us. We have wronged no one, we have corrupted no
one, we have cheated no one. 3 I do not say *this* to condemn; for I have said
before that you are in our hearts, to die together and to live together. 4 Great *is*
my boldness of speech toward you, great *is* my boasting on your behalf. I am
filled with comfort. I am exceedingly joyful in all our tribulation.

5 For indeed, when we came to Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we
were troubled on every side. Outside *were* conflicts, inside *were* fears.
6 Nevertheless God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming
of Titus, 7 and not only by his coming, but also by the consolation with which
he was comforted in you, when he told us of your earnest desire, your
mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced even more.

8 For even if I made you sorry with my letter, I do not regret it; though I did
regret it. For I perceive that the same epistle made you sorry, though only for
a while. 9 Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow
led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you
might suffer loss from us in nothing. 10 For godly sorrow produces repentance
*leading* to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces
death. 11 For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner:
What diligence it produced in you, *what* clearing *of yourselves*, *what*
indignation, *what* fear, *what* vehement desire, *what* zeal, *what* vindication! In
all *things* you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter. 12 Therefore,
although I wrote to you, *I did* not *do it* for the sake of him who had done the
wrong, nor for the sake of him who suffered wrong, but that our care for you
in the sight of God might appear to you.

**THE JOY OF TITUS**

13 Therefore we have been comforted in your comfort. And we rejoiced
exceedingly more for the joy of Titus, because his spirit has been refreshed
by you all. 14 For if in anything I have boasted to him about you, I am not

ashamed. But as we spoke all things to you in truth, even so our boasting to Titus was found true. [15]And his affections are greater for you as he remembers the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling you received him. [16]Therefore I rejoice that I have confidence in you in everything.

**KEY PASSAGE**

# MORE THAN SORRY

# (7:7-10)

True repentance begins when people understand the weight of their sins and the great sacrifice Christ made to cover them. Only then will they move to turn away from their sin. Moreover, they need to turn *to* God for salvation. As Paul wrote, "Godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation."

Repentance is more than saying, "I'm sorry"; it carries with it the desire to change one's ways. When people accept Christ and ask Him to forgive their sins, He does so right away. He wipes the slate clean. Does that mean that those Christians will never sin again? Certainly not. Repentance is an ongoing daily process as we seek to live for Christ despite our failures. We need not itemize every sin, fearing that if we forget to repent of one we will be forever lost. But we do need to have a constant attitude of godly sorrow and repentance, seeking to let God change us to become more like Christ.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about repentance The Blessing Of A

Repentant Heart. See also the personality profile of the thief on the cross The Thief And His Savior.

## EXCEL IN GIVING

**8** Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on
the churches of Macedonia: [2]that in a great trial of affliction the abundance
of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality.
[3]For I bear witness that according to *their* ability, yes, and beyond *their*
ability, *they were* freely willing, [4]imploring us with much urgency that we
would receive[a] the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.
[5]And not *only* as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord,
and *then* to us by the will of God. [6]So we urged Titus, that as he had begun,
so he would also complete this grace in you as well. [7]But as you abound in
everything-in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all diligence, and in your love
for us-*see* that you abound in this grace also.

## CHRIST OUR PATTERN

[8]I speak not by commandment, but I am testing the sincerity of your love
by the diligence of others. [9]For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through
His poverty might become rich.

[10]And in this I give advice: It is to your advantage not only to be doing
what you began and were desiring to do a year ago; [11]but now you also must
complete the doing *of it;* that as *there was* a readiness to desire *it,* so *there*
also *may be* a completion out of what *you* have. [12]For if there is first a willing
mind, *it is* accepted according to what one has, *and* not according to what he
does not have.

[13]For *I do* not *mean* that others should be eased and you burdened; [14]but by
an equality, *that* now at this time your abundance *may supply* their lack, that
their abundance also may supply your lack-that there may be equality. [15]As it
is written, "He who *gathered* much had nothing left over, and he who
*gathered* little had no lack."[a]

## COLLECTION FOR THE JUDEAN SAINTS

[16]But thanks *be* to God who puts[a] the same earnest care for you into the

heart of Titus. [17]For he not only accepted the exhortation, but being more diligent, he went to you of his own accord. [18]And we have sent with him the brother whose praise *is* in the gospel throughout all the churches, [19]and not only *that*, but who was also chosen by the churches to travel with us with this gift, which is administered by us to the glory of the Lord Himself and *to show* your ready mind, [20]avoiding this: that anyone should blame us in this lavish gift which is administered by us- [21]providing honorable things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.

[22]And we have sent with them our brother whom we have often proved diligent in many things, but now much more diligent, because of the great confidence which *we have* in you. [23]If *anyone inquires* about Titus, *he is* my partner and fellow worker concerning you. Or if our brethren *are inquired about, they are* messengers of the churches, the glory of Christ. [24]Therefore show to them, and[a] before the churches the proof of your love and of our boasting on your behalf.

## ADMINISTERING THE GIFT

**9** Now concerning the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to
write to you; 2for I know your willingness, about which I boast of you to
the Macedonians, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal has stirred
up the majority. 3Yet I have sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should
be in vain in this respect, that, as I said, you may be ready; 4lest if *some*
Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we (not to mention
you!) should be ashamed of this confident boasting.[a] 5Therefore I thought it
necessary to exhort the brethren to go to you ahead of time, and prepare your
generous gift beforehand, which *you had* previously promised, that it may be
ready as *a matter of* generosity and not as a grudging obligation.

## THE CHEERFUL GIVER

6But this *I say:* He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he
who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 7*So let* each one *give* as he
purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful
giver. 8And God *is* able to make all grace abound toward you, that you,
always having all sufficiency in all *things,* may have an abundance for every
good work. 9As it is written:

> So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.
> 2 CORINTHIANS 9:7

> *"He has dispersed abroad,*
> *He has given to the poor;*
> *His righteousness endures forever."*[a]

10Now may[a] He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply
and multiply the seed you have *sown* and increase the fruits of your
righteousness, 11while *you are* enriched in everything for all liberality, which
causes thanksgiving through us to God. 12For the administration of this
service not only supplies the needs of the saints, but also is abounding
through many thanksgivings to God, 13while, through the proof of this

ministry, they glorify God for the obedience of your confession to the gospel of Christ, and for *your* liberal sharing with them and all *men*, [14]and by their prayer for you, who long for you because of the exceeding grace of God in you. [15]Thanks *be* to God for His indescribable gift!

## THE SPIRITUAL WAR

**10** Now I, Paul, myself am pleading with you by the meekness and
gentleness of Christ-who in presence *am* lowly among you, but being
absent am bold toward you. 2But I beg *you* that when I am present I may not
be bold with that confidence by which I intend to be bold against some, who
think of us as if we walked according to the flesh. 3For though we walk in the
flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. 4For the weapons of our warfare
*are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, 5casting
down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge
of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, 6and
being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.

## REALITY OF PAUL'S AUTHORITY

7Do you look at things according to the outward appearance? If anyone is
convinced in himself that he is Christ's, let him again consider this in
himself, that just as he *is* Christ's, even so we *are* Christ's.[a] 8For even if I
should boast somewhat more about our authority, which the Lord gave us[a]
for edification and not for your destruction, I shall not be ashamed-9lest I
seem to terrify you by letters. 10"For *his* letters," they say, "*are* weighty and
powerful, but *his* bodily presence *is* weak, and *his* speech contemptible."
11Let such a person consider this, that what we are in word by letters when
we are absent, such *we will* also *be* in deed when we are present.

## LIMITS OF PAUL'S AUTHORITY

12For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who
commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and
comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise. 13We, however, will
not boast beyond measure, but within the limits of the sphere which God
appointed us-a sphere which especially includes you. 14For we are not
overextending ourselves (as though *our authority* did not extend to you), for
it was to you that we came with the gospel of Christ; 15not boasting of things
beyond measure, *that is,* in other men's labors, but having hope, *that* as your

faith is increased, we shall be greatly enlarged by you in our sphere, [16]to preach the gospel in the *regions* beyond you, *and* not to boast in another man's sphere of accomplishment.

[17]But "he who glories, let him glory in the LORD."[a] [18]For not he who commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Satan's Strongholds** *(10:3, 4)* The Christian life is like a war. Christians "walk in the flesh," meaning they are human beings capable of being tempted, hurt, even killed in this war. The battleground is the world, but the true battle is in the spiritual realm between the forces of Christ and the forces of Satan. Believers have weapons to protect them (Eph. 6:10-17) and help them pull down Satan's strongholds. Satan and his forces have a tight grip on this world, but they are already defeated. Believers must stand their ground, obeying their Commander, knowing that He has already won the war. **Topic: Occult**

## CONCERN FOR THEIR FAITHFULNESS

**11** Oh, that you would bear with me in a little folly-and indeed you do bear
with me. [2]For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have
betrothed you to one husband, that I may present *you as* a chaste virgin to
Christ. [3]But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his
craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity[a] that is in
Christ. [4]For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not
preached, or *if* you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a
different gospel which you have not accepted-you may well put up with it!

## PAUL AND FALSE APOSTLES

[5]For I consider that I am not at all inferior to the most eminent apostles.
[6]Even though *I am* untrained in speech, yet *I am* not in knowledge. But we
have been thoroughly manifested[a] among you in all things.

[7]Did I commit sin in humbling myself that you might be exalted, because I
preached the gospel of God to you free of charge? [8]I robbed other churches,
taking wages *from them* to minister to you. [9]And when I was present with
you, and in need, I was a burden to no one, for what I lacked the brethren
who came from Macedonia supplied. And in everything I kept myself from
being burdensome to you, and so I will keep *myself.* [10]As the truth of Christ
is in me, no one shall stop me from this boasting in the regions of Achaia.
[11]Why? Because I do not love you? God knows!

[12]But what I do, I will also continue to do, that I may cut off the
opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we
are in the things of which they boast. [13]For such *are* false apostles, deceitful
workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. [14]And no wonder!
For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. [15]Therefore *it is*
no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of
righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.

## RELUCTANT BOASTING

[16]I say again, let no one think me a fool. If otherwise, at least receive me as

a fool, that I also may boast a little. [17]What I speak, I speak not according to the Lord, but as it were, foolishly, in this confidence of boasting. [18]Seeing that many boast according to the flesh, I also will boast. [19]For you put up with fools gladly, since you *yourselves* are wise! [20]For you put up with it if one brings you into bondage, if one devours *you*, if one takes *from you*, if one exalts himself, if one strikes you on the face. [21]To *our* shame I say that we were too weak for that! But in whatever anyone is bold-I speak foolishly-I am bold also.

**SUFFERING FOR CHRIST**

[22]Are they Hebrews? So *am* I. Are they Israelites? So *am* I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So *am* I. [23]Are they ministers of Christ?-I speak as a fool-I *am* more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. [24]From the Jews five times I received forty *stripes* minus one. [25]Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; [26]*in* journeys often, *in* perils of waters, *in* perils of robbers, *in* perils of *my own* countrymen, *in* perils of the Gentiles, *in* perils in the city, *in* perils in the wilderness, *in* perils in the sea, *in* perils among false brethren; [27]in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness- [28]besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches. [29]Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn *with indignation?*

[30]If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity. [31]The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying. [32]In Damascus the governor, under Aretas the king, was guarding the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desiring to arrest me; [33]but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped from his hands.

## SOUL NOTE

**Jealous Jabs** *(11:1-3)* The word “jealous” can be used positively or negatively. Paul said that he was “jealous for” the Corinthian believers “with godly jealousy.” He had brought them the gospel message, and they had received it. Paul feared, however, that these young believers would be enticed away from Christ. Paul’s jealousy was not for his own reputation but for the Corinthians’ eternal safety. Human jealousy, however, often has a less than noble focus-such as another’s looks, wealth, popularity, or power-and it is harmful to all involved. Believers must be careful not to allow jealousy over petty issues to harm them or others. **Topic: Jealousy**

## THE VISION OF PARADISE

**12** It is doubtless[a] not profitable for me to boast. I will come to visions and
revelations of the Lord: 2I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago-
whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know,
God knows-such a one was caught up to the third heaven. 3And I know such
a man-whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows-
4how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it
is not lawful for a man to utter. 5Of such a one I will boast; yet of myself I
will not boast, except in my infirmities. 6For though I might desire to boast, I
will not be a fool; for I will speak the truth. But I refrain, lest anyone should
think of me above what he sees me *to be* or hears from me.

## THE THORN IN THE FLESH

7And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the
revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to
buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. 8Concerning this thing I pleaded
with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. 9And He said to me,
"My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in
weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that
the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10Therefore I take pleasure in
infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's
sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

> And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.
> 2 CORINTHIANS 12:9

## SIGNS OF AN APOSTLE

11I have become a fool in boasting;[a] you have compelled me. For I ought
to have been commended by you; for in nothing was I behind the most
eminent apostles, though I am nothing. 12Truly the signs of an apostle were

accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds. [13]For what is it in which you were inferior to other churches, except that I myself was not burdensome to you? Forgive me this wrong!

**LOVE FOR THE CHURCH**

[14]Now *for* the third time I am ready to come to you. And I will not be burdensome to you; for I do not seek yours, but you. For the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children. [15]And I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I am loved.

[16]But be that *as it may*, I did not burden you. Nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you by cunning! [17]Did I take advantage of you by any of those whom I sent to you? [18]I urged Titus, and sent our brother with *him*. Did Titus take advantage of you? Did we not walk in the same spirit? Did *we* not *walk* in the same steps?

[19]Again, do you think[a] that we excuse ourselves to you? We speak before God in Christ. But *we do* all things, beloved, for your edification. [20]For I fear lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I wish, and *that* I shall be found by you such as you do not wish; lest *there be* contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, backbitings, whisperings, conceits, tumults; [21]lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and I shall mourn for many who have sinned before and have not repented of the uncleanness, fornication, and lewdness which they have practiced.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Perfected Weakness** *(12:7-10)* Pain doesn't have to be our enemy. Paul had experienced a great revelation from God (12:1-6). To keep him from being "exalted above measure," however, he had also been given "a thorn in the flesh." Most likely this was some physical

ailment that constantly afflicted him. Many people face chronic pain or physical afflictions. They may think that if God would heal them they would be much more valuable and effective in ministry. But God's power is often best revealed when He works through human weaknesses. His "strength is made perfect in weakness." **Topic: Pain**

## KEY PASSAGE

## STRENGTH BUILDERS

**(12:9, 10)**

To be perfect, strong, and capable-or at least to be perceived that way-is the desire of the human heart. Because God sometimes turns a person's life upside down, however, the pursuit of perfection can be a bad thing. Too often, "perfect," strong, and capable people try to do everything on their own; they don't feel a need for God, or they forget to rely on Him for the results.

Those who see their dependence, however, fully realize that they can accomplish nothing on their own. They need God to work through them. In that way, the task is accomplished, and God receives all the glory. That is why Paul could say, "I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." Paul could even take pleasure in those weaknesses, because only when he was weak could he really be strong in Christ.

Every person has areas of strength and weakness. How wonderful that God can use both! He equips us with strengths to serve Him humbly, and He works through our weaknesses so that we never forget His power.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about weakness My Weakness, His Strength. See also the personality profile of Mark-God's Work In Weakness.

**PAIN: PROBLEM, PUZZLE, PARABLE**

# SIANG-YANG TAN AND GEORGE OHLSCHLAGER

## (2 Corinthians 12:9)

**P**ain, and the suffering it causes, is one of life's greatest problems. For all the amazing advances in medicine, pain still remains a significant puzzle. Although everyone has experienced pain, it is still difficult to precisely define and effectively treat. Economically, pain directly and indirectly costs America upwards of eighty billion dollars every year. An estimated ninety million Americans suffer and experience some level of disability due to chronic pain.

Spiritually, pain may also be considered a parable about living. It is a universal residue of the Fall, a reminder to every living person that the entire human race is under a curse. Pain was, in fact, a direct consequence of the sin of Adam and Eve. Women were cursed to bear children "in pain," and men were bound for "toil" and "sweat" to eke out an existence from the earth (Gen. 3:16-19). In contrast, the end of pain-God's promise to one day banish it forever-is a grand part of the glorious promise of heaven (Rev. 21:4).

For most, however, living with chronic pain is a major life

problem. Not only is it a major medical and physical challenge, but it constantly assaults the mind and the spirit. Mentally, it is difficult not to obsessively focus and think about pain because its message to the nervous system is always demanding attention. Exhaustion, confusion, chronic fatigue, hopelessness, memory dysfunction, despair, suicidal thinking and planning, and distressed relations are all commonly associated with chronic pain.

Pain also assaults people's spiritual life, robbing them of spiritual vitality and motivation. Not only is it hard to pray and stay focused on God, often the pain sufferer simply doesn't want to be connected. For some, it's too much work. Others are angry with God and confused as to why He is not healing them. They struggle with believing that God is good, or that He really cares for them personally. Chronic pain usually triggers a major challenge to faithful living and can easily shake the very foundations of people's beliefs.

## GETTING ORIENTED TO PAIN MANAGEMENT

Psychiatrist Scott Peck begins his famous book, *The Road Less Traveled,* with the idea that life is difficult and full of trouble. People's refusal to accept this troublesome truth only magnifies the trouble we already live in. Likewise, accepting the fact of our chronically pained existence is essential. It will motivate us to act sufficiently and persevere long enough to control pain. It will also help us to live better with the pain that can't be controlled.

Accepting pain is not the same as resigning oneself to it and slipping into despair. Pain management requires that people accept the pain and map out a plan of action for dealing with it.

## PAIN CONTROL STRATEGIES

There are literally dozens of strategies that have been developed to control and manage pain-cutting across medical, psychological, social, and spiritual domains. People in chronic pain can be helped by praying, reading and memorizing Scripture, being thankful for the

good things in life, and being involved in worship, praise, and singing. They can occupy their minds with humor and laughter. Learning to see life's humor and laughing as much as possible can be a great release for people in pain. Starting or reviving a hobby, playing games, or doing puzzles can put their minds on other interesting activities. Group activities-whether a support group, joining a service club or helping ministry, doing counseling, or taking a class-also help put their focus elsewhere. Some are helped by writing-such as keeping a journal or writing letters. Most important, they need to stay hopeful, no matter what happens.

Methods to physically manage the pain include: pain medications, surgery, using a TENS unit (transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation), biofeedback training, relaxation training, retraining painful body movements, or massage therapy. Other ways to train their minds to manage pain include: pleasant imagery or music, calming self-talk, and thought retraining. People with chronic pain need to learn how to plan and pace their work, improve nutrition and exercise programs, and perhaps learn how to take strategic naps in order to help them function at their best.

**THE GIFT OF PAIN**

Years ago Philip Yancey and Paul Brand wrote a book destined to become a contemporary classic, *Pain: The Gift Nobody Wants*. In it, they talk about the tragedy of living life without pain, as did the lepers Dr. Brand worked with in India. Inability to feel pain usually leads to an early death or disability because the body has no mechanism to warn or fight against that which is dangerous to it.

This physical paradox is a metaphor for our spiritual and emotional life. The pain of a tweaked conscience can warn us about evil dangers and moral trouble. Fear can sensitize us to risky people and situations, preparing us to flee or to fight. Pain, in truth, is a necessary part of healthy human existence.

Pain is also the impetus that attracts God to us in a special way. Pain motivates the Holy Spirit to reveal His comforting, nurturing, consoling, and protecting character-something that often comes to us by no other means but pain. Pain will truly teach that nothing will come between us and God (Rom. 8:31-39). Pain is the seed to growing a deep faith, to maturing in spiritual strength and wisdom, to becoming more and more like Christ (James 1:2-4; 1 Pet. 1:6, 7).

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of pain include:

- Psalm 25:18
- Jeremiah 29:11-13
- Habakkuk 3:17-19
- John 16:33
- Romans 8:18, 31-39
- 1 Peter 1:6, 7; 4:12-19

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on pain at Hebrews 4:14-16. See also the personality profile of the man at the pool of Bethesda The Man At The Pool: Freedom From Pain.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# PAUL: STRENGTH IN WEAKNESS

## (12:9, 10)

Paul had a passion for ministry that would put most any other believer to shame. He tirelessly traveled, taught, wrote letters, prayed, and traveled some more. His legacy forms much of our New Testament; his words comfort, encourage, and guide believers today. Clearly Paul had many strengths, and God used him well for the kingdom.

Paul also was acutely aware of a nagging health problem, a physical infirmity he called his "thorn in the flesh" (12:7). It apparently hampered his service at times, for in his letter to the Galatian church, he wrote, "My trial which was in my flesh you did not despise or reject, but you received me as an angel of God. . . . I bear you witness that, if possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes and given them to me" (Gal. 4:14, 15). From these words, some have conjectured that Paul's "thorn" was an eye disease that hampered his vision. But the point is not to identify the thorn, but to learn how Paul ministered in spite of it.

Paul had pleaded with God to remove the thorn. Paul may have reasoned, "I would be able to travel and write and teach so much more if God would restore my health." The request was certainly reasonable, but God said no. God lovingly responded to his faithful servant, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness."

Health is a gift of God, but it is not a requirement for spiritual service. Many people have physical ailments, chronic pain, or debilitating diseases. They might think, "If God would only heal me, then I can truly minister for Him." But God often responds that His strength can be made perfect in any weak vessel that is completely dependent upon Him. The only requirement for service in God's

kingdom is a humble and obedient heart. He will do the rest.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Health And Spirituality. See also the key passage note at Proverbs 17:22.

## COMING WITH AUTHORITY

**13** This *will be* the third *time* I am coming to you. “By the mouth of two or
three witnesses every word shall be established.”[a] 2I have told you
before, and foretell as if I were present the second time, and now being
absent I write[a] to those who have sinned before, and to all the rest, that if I
come again I will not spare-3since you seek a proof of Christ speaking in me,
who is not weak toward you, but mighty in you. 4For though He was
crucified in weakness, yet He lives by the power of God. For we also are
weak in Him, but we shall live with Him by the power of God toward you.

5Examine yourselves *as to* whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves.
Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?-unless indeed you
are disqualified. 6But I trust that you will know that we are not disqualified.

## PAUL PREFERS GENTLENESS

7Now I[a] pray to God that you do no evil, not that we should appear
approved, but that you should do what is honorable, though we may seem
disqualified. 8For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth. 9For
we are glad when we are weak and you are strong. And this also we pray, that
you may be made complete. 10Therefore I write these things being absent,
lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the authority which the
Lord has given me for edification and not for destruction.

## GREETINGS AND BENEDICTION

11Finally, brethren, farewell. Become complete. Be of good comfort, be of
one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.

12Greet one another with a holy kiss.

Finally, brethren, farewell. Become complete. Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.
2 CORINTHIANS 13:11

[13]All the saints greet you.

[14]The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit *be* with you all. Amen.

# Galatians



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# Galatians

Pressure to change, to act differently, or to speak a different message can come from almost anywhere and can be difficult to resist, even when we know we're right.

For almost 2000 years, the church has faced pressure to change the gospel. In our pluralistic age, the temptation is to water down the message, make it popular. But in the first century, the church was pressured to change in the opposite direction-to add stringent rules to Christ's message of grace.

This disturbing development explains the apostle Paul's fiery letter to the church at Galatia, written about A.D. 49. Soon after their conversion during Paul's first missionary journey, the Galatians were deceived by false teachers who insisted on the necessity of following the Jewish law in order to be accepted by God. In the strongest possible terms, Paul renounces that message, proclaiming that salvation comes by faith alone in Christ alone. In Christ, believers are free from having to meet the impossible demands of the Jewish law and can live joyfully in God's unconditional acceptance.

Galatians also reminds us that every believer is a valued member of the household of faith with equal standing before God (3:26-29). The letter also contains a classic passage of what it means to live under the control of the Holy Spirit (ch. 5).

Galatians is for those who are struggling to understand grace, struggling to break free from the power of sin, or struggling to give themselves more fully to God. Could it be that Galatians is exactly what your soul needs?

**SOUL CONCERN IN**

## GALATIANS

VALUES (5:22)

## GREETING

**1** Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ
and God the Father who raised Him from the dead), [2]and all the brethren
who are with me,

To the churches of Galatia:

[3]Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ,
[4]who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present
evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, [5]to whom *be* glory
forever and ever. Amen.

## ONLY ONE GOSPEL

[6]I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in
the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, [7]which is not another; but there are
some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. [8]But even if
we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we
have preached to you, let him be accursed. [9]As we have said before, so now I
say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have
received, let him be accursed.

[10]For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I
still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.

## CALL TO APOSTLESHIP

[11]But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached
by me is not according to man. [12]For I neither received it from man, nor was I
taught *it,* but *it came* through the revelation of Jesus Christ.

[13]For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted
the church of God beyond measure and *tried to* destroy it.

[14]And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my
own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers.

[15]But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb
and called *me* through His grace, [16]to reveal His Son in me, that I might

preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, [17]nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those *who were* apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.

**CONTACTS AT JERUSALEM**

[18]Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter,[a] and remained with him fifteen days. [19]But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother. [20](Now *concerning* the things which I write to you, indeed, before God, I do not lie.)

[21]Afterward I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. [22]And I was unknown by face to the churches of Judea which *were* in Christ. [23]But they were hearing only, "He who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith which he once *tried to* destroy." [24]And they glorified God in me.

## DEFENDING THE GOSPEL

**2** Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and also took Titus with *me*. 2And I went up by revelation, and communicated to them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those who were of reputation, lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain. 3Yet not even Titus who *was* with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. 4And *this occurred* because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage), 5to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.

6But from those who seemed to be something-whatever they were, it makes no difference to me; God shows personal favoritism to no man-for those who seemed *to be something* added nothing to me. 7But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as *the gospel* for the circumcised *was* to Peter 8(for He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles), 9and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we *should go* to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. 10*They desired* only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do.

## NO RETURN TO THE LAW

11Now when Peter[a] had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; 12for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. 13And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy.

14But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before *them* all, “If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you[a] compel Gentiles to live

as Jews?[b] [15]We *who are* Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, [16]knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.

[17]"But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, *is* Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not! [18]For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. [19]For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. [20]I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. [21]I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness *comes* through the law, then Christ died in vain."

> "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."
> GALATIANS 2:20

**SOUL NOTE**

**Careful Conflict** *(2:11-13)* Paul needed to confront Peter publicly over a very important issue because others were following Peter's poor example. The disagreement involved how Jewish believers were to treat Gentile believers. This issue had the power to divide the church, so in front of everyone, Paul stepped into the gap to resolve the conflict. Because disputes and confrontations differ, they need to be handled differently. Most of the time, conflict can and should be handled privately between the people involved. Believers should deal with their disagreements carefully, seeking wisdom and guidance

from God. **Topic: Conflict**

**KEY PASSAGE**

# WORTH GIVING UP

**(2:20)**

The wonder of the Christian life is captured in these words. Becoming a believer is more than saying a prayer or committing oneself to a new way of living-it is an entirely new life! When Christ was crucified, He died in the place of all believers. Thus, the believer has been "crucified with Christ," which means that the sinful self is dead. Now, Christ lives in that person. In a glorious, incomprehensible transaction, Christ lives His life through each believer. Each remains an individual, but each is recreated by Christ. Each believer has the ability to deny sin's hold on their life and to live to please Christ.

What do believers have to give up? Selfishness, a life that is headed nowhere, sin and its consequences. Such self-denial can hardly compare with what God offers. When we are crucified with Christ, our lives are lived "by faith in the Son of God" who loved us and gave Himself for us. That's the best way to live!

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about self-denial The Cost Of Commitment. See also the personality profile of John The Baptist: Everything For Jesus.

## JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

**3** O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth,[a] before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you[b] as crucified? 2This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? 3Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? 4Have you suffered so many things in vain-if indeed *it was* in vain?

5Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, *does He do it* by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?-6just as Abraham "believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."[a] 7Therefore know that *only* those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. 8And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, *saying*, "In you all the nations shall be blessed."[a] 9So then those who *are* of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.

## THE LAW BRINGS A CURSE

10For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, "Cursed *is* everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them."[a] 11But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God *is* evident, for "the just shall live by faith." [a] 12Yet the law is not of faith, but "the man who does them shall live by them."[a]

13Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed *is* everyone who hangs on a tree"[a]), 14that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

## THE CHANGELESS PROMISE

15Brethren, I speak in the manner of men: Though *it is* only a man's covenant, yet *if it is* confirmed, no one annuls or adds to it. 16Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one, "And to your Seed,"[a] who is Christ. 17And

this I say, *that* the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ,[a] that it should make the promise of no effect. [18]For if the inheritance *is* of the law, *it is* no longer of promise; but God gave *it* to Abraham by promise.

**PURPOSE OF THE LAW**

[19]What purpose then *does* the law *serve?* It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; *and it was* appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator. [20]Now a mediator does not *mediate* for one *only,* but God is one.

[21]*Is* the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. [22]But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. [23]But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. [24]Therefore the law was our tutor *to bring us* to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. [25]But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

**SONS AND HEIRS**

[26]For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. [27]For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. [28]There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. [29]And if you *are* Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

**SOUL NOTE**

**One Big Family** *(3:28)* This verse describes how Christ breaks down all barriers. There should be no place for one member of the body of

believers to have prejudice against another member because of race, social status, gender, background, or any other superficial barriers human beings create. All believers have personal identities, which provide rich variety in the church. But all have also been made “one in Christ Jesus.” This oneness provides deep unity. As part of a huge, diverse family, we should not allow anything to separate us from other believers. **Topic: Prejudice**

**4** Now I say *that* the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a
slave, though he is master of all, [2]but is under guardians and stewards until
the time appointed by the father. [3]Even so we, when we were children, were
in bondage under the elements of the world. [4]But when the fullness of the
time had come, God sent forth His Son, born[a] of a woman, born under the
law, [5]to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the
adoption as sons.

[6]And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into
your hearts, crying out, “Abba, Father!” [7]Therefore you are no longer a slave
but a son, and if a son, then an heir of[a] God through Christ.

**FEARS FOR THE CHURCH**

[8]But then, indeed, when you did not know God, you served those which by
nature are not gods. [9]But now after you have known God, or rather are known
by God, how *is it that* you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to
which you desire again to be in bondage? [10]You observe days and months
and seasons and years. [11]I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in
vain.

[12]Brethren, I urge you to become like me, for I *became* like you. You have
not injured me at all. [13]You know that because of physical infirmity I
preached the gospel to you at the first. [14]And my trial which was in my flesh
you did not despise or reject, but you received me as an angel of God, *even* as
Christ Jesus. [15]What[a] then was the blessing you *enjoyed?* For I bear you
witness that, if possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes and
given them to me. [16]Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you
the truth?

[17]They zealously court you, *but* for no good; yes, they want to exclude
you, that you may be zealous for them. [18]But it is good to be zealous in a
good thing always, and not only when I am present with you. [19]My little
children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you, [20]I
would like to be present with you now and to change my tone; for I have
doubts about you.

**TWO COVENANTS**

21 Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law?
22 For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the
other by a freewoman. 23 But he *who was* of the bondwoman was born
according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise, 24 which
things are symbolic. For these are the[a] two covenants: the one from Mount
Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar- 25 for this Hagar is Mount
Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in
bondage with her children- 26 but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the
mother of us all. 27 For it is written:

> "Rejoice, O barren,
> You who do not bear!
> Break forth and shout,
> You who are not in labor!
> For the desolate has many more children
> Than she who has a husband."[a]

28 Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise. 29 But, as he
who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him who was born
according to the Spirit, even so it is now. 30 Nevertheless what does the
Scripture say? "Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the
bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman."[a] 31 So then,
brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Being Dad** *(4:6)* "Abba, Father" describes believers' intimate relationship with God. As children love their fathers and yet respect and obey them, so believers love God and have respect for and awe of Him. At times, people's unhappy relationships with their earthly fathers inhibit their ability to understand the loving fatherhood of God. This puts a great responsibility on fathers to seek the guidance of the perfect Father as they raise their children. Christian fathers

should raise their children with love and discipline. This will help their children to have a healthy concept of God. **Topic: Fatherhood**

## CHRISTIAN LIBERTY

**5** Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free,[a] and
do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage. [2]Indeed I, Paul, say to
you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. [3]And I
testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to
keep the whole law. [4]You have become estranged from Christ, you who
*attempt to* be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. [5]For we through
the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. [6]For in Christ
Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith
working through love.

## LOVE FULFILLS THE LAW

[7]You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? [8]This persuasion
does not *come* from Him who calls you. [9]A little leaven leavens the whole
lump. [10]I have confidence in you, in the Lord, that you will have no other
mind; but he who troubles you shall bear his judgment, whoever he is.

[11]And I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer
persecution? Then the offense of the cross has ceased. [12]I could wish that
those who trouble you would even cut themselves off!

[13]For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not *use* liberty as
an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. [14]For all the
law is fulfilled in one word, *even* in this: “You shall love your neighbor as
yourself.”[a] [15]But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be
consumed by one another!

## WALKING IN THE SPIRIT

[16]I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the
flesh. [17]For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh;
and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that
you wish. [18]But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

[19]Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery,[a] fornication,

uncleanness, lewdness, [20]idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, [21]envy, murders,[a] drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told *you* in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

[22]But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, [23]gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. [24]And those *who are* Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. [25]If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. [26]Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Too Much** *(5:19-21)* This list of the "works of the flesh" includes "drunkenness, revelries, and the like." Drinking excessively and allowing alcohol to take over one's senses is sinful and reveals a lack of self-control. Drunkenness also leads to other sins, such as taking part in "revelries" that might have consequences far beyond one's control. Involvement in any kind of substance abuse, whether it's alcohol or drugs, is sinful, and believers must turn away from it. If they have faced that difficulty in their past, they can trust God to help them overcome the temptation and learn self-control (5:23). **Topic: Drug Abuse**

**SOUL NOTE**

**God's Fruit** *(5:22, 23)* What do we value most in life? Many people try self-improvement or self-awareness programs to find meaning and

purpose. These two verses hold the secret to becoming exactly what God desires. The “fruit of the Spirit” are not works that believers must accomplish so they can check them off as they “grow” them. Instead, these fruit grow naturally as the produce of the Holy Spirit’s ministry in a person’s life. As we grow in the Christian faith, these characteristics should increasingly be manifested in our lives. The key is for us to submit our lives to Christ daily, allowing Him to work in and through us. That should be our highest value.**Topic: Values**

**CHRISTIAN VALUES IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY**

# CRAIG AND JANET PARSHALL

## (Galatians 5:22)

**T**he “spin-doctors” are definitely in. From politics to media, any topic can be given the proper makeover to introduce it to society as politically, socially, and even spiritually correct. Today is a time of moral relativism where moral values are never absolute. Many people think that the situation determines the nature or value of personal choice (“moral autonomy”). However, the Word of God has much to say in opposition to this kind of moral value system.

### KNOWING GOD’S VALUES

In distinct contrast to moral relativism, the Christian message is that God has clearly and authoritatively spoken about the values His people should hold. God’s Word gives a description of truly beneficial moral attributes that glorify God. Because these values are

eternal, they are always applicable, not situational. “Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy-meditate on these things” (Phil. 4:8). This is the standard of objectively true and divinely reliable moral values. Paul’s exhortation ends with the instruction to “meditate” about the moral values that God prizes.

God does not want people to decide what is virtuous according to the circumstances. And yet how often people do just that! Who has ever lied to the boss and tried to justify doing so? Who has ever tried to come up with a reason to see an impure movie or video because everyone is talking about it at work? Many times people know what is right, but because of societal pressure or their own selfishness, they choose what is wrong and attempt to justify it.

In contrast, God’s people rely on His standard about what is good, true, and morally pure. They then apply that standard to their circumstances, not the other way around. The standard does not change; instead, their lives must change to match the standard.

## APPLYING GOD’S VALUES

Simply knowing what values are best is not enough. Christians need to understand and apply them. That means turning God’s moral values into their own personal virtues. How is that possible? Virtuous character begins with the awesome idea of personal freedom. Followers of Jesus Christ are set free from continuing as slavish servants of depravity. As Paul wrote, “Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage” (Gal. 5:1).

The Bible makes it clear that the freedom given in Christ Jesus is for a purpose. “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve

one another" (Gal. 5:13). Christ's gift of freedom is not to be used as an excuse to sin. There is a clear choice. People can serve the "works of the flesh" such as "adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like" (Gal. 5:19, 20). But that choice is contradictory to the life one is able to live "in the Spirit" of God (Gal. 5:16). The solution, then, is to crucify the improper desires of the sinful nature. Believers can consider themselves dead to sin. Then they are free to walk in the Spirit (Gal. 5:16, 25).

## WALKING IN THE SPIRIT

Walking in the Spirit is a muscular enterprise. It means Christians are to manifest the "fruit" or expression of the Spirit whenever possible. Of course, Christian character is also a byproduct of a natural process. Apple trees don't sweat, moan, and groan in order to produce apples. In the same way, a Christian walking in the Spirit should, over time, naturally exhibit the fruit of Christian character: moral virtues.

In the end, this is a joint venture. While God's empowering Spirit gives Christians the fruit of Christlike character, they also play a critical part in their pursuit of these values. When they yield to the Holy Spirit and maintain a daily lifestyle that is consistent with God's values, the result is that they will inherit the kingdom of God (Gal.5:21). What are these values that Christians should reveal? They are the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22, 23).

While virtue comes from the internal process of deciding to walk according to the Spirit rather than the flesh, it is also forged from the blast furnace of external trials and pressures. "We also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us" (Rom. 5:3-5). People often

gain a greater level of maturity, temperance, and character as a result of hardship. Through difficulties, they come to understand what they truly value.

If our lives are marked by Christlike virtues, we will be happy and productive. We will experience personal peace and security. We know that even though our circumstances change, our values will not. Best of all, we will also revolutionize the world by drawing others to Christ through our solid example.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of values include:

- Psalm 15:1-5
- Micah 6:8
- Matthew 6:33
- 1 Corinthians 10:31
- Ephesians 5:1-4

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on values at 2 Peter 1:5-9. See also the personality profile of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego Three Men And A Powerful God.

## BEAR AND SHARE THE BURDENS

**6** Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who *are* spiritual
restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you
also be tempted. 2Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.
3For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he
deceives himself. 4But let each one examine his own work, and then he will
have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. 5For each one shall bear
his own load.

## BE GENEROUS AND DO GOOD

6Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who
teaches.

7Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he
will also reap. 8For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption,
but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. 9And let
us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do
not lose heart. 10Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all,
especially to those who are of the household of faith.

## GLORY ONLY IN THE CROSS

11See with what large letters I have written to you with my own hand! 12As
many as desire to make a good showing in the flesh, these *would* compel you
to be circumcised, only that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of
Christ. 13For not even those who are circumcised keep the law, but they
desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh. 14But God
forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by
whom[a] the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. 15For in Christ
Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new
creation.

## BLESSING AND A PLEA

16And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy *be* upon

them, and upon the Israel of God. [17]From now on let no one trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. [18]Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with your spirit. Amen.

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.
GALATIANS 6:7

**KEY PASSAGE**

# BACK TO THE BODY

**(6:1-5)**

Although all believers have been born again, they still face the dilemma of the sin nature. At times, this can overwhelm a believer, causing involvement in destructive sin. So what should other believers do for a brother or sister who is "overtaken in any trespass"?

Paul had advised elsewhere that discipline may be required (as in 1 Cor. 5), but its purpose should always be to restore the believer to the fellowship. Those who seek out an erring believer must come in a "spirit of gentleness," realizing that they also are sinners constantly in need of God's grace and forgiveness. The fallen but repentant believer is not neglected or rejected but rather is helped, encouraged, prayed over, offered assistance, and warmly welcomed back into the fellowship. Restoration helps a repentant believer get back on track and continue to grow; it humbles the church to realize the reality of sin; and it reveals the grace and power of Almighty God.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Restoration. See also the personality profile of David Restored.

**SOUL NOTE**

**A Heart for the Harvest** *(6:9)* Hurting people everywhere need the healing touch of God's servants. Paul encourages believers to "not grow weary while doing good." Continuing to do good and never seeing a harvest can be discouraging and frustrating. At times, loving words fall on deaf ears and hard work on thankless hearts. But no work for God is ever wasted: "In due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart." We will reap a harvest of blessings as the Holy Spirit works in our lives. We must never allow discouragement to make us grow idle. Our good works are valuable to God. **Topic: Discouragement**

# Ephesians



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# Ephesians

Remember when as a child you just wanted to grow-to be bigger, stronger, and faster? Maturing takes time, and it can't be rushed by our wanting to. Spiritual growth also takes time as God works in believers, conforming them to the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29). Some, desiring to rush the process, wish for instant maturity. Worse, some hold on to their immaturity and live as spiritual infants.

The apostle Paul's letter to the Ephesians is a treasure trove of truth and a manual for developing a life of substance and depth. Ephesus was a major commercial and religious metropolis in Asia Minor where Paul planted a church toward the end of his second missionary journey (A.D. 53; Acts 18, 19). About seven years later, while imprisoned for preaching the gospel, Paul apparently felt that the Ephesian Christians needed to be reminded of their extraordinary spiritual blessings. The result is this rich letter spelling out the great mystery of the Christian faith. Those whose minds are renewed by God's grace (ch. 1-3), says Paul, will see radical changes in the way they live (ch. 4-6). In short, they will grow and mature in Christ.

Unlike the many shallow, misguided believers who think God exists for them (rather than the other way around), those who study Ephesians and work to apply it to their lives will develop depth and stability in their souls. Maturity comes only by grace, so understanding that grace must become our lifelong passion.

**SOUL CONCERNS IN**

## EPHESIANS

CULTS (4:14)

SPIRITUAL WARFARE (6:10-20)

## GREETING

**1** Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God,

To the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus:

2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

## REDEMPTION IN CHRIST

3 Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ, 4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, 5 having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.

> That you may know what is the
> hope of His calling, what are the
> riches of the glory of His inheritance
> in the saints, and what is
> the exceeding greatness of His
> power toward us who believe.
> EPHESIANS 1:18, 19

7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace 8 which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, 9 having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, 10 that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both *a* which are in heaven and which are on earth-in Him. 11 In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, 12 that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.

13 In Him you also *trusted,* after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of

your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, [14]who[a] is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

**PRAYER FOR SPIRITUAL WISDOM**

[15]Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, [16]do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: [17]that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, [18]the eyes of your understanding[a] being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, [19]and what *is* the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power [20]which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated *Him* at His right hand in the heavenly *places,* [21]far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.

[22]And He put all *things* under His feet, and gave Him *to be* head over all *things* to the church, [23]which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Bless You** *(1:3)* In words of lofty praise, Paul blessed God, who has blessed His people “with every spiritual blessing.” Being blessed refers to receiving something good; blessing others means desiring the best for them. Believers bless God by attributing all power and glory to Him. He is the source of every spiritual blessing-Christians could not know God or grow spiritually unless He had blessed them with that opportunity. The spiritual blessings God gives are far

beyond anything humans could ask or imagine-yet He freely blesses His people. We should not cease blessing God for His great blessings toward us! **Topic: Attachment/Blessing**

## BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH

**2** And you *He made alive,* who were dead in trespasses and sins, [2]in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, [3]among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

[4]But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, [5]even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), [6]and raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, [7]that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in *His* kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. [8]For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, [9]not of works, lest anyone should boast. [10]For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

## BROUGHT NEAR BY HIS BLOOD

[11]Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh-who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands-[12]that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. [13]But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

## CHRIST OUR PEACE

[14]For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, [15]having abolished in His flesh the enmity, *that is,* the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man *from* the two, *thus* making peace, [16]and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. [17]And He came and preached peace to you who

were afar off and to those who were near. [18]For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.

**CHRIST OUR CORNERSTONE**

[19]Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, [20]having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner*stone*, [21]in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, [22]in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Nobody's Perfect** *(2:8, 9)* God is perfect; people are sinful. Fortunately, God does not require people to reach a certain level of perfection before He will accept them. Otherwise, no one could ever be saved! God provided a perfect way of salvation-grace. No one is saved by his or her good works; otherwise, people might be tempted to boast about how they had earned their salvation. Instead, no one can boast; they can only accept by faith this gift of God. One day God will make us perfect; until then, we continue to grow more and more like Christ with the help of the Holy Spirit. **Topic: Perfectionism**

## THE MYSTERY REVEALED

**3** For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles-[2]if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, [3]how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, [4]by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), [5]which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and proph-ets: [6]that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, [7]of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power.

> Now to Him who is able to do
> exceedingly abundantly above
> all that we ask or think, according to
> the power that works in us, to Him
> be glory in the church by Christ
> Jesus to all generations, forever and
> ever. Amen.
> EPHESIANS 3:20, 21

## PURPOSE OF THE MYSTERY

[8]To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, [9]and to make all see what *is* the fellowship[a] of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ;[b] [10]to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly *places,* [11]according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, [12]in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him. [13]Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

## APPRECIATION OF THE MYSTERY

14 For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,[a]
15 from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,
16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man,
17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love,
18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what *is* the width and length and depth and height-
19 to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

20 Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,
21 to Him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

### SOUL NOTE

**Growing Up** *(3:14-19)* These words describe the goal of all Christians as they seek to mature in their faith. Believers can pray to be strengthened by the Holy Spirit, so that they can withstand temptations and fears. They can pray for Christ to dwell in their hearts, helping them remain "rooted and grounded in love." Finally, they can pray "to know the love of Christ," a love that is incomprehensible, yet able to be known by experience. When we pray for spiritual growth for ourselves and others, we can use the words of this prayer. **Topic: Spiritual Growth**

## WALK IN UNITY

**4** I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the
calling with which you were called, [2]with all lowliness and gentleness,
with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, [3]endeavoring to keep
the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. [4]*There is* one body and one Spirit,
just as you were called in one hope of your calling; [5]one Lord, one faith, one
baptism; [6]one God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in
you[a] all.

## SPIRITUAL GIFTS

[7]But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of
Christ's gift. [8]Therefore He says:

> *"When He ascended on high,*
> *He led captivity captive,*
> *And gave gifts to men."*[a]

[9](Now this, "He ascended"-what does it mean but that He also first[a]
descended into the lower parts of the earth? [10]He who descended is also the
One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)

[11]And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some
evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, [12]for the equipping of the saints
for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, [13]till we all
come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a
perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; [14]that we
should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every
wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful
plotting, [15]but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him
who is the head-Christ-[16]from whom the whole body, joined and knit
together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by
which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of
itself in love.

## THE NEW MAN

17 This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer
walk as the rest of[a] the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, 18 having
their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because
of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart;
19 who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work
all uncleanness with greediness.

20 But you have not so learned Christ, 21 if indeed you have heard Him and
have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: 22 that you put off,
concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according
to the deceitful lusts, 23 and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and that
you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true
righteousness and holiness.

**DO NOT GRIEVE THE SPIRIT**

25 Therefore, putting away lying, "*Let* each one *of you* speak truth with his
neighbor,"[a] for we are members of one another. 26 "Be angry, and do not
sin":[a] do not let the sun go down on your wrath, 27 nor give place to the devil.
28 Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with *his*
hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.
29 Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for
necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. 30 And do not
grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of
redemption. 31 Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be
put away from you, with all malice. 32 And be kind to one another,
tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

**KEY PASSAGE**

# WORDS' WORTH

## (4:15)

Without communication, human beings would be isolated. God gave us language to allow us to talk, express ideas and opinions, provide information, and share feelings. Some people communicate in hurtful ways, saying words that cause pain to the hearer. Believers, however, are to communicate differently. Paul wrote that Christians' words should always be truthful and spoken in love. He added that no corrupt words should come out of believers' mouths; instead, they should speak only "what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers" (Eph. 4:29).

Think about how many times a day we open our mouths to talk. What if every word first had to be passed through a sieve of truthfulness, love, and edification? Would we be left speechless? We would do well to consider what we have to say before we say it. Then we would have time to apply Paul's test to our words.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about communication Four Laws Of Communication. See also the personality profile of Paul And Barnabas-communicating Truth In Life.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Even at Home** *(4:15)* Sometimes it is most difficult to be a Christian at home. Believers may work hard at speaking carefully in the world; at home, however, they may not try so hard. While home is a place where we can be ourselves, those "selves" should still show

Christlike character. Marriage partners should speak as carefully to each other as they would to a friend or an unbeliever. To speak the truth in love means honesty and openness with the seasoning of love that always respects the other person, seeking his or her best interests. Christian couples who follow Paul's advice to "speak the truth in love" have healthy communication. **Topic: Marital Communication**

## SWEET EQUILIBRIUM: A HEALTHY, BALANCED CHRISTIAN FAITH

STEPHEN ARTERBURN

(Ephesians 4:14)

**I**t is an extraordinarily difficult quality to fake. It is beautiful to see it demonstrated in someone's life. However, it is equally obvious when it is lacking. What is it? It is a healthy, consistent, and balanced faith.

Those involved in unhealthy faith systems-whether it be a cult, a false teaching, or even excessive legalism-exude a lack of balance, which is a glaring tip-off of toxic teachings. False religions, cults, and other forms of toxic faith are generally based on an "either-or," "black-white," "us-them," or "all or nothing" mentality. There is no room for compromise and no middle ground. In contrast, healthy faith accepts the fact that life is not usually black or white. Healthy faith finds balance in allowing believers to feel okay about struggling with the many gray areas of life. Toxic faith, however, labels those with sincere questions about religion as untrustworthy dissidents.

## BALANCED FAITH IN ACTION

People with a healthy, balanced Christian faith draw people to Christ. They refuse to compromise the truth of God's Word, but they also refuse to put down other people's beliefs. People with healthy faith understand that many people get involved in other religions because those religions offer something appealing. The fact that so many people are involved in so many religions demonstrates the human search for truth and for connection with the Creator of the universe. Healthy believers can admire and respect the devotion demonstrated by the followers of other religions. Healthy believers can learn about other faiths and religions in order to understand their influence on people throughout the world. For example, many world religions are very mission-minded in their attempt to share their concept of truth with others-a quality the Christian faith can appreciate.

As they learn more about other religions, healthy believers see the common thread in all other faiths-the need these faiths perceive to work one's way to God. For the adherents of these faiths, performance is everything, which is why many people of different non-Christian faiths believe that people who live good lives will gain eternal life. However, Christianity alone teaches that it is impossible to be consistently good, much less good enough to earn passage into heaven. Christianity also realizes the impossibility of comparing oneself to the example of perfection set by Jesus Christ. At this crossroads, sharing one's own experience with personal failures and inconsistencies becomes a testimony as to why Christianity is so personally appealing! Rather than working one's way to heaven, God works His way to people!

The difference in the healthy believer's approach is that they will not put down the other person's faith. Instead, they share the truth of Christianity in a tone of empathy for the human experience. Everyone is searching for truth and seeking to have some relationship with God. People with healthy faith see themselves as part of a great community in which everyone is struggling to find the truth about God,

themselves, and others. Christians are more likely to gain an effective hearing through sharing what they have found in their own search. While people may argue with a biblical text or theological tenet, no one can deny a person's truthful testimony about an experience with Christ. A testimony can become a powerful witness to the truth of Christianity. When Christians abandon the "us versus them," unbalanced mentality, people are drawn to them and to Christ.

## THE RESULTS OF BALANCED FAITH

Where healthy faith grows, every area of the believer's life improves. In the balanced practice of the Christian faith, families grow closer, friendships become stronger, and conflict is more easily resolved. Rigidity is replaced by understanding-a soothing balm in many relationships that may be bruised by misunderstandings and stalwart religious discussions. Those who grow in a healthy faith find comfort because their lives have perspective. They find wholeness in a balanced faith.

Healthy believers also find freedom from the performance review trap. Instead of engaging in a toxic struggle to somehow earn more acceptance from God by trying to appear more righteous than others, healthy Christians realize that they do not have to be perfect to be accepted. While the Pharisees desperately honed and perfected their extreme devotion to the Law, Jesus taught balance. When confronted about breaking a Sabbath law, He told His critics that the Sabbath was created for people, not people for the Sabbath (Mark 2:27).

Healthy faith is steeped in mercy. Emulating a merciful God, Christians must incorporate mercy into their views of other people as well as themselves. Mercy can heal family relationships and friendships that have been strained by the practice of a toxic faith. A truly biblical, Spirit-filled faith will display an attractive, winsome balance that draws people in instead of driving them away.

Healthy faith is balanced in its expression. "We should no longer

be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting" (Eph. 4:14). We know we are balanced when we are tolerant and patient, able to confront without being aggressive, to be assertive without being insensitive, and to be loving yet truthful.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of cults include:

- 1 Timothy 4:6, 7
- 2 Peter 2:1-22
- 1 John 4:1-6
- 2 John 7-11
- Jude 3, 4

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on cults at Titus 1:16. See also the personality profile of Simon The Sorcerer-the Trap Of False Religion.

**KEY PASSAGE**

# A REAL PUT-ON

# (4:22-24)

The Christian life is a process of change and growth toward maturity. God does not make us perfect the moment we accept Christ as Savior. Instead, He transforms our old selves. The "old man," the sin nature,

is taken off like a dirty piece of clothing. In its place, we "put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness." We wear that new man like a clean piece of clothing in all areas of our lives. At times, we may forget about the new clothing and allow sin to get us dirty, but we can go back to God for cleansing. At other times, that new clothing reminds us of our new identity in Christ and helps us make right choices.

We should be maturing in our Christian lives, finding that the new clothing is comfortable and that wearing it is second nature. We must never stop seeking to become more mature in Christ. That process lasts a lifetime.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Maturity And Change. See also the personality profile of Paul's Change For The Better.

**KEY PASSAGE**

# BEFORE THE SUN SETS

## (4:26, 27)

The Bible doesn't say, "Never get angry." It *does* say, however, "Be angry, and do not sin." Anger is a God-given, powerful emotion. Handled well, anger can cause positive change. Anger handled poorly, however, can cause great harm.

So what should believers do with their angry feelings? They should not indulge that anger, because that could cause them to speak or act

in ways that they would later regret. Nor should anger be stuffed deep inside with people pretending they never feel angry. That can cause a host of personal and relational problems. Stuffed anger will eventually cause a “system overload” whereby years of resentment erupt when a small spark sets it ablaze. The healthy way to handle anger is to deal with it as quickly as possible-before the sun goes down-so that we do not nurse the anger and thus “give place to the devil.” Satan loves to use angry feelings to divide believers. We should seek to resolve our differences with others quickly. Then we can get on with the Lord’s work.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about anger Cultivating Healthy Anger. See also the personality profile of Cain Angry As Cain?.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Saying Grace** *(4:29)* Words are powerful. They can wound or heal. Spoken in love or in anger, words often are remembered by the hearer for many years. A believer’s words must be carefully chosen and considered in light of one’s relationship with Christ. New life in Christ not only affects where a person will spend eternity, how that person lives, or their self-esteem, but it should also profoundly affect their words. We should never speak with “corrupt words”-such as coarse language, gossip, or slander. Instead, our words should “impart grace” to our listeners. What do our words say about our faith?
**Topic: Communication**

**KEY PASSAGE**

# A VERY REAL PRESENCE

# (4:30)

When we accept Christ as Savior, we receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). Jesus had promised this Spirit to His followers (John 14:15-18). The Holy Spirit marks God's people as His own (Eph. 1:13); we are "sealed for the day of redemption" (Eph. 4:30).

Although the Holy Spirit enters our lives to help us live for God, He does not turn us into robots. We constantly battle the sin nature, and at times we fail. When we willfully continue in sin, however, we "grieve" the Holy Spirit.

Having the Holy Spirit with us and in us is a great privilege, but it brings great responsibility. We do not want to grieve Him, so we must be responsible enough to be sensitive to what He tells us. We try to follow His guidance because He has given us a great privilege, sealing us to be with God forever. Far from being an excuse for sin, that privilege gives us high motivation to live for God.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about the presence of the Holy Spirit Holy Spirit, Heavenly Dove. See also the personality profile of The Holy Spirit In Believers' Lives.

**KEY PASSAGE**

# KIND, TENDER, FORGIVING

# (4:31, 32)

As God's people, we must put out of our lives bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, evil speech, and malice. Then we should replace those attitudes and actions with positive ones:

- *Being kind to one another.* We should act charitably and benevolently to all people, regardless of how we are treated in return. That means taking the initiative in being kind.
- *Being tenderhearted.* This means having compassion. We should show genuine sensitivity, allowing for others' faults and failings while still showing care and concern.
- *Being forgiving . . . even as God in Christ forgave us.* This is probably the most difficult. If our relationships are going to flourish, we need to be able to forgive others. Christ forgave all our sins and continues to forgive us daily. We can forgive because we are forgiven.

Consider how our relationships would change if we lived by these words!

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about relationships Building Good Relationships. See also the personality profile of David And Jonathan-best Of Friends.

## WALK IN LOVE

**5** Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. [2]And walk in love, as
Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a
sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.

[3]But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; [4]neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. [5]For this you know,[a] that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. [6]Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. [7]Therefore do not be partakers with them.

## WALK IN LIGHT

[8]For you were once darkness, but now *you are* light in the Lord. Walk as children of light [9](for the fruit of the Spirit[a] *is* in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), [10]finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. [11]And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose *them.* [12]For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. [13]But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. [14]Therefore He says:

> "Awake, you who sleep,
> Arise from the dead,
> And Christ will give you light."

## WALK IN WISDOM

[15]See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, [16]redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

[17]Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord *is.* [18]And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, [19]speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, [20]giving thanks always

for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,
21 submitting to one another in the fear of God.[a]

**MARRIAGE-CHRIST AND THE CHURCH**

22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband
is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior
of the body. 24 Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so *let* the
wives *be* to their own husbands in everything.

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave
Himself for her, 26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of
water by the word, 27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church,
not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and
without blemish. 28 So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own
bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hated his own
flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord *does* the church. 30 For
we are members of His body,[a] of His flesh and of His bones. 31 "For this
reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and
the two shall become one flesh."[a] 32 This is a great mystery, but I speak
concerning Christ and the church. 33 Nevertheless let each one of you in
particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife *see* that she
respects *her* husband.

**SOUL NOTE**

**What a Waste** *(5:18)* Drunkenness has no place in believers' lives. To become "drunk with wine," or any alcoholic drink, reveals a lack of self-control. Getting drunk, wrote Paul, is "dissipation," referring to the waste of time and money caused by partying and an out-of-control lifestyle. The waste of God-given talents resources, the

consequences of drunkenness, and addiction to alcohol should keep and resources, the consequences of drunkenness, and addiction to alcohol should keep people from substance abuse. The underlying issue, of course, is who or what is in charge of a person's life. Believers should be able to say that God is in charge and then trust Him to help them overcome such behaviors. **Topic: Drug Abuse**

**SOUL NOTE**

**The Feeling Is Mutual** *(5:21-26)* The Bible teaches mutual submission in marriage. Wives should submit to their husband's leadership because that provides stability in the home. Husbands, however, should love their wives as Christ loved the church, meaning they would give up anything for the good of their wives. When husbands love this way, their wives will have no fear of submitting to them. When both spouses act in each other's best interest and live to please Christ, they will build a solid marriage and family. **Topic: Marriage**

## CHILDREN AND PARENTS

**6** Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. [2]"*Honor your father and mother*," which is the first commandment with promise: [3]"*that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.*"[a]

[4]And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.

## BONDSERVANTS AND MASTERS

[5]Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; [6]not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, [7]with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men, [8]knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether *he is* a slave or free.

[9]And you, masters, do the same things to them, giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master also[a] is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.

## THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD

[10]Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. [11]Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. [12]For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age,[a] against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*.[13]Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

Finally, my brethren, be strong in
the Lord and in the power
of His might.
EPHESIANS 6:10

[14]Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, [15]and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; [16]above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. [17]And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; [18]praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints-[19]and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, [20]for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

**A GRACIOUS GREETING**

[21]But that you also may know my affairs *and* how I am doing, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make all things known to you; [22]whom I have sent to you for this very purpose, that you may know our affairs, and *that* he may comfort your hearts.

[23]Peace to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. [24]Grace *be* with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Bringing Them Up** *(6:1-4)* Parents and children constitute a family-happy and content when there is respect and obedience, unhappy and resentful when there is anger and rebellion. Paul advised fathers (as the heads of the household) and children each to do their part in building a healthy family life. Children must obey their parents, understanding that rules are in place for their own good. Fathers, on the other hand, should make the rules carefully, not to provoke their

children, but to “bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.” Parents and children all have responsibilities in a family.
**Topic:** **Family Life**

**KEY PASSAGE**

# DEAR OLD DAD

# (6:4)

Paul here addressed just fathers, but obviously, mothers can use this same advice. Fathers are responsible for their children, to “bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.” All fathers should be working toward the goal of raising God-honoring children. Because all fathers are different, with varying backgrounds, personalities, and ideas, they will do this in many different ways. Yet they ought to be careful in their training and discipline not to provoke their children “to wrath.” In other words, sometimes a father’s discipline can be overly harsh, unfair, unloving, or irresponsible, causing children to become angered, discouraged, and resentful. A father who disciplines fairly, consistently, and lovingly is raising his children well. Dads also have the huge responsibility of modeling to their children what their heavenly Father is like. What an incredible opportunity and responsibility!

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about fatherhood Someone Special. See also the personality profile of the The Prodigal Son’s Loving Father.

**KEY PASSAGE**

# THE WINNING TEAM

## (6:10-20)

The spiritual realm has two sides-God's side and Satan's side. Those who have accepted Christ as Savior are on God's side; that automatically makes them enemies of Satan. This passage says that our battle is against "the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." These forces are real and powerful and should not be underestimated. Their goal is to make believers ineffective for God's kingdom and to keep unbelievers away from God.

The battle rages constantly, usually beyond our earthly vision. At times, however, we see it clearly when we face temptation, difficulty, and trials. Evil knows our weaknesses; Satan knows where to attack. Our strength for the battle is in God. We need to "suit up" with God's armor so that we can be ready when Satan attacks. Wearing God's armor, we fight our daily battles, trusting God to fight with us through His Holy Spirit. The war has already been won, and we are on the winning side!

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Spiritual Warfare. See also the personality profile of Michael The Archangel.

**KEY PASSAGE**

# DANGEROUS LIAISONS

# (6:10-20)

Satan is God's avowed enemy, seeking to subvert and corrupt every part of God's creation. From the beauty of the earth to the love between people, every good thing is Satan's target. His realm is powerful, but he is not more powerful than God.

The occult is aligned with Satan. Mysterious powers and forces work in the occult, attempting to convince many people. Those involved in the occult may practice various forms of satanic worship; others attempt to tell the future or cast spells; still others seek to contact dead people and communicate with their spirits. Satan is quite real, and occult powers can be very real, too. Believers must not let a desire to know the future or understand the past lead them into any form of involvement in the occult. Yet even people who have been involved in occult practices can be forgiven by God. His power is infinitely greater than Satan's.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about The Occult. See also the personality profile of The Witch Of En Dor-the Occult Temptation.

**SPIRITUAL WARFARE**

# DAVID POWLISON

## (Ephesians 6:10-20)

**T**he Bible makes it clear that all people choose either to follow the one and only God or to follow Satan. To refuse to love God automatically places someone in Satan's camp. But God has chosen to attack and plunder Satan's kingdom in order to deliver us. He captures people for Himself through the powerful love of Jesus (Col. 1:13). God is on the offensive in spiritual warfare, and we join His fight.

But the enemy fights back, so believers must be alert and courageous. The outcome is certain-light will defeat darkness-but the battle still rages. The Bible repeatedly calls believers to stand up to Satan: "Stand against the wiles of the devil" (Eph. 6:11); "resist the devil" (James 4:7). God promises that the devil will flee, will be crushed underfoot, and that we will stand victorious. The Bible teaches in detail how to fight against Satan with truth, faith, repentance, prayer, love, and obedience in the power of the Spirit.

Unfortunately, some in the church have come to think that involvement in spiritual warfare is mainly about the problem of being possessed by demons. The Bible makes clear, however, that *all believers* face spiritual warfare. The Bible never mentions exorcism of demons in the context of fighting the deepest spiritual battle.

Ephesians 6:10-20 offers specific instruction about how to fight spiritual warfare.

### WEARING THE ARMOR

The armor *is* the Lord, who Himself invades the world of darkness

and evil. The Old Testament provides pictures of each of the different weapons of war that God-inChrist wears: the belt of faithfulness (Is. 11:5), the breastplate of righteousness and helmet of salvation (Is. 59:17), the feet bringing good news (Is. 52:7), the sword of the Word (Is. 49:2). The Lord is also the shield behind which faith takes refuge (Ps. 18:2). So God is the attacker and invader in spiritual warfare. He first wears His own weapons.

We put on God and His power. We put on this armor of light, the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 13:12, 14). The entire Book of Ephesians demonstrates how Paul as a man in Christ invades the world of darkness with the light of the message of Jesus. He calls believers to put on the same armor for the ongoing spiritual warfare that we all face. He does not speak of "demon deliverance."

## FIGHTING THE REAL BATTLE

"Demon deliverance" in the sphere of counseling, evangelism, and sanctification is a fairly recent phenomenon. This "deliverance" focus believes that spiritual warfare involves grappling with resident demons that hold people in bondage to patterns of sin. Becoming indwelt by demons is believed to occur as an inheritance from evil ancestors, from persisting in sin, from being sinned against, or through owning evil objects. Freedom (deliverance) is thought to come from casting the demons out. Scripture consistently undermines this view, however. Demon deliverance is not a biblical understanding of spiritual warfare for five main reasons.

First, it grants too much freedom and initiative to Satan, and portrays our warfare as largely on the defensive. Satan's malicious activities operate under God's sovereign control and purposes. For example, Satan's affliction of Job and the evil spirit's torment of Saul occurred only with God's permission. The devil's malice toward God and His people was a tool of God's greater purposes: to humiliate Satan, to grow Job's faith, to destroy Saul.

Second, the exorcisms Jesus performed never intended to address moral bondage and confusion. The driving out of demons is not even about spiritual warfare, *per se* . The struggles of spiritual warfare-sins, unbelief, idolatry, confusion, and moral struggles-are never cast out. Those from whom Jesus drove demons primarily had symptoms of physical suffering. Jesus' approach to afflicting spirits lacked the hysteria and animistic worldview embodied in contemporary "demon deliverance."

Third, when Jesus and the apostles dealt with sin, occult practices, temptation, and moral bondage, they always spoke and fought in the Ephesians 6 manner-using relevant truth, living faith, repentance, and pointed prayer. Satan's attempts to rule people's lives through falsehood, deceit, intimidation, and temptation are never "cast out." Both in the wilderness and in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus displayed true spiritual warfare by holding onto truth.

Fourth, people who come out of an occult background would seem to be a strong argument for some type of deliverance. The Bible, however, frequently talks about such people and never portrays exorcism as the solution to their problems. Simon the sorcerer is a prime example (Acts 8). When he showed patterns of power lust, Peter used moral bondage language and not demonic bondage language. Exorcism did not appear to be Peter's concern in addressing Simon's condition.

Finally, the devil works on the inside, appealing to and ruling people's hearts. Exactly how he does this is a mystery; that he does this is a given. The human heart is by nature "full of evil" (Eccl. 9:3), so it is no surprise to find an intimate congruence between humans and the evil one. God's method for helping such people is amazingly normal and straightforward: repentance of sinful tendencies so that they can be cleansed and renewed.

Spiritual warfare is part of every Christian's daily life. We triumph as we walk by faith in Christ, who turns us from darkness to light,

from the power of Satan to God, forgiving sin, and giving us a place among those who are sanctified by faith (Acts 26:18).

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of spiritual warfare include:

- Matthew 4:1-11
- Ephesians 2:2
- James 4:7-10
- 1 John 4:1-6
- 2 John 7-11

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note about spiritual warfare at Ephesians 6:10-20. See also the personality profile of Michael The Archangel.

# Philippians



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# Philippians

How would you describe your life these days? Is it anxious, joyful, weary, bitter, busy, or distracted? Few of us would say we were joyful.

Modern life is filled with "joy robbers." We spend too much time working to get ahead, battling traffic, and struggling with schedules. All too often, we lose the joy of life that God intended for us.

The apostle Paul wrote the New Testament letter to the church at Philippi while he was a prisoner in Rome awaiting trial (1:7). Despite his dire circumstances, Paul's tone is unabashedly joyful. (The word "joy" and its derivatives occur sixteen times in four short chapters!) His experience reminds us that joy comes from God and transcends mere happiness. Joy survives our trials and is the perfect antidote to fear and anxiety (4:4-6).

What was Paul's secret? Maybe it was his discovery of the truth that Christ is the be-all and end-all of life (1:20). For him, to live was Christ and to die was gain (1:21). Perhaps it was his embracing of the "mind of Christ"-a mindset of utter humility, a determination to serve no matter what, and a commitment to true unity among believers. Whatever the case, Paul was able to face (and have victory over) tough challenges because he was radically committed to a Christ-centered life.

Is your soul joyful today? Read Philippians and rejoice in what Christ has done for you!

**SOUL CONCERN IN**

## PHILIPPIANS

ANXIETY (CH. 4)

## GREETING

**1** Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ,

To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops[a] and deacons:

2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

## THANKFULNESS AND PRAYER

3 I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, 4 always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, 5 for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, 6 being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete *it* until the day of Jesus Christ; 7 just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace. 8 For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ.

> And this I pray, that your love
> may abound still more and more
> in knowledge and all discernment,
> that you may approve the things
> that are excellent, that you may
> be sincere and without offense
> till the day of Christ.
> PHILIPPIANS 1:9, 10

9 And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, 10 that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, 11 being filled with the fruits of righteousness which *are* by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

## CHRIST IS PREACHED

12 But I want you to know, brethren, that the things *which happened* to me

have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, [13]so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ; [14]and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

[15]Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill: [16]The former[a] preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; [17]but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel. [18]What then? Only *that* in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.

## TO LIVE IS CHRIST

[19]For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, [20]according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. [21]For to me, to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain. [22]But if *I* live on in the flesh, this *will mean* fruit from *my* labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. [23]For[a] I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, *which is* far better. [24]Nevertheless to remain in the flesh *is* more needful for you. [25]And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith, [26]that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again.

## STRIVING AND SUFFERING FOR CHRIST

[27]Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel, [28]and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation,[a] and that from God. [29]For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, [30]having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear *is*

in me.

**SOUL NOTE**

**His Handiwork** *(1:6)* The process of Christian growth and maturity begins when we accept Jesus as Savior. As believers we still struggle with a sin nature, and we will fail at times. God helps us to grow and mature all through our lives. We won't be perfect until we are with Christ. In the meantime, when we feel discouraged or distressed by our failures, we just need to remember that God won't give up on us. He began His good work in us and will complete it when we meet Him face to face. **Topic: Failure**

## UNITY THROUGH HUMILITY

**2** Therefore if *there is* any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, [2]fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind. [3]*Let* nothing *be done* through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. [4]Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

## THE HUMBLED AND EXALTED CHRIST

[5]Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, [6]who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, [7]but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men. [8]And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of* death, even the death of the cross. [9]Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, [10]that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, [11]and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

## LIGHT BEARERS

[12]Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; [13]for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure.

[14]Do all things without complaining and disputing, [15]that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, [16]holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.

[17]Yes, and if I am being poured out *as a drink offering* on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. [18]For the same

reason you also be glad and rejoice with me.

**TIMOTHY COMMENDED**

19 But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also
may be encouraged when I know your state. 20 For I have no one like-minded,
who will sincerely care for your state. 21 For all seek their own, not the things
which are of Christ Jesus. 22 But you know his proven character, that as a son
with *his* father he served with me in the gospel. 23 Therefore I hope to send
him at once, as soon as I see how it goes with me. 24 But I trust in the Lord
that I myself shall also come shortly.

**EPAPHRODITUS PRAISED**

25 Yet I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother,
fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who
ministered to my need; 26 since he was longing for you all, and was distressed
because you had heard that he was sick. 27 For indeed he was sick almost unto
death; but God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I
should have sorrow upon sorrow. 28 Therefore I sent him the more eagerly,
that when you see him again you may rejoice, and I may be less sorrowful.
29 Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such men in
esteem; 30 because for the work of Christ he came close to death, not
regarding his life, to supply what was lacking in your service toward me.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Pride Problems** *(2:1-4)* Paul stresses spiritual unity in the body of Christ. Selfish ambition and conceit bring discord, which draws people's focus away from Christ and toward themselves and their

desires. Genuine humility, however, builds and strengthens the body of believers. Being humble involves having a true perspective about ourselves (Rom. 12:3), "lowliness of mind," and looking out for the interests of others. Believers must lay aside any pride or selfishness, always treating people with respect. In that way, we will be following the example of Christ, who selflessly gave His life for us (2:8).
**Topic: Pride**

## SOUL NOTE

**A Hearty Welcome** *(2:2-4)* Philippi was a cosmopolitan city whose church reflected great diversity of backgrounds and social status. With so many lifestyles and attitudes represented, unity must have been difficult to maintain. Paul encouraged the believers to guard against any selfishness, prejudice, or jealousy that might lead to division. This holds true as the church continues to reach out to all walks of life. We must remember not to prejudge, but rather, to welcome new believers with open minds and genuine interest, taking positive steps toward building unity in Christ. **Topic: Attitudes**

## ALL FOR CHRIST

**3** Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you *is* not tedious, but for you *it is* safe.

2 Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation! 3 For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit,[a] rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh, 4 though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: 5 circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, *of* the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; 6 concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

7 But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. 8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which *is* from the law, but that which *is* through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; 10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, 11 if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

## PRESSING TOWARD THE GOAL

12 Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. 13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing *I do,* forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

15 Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. 16 Nevertheless, to *the degree* that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule,[a] let us be of the same mind.

**OUR CITIZENSHIP IN HEAVEN**

[17]Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. [18]For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* the enemies of the cross of Christ: [19]whose end *is* destruction, whose god *is their* belly, and *whose* glory *is* in their shame-who set their mind on earthly things. [20]For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, [21]who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Works Don't Work** *(3:5, 6)* Paul seems to be boasting of his achievements, but actually he was explaining that his human accomplishments, no matter how impressive or extensive, could not earn salvation and eternal life with God. Paul didn't depend on his works to please God, because even the most impressive resumé falls short of God's standards. We can't rely on our good works to usher us into eternity-it's so much easier than that! All we need to do is confess our sins and believe in Jesus as our personal Savior. God isn't impressed by what we've done-He's impressed by our acceptance of His grace. **Topic: Work**

## SOUL NOTE

**Forget It** *(3:12-16)* Believers must constantly seek the goal of maturity in Christ. Even Paul knew that he had not attained that goal, so he pressed on to grow in Christ. A key to that growth is “forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead.” Past sins have been covered and need not hinder us, and past worldly accomplishments mean nothing. We are “heavenly citizens in training.” All that matters is walking with Christ through life, allowing Him to prepare us for His kingdom. **Topic: Change/Maturity**

**4** Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved.

**BE UNITED, JOYFUL, AND IN PRAYER**

2 I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. 3 And[a] I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names *are* in the Book of Life.

4 Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!

5 Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord *is* at hand.

> Be anxious for nothing, but in
> everything by prayer and supplication,
> with thanksgiving, let your
> requests be made known to God;
> and the peace of God, which
> surpasses all understanding, will
> guard your hearts and minds
> through Christ Jesus.
> PHILIPPIANS 4:6, 7

6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

**MEDITATE ON THESE THINGS**

8 Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things *are* noble, whatever things *are* just, whatever things *are* pure, whatever things *are* lovely, whatever things *are* of good report, if *there is* any virtue and if *there is* anything praiseworthy-meditate on these things. 9 The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.

**PHILIPPIAN GENEROSITY**

[10]But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity. [11]Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: [12]I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. [13]I can do all things through Christ[a] who strengthens me.

[14]Nevertheless you have done well that you shared in my distress. [15]Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. [16]For even in Thessalonica you sent *aid* once and again for my necessities. [17]Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account. [18]Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things *sent* from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God. [19]And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. [20]Now to our God and Father *be* glory forever and ever. Amen.

**GREETING AND BLESSING**

[21]Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you. [22]All the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar's household.

[23]The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.[a] Amen.

**KEY PASSAGE**

# ANXIOUS FOR NOTHING

## (4:6-13)

Paul certainly had plenty of reason to feel anxious. Sitting in a Roman prison, he didn't know if he would be released or put to death. Writing to the believers in Philippi, however, he urged them, "Be anxious for nothing."

Anxiety and its companion, worry, do their best to immobilize believers. People are anxious about the future; they are anxious about events that haven't happened but *could* happen. Anxiety causes physical problems. Anxiety makes people fearful and distressed.

So what can believers do about their anxiety? Paul gives the answer, "In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God." When we give our anxiety to God, He replaces it with His peace that "surpasses all understanding." God's peace is beyond comprehension because it makes no sense-the circumstances seem to require anxiety, but instead we feel God's peace. When we feel anxiety rising, we should turn to God in prayer. He will give us the peace He promised.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about anxiety Understanding Anxiety. See also the personality profile of David: The Anxieties Of A King.

**UNDERSTANDING ANXIETY**

ARCHIBALD D. HART

(Philippians 4)

Anxiety disorders are the most common emotional struggles of today, affecting some 20 to 30 million people. Why such a dramatic rise in the incidence of anxiety disorders? In a **A** nutshell, many people live too disconnected, carry too much debt, and live at too fast a pace. People were designed to travel at a camel's pace, but they behave like supersonic jets, running constantly on a supercharged stream of adrenaline. They end up paying for this abuse with worry and anxiety.

**FEAR, WORRY, AND ANXIETY**

*Fear*

Fear is a natural and necessary alarm system that is triggered whenever we feel threatened. This God-given emotion ignites a response to a real or perceived danger, such as running into a spider web. The fear response imagines the spider biting, so the body is put on alert. The experience of the fear is very real. God has created us to feel fear, and, provided the fear is justified, it is perfectly normal and can lead to protective behavior.

People also feel fear over imagined possible outcomes. Though the list is potentially endless, some common fears include: losing a child, spouse, job, or health, being shamed or humiliated in public, being rejected, failing (or succeeding), dying or dying painfully. Others face phobic fears-of heights, tight places, the dark, etc.

*Worry*

Worry is not an emotion but a mental activity that produces anxiety. This *stinking thinking* is an unhealthy and unreasonable exercise that attempts to solve situations beyond our control. Instead of praying or simply letting go of things that cannot be controlled, worriers obsess about controlling the problem, talking to themselves about how terrible it is, and imagining all sorts of horrible results if the problem

is not solved immediately. Over enough time, people even begin to believe that if they worry hard enough, their worry will somehow solve the problem.

*Anxiety*

Anxiety keeps a person from relaxing, from resting. It is a pervasive, long-term inner feeling of nervousness, unrest, and uneasiness. Anxiety's symptoms can include: tense feelings, rapid heart beat, dry mouth, increased blood pressure, jumpiness or feeling faint, excessive perspiring, feeling clammy, and anticipation of trouble.

*Anxiety Disorders*

Everyone experiences some anxiety. But frequent and intense anxiety may indicate a clinically diagnosable and treatable disorder. An anxiety disorder can be a sudden and unexplained uneasiness that lasts a few hours, or it can be a constant state. Simply wishing the symptoms away will not work. Some forms of troubling anxiety include:

Generalized Anxiety. A pervasive form of chronic tension that manifests itself in many different situations. When it exists longer than six months, it is diagnosable as an anxiety disorder.

Phobia. Fear strongly associated with a single object, place, or event.

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder. OCD is fear hidden behind a variety of obsessions and compulsions, such as highly ritualized/ repetitive behavior (like constant hand-washing). These maladaptive patterns are attempts to manage anxious thoughts and feelings.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. As a result of being victimized or even witnessing a traumatic event, recurring visions, dreams, and memories of the trauma induce fear and are relived in debilitating ways. First recognized in prisoners of war, PTSD is now seen as a common experience across a whole range of traumatic life

experiences-physical and sexual abuse, natural disasters, injurious accidents, etc.

Panic Attack. The sudden onset of panic is an overwhelming state of anxiety-being flooded and paralyzed by the fight-or-flight response. Symptoms include racing heart, sweating, dizziness, ringing ears, choking, and vertigo. The physiological reaction to panic is so strong that the panic sufferer often imagines that he or she is having a heart attack or going crazy. Agoraphobia can set in-the fear of returning to the people and places where panic occurred. At its worst, the sufferer ends up housebound, fearful of panic away from home, and excessively vigilant. More than three panic attacks in a month or the onset of agoraphobia indicate a disorder that needs professional treatment.

## SCRIPTURE AND ANXIETY

Many Christians think that God condemns all anxiety, and, by implication, that He also condemns those who suffer with different forms of it. Certainly Scripture condemns a particular form of anxiety. Jesus said, “Let not your heart be troubled” (John 14:1), referring to a form of anxiety that has been with us for all time: *worry*.

Jesus’ familiar expression, “Take no thought for your life,” refers to anxious worry. In the Sermon on the Mount, He calls attention to the destructiveness of anxiety about the future (Matt. 6:25-34). His teaching is startlingly clear-such worry is futile, pointless, and unable to help solve the problem. No worrisome thought about tomorrow can help people live better or keep evil away. Worry, then, is not an emotion but a pattern of thinking that takes hold when people try to live independent of God.

Unless fear, worry, and anxiety are honestly faced and worked through, people can end up in a pattern of avoidance-organizing their lives around people and situations that they must avoid. It is much

healthier to practice another pattern:

- Turn to God first (1 Pet. 5:7).
- Focus on the solution, not the problem (Matt. 14:22, 23).
- Stop wasting energy on worrying (Matt. 6:25-34).
- Keep your thoughts on God in order to have peace (Is. 26:3).
- Pray (Phil. 4:4-9).
- Direct your attention toward your true source of hope (Ps. 91:2).

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of anxiety include:

- Deuteronomy 31:8
- Psalms 23; 103; 121; 146
- Isaiah 41:13; 44:2
- 2 Timothy 1:7
- Hebrews 13:5
- 1 Peter 5:7-11

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on anxiety at Philippians 4:6-13. See also the personality profile of David: The Anxieties Of A King.

# Colossians



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# Colossians

Someone has observed that one rotten egg in a four-egg omelet still ruins the omelet. Something can be pure or impure, but there's no such thing as "mostly pure."

This principle is terribly important in the spiritual realm. Mix a few distorted, human notions with the pure and simple gospel of Christ and the result, no matter how good it may seem, is a long way from the truth. Such was the case in the first-century church at Colosse, a congregation started in A.D. 54-56, probably by Epaphras, an associate of the apostle Paul.

Paul wrote to the Colossians to combat the subtle error that conflicting truth claims can be blended into a God-honoring religious system. Some believers, while claiming to embrace the gospel, were adopting forms of Jewish legalism. Others were lapsing into immorality. The true gospel was being polluted with various worldly philosophies that compromised the integrity of the Christian message.

Rejecting the notion that the gospel is just one possible belief system among many, Paul's short letter presents Jesus Christ as the exalted Lord of the universe. Therefore it is only fitting that He should be preeminent in all of life-church, friendships, marriage, family life, and employer-employee relations.

In a day of moral and philosophical relativism, when many people believe "what's true for you may not be true for me," Colossians reminds us that being even a "little" off is a big deal!

**SOUL CONCERN IN**

## COLOSSIANS

MARITAL PROBLEMS (3:18, 19)

## GREETING

**1** Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our
brother,

[2]To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ *who are* in Colosse:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.[a]

## THEIR FAITH IN CHRIST

[3]We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, [4]since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints; [5]because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, [6]which has come to you, as *it has* also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit,[a] as *it is* also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth; [7]as you also learned from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, [8]who also declared to us your love in the Spirit.

## PREEMINENCE OF CHRIST

[9]For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; [10]that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing *Him,* being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; [11]strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; [12]giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. [13]He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed *us* into the kingdom of the Son of His love, [14]in whom we have redemption through His blood,[a] the forgiveness of sins.

[15]He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. [16]For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All

things were created through Him and for Him. [17]And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. [18]And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.

## RECONCILED IN CHRIST

[19]For it pleased *the Father that* in Him all the fullness should dwell, [20]and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.

[21]And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled [22]in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight- [23]if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.

## SACRIFICIAL SERVICE FOR CHRIST

[24]I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church, [25]of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God, [26]the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. [27]To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which[a] is Christ in you, the hope of glory. [28]Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. [29]To this *end* I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.

## SOUL NOTE

**Let's Pray** *(1:9-12)* Believers can pray for spiritual growth for themselves and for others. Paul's prayer for the Colossian believers is a model of such a prayer. We can pray for wisdom and spiritual understanding in order to know God's will. And we can pray that we will live for God, being fruitful in His service. Then we can give thanks to God for making us "saints in the light." When we pray this way, we are praying for spiritual maturity. **Topic: Spiritual Growth**

## NOT PHILOSOPHY BUT CHRIST

**2** For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in
Laodicea, and *for* as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, [2]that their
hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and *attaining* to all
riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery
of God, both of the Father and[a] of Christ, [3]in whom are hidden all the
treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

[4]Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words.
[5]For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to
see your *good* order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.

[6]As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him,
[7]rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been
taught, abounding in it[a] with thanksgiving.

[8]Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit,
according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the
world, and not according to Christ. [9]For in Him dwells all the fullness of the
Godhead bodily; [10]and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all
principality and power.

## NOT LEGALISM BUT CHRIST

[11]In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without
hands, by putting off the body of the sins[a] of the flesh, by the circumcision of
Christ, [12]buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with *Him*
through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. [13]And
you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He
has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses,
[14]having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us,
which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it
to the cross. [15]Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public
spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.

[16]So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a

new moon or sabbaths, [17]which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ. [18]Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in *false* humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not[a] seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, [19]and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase *that is* from God.

[20]Therefore,[a] if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as *though* living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations- [21]"Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle," [22]which all concern things which perish with the using-according to the commandments and doctrines of men? [23]These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, *false* humility, and neglect of the body, *but are* of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Many Opinions, One Lord** *(2:16)* Christ has set His people free from legalistic rules concerning things like food, drink, and worship style. Believers should not judge others by concluding that certain preferences exclude them from being Christians. Believers hold many different opinions about living out one's faith, but we must not criticize or condemn fellow Christians whose lifestyle choices differ from ours. As long as other believers are not violating Scripture-committing outright sin or teaching heresy-we need to accept them into the fellowship as members of God's family. We have one Savior and Lord. **Topic: Legalism**

## NOT CARNALITY BUT CHRIST

**3** If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above,
where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. [2]Set your mind on things
above, not on things on the earth. [3]For you died, and your life is hidden with
Christ in God. [4]When Christ *who is* our life appears, then you also will
appear with Him in glory.

> Set your mind on things above,
> not on things on the earth.
> For you died, and your life is
> hidden with Christ in God.
> COLOSSIANS 3:2, 3

[5]Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication,
uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.
[6]Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of
disobedience, [7]in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them.

[8]But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice,
blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. [9]Do not lie to one another,
since you have put off the old man with his deeds, [10]and have put on the new
*man* who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who
created him, [11]where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor
uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave *nor* free, but Christ *is* all and in all.

## CHARACTER OF THE NEW MAN

[12]Therefore, as *the* elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies,
kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; [13]bearing with one another, and
forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as
Christ forgave you, so you also *must do.* [14]But above all these things put on
love, which is the bond of perfection. [15]And let the peace of God rule in your
hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. [16]Let the
word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing
one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in

your hearts to the Lord. [17]And *whatever* you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

**THE CHRISTIAN HOME**

[18]Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

[19]Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them.

[20]Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord.

[21]Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.

[22]Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. [23]And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, [24]knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for[a] you serve the Lord Christ. [25]But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Mindset** *(3:2)* As believers we should set our minds (our focus and priorities) “on things above, not on things on the earth.” This does not mean refusing to hold a job or care for one’s family; instead, it means that believers have a different attitude in all that they do. Because we love God and want to live for Him, we center our lives on Christ. When we set our minds on things above, we begin to see life from God’s perspective. So we work and serve to please Christ. **Topic: Attitudes**

**SOUL NOTE**

**Overcomers** *(3:5, 6)* Believing sets us free from legalism, but we still have to be careful to stay away from certain activities that are against God's will for us. These verses describe some of those sinful desires that believers should "put to death." Sexual sins, evil desires, and covetousness (a form of idolatry) should have no place in a believer's heart. It takes a conscious daily decision to say no to these sinful temptations and rely on the Holy Spirit's power to overcome them. **Topic: Addictions**

**SOUL NOTE**

**Making Melody** *(3:16)* God should always be the focus of our worship. Music can be a beautiful part of the worship service. Through "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs," believers sing their praises to the Lord. The early church did not have Bibles for each worshiper, so they often would teach God's Word through music. Today we have many styles of music. From old hymns to contemporary songs to praise choruses, music that is grounded in the truth of God's Word honors Him. **Topic: Praise and Worship**

**SOUL NOTE**

**In His Name** *(3:17)* This verse summarizes the Christian life. Everything believers say and do should be "in the name of the Lord Jesus." In other words, their words and actions should represent Jesus Christ. So how do our Christian lives reflect this standard? Do we greet each new day in the name of the Lord Jesus? Do we go about our daily activities in the name of the Lord Jesus? Do we talk with our family and friends in the name of the Lord Jesus? Do we handle our finances in the name of the Lord Jesus? **Topic: Spiritual Disciplines**

**KEY PASSAGE**

# THE POWER OF LOVE

## (3:18, 19)

**Marital Problems** Marriages have problems for various reasons. An attitude of love and service, each person toward the other, can go a long way toward solving many of the irritations and difficulties that can arise. Wives are told to submit to their husbands, willingly allowing their husbands the position of leadership over the family. Husbands, in turn, are told to love their wives sacrificially, as Christ loved the church.

A wise and Christ-honoring wife seeks her husband's best-serving, helping, comforting, and supporting him as he assumes the God-given role of head of the household. When a wife treats her husband that way, providing a haven at home, she has done him great good. A wise and Christ-honoring husband seeks his wife's best as a godly and

loving leader-serving, helping, comforting, and supporting her as she carries out her role in the home (and perhaps in a workplace as well). Most marital problems find healing in mutual love, submission, and respect.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about marital problems Marital Problems And Problem-solving. See also the personality profile of Rebekah And Isaac: For Worse.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Helpful, Not Harmful** *(3:21)* Fathers are told not to discourage their children. Although children are commanded to obey their parents, this does not give parents permission to be cruel or unreasonable in their treatment of their children. Parents who nag, belittle, or deride their children destroy their self-esteem and discourage them. The purpose of parental discipline is to train children. Consistent discipline, administered with love, will help children to grow into responsible adults. **Topic: Fatherhood**

**MARITAL PROBLEMS AND PROBLEM-SOLVING**

TIM CLINTON

(Colossians 3:18, 19)

**A**ll marriages go through times when love grows cold or lacks the closeness we desire. And, when our marriages get into trouble, we hurt. Many times we can't even pinpoint what went wrong.

If people are willing to step back and review their marital story, they will usually find a pattern. If left unchecked, that pattern can lead them to heartbreak and, maybe, to divorce.

There is hope for the troubled marriage, however. Since the pattern is often predictable, the courageous can work to stop the harmful patterns and save their marriages. But more than just keeping their marriage afloat, they can work to reverse the process and breathe new life into their marriages.

## THE PROCESS AND CYCLE OF DISAFFECTION

How does disaffection start? It actually begins with everyday life-with pressures people face daily. Following are some examples.

*Sin/Selfishness*

Sin is part of our nature. As Christians, we seek to be victorious, but we will often fail. Somewhere in the marital story, one or both partners may begin to take advantage of the other. They hurt each other. As Paul wrote, "For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do" (Rom. 7:15). Being honest, seeking forgiveness, and staying deeply invested in one's spouse is the only remedy.

*Stress*

Some marriages have been battered by stresses of life such as financial pressures, loss, health problems, or demanding work schedules. Spouses must deal with stress by considering the *demands* in life and their ability to *cope* with those demands. If the demands exceed their ability to cope, the formula spells trouble. Spouses need

to take an inventory of what stresses have been tearing at their relationship since they married.

*Satanic Assault*

Since Adam and Eve, Satan has had the poison arrows of hell aimed at the intimate bond of marriage. He is the great confuser and the ultimate liar. He magnifies people's weaknesses and fears, using them as wedges in their marriages. Peter described Satan as "a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5:8). And he's out to take a big bite out of people's marriages.

*Unrealistic Expectations*

The gap between unrealized expectations and reality is filled with disappointment. If people's expectations for marriage are unrealistic, they are setting themselves up for a fall. A few common unrealistic expectations include:

- "Marriage will complete me." Some who grew up in unloving homes or some other painful environment, may expect marriage to reverse all the negatives they're carrying into it.
- "My spouse won't hurt me." As the first expectation sees marriage as the healing agent, this one sees marriage as the ultimate safe haven. The first experience of hurt, then, is devastating.
- "Life will be easy now." This is the "happily- ever-after" expectation of fairy tales. Every unhappy moment in a marriage then brings disappointment and possibly fear.
- "Love will keep us together." Every time spouses hurt one another, intentionally or unintentionally, love is perceived as increasingly less effective until, in the end, they can say that their relationship just wasn't meant to be.

These unrealistic expectations must be fought with realistic biblical ones. People need to understand that no one is perfect, no one person

will ever fulfill all their needs. Only God can do that. No marriage is free from discord, and no spouse is completely unselfish.

Marriage brings together two people who have many human frailties, and puts them in such close proximity that every detail and flaw is exposed. Hopefully, in Christ, these are strengthened into godly traits. But, it takes a lot of humility, grace, and deep forgiveness. In other words, it is a lot of work.

*Childhood Scripts*

Many counselors believe that a majority of what drives us as adults happened to us in our early years. These "scripts" written for us long ago are faithfully followed and reinforced as we hold tightly to them. For instance, some whose parents abandoned them may live as if they expect those they love to abandon them. Such scripts distort reality and drive people to act and react in what could be very destructive ways. These scripts also impact how people give and receive love. Unresolved physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, parental divorce, abandonment, gross failure, or emotional loss need to be dealt with before the Father so they don't infect one's marriage.

*Time*

Relationships and intimacy takes time. Time to understand, enjoy, and respond to one another-time to satisfy the other's needs and have one's own needs satisfied. But with life being lived on the run as it is today, there is little time-unless couples *make* the time. In order to stay close, couples need to regularly schedule time just to be together.

## A REASONABLE RESPONSE TO AN UNREASONABLE SITUATION

A natural response to pain in marriage is to create space between ourselves and our partners. Drifting-with a subtle, even unintentional severing of relational strands-takes place. The healing path begins by

seeing and reframing our marital story and then responding (not reacting) to each other as Christ would.

Remember, God gave us our spouses so that He could work through us to make him or her more like Christ.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of marital problems include:

- Genesis 2:24
- Proverbs 5:15-23; 12:4
- Ecclesiastes 9:9
- Matthew 19:4-6
- 1 Corinthians 7:1-5; 13:1-13
- Ephesians 5:22-33
- Hebrews 13:4
- James 4:1-10
- 1 Peter 3:1-9

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on marital problems at Colossians 3:18, 19 . See also the personality profile of Rebekah And Isaac: For Worse.

**4** Masters, give your bondservants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.

## CHRISTIAN GRACES

[2]Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; [3]meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, [4]that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.

[5]Walk in wisdom toward those *who are* outside, redeeming the time. [6]*Let* your speech always *be* with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.

## FINAL GREETINGS

[7]Tychicus, a beloved brother, faithful minister, and fellow servant in the Lord, will tell you all the news about me. [8]I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that he[a] may know your circumstances and comfort your hearts, [9]with Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is *one* of you. They will make known to you all things which *are happening* here.

[10]Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, with Mark the cousin of Barnabas (about whom you received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him), [11]and Jesus who is called Justus. These *are my* only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are of the circumcision; they have proved to be a comfort to me.

[12]Epaphras, who is *one* of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete[a] in all the will of God. [13]For I bear him witness that he has a great zeal[a] for you, and those who are in Laodicea, and those in Hierapolis. [14]Luke the beloved physician and Demas greet you. [15]Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea, and Nymphas and the church that *is* in his[a] house.

## CLOSING EXHORTATIONS AND BLESSING

[16]Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the epistle from

Laodicea. [17]And say to Archippus, “Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it.”

[18]This salutation by my own hand-Paul. Remember my chains. Grace *be* with you. Amen.

# 1 Thessalonians



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# 1 Thessalonians

Every parent knows the agony and the ecstasy of child rearing. As one smart remark puts it, successful parenting is simply a matter of knowing which end of the child to pat, and how hard.

The same dynamic is true in the realm of the soul. We are all spiritual offspring who need to grow up in the faith. We also have the responsibility of parenting those who are newborns in the faith. Given that truth and that obligation, it's hard to think of a more helpful resource than 1 Thessalonians.

During his second missionary journey (A.D. 51), the apostle Paul became anxious for news about the young congregation begun months earlier in Thessalonica. He sent Timothy to investigate, and was greatly encouraged by what he heard. The Thessalonians, only recently converted to Christianity, were faithfully living out the gospel! Like a proud parent, Paul took pen in hand and affirmed their progress in the faith, encouraging them to continue. He also expressed tender affection for this young, excited congregation. Not only had he given them the gospel, but he would have gladly given them his life (2:8).

First Thessalonians provides detailed instruction about sexual purity (ch. 4) and the return of the Lord (ch. 5). But at the most basic level it is a highly practical reminder of our need to grow on to maturity, and of our responsibility to help newer believers in the all-important task of soul care.

Let Paul parent you a little in the pages that follow. Then be willing to share what you learn!

**SOUL CONCERN IN**

## 1 THESSALONIANS

SEXUAL SIN (4:5)

## GREETING

**1** Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy,

To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.[a]

## THEIR GOOD EXAMPLE

[2]We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, [3]remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father, [4]knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God. [5]For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake.

[6]And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, [7]so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe. [8]For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything. [9]For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, [10]and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, *even* Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Life Changing** *(1:8, 9)* The Thessalonian church was only a few months old but was already having an impact! These young believers

were being tested by severe suffering (1:6), but their solid faith was being talked about “in every place.” That’s what the good news of Jesus Christ does-it makes astounding changes in people’s lives that could not happen any other way. For some, the change is more noticeable than for others. But whenever Christ enters a life, He changes things. We need to let Christ work in our lives so that we can make an impact on our world. **Topic: Change/Maturity**

## PAUL'S CONDUCT

**2** For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in
vain. [2]But even[a] after we had suffered before and were spitefully treated at
Philippi, as you know, we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of
God in much conflict. [3]For our exhortation *did* not *come* from error or
uncleanness, nor *was it* in deceit.

[4]But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel,
even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts. [5]For
neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak for
covetousness-God *is* witness. [6]Nor did we seek glory from men, either from
you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ.
[7]But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing *mother* cherishes her own
children. [8]So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart
to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had
become dear to us. [9]For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for
laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we
preached to you the gospel of God.

[10]You *are* witnesses, and God *also*, how devoutly and justly and
blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe; [11]as you know
how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged[a] every one of you, as a father
*does* his own children, [12]that you would walk worthy of God who calls you
into His own kingdom and glory.

## THEIR CONVERSION

[13]For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you
received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed *it* not *as*
the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively
works in you who believe. [14]For you, brethren, became imitators of the
churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus. For you also suffered the
same things from your own countrymen, just as they *did* from the Judeans,
[15]who killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted
us; and they do not please God and are contrary to all men, [16]forbidding us to

speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved, so as always to fill up *the measure of* their sins; but wrath has come upon them to the uttermost.

**LONGING TO SEE THEM**

[17]But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavored more eagerly to see your face with great desire. [18]Therefore we wanted to come to you-even I, Paul, time and again-but Satan hindered us. [19]For what *is* our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? *Is it* not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? [20]For you are our glory and joy.

## CONCERN FOR THEIR FAITH

**3** Therefore, when we could no longer endure it, we thought it good to be
left in Athens alone, [2]and sent Timothy, our brother and minister of God,
and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you and encourage
you concerning your faith, [3]that no one should be shaken by these afflictions;
for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this. [4]For, in fact, we told
you before when we were with you that we would suffer tribulation, just as it
happened, and you know. [5]For this reason, when I could no longer endure it, I
sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter had tempted you,
and our labor might be in vain.

## ENCOURAGED BY TIMOTHY

[6]But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and brought us good
news of your faith and love, and that you always have good remembrance of
us, greatly desiring to see us, as we also *to see* you-[7]therefore, brethren, in all
our affliction and distress we were comforted concerning you by your faith.
[8]For now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord.

[9]For what thanks can we render to God for you, for all the joy with which
we rejoice for your sake before our God, [10]night and day praying exceedingly
that we may see your face and perfect what is lacking in your faith?

## PRAYER FOR THE CHURCH

[11]Now may our God and Father Himself, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct
our way to you. [12]And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love
to one another and to all, just as we *do* to you, [13]so that He may establish
your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of
our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.

## PLEA FOR PURITY

## SOUL NOTE

**Encouraging Words** *(3:2)* Paul was so concerned for this young congregation that he sent Timothy to check out the situation, and to establish and encourage the believers in the faith. The church was being persecuted, and Paul wanted to make sure that they would hold on to the truth. When Christians are facing difficulties because of their faith, other believers should hold them up in prayer, offering words of compassion and encouragement as they seek to follow God. Whether it is a child with an unsympathetic teacher or a church in a persecuting country, we can pray for them and offer encouraging words. **Topic: Compassion**

## PLEA FOR PURITY

**4** Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God; [2]for you know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus.

[3]For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; [4]that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, [5]not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God; [6]that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord *is* the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified. [7]For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness. [8]Therefore he who rejects *this* does not reject man, but God, who has also given[a] us His Holy Spirit.

## A BROTHERLY AND ORDERLY LIFE

[9]But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; [10]and indeed you do so toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, that you increase more and more; [11]that you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, [12]that you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and *that* you may lack nothing.

## THE COMFORT OF CHRIST'S COMING

[13]But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. [14]For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.[a]

[15]For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive *and* remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. [16]For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in

Christ will rise first. [17]Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. [18]Therefore comfort one another with these words.

**KEY PASSAGE**

# For Our Own Good

# (4:3-7)

The Bible is very clear about sexual sin. God created sex as a beautiful expression of love in marriage. Satan took that beauty and distorted it. Sexual sin encompasses a wide range of activities forbidden by God. No matter what society allows, believers must look to God for instruction in this serious matter. Christians need to avoid activities or thoughts that warp what God intended for building oneness in marriage. The Bible's statements concerning sexual sins are plentiful and plain:

- *Adultery* (Ex. 20:14; Lev. 18:20; Prov. 6:32; Matt. 5:27, 28)
- *Homosexuality* (Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Rom. 1:26, 27; 1 Cor. 6:9; 1 Tim. 1:10)
- *Incest* (Lev. 18:6-18; 20:11, 12, 17; Deut. 27:20, 22, 23)
- *Bestiality* (Ex. 22:19; Lev. 18:23; 20:15, 16; Deut. 27:21)
- *Lust* (Matt. 5:28; Rom. 13:13; 1 Thess. 4:5; James 1:14, 15; 1 Pet. 4:3)

Believers must have no part in sexual sin. God knows its power to destroy people. His commands are for our good.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about sexual sin Sexual Sin And Personal Holiness. See also the personality profile of David And Bathsheba-costly Cover-up.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Vessels of Honor** *(4:4)* The words "each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor" refer to believers having sexual self-control. The standards of the Roman Empire were not much different from a lot of the world today: Sex was a form of entertainment; sexual activity between the unmarried was considered normal; even homosexuality was often accepted. But the Bible teaches sexual integrity. Sex is meant only for a husband and wife in the loving bonds of marriage. As believers we should uphold the beauty of sexual integrity, starting in our own lives. **Topic: Sexual Integrity**

**SEXUAL SIN AND PERSONAL HOLINESS**

MARNIE C. FERREE AND MARK R. LAASER

(1 Thessalonians 4:5)

**A** trip to the grocery store on any given day will reveal the blatant sexual messages that infiltrate modern culture. The checkout line is a tunnel of sexual stimuli by way of magazine images and headlines. In every corner of the everyday experience, unholy sexual messages abound.

Sexual sin is not a new problem. Long before the "free love" climate of the modern world, the New Testament recorded incest, adultery, homosexuality, lust, and perversions of every kind throughout the cities of the Roman Empire where Paul established churches. God calls Christians to a vision of healthy sexuality that is experienced only in the sanctity of the marriage union.

**FORMS OF SEXUAL SIN**

The forms of sexual sin and perversion are as varied as the depraved human mind can fathom. The Bible talks about "lust," which is a generic term encompassing many variations of the desire to gratify sexual needs in purely physical ways outside the spiritual and emotional commitment of marriage.

The sin of adultery is one example. King David's sin with Bathsheba illustrates the incredible damage adultery causes to the people involved, as well as to their marriages and their families (2 Sam. 11, 12). Homosexuality is another example. While today it is often deemed unacceptable to view same-sex encounters as sinful or perverted, the Bible's position is clear: Homosexual behavior is sin (1 Cor. 6:9). Other common sexual perversions in society include exhibitionism, voyeurism, cross-dressing, or some kind of sexual fetish. Sexual abuse, especially of children, is another perversion that is profoundly damaging. Almost always, professional help is required when someone is dealing with the web of sexual abuse or some similarly serious perversion.

However, the problem Christian helpers are most likely to encounter is pornography. Many leading Christian counselors and clergy consider pornography to be the number one social problem today. The Internet has conveniently introduced an incredible array of perverted, yet compelling pornography. More sexually oriented sites are launched on the Internet than any other kind.

## UNDERLYING CAUSES OF SEXUAL SIN

Most sexually sinful or perverted behavior is not coincidental or impulsive. Frequently, it is a symptom of deeper issues. One of the underlying issues is loneliness-a disconnection of intimate relationships. Perhaps a marital relationship has gone stale, or the partners never learned to communicate in the first place. Or maybe a single individual feels isolated and unimportant. Some inappropriate behavior is the result of trauma, especially childhood abuse or abandonment.

Another underlying cause behind sexual sin may be the seduction of the culture. Our sexually saturated society gives the message that everyone is having promiscuous sex.

## SOLUTIONS TO SEXUAL SIN

How can one best help someone who is struggling in this area? A foundational principle is to approach the sexual sinner with grace rather than with judgment. There is no difference in God's sight: Everyone is sinful (Rom. 3:22, 23). Sexual sin and perversion must be addressed in the spiritual arena. The sinner must first be willing to admit and confess the sin. The model of David's haunting confession of his sin, written in Psalm 51, can be helpful. Repentance is a crucial spiritual component of healing. The word "repent" means to turn away from the behavior, as illustrated in Jesus' command to the adulterous woman to "go and sin no more" (John 8:11).

Following confession, a person should accept God's forgiveness.

Through forgiveness, people are able to enjoy a new sexual start. God has cleansed them and made them "white as snow" (Is. 1:18). Many people embrace the idea of "spiritual virginity," which simply means a rededication to sexual purity.

In the relational realm, healing may need to take place in the context of community-such as Christian counseling and/or Christian mentoring. Other believers who are connected to and supportive of a person can help him or her through the healing process. By being partners in accountability, they can help the person through times of temptation, so that he or she is less likely to return to the same sin. However, if a person is unable to maintain boundaries and repeatedly commits sexual sin, an addiction may be present, which will require professional help.

In a practical sense, the person may need to avoid certain people, places, and activities in order to maintain boundaries against sexual sin. The injunction to "keep your heart" is a good guide (Prov. 4:23). Christians are promised a way of escape from temptation, which may involve practical tools such as learning to communicate their needs in an appropriate manner and discovering how to develop greater self-control (1 Cor. 10:13).

Paul calls believers to "put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind" (Eph. 4:22, 23). This renewal is built on a new vision that abandons the urge to indulge in sexual sin or perversion. "Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16).

When people have a vision of commitment to sexual purity and when they have others to whom they can be accountable, they will be better able to make healthy sexual choices.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of sexual sin include:

- Proverbs 5:1-23; 6:20-7:27
- John 8:1-11
- Romans 6:12
- 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; 6:15-20
- 1 Thessalonians 4:1-7

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on sexual sin at 1 Thessalonians 4:3-7. See also the personality profile of David And Bathsheba-costly Cover-up.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Reunion** *(4:13, 14)* The Thessalonian believers wondered what was happening to their fellow believers who had died. They had been taught that Christ would come again, but they wondered if those who had died would miss out. Paul comforted the church, answering their question by explaining that believers do not need to "sorrow as others who have no hope." Believers have the ultimate assurance. e believe that Jesus died, rose again, ascended, and is coming again; and we also believe that He will bring with Him those who have died. One day, all believers will be reunited in the grandest reunion ever seen!
**Topic: Grief/Loss**

**KEY PASSAGE**

# FOREVER AND EVER

## (4:13-18)

Eternal life with God is an absolute certainty for believers. These words should be taken literally-Christ will return, and "the dead in Christ will rise" from their graves. Believers who are alive at that time will be drawn up with them into heaven and "thus we shall always be with the Lord."

There is much debate about the timing or order of various events surrounding the Second Coming, but several truths are undeniable:

- Eternal life begins the moment a person accepts Christ as Savior. If the believer must experience death before Christ returns, that is merely the way to heaven.
- Believers who have died will experience a bodily resurrection, living believers will be changed, and all will receive new, glorified bodies that will never get sick or die.
- Christ will return to defeat evil and death forever.
- Believers will live forever in heaven with Christ.

As Paul noted to the Thessalonians, we should "comfort one another with these words."

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about eternal life Eternal Life In Heaven. See also the personality profile of the apostle John John's Glimpses Of Heaven.

## THE DAY OF THE LORD

**5** But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that
I should write to you. [2]For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of
the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. [3]For when they say, “Peace and
safety!” then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a
pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. [4]But you, brethren, are not in
darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. [5]You are all sons of
light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. [6]Therefore
let us not sleep, as others *do,* but let us watch and be sober. [7]For those who
sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. [8]But let us
who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and
*as* a helmet the hope of salvation. [9]For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to
obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, [10]who died for us, that
whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.

> Rejoice always, pray without
> ceasing, in everything give thanks;
> for this is the will of God in
> Christ Jesus for you.
> 1 THESSALONIANS 5:16-18

[11]Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are
doing.

## VARIOUS EXHORTATIONS

[12]And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you,
and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, [13]and to esteem them very
highly in love for their work’s sake. Be at peace among yourselves.

[14]Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the
fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all. [15]See that no one renders
evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves
and for all.

Now may the God of peace
Himself sanctify you completely;
and may your whole spirit, soul, and
body be preserved blameless at the
coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.
1 THESSALONIANS 5:23

16 Rejoice always, 17 pray without ceasing, 18 in everything give thanks; for
this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

19 Do not quench the Spirit. 20 Do not despise prophecies. 21 Test all things;
hold fast what is good. 22 Abstain from every form of evil.

**BLESSING AND ADMONITION**

23 Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may
your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our
Lord Jesus Christ. 24 He who calls you *is* faithful, who also will do *it.*

25 Brethren, pray for us.

26 Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss.

27 I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read to all the holy[a] brethren.

28 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you. Amen.

# 2 Thessalonians



## Chapter in 2 Thessalonians

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# 2 Thessalonians

As the twentieth century came to a close, millennial fever increased the hopes of many for the second coming of Christ. It also reminded us that the many New Testament promises of the Lord's return have always been a source of confusion among believers. We know this because of the apostle Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians.

Certain false teachers had infiltrated the fledgling congregation, playing on people's hopes and fears, and creating a climate of wild speculation. Complicating matters was the increasing persecution of believers. Paul wrote to provide comfort and clarity in a disturbing time. He assured the Thessalonians that, despite the pronouncements of some, Christ had not yet returned. Certain identifiable events would precede the yet future "day of the Lord" (2:1-12). In short, Paul urged his younger brothers and sisters in the faith to avoid fanatical and anxious speculation about the events related to Christ's return. For the unbeliever, the future holds terrible judgment. But Christians do not have to fear the end because God has all things under His perfect control.

The Bible never encourages the people of God to sit around aimlessly waiting for the end of the world. On the contrary, the Scriptures urge us to be about our Master's business until He returns. The key to a successful Christian life and a healthy soul is to do what we have been called to do, and to leave our future (and the world's) in the good hands of our wise and mighty Father in heaven.

**SOUL CONCERN IN**

## 2 THESSALONIANS

WORK (3:10-15)

## GREETING

**1** Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy,

To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

## GOD'S FINAL JUDGMENT AND GLORY

3 We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other, 4 so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure, 5 *which is* manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer; 6 since *it is* a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, 7 and to *give* you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, 8 in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, 10 when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe,[a] because our testimony among you was believed.

11 Therefore we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of *this* calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of *His* goodness and the work of faith with power, 12 that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

## THE GREAT APOSTASY

**2** Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our
gathering together to Him, we ask you, [2]not to be soon shaken in mind or
troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the
day of Christ[a] had come. [3]Let no one deceive you by any means; for *that Day*
*will not come* unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin[a] is
revealed, the son of perdition, [4]who opposes and exalts himself above all that
is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God[a] in the temple of
God, showing himself that he is God.

[5]Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these
things? [6]And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in
his own time. [7]For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He[a]
who now restrains *will do so* until He[b] is taken out of the way. [8]And then the
lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of
His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. [9]The coming of the
*lawless one* is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and
lying wonders, [10]and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish,
because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.
[11]And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should
believe the lie, [12]that they all may be condemned who did not believe the
truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

## STAND FAST

[13]But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved
by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through
sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, [14]to which He called you
by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.
[15]Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were
taught, whether by word or our epistle.

[16]Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who
has loved us and given *us* everlasting consolation and good hope by grace,
[17]comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.

## SOUL NOTE

**Truth Grip** *(2:9-12)* One day a “lawless one” will arise and, empowered by Satan, will deceive many people. Those who “did not receive the love of the truth” and who “believe the lie” will be lost forever. Satan always seeks to deceive-but a ton of truth with an ounce of a lie is still a lie. Many false religions flirt at the edges of the truth and sound good. But any religion that teaches salvation by any other way than through Jesus Christ is a deception. We must hold tight to the truth we have been taught so as not to be deceived. **Topic: Cults**

**PRAY FOR US**

**3** Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run *swiftly* and
be glorified, just as *it is* with you, [2]and that we may be delivered from
unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith.

[3]But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard *you* from the
evil one. [4]And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, both that you
do and will do the things we command you.

[5]Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the
patience of Christ.

**WARNING AGAINST IDLENESS**

[6]But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that
you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to
the tradition which he[a] received from us. [7]For you yourselves know how you
ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you; [8]nor did we eat
anyone's bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day,
that we might not be a burden to any of you, [9]not because we do not have
authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us.

[10]For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone
will not work, neither shall he eat. [11]For we hear that there are some who
walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are
busybodies. [12]Now those who are such we command and exhort through our
Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread.

[13]But *as for* you, brethren, do not grow weary *in* doing good. [14]And if
anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not
keep company with him, that he may be ashamed. [15]Yet do not count *him* as
an enemy, but admonish *him* as a brother.

Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always in every way. The Lord be with you all.
2 THESSALONIANS 3:16

**BENEDICTION**

16 Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always in every way. The Lord *be* with you all.

17 The salutation of Paul with my own hand, which is a sign in every epistle; so I write.

18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Follow the Leader** *(3:3-5)* Believers are engaged in a spiritual battle. As part of God's army, we have God as our Commander and Satan as our avowed enemy. The battle rages in the spiritual realm and constantly affects the earthly realm, where believers have great victories but also face difficult trials, temptations, and persecutions. At times the difficulties become so intense that we feel weak and vulnerable. At those times, we need to remember Paul's advice: "The Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one." God's Word and work will never fail. When we feel weak, we must remember God's faithfulness. **Topic: Weakness**

**KEY PASSAGE**

# OFF TO WORK

# (3:10-12)

Some of the Thessalonian believers had stopped working. It seems they were relying on the generosity of their fellow believers, supposedly for the sake of being spiritual and waiting for the second coming of Christ-or maybe they were just being lazy. Whatever it was, Paul had harsh words for such an outlook.

Work is good for us. Upon placing Adam in the Garden of Eden, God gave him the work of caring for it. God provides work in order for people to provide for their families. To refuse to work when one has the ability and the opportunity is wrong, and the church should not support such people.

When we see our work as God-given, we have a whole new perspective. It is not a necessary evil that takes time away from "spiritual" things, but a gift from God through which we are to grow spiritually and minister to others. God needs people in all walks of life in order to reach those who have not heard the Good News of salvation.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about work The World Of Work. See also the personality profile of Aaron: Serving Together.

**THE WORLD OF WORK**

# TIM CLINTON AND GEORGE OHLSCHLAGER

## (2 Thessalonians 3:10-15)

"**W**hat do you do?" Many people have been asked that question thousands of times. The question is presaged by the question in

childhood, “What do you want to be when you grow up?”

We are socialized early on in life to the importance of work. And so it should be. Much more than just a means to a livelihood, work is a source of identity, a well of friendships and associations, and a way in which people derive meaning and satisfaction in life. When things aren’t going well on the job, it makes for some long days and discouraged people.

## GOD AND OUR WORK

Some Christians believe that work is also a form of worship, a sacred extension of the ongoing creative process by which God still functions. The Bible reveals that work, despite its being a product of the Fall, has been made a source of human dignity.

Because of disobedience to God, man was cursed to eke out an existence from the earth, struggling to live by the sweat of his brow until death (Gen. 3:17-19). Yet God has redeemed work, and looks upon people at work with dignity and protection, calling for justice and honesty in all employer- worker relations. God calls upon humankind to work honestly, heartily, happily, and as though we are working for the Lord (Ex. 23:12; Eccl. 5:19; Col. 3:23).

The church at Thessalonica had developed a serious problem. Some had become so convinced of Christ’s imminent return that they gave up working and began to wait for the Second Coming. This created some serious problems as the wait extended from days to weeks to months. Paul encouraged these believers to follow his example of hard work and commanded the church not to feed those who refused to work (2 Thess. 3:10-15). Honest work and understanding that one must work to provide for the necessities of living have been central values in the church for nearly two thousand years.

The fact that there are so many dissatisfied workers today may also

mean that the value of work has been distorted. Think of how many people you know who are unhappy in their work, unfulfilled and bored to tears by the 9 to 5 routine. Maybe work has lost the moral and biblical anchors that balance its importance in the larger scheme of things. Maybe worker dissatisfaction simply means that too many people have chosen their life's work poorly, for the wrong reasons, or with the wrong fit of interests, skills, personality, and gifts. Whatever the reason, work dissatisfaction, job stress, and interpersonal conflict in work organizations are a big reason why many people and work organizations seek professional help, including counseling.

Our work life must be maintained as a proper priority in relation to God, marriage and family life, and commitments to church and community. When this balance is not held, work can easily become an idol, a false god that serves as a terrible taskmaster. "Workaholism" has become an all-consuming obsession for too many modern workers, a sleep-depriving, health-robbing, greed-festering monster that may be the most rewarded-and least challenged-addiction in America.

Like all addicts, workaholics must be able to admit their obsessive drivenness and confess its many costs. They must be able to build and maintain times of rest, play, family, and leisure. Work addicts need to realize that the deeper life with Christ comes only after one is able to be still and know God.

## FINDING THE BEST WORK

Career counselors and experts say that the accelerating pace of technological change combined with the high mobility and trainability of the modern workforce will lead workers in the current generation to change jobs and/or careers nine times over the course of their lifetimes.

Career counseling generally seeks to facilitate four primary objectives in helping people find and fit into a good job or career:

- increasing self-awareness of values and work interests,
- becoming familiar with the world of work,
- teaching assessment and decision-making skills,
- teaching skills to enhance employability.

Work without a purpose, without a vision for how we are advancing the cause of God's kingdom, can easily become meaningless. Disciplined work is recognizing that excellence can be achieved by tackling tasks every day with wisdom, commitment, and earnest effort. Diligent workers are pursuing and achieving excellence-they have caught a vision of how their work fits into the larger purposes of God. These high-level workers seek to be directed by the Holy Spirit, and their effort and excellence reflect the fruits of this vision motivation.

The following values and goals are important when considering work and career issues:

1. Pursue your choice of life's work as a calling from God, believing that He will guide and prepare you to accomplish a good work in your life.

2. Increase understanding of your interests, personality, style, gifts, and talents, seeking to explore and test how these things fit into a variety of different jobs.

3. Increase your skill and usability of "universal" job skills-analytical thinking and evaluating skills, command of positive communicating, writing, and speaking skills, interpersonal relationship skills, and problem-solving skills.

4. Determine how to attain the skills and credentials you need for your particular work pursuits in the most time/cost effective way.

5. Be willing to engage in ongoing education for increased knowledge and skills enhancement in your field.

6. Whatever you do, do it with praise and thanksgiving, spread the credit around to your colleagues and coworkers, and give glory to God for its achievement.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of work include:

- Genesis 2:2, 15
- Exodus 20:8-11
- Proverbs 28:19
- 1 Timothy 5:8

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on work at 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12. See also the personality profile of Aaron: Serving Together.

# 1 Timothy



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# 1 Timothy

Are you a leader?

Be careful before answering that question. We typically reserve the term “leader” for politicians, CEOs, and others who do that kind of high-profile leading. But what about those who are called to provide guidance to a family or a social organization? And what about the daily responsibility of influencing neighbors and coworkers, or the high calling to set a positive example for one’s sports team or classmates? In a sense, we are *all* leaders, which makes the apostle Paul’s first letter to Timothy extremely relevant.

Paul’s letters to Timothy are two of the so-called “pastoral epistles.” They were written to help the apostle’s young protégé navigate the difficult waters of church leadership in Ephesus. Written from Macedonia around A.D. 62, 1 Timothy discusses a wide range of pertinent issues: what to do about false teachers (ch. 1 and 4), guidelines for public worship (ch. 2), character requirements for leaders (ch. 3), healthy relationships within the church (ch. 5) and proper motives for leading (ch. 6). Because Paul and Timothy had a long-term relationship and a history of ministering together (Acts 16:1-5), 1 Timothy is an intensely personal letter. We sense a fatherly concern in the apostle’s wise counsel.

Whether you call yourself a church leader or not, let the practical wisdom of 1 Timothy seep into your heart and soul. You’ll find that its truth will serve you well as you influence others. And while you’re reading, pray for a spiritual leader you know who could use the kind of encouragement found in the following six chapters.

**SOUL CONCERN IN**

**1 TIMOTHY**

MEN’S ISSUES (6:11)

## GREETING

**1** Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the commandment of God our Savior
and the Lord Jesus Christ, our hope,

2 To Timothy, a true son in the faith:

Grace, mercy, *and* peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.

## NO OTHER DOCTRINE

3 As I urged you when I went into Macedonia-remain in Ephesus that you
may charge some that they teach no other doctrine, 4 nor give heed to fables
and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification
which is in faith. 5 Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure
heart, *from* a good conscience, and *from* sincere faith, 6 from which some,
having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk, 7 desiring to be teachers of the
law, understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm.

8 But we know that the law *is* good if one uses it lawfully, 9 knowing this:
that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for *the* lawless and
insubordinate, for *the* ungodly and for sinners, for *the* unholy and profane, for
murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, 10 for
fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there
is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine, 11 according to the
glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust.

## GLORY TO GOD FOR HIS GRACE

12 And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He
counted me faithful, putting *me* into the ministry, 13 although I was formerly a
blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because
I did *it* ignorantly in unbelief. 14 And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly
abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. 15 This *is* a faithful
saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to
save sinners, of whom I am chief. 16 However, for this reason I obtained
mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern
to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life. 17 Now to the

King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise,[a] *be* honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

## FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT

[18]This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, [19]having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck, [20]of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.

### SOUL NOTE

**Legal Notes** *(1:8, 9)* Laws give people direction for living, but following laws can never save anyone. The law offers a standard of behavior, it shows how far people fall short of God's perfection, and it demonstrates how much we need His grace and forgiveness. But if people try to live right and keep laws in order to be good enough for God, they will slip into the trap of legalism. That will harm them, for they can never keep the law perfectly. Christ has set us free from the law so that we can obey Him through the power of the Holy Spirit.
**Topic: Legalism**

**PRAY FOR ALL MEN**

**2** Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, *and* giving of thanks be made for all men, [2]for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. [3]For this *is* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, [4]who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. [5]For *there is* one God and one Mediator between God and men, *the* Man Christ Jesus, [6]who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time, [7]for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle-I am speaking the truth in Christ[a]

**MEN AND WOMEN IN THE CHURCH**

[8]I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting; [9]in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, [10]but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works. [11]Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. [12]And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. [13]For Adam was formed first, then Eve. [14]And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. [15]Nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Power Packed***(2:8)* Imagine the power of prayers offered "without wrath and doubting"! Anger and doubt can make prayer difficult. Anger can be so divisive that Jesus warned people to make peace before coming to prayer (Matt. 5:23, 24). Doubt can make prayer less

powerful, because we cannot pray confidently if we are unsure whether God hears, cares, or will answer. Prayer offered in total dependence and trust toward God is packed with power. We should come to God without doubting His commitment to being there for us when we need Him. **Topic: Doubt**

## QUALIFICATIONS OF OVERSEERS

**3** This *is* a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop,[a] he
desires a good work. [2]A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of
one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to
teach; [3]not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money,[a] but gentle, not
quarrelsome, not covetous; [4]one who rules his own house well, having *his*
children in submission with all reverence [5](for if a man does not know how to
rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?); [6]not a
novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the *same* condemnation as
the devil. [7]Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are
outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

## QUALIFICATIONS OF DEACONS

[8]Likewise deacons *must be* reverent, not double-tongued, not given to
much wine, not greedy for money, [9]holding the mystery of the faith with a
pure conscience. [10]But let these also first be tested; then let them serve as
deacons, being *found* blameless. [11]Likewise, *their* wives *must be* reverent, not
slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things. [12]Let deacons be the husbands of
one wife, ruling *their* children and their own houses well. [13]For those who
have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great
boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

## THE GREAT MYSTERY

[14]These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly; [15]but
if I am delayed, *I write* so that you may know how you ought to conduct
yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar
and ground of the truth. [16]And without controversy great is the mystery of
godliness:

God[a] was manifested in the flesh,
Justified in the Spirit,
Seen by angels,
Preached among the Gentiles,
Believed on in the world,

Received up in glory.

## SOUL NOTE

**Being His** *(3:16)* This verse affirms both the humanity and divinity of Jesus Christ. He is human, having been "manifested in the flesh," and He is divine, having been "received up in glory." This is the great "mystery of godliness." We become godly not by trying to be good enough, but by depending on Jesus Christ. He lived a perfect human life, then He rose again to make it possible for us to one day be with Him. We can please God by accepting His Son, Jesus Christ. We live for Him by being His own. **Topic: Knowing Jesus**

## THE GREAT APOSTASY

**4** Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the
faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, [2]speaking
lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron,
[3]forbidding to marry, *and commanding* to abstain from foods which God
created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the
truth.[4] For every creature of God *is* good, and nothing is to be refused if it is
received with thanksgiving; [5]for it is sanctified by the word of God and
prayer.

## A GOOD SERVANT OF JESUS CHRIST

[6]If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of
Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which
you have carefully followed. [7]But reject profane and old wives' fables, and
exercise yourself toward godliness. [8]For bodily exercise profits a little, but
godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is
and of that which is to come. [9]This *is* a faithful saying and worthy of all
acceptance. [10]For to this *end* we both labor and suffer reproach,[a] because we
trust in the living God, who is *the* Savior of all men, especially of those who
believe. [11]These things command and teach.

## TAKE HEED TO YOUR MINISTRY

[12]Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in
word, in conduct, in love, in spirit,[a] in faith, in purity. [13]Till I come, give
attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.[14] Do not neglect the gift that
is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the
hands of the eldership.[15] Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to
them, that your progress may be evident to all. [16]Take heed to yourself and to
the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself
and those who hear you.

## SOUL NOTE

**Satan's Lies** *(4:1-3)* False teachers abound today as they did in Paul's day. They may teach that god is in nature, or that god is found within oneself. Others may teach that God wants people to be rich or that He will not judge anyone. But any teaching that is contrary to God's Word is a lie. When people follow these teachings, they are "giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons." Believers have to be on guard against the subtleties of false teaching, and we need to check every teaching against the truth in God's Word. **Topic: Cults**

## KEY PASSAGE

# SENSIBLE ADOLESCENCE

# (4:7)

Adolescence is a time of great change. Young people transform from children into adults, gaining independence from their parents and moving toward life on their own. During this time, some young people rebel against authority, committing sins with consequences that last a lifetime. But it need not be that way.

Paul borrowed athletic words to describe spiritual growth. Whether new to the faith or raised in it from childhood, young people can "exercise" themselves toward godliness. To live a godly life during turbulent and uncertain adolescent years takes self-control, commitment, and continual work. As in working out for a sport, the Christian life requires daily work. Young people can develop spiritually through this time by entrusting their temptations, desires, frustrations, fears, and future to God. He cares about every part of their lives. Parents can help by praying for their children and maintaining open communication. The time of change can be exciting and rewarding for both the parents and the children who keep God front and center.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about adolescent development Helping Teens Grow With God. See also the personality profile of Daniel Daniel Served God First.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Stay on Track** *(4:7)* Anyone who has begun a new exercise regimen realizes the self-control needed, as well as the constant temptation to give up. It takes great discipline to keep exercising in order to see results. The same is true for spiritual training. Believers need to "exercise" themselves "toward godliness." It doesn't happen overnight; godliness is a process of discipline and self-control, with some days being easier than others. Every day brings temptation and difficulties, and believers must discipline themselves in order to stay on track with God. How is your personal spiritual exercise program? Are you seeing any results? **Topic: Spiritual Disciplines**

## SOUL NOTE

**Trust Talk** *(4:10)* Believers have a great future promised by God. They train themselves toward godliness not *in order* to be saved but because they *are* saved and want to be ready for eternity with Christ. They are willing to work hard, deny themselves certain activities, and face reproach from an unbelieving world because they "trust in the living God." Their trust is in the One who died and rose again-not in a philosophy, a set of rules, personal achievement, or a standard of behavior. That trust in the living God is their anchor, their hope, their certain future. When we place our trust in God, we have nothing to fear. **Topic: Trust**

## PERSONALITY PROFILE

# TIMOTHY: LOTS OF CHANGES

## (1 Timothy 4:12-16)

Timothy had experienced many changes throughout his young life. When he received this letter from Paul, he was already the pastor of the large church that Paul had planted in Ephesus. Yet Timothy was still a young man, for Paul encouraged him by writing, "Let no one

despise your youth." So it seems Timothy had come a long way in a short time.

Timothy had been born of a Jewish mother and a Greek father, and had received religious training through his mother and grandmother. When the great apostle Paul made his way to Lystra, he met this young man who appeared to have great potential. Because Timothy "was well spoken of by the brethren" (Acts 16:2), Paul invited him to join his second missionary journey.

Timothy seems to have been somewhat timid, for Paul often encouraged him in these letters. With a man like Paul behind him, Timothy could hardly help but grow into a strong leader. Paul entrusted him with several important missions, some of which consisted of traveling in Paul's place when he was imprisoned or detained for some reason.

Life is filled with change. We grow; we develop; we mature. Some people go through many changes before becoming Christians. Others are fortunate enough to come to the Lord at a young age and experience their changes with Him. Hopefully, the changes we experience help us grow and mature as Timothy did. When we are open to God's will, we never know what surprises He may have for us.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about life transitions Seasons Of Life. See also the key passage note at Ecclesiastes 3:1-11.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Unwrapped Gifts** *(4:14, 15)* Paul encouraged Timothy to "not

neglect the gift" that God had given him. God gives spiritual gifts to all believers. These gifts include teaching, hospitality, giving, or showing mercy (others are listed in Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 12; Eph. 4). Each person is responsible for discovering and using their own gifts for God's kingdom. The variety of gifts is needed in order for the church to function at its best. Not everyone has every gift, so the church needs all believers to be using responsibly the gifts God has chosen to give them. The church is in operating mode when all of its gifts are!
**Topic: Responsibility**

## TREATMENT OF CHURCH MEMBERS

**5** Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort *him* as a father, younger men as
brothers, [2]older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, with all
purity.

## HONOR TRUE WIDOWS

[3]Honor widows who are really widows. [4]But if any widow has children or
grandchildren, let them first learn to show piety at home and to repay their
parents; for this is good and[a] acceptable before God. [5]Now she who is really
a widow, and left alone, trusts in God and continues in supplications and
prayers night and day. [6]But she who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives.
[7]And these things command, that they may be blameless. [8]But if anyone does
not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has
denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

[9]Do not let a widow under sixty years old be taken into the number, *and
not unless* she has been the wife of one man, [10]well reported for good works:
if she has brought up children, if she has lodged strangers, if she has washed
the saints' feet, if she has relieved the afflicted, if she has diligently followed
every good work.

[11]But refuse *the* younger widows; for when they have begun to grow
wanton against Christ, they desire to marry, [12]having condemnation because
they have cast off their first faith. [13]And besides they learn *to be* idle,
wandering about from house to house, and not only idle but also gossips and
busybodies, saying things which they ought not. [14]Therefore I desire that *the*
younger *widows* marry, bear children, manage the house, give no opportunity
to the adversary to speak reproachfully. [15]For some have already turned aside
after Satan. [16]If any believing man or[a] woman has widows, let them relieve
them, and do not let the church be burdened, that it may relieve those who are
really widows.

## HONOR THE ELDERS

[17]Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor,

especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. [18]For the Scripture says, “You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain,”[a] and, “The laborer *is* worthy of his wages.”[b] [19]Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses. [20]Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear.

[21]I charge *you* before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels that you observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing with partiality. [22]Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people’s sins; keep yourself pure.

[23]No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach’s sake and your frequent infirmities.

[24]Some men’s sins are clearly evident, preceding *them* to judgment, but those of some *men* follow later. [25]Likewise, the good works *of some* are clearly evident, and those that are otherwise cannot be hidden.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Taking Care of Business** *(5:8)* To neglect one’s basic responsibility of care and support of the family is the same as denying the faith. No one can claim love for and allegiance to God while neglecting to provide for their family. Paul called such an irresponsible person “worse than an unbeliever,” for even unbelievers understand family responsibility. God gives us our families and they are our first responsibility. We show our love for God through how we treat our family. We can thank God for the work He provides whereby we can take care of those who depend on us. **Topic: Work**

## SOUL NOTE

**Don’t Pass It On** *(5:13)* The context of this verse discusses the care of widows by the church. The truth taught, however, is that people with too much time on their hands often get into trouble. Without enough work to occupy their time, such people can become gossips and busybodies, visiting from house to house, “saying things which they ought not.” That describes gossip-saying things that shouldn’t be repeated. We should be careful about what we say, seeking to make sure that our words are truthful, loving, and edifying. **Topic: Gossip**

## HONOR MASTERS

**6** Let as many bondservants as are under the yoke count their own masters
worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and *His* doctrine may not be
blasphemed. 2And those who have believing masters, let them not despise
*them* because they are brethren, but rather serve *them* because those who are
benefited are believers and beloved. Teach and exhort these things.

## ERROR AND GREED

3If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words,
*even* the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords
with godliness, 4he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes
and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil
suspicions, 5useless wranglings[a] of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the
truth, who suppose that godliness is a *means of* gain. From such withdraw
yourself.[b]

6Now godliness with contentment is great gain. 7For we brought nothing
into *this* world, *and it is* certain[a] we can carry nothing out. 8And having food
and clothing, with these we shall be content. 9But those who desire to be rich
fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and harmful lusts
which drown men in destruction and perdition. 10For the love of money is a
root of all *kinds of* evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their
greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

> Now godliness with contentment
> is great gain.
> 1 TIMOTHY 6:6

## THE GOOD CONFESSION

11But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness,
godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. 12Fight the good fight of faith, lay
hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the
good confession in the presence of many witnesses. 13I urge you in the sight
of God who gives life to all things, and *before* Christ Jesus who witnessed the

good confession before Pontius Pilate, [14]that you keep *this* commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing, [15]which He will manifest in His own time, *He who is* the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, [16]who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom *be* honor and everlasting power. Amen.

**INSTRUCTIONS TO THE RICH**

[17]Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. [18]*Let them* do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, [19]storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

**GUARD THE FAITH**

[20]O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane *and* idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge-[21]by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith.

Grace *be* with you. Amen.

**KEY PASSAGE**

# ROOTED OUT

# (6:6-10)

The Bible doesn't say that money is the root of all evil. Everybody

needs money; no one can live without it. Money buys food and pays the bills. Financial donations help ministries support missionaries all over the world. Church offerings help pay the pastor. Money can do good things for God's kingdom.

The root of all evil is the *love* of money. People who love money simply "desire to be rich" more than anything else. Too often, as the Bible says, this leads them into "temptation and a snare," and into "many foolish and harmful lusts." Those who love money never have enough, and they do any number of stupid, illegal, or risky things in order to obtain more. They are never satisfied.

How do believers stay away from the love of money? "Godliness with contentment" is the answer. When we are content with what we have, we can give the extra back to Him.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about money Mastering Your Money. See also the personality profile of the rich young ruler Rich Man, Poor Man.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Man of God** *(6:11)* Paul described Timothy as a "man of God," certainly a fitting title for all men who seek to serve the Lord. In contrast to some who have "strayed from the faith" (6:10), God's men are to flee from the love of money, and to "pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness." This is not an exhaustive list of all of the characteristics of a godly man, but it certainly is a good start. Men who seek to live this way in all areas of their life-work, family, church, friendship-will find true fulfillment and success. **Topic: Men's Issues**

## BEING A REAL MAN

# ROD COOPER

## (1 Timothy 6:11)

**A** free man is an authentic man. An authentic man's view of himself and the world around him is consistent with reality, honest, and accurate. Therefore, an authentic man is a "real" man. He is the genuine thing!

The authentic man is connected to his feelings. He may not know what his emotions mean, but he experiences them consciously and honestly. Too many men have learned to ignore their emotions. Often a man's conscious thoughts are disconnected from his emotions. He cannot seem to get them together. On the other hand, an authentic man is immediately conscious of his feelings because he knows who he is. He understands that his feelings are part of being a man. When those emotions well up in him, he is not afraid of them. He is in touch with them.

The authentic man responds quickly to what he is feeling and to what is happening around him. He experiences those feelings of spontaneity, which allow him to respond freely. It would be easy to assume that an authentic man experiences emotions and then spontaneously does whatever he feels like doing. That is not the case. Instead, an authentic man identifies what is happening inside himself. He processes what he is feeling and evaluates it by getting his

feelings out and then acting on them in a responsible manner.

Jesus understood His emotions. When faced with the merchants and money changers in the temple, He reacted with appropriate anger (John 2:13-17). The Bible says that when faced with the death of Lazarus, "Jesus wept" (John 11:35). When He saw the multitudes who were like sheep without a shepherd, "He was moved with compassion for them" (Matt. 14:14).

## BECOMING AUTHENTIC

*Authentic Men Need to Cultivate Their Relationship with God*
It is only natural for people to look to other people to meet their deepest emotional needs. The problem is, they can't! Asking them to do so is like trying to draw water from a dry well. People are not equipped to fill our emotional cup-only God can do that! He knows us for what we really are and still loves us in spite of ourselves. By allowing us to participate in His purpose for our lives, He gives us a sense of significance that we cannot give ourselves. Men need to cultivate their relationship with God-drawing close to Him daily and depending on Him as they make decisions and handle the pressures of everyday life.

*Authentic Men Need to Cultivate Their Relationships with Men*
Sometimes it shocks men when I tell them they need more than God. That almost sounds sacrilegious. But it is not. We were created for relationship. And if we want to be authentic men, we must cultivate relationships with other men.

Time and time again, Jesus was transparent with His disciples. He ate with them, slept under the stars with them, prayed with them, cried with them, and even resolved their arguments. He revealed Himself clearly to them and told them, "I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you" (John 15:15).

So then, real men-authentic men-care about God and others.

## BECOMING A LEADER

Most men want to be leaders, but only a few ever succeed at leading. Too many men want to dictate without leading. They want to command without setting the example. Genuine leadership involves mentoring those around us-our wives, our children, our friends. We cannot simply *tell* them what to do; we must *show* them by the example of our own lives. Most of those we lead will not rise above the level of our leadership-they will simply reproduce what we are. That is why it is so important that we, as men and as leaders, become all that God intended us to be.

Real leaders reach out to others. They see a need and meet it. When someone is struggling, they are quick to lend a helping hand, an open heart, or a word of comfort and encouragement. They help people face their fears, conquer their doubts, and find their way. They are men who have experienced the challenges of life, and who have partaken deeply of the wells of spirituality.

Leaders are men who help others become leaders as well. They are disciplers of men, women, and children. They are men who have experienced the grace of God in their own lives and want to pass it on to others. The apostle Paul told Timothy: “You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:1, 2). Peter wrote to the believers, “Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 1:10, 11).

Males are born; men are made. God uses the difficulties of men’s lives to strengthen us so that we can better serve those who need our

help and leadership.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about men's issues include:

- Proverbs 1:5
- Matthew 5:14-16
- 1 Corinthians 4:1, 2; 13:11
- Galatians 6:1-6
- 1 Timothy 5:8
- 1 Peter 3:7
- 2 Peter 1:5-11
- 1 John 3:16-18

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on men's issues at Titus 2:2. See also the personality profile of Titus-choosing Godly Men.

# 2 Timothy



## Chapter in 2 Timothy

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## Verses in 2 Timothy Chapter 3

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## Verses in 2 Timothy Chapter 4

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10

11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20

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# 2 Timothy

The words of a dying person-especially a great person-will always grab our attention. Last words, as the old saying goes, are words that last.

When the apostle Paul wrote one last note to Timothy (2 Timothy), he was awaiting execution in a Roman prison (A.D. 67). Paul challenged his "son in the faith" to a life marked by faithful service-even in the face of suffering and persecution. Paul exhorted Timothy to handle the Word of God accurately (2:15) and to proclaim it boldly (3:15-4:2). To drive home his message, Paul used a variety of word pictures. He mentioned soldiers who must "endure hardship" and remain focused (2:3, 4), athletes who play by the rules (2:5), farmers who need great patience (2:6), workers who must be diligent (2:15), and vessels that are used by the Master only if clean (2:20, 21).

Thankfully, God has preserved this final bit of intimate correspondence. It reminds us that we must both understand and keep the faith. Do you have a Paul in your life to help you in this all-important process of soul care? We must also pass the faith on. Do you have a Timothy to pour your life into? This is God's preferred method (2:2) for making disciples. It's also the way to insure that when you get to the end of your life you'll be able to say with Paul, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (4:7).

**SOUL CONCERN IN**

## 2 TIMOTHY

SEXUAL INTEGRITY (2:22)

## GREETING

**1** Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ[a] by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus,

[2]To Timothy, a beloved son:

Grace, mercy, *and* peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

## TIMOTHY'S FAITH AND HERITAGE

[3]I thank God, whom I serve with a pure conscience, as *my* forefathers *did,* as without ceasing I remember you in my prayers night and day, [4]greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy, [5]when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also. [6]Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. [7]For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

## NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL

[8]Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, [9]who has saved us and called *us* with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, [10]but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, *who* has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, [11]to which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.[a] [12]For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.

## BE LOYAL TO THE FAITH

[13]Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. [14]That good thing which was

committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.

15 This you know, that all those in Asia have turned away from me, among whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes. 16 The Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain; 17 but when he arrived in Rome, he sought me out very zealously and found *me*. 18 The Lord grant to him that he may find mercy from the Lord in that Day-and you know very well how many ways he ministered *to me*[a] at Ephesus.

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# TIMOTHY: A GODLY HERITAGE

## (2 TIMOTHY 1:5)

Never underestimate the power of godly parents. In Timothy's case, a godly mother and grandmother had taught him about faith in the God of Israel. Grandmother Lois influenced mother Eunice, and they both taught young Timothy. When the apostle Paul came to their hometown of Lystra with the Good News of the Messiah, Timothy's heart was ready to hear and accept the message.

An interesting side note to this story is recorded in Acts 16. Timothy's father was a Greek, not a Jew. It was unusual for a Jewish woman to marry outside of her faith, but Eunice had done so. Yet she had held fast to her faith, teaching it to her son. The father seems at least not to have worked against her, allowing his son to be raised with Jewish teaching, although Timothy was never circumcised, as all Jewish boys must be. Through all of these possible stumbling blocks,

God fashioned a young man who would serve the great apostle in many capacities, eventually taking on leadership himself.

Lois and Eunice are two of the quiet heroes of the New Testament. They provided Timothy with a good family life and solid spiritual teaching. No matter what other situations may exist in a family, Christian parents can provide these two benefits for their children. Even if there is only one believing parent, he or she can work toward this end and pray that the other parent will be supportive. And believing grandparents can help. God is fashioning the leaders of tomorrow in the homes of today.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about family life Strong Families. See also the key passage note at Psalm 127:3-5.

**KEY PASSAGE**

# MORE THAN FULL TIME

# (1:5)

When God had told the first couple, Adam and Eve, to "fill the earth" (Gen. 1:28), He had created woman with the capacity to carry and give birth to another living being. Nowhere else in the animal kingdom are mothers so vital to their children for such a long time. No other animals have the same emotional ties that humans carry throughout their lifetimes. Nowhere else are mothers and grandmothers so honored.

Being a mother is a high calling and must be entered into with thought and preparation. Young women should wait until they are married to take on this huge responsibility. Women who have experienced divorce or widowhood need special support as they continue to mother alone. Most important, every mother needs a personal relationship with her heavenly Father to guide her in her most important occupation-being a mom.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about motherhood Does Mothering Matter?. See also the personality profile of Mary the mother of Jesus Mary: A Mother's Love.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Worry Replacers** *(1:7)* Those who worry are not trusting God. Worry can be a natural first reaction to an uncertain situation, but to persist in worry reveals a lack of trust that God is in charge. Besides, God has not given believers "a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind." *Power* helps us have strength of character and confidence in any situation. *Love* helps us graciously deal with difficult people. A *sound mind* helps us remain self-controlled and self-disciplined no matter what happens. We can set aside our worry and replace it with these gifts from God. **Topic: Worry**

## BE STRONG IN GRACE

**2** You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. [2]And
the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit
these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. [3]You therefore
must endure[a] hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. [4]No one engaged in
warfare entangles himself with the affairs of *this* life, that he may please him
who enlisted him as a soldier. [5]And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is
not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. [6]The hardworking
farmer must be first to partake of the crops. [7]Consider what I say, and may[a]
the Lord give you understanding in all things.

[8]Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the
dead according to my gospel, [9]for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, *even*
to the point of chains; but the word of God is not chained. [10]Therefore I
endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the
salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

[11]*This is* a faithful saying:

For if we died with *Him,*
We shall also live with *Him.*
[12] If we endure,
We shall also reign with *Him.*
If we deny *Him,*
He also will deny us.
[13] If we are faithless,
He remains faithful;
He cannot deny Himself.

## APPROVED AND DISAPPROVED WORKERS

[14]Remind *them* of these things, charging *them* before the Lord not to strive
about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers. [15]Be diligent to present
yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly
dividing the word of truth. [16]But shun profane *and* idle babblings, for they
will increase to more ungodliness. [17]And their message will spread like

cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort, [18]who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some. [19]Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: “The Lord knows those who are His,” and, “Let everyone who names the name of Christ[a] depart from iniquity.”

[20]But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. [21]Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work. [22]Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. [23]But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. [24]And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, [25]in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, [26]and *that* they may come to their senses *and escape* the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to *do* his will.

**KEY PASSAGE**

# PASS IT ON

## (2:2)

God worked through the many teachers in the early church, protecting His message so that it did not get changed or garbled as it was passed from person to person, from one generation to the next. The early believers had no written New Testament, but they depended on the spoken gospel message as it was taught to them by others. The

process is called mentoring, or discipling, and through it God's message is taught to people who in turn will teach others.

Although Paul was nearing the end of his earthly life, his ministry would continue because he had mentored Timothy. Eventually Timothy would die too, so he would need to commit the message "to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." In that way, the message would move across the world and across the centuries. We are believers today because faithful people have been teaching others for hundreds of years. We must mentor others so the message continues. God has given us that responsibility.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about mentoring Master Mentoring. See also the personality profile of Elijah And Elisha: A Tough Act To Follow.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Truth Teaching** *(2:15)* Paul warned Timothy that false teachers would attempt to distort the gospel message. The best weapon against false teaching is the truth of God's Word-in the hands of diligent workers who have no need to be ashamed of it or their handling of it. Believers who are "rightly dividing the word of truth" know God's Word, understand its meaning, and teach it correctly. The truth of God's Word has not changed from Timothy's day to today. We ought to diligently study the Bible so that we can know and share its truths with others correctly. **Topic: Truth**

## SOUL NOTE

**Run Away** *(2:22)* Believers have a responsibility to be pure. No matter what a person's past, God will forgive. Once someone believes, the Holy Spirit enters their life to help them deal with the continual temptations of the sinful nature. Some situations are more tempting for a person than others are, and in such cases the believer's best resource may simply be to flee. The "youthful lusts" here are not just sexual desires, although these are included. The area of temptation that causes us the most difficulty may be the one from which we simply must run. God is not dishonored when we flee temptation. He is dishonored when we give in. **Topic: Temptation**

## SOUL NOTE

**Never Give Up** *(2:25, 26)* Paul was teaching Timothy how to deal with those in the church who oppose the truth. This teaching also applies to parents who are dealing with "opposing" children. Timothy was not to give up on contrary church members, and parents shouldn't give up on their contrary children-because they don't know "if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth." Parents pray and teach, hoping that their children will "come to their senses." We must entrust our rebellious children to God. **Topic: Adolescent Problems**

## OBEDIENCE OR

## MERE EXCELLENCE?

# STEPHEN ARTERBURN

## (2 Timothy 2:22)

**W**hy is it so easy for people to compromise their standards of sexual sin and so difficult to firmly commit to obedience? Perhaps it is because people are used to compromise. Most people easily tolerate mixed standards of sexual purity because they tolerate mixed standards in other areas. If mixed standards are the rule, people are not motivated to single out sexual standards and maintain purity in that one area.

Sexual sin begins when people stop short of God's standard of sexual purity, which is complete obedience to His commands. God commands that sex be a part of a married relationship between a husband and a wife. People who obey that command have sexual integrity.

### OBEDIENCE OR EXCELLENCE?

Normally, we might consider these two words to be synonymous. After all, if we are acting obediently, isn't that excellent? There is a difference, however. In business, the *pursuit* of excellence is considered to be good enough. Few businesses would try to be truly perfect, because true perfection is too costly. Businesses know it is enough to *seem* to be in pursuit of excellence. The "search for excellence" becomes a comfortable and profitable pit stop short of the price of perfection.

In the same way, Christians are tempted to stop short of perfection. Instead of truly being obedient, they are content to appear to be in pursuit of excellence. That way they can feel content that they are

"trying," without the cost of perfect obedience. They can cross boundaries of sexual purity, becoming dangerously distinguished only by the fact that they are not involved in actual intercourse. Ironically, they consider themselves to be "obedient" because they have the appearance of excellence. However, "excellence" in this sense is a mixed standard, and it is not good enough. It is not sexual integrity.

## THE COST OF DISOBEDIENCE

When people's standards of sexual purity move closer to that of their peers, the result is distance from God. Christians are often indistinguishable from non-Christians-sharing the same activities and attitudes about premarital sex. Many Christian singles groups don't question men and women among them who are sexually active. Christian couples have also fallen short, reeling in the wake of adulterous affairs and marital separations. However, Scripture warns, "But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting" (Eph. 5:3, 4).

## THE COST OF OBEDIENCE

Christians who live according to mixed standards may seem "good enough" to a depraved world. However, God's standard of perfection beckons Christians to go farther and demonstrate the cost of obedience in their lives.

For example, it costs a family to have regular worship and devotion times. However, those who seek obedience to God's commands pay a price in their priorities and are rewarded by stability and purpose amid their frantic activities. In the same way, it costs something to insist that one's children practice modesty in their appearance and attitudes-it's easier to give in and avoid the battle. However, the family that invests in a framework for making moral decisions is prepared for the cost.

In the realm of sexual integrity, it costs something to control one's eyes, heart, and mind when lured by the temptations in magazine racks, movies, and video stores. God doesn't demand obedience in order to take the fun and thrill out of life. Instead, He knows that sexual purity is for our good and for the good of His kingdom. He wants His children to be "blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world" (Phil. 2:15).

Every believer's heart faces a daily spiritual battle for purity. The costs are real. Obedience is hard, requiring humility and meekness. Too many people refuse to commit to obedience because of the "unforeseen situations" they assume may try their attempted standards anyway.

Sexual impurity has become rampant in the church because people have ignored the costly work of obedience to God. "For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality. . . . For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness" (1 Thess. 4:3, 7). Christians have crafted an image and may even seem sexually pure, while permitting their eyes to roam when no one is around. It is easy to avoid the hard work of sexual purity! They have also ignored the cost of Christ's sacrifice on their behalf. Believers who truly comprehend the obedience of Christ-difficult obedience, in order to cleanse us from sin-should not even want to sin in His presence.

## THE REWARDS OF OBEDIENCE

Recognizing the tolerance of sin in one's own life is the first step toward reaching the greater goal of true obedience. It costs something to learn about Christ's standards for living and even more to live like Him. However, the rewards for doing so are immeasurable, both for this life and the life to come. Sexual integrity brings great hope and joy. While a search for excellence or "how holy can I be" leaves one vulnerable to the dangerous snare of compromise, obedience builds

greater hope for a growing faith. Instead of merely getting by with the pretension of “appearing” good enough, Christians who seek to obey God will find that His rewards far outweigh any of the costs.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of sexual integrity include:

- Genesis 2:24
- Proverbs 4:1-27; 5:18
- Romans 7:13-25
- 1 Corinthians 7:5; 10:13
- Hebrews 4:12
- James 4:7, 8

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on sexual integrity at 1 Corinthians 6:15. See also the personality profile of Ruth & Boaz - Sexual Integrity In Premarital Relationships.

## PERILOUS TIMES AND PERILOUS MEN

**3** But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: [2]For men will
be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers,
disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, [3]unloving, unforgiving,
slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, [4]traitors,
headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, [5]having a
form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!
[6]For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of
gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, [7]always
learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. [8]Now as
Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of
corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith; [9]but they will progress no
further, for their folly will be manifest to all, as theirs also was.

## THE MAN OF GOD AND THE WORD OF GOD

[10]But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose,
faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, [11]persecutions, afflictions, which
happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra-what persecutions I
endured. And out of *them* all the Lord delivered me. [12]Yes, and all who
desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. [13]But evil men and
impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. [14]But
you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of,
knowing from whom you have learned *them*, [15]and that from childhood you
have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for
salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

[16]All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for
doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, [17]that
the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

## SOUL NOTE

**Too Tolerant** *(3:1-9)* There is a time for tolerance; there is also a time for intolerance. Being tolerant can be a positive characteristic when dealing with people's idiosyncrasies or weaknesses. Tolerance is also positive when it frees someone from prejudice toward a person's race or culture. But believers must not be tolerant of anyone who claims to teach the faith while living opposed to it ("having a form of godliness but denying its power"). "From such people turn away," exclaims Paul, for they cause great danger to weak believers. That's the kind of tolerance we don't need. **Topic: Tolerance**

## SOUL NOTE

**Early Education** *(3:14, 15)* Timothy had been learning the Holy Scriptures from childhood. Christian parents have the God-given responsibility to raise their children to know and love God and His word. Young children can learn the great truths and stories found in the Bible that show God's love and power. Teaching given to young children will be embedded in their minds, giving them a strong foundation on which to build. That training is able to make them "wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." **Topic: Parenting**

## PREACH THE WORD

**4** I charge *you* therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will
judge the living and the dead at[a] His appearing and His kingdom: 2Preach
the word! Be ready in season *and* out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort,
with all longsuffering and teaching. 3For the time will come when they will
not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, *because* they
have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; 4and they will
turn *their* ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. 5But you be
watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill
your ministry.

## PAUL'S VALEDICTORY

6For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my
departure is at hand. 7I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I
have kept the faith. 8Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of
righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that
Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

I have fought the good fight,
I have finished the race,
I have kept the faith.
2 TIMOTHY 4:7

## THE ABANDONED APOSTLE

9Be diligent to come to me quickly; 10for De-mas has forsaken me, having
loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica-Crescens for
Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia. 11Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him
with you, for he is useful to me for minis try. 12And Tychicus I have sent to
Ephesus. 13Bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas when you come-
and the books, especially the parchments.

14Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm. May the Lord repay him
according to his works. 15You also must beware of him, for he has greatly

resisted our words.

16 At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them.

**THE LORD IS FAITHFUL**

17 But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and *that* all the Gentiles might hear. Also I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. 18 And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve *me* for His heavenly kingdom. To Him *be* glory forever and ever. Amen!

**COME BEFORE WINTER**

19 Greet Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus. 20 Erastus stayed in Corinth, but Trophimus I have left in Miletus sick.

21 Do your utmost to come before winter. Eubulus greets you, as well as Pudens, Linus, Claudia, and all the brethren.

**FAREWELL**

22 The Lord Jesus Christ[a] be with your spirit. Grace be with you. Amen.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Ready to Go** *(4:6-8)* Paul knew that he would soon die, yet he was not fearful or worried for his ministry or for himself. He knew that others would faithfully carry on the task of spreading the gospel message. He knew that he was on his way to glory in heaven and a crown of righteousness. He knew that his job was done, and it was time to go. Believers can face death with confidence, knowing that God is waiting for them. May we all be able to say, “I have fought the

good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” **Topic: Death**

# Titus



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# Titus

Do you know any hypocrites? Do you ever feel like one?

One of the most common criticisms of the church is that it is filled with people who know a lot of biblical facts, but whose lives are not exactly marked by biblical acts.

This is not a new criticism. Around A.D. 63, the apostle Paul sent a brief letter to a pastor named Titus who was ministering on the island of Crete-a place notorious for its moral corruption. The gist of his message: Know the truth and live it.

Titus's name is not mentioned in the Book of Acts, but Paul's letters let us know that he was both a convert and a trusted colleague of the great apostle. This letter gives Titus instructions for leading the churches under his influence.

First, Paul urged Titus to root himself and his congregation in the truth ("sound doctrine"-see 2:1). Paul understood that behavior is shaped by belief, that people become what they think. Second, Paul stressed that the Christians at Crete needed to do "good works" (1:16; 2:7, 14; 3:1, 8, 14) so as to "adorn the doctrine of God" (2:10). In other words, they would represent God's truth better if they modeled authentic, counter-cultural Christian living.

It's still the same now. Believers in Jesus still need to be people of God's book. Cynical unbelievers still need to see Christians living with integrity and authenticity before they can be convinced of the power of the gospel.

We can resist the hypocritical Christian experience that has become so commonplace in the church and is so repulsive to onlookers. Titus shows us how to make the gospel attractive in our own lives.

## GREETING

**1** Paul, a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the
faith of God's elect and the acknowledgment of the truth which accords
with godliness, 2in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised
before time began, 3but has in due time manifested His word through
preaching, which was committed to me according to the commandment of
God our Savior;

4To Titus, a true son in *our* common faith:

Grace, mercy, *and* peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ[a]
our Savior.

## QUALIFIED ELDERS

5For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things
that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you- 6if a
man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not
accused of dissipation or insubordination. 7For a bishop[a] must be blameless,
as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine,
not violent, not greedy for money, 8but hospitable, a lover of what is good,
sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, 9holding fast the faithful word as he
has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and
convict those who contradict.

## THE ELDERS' TASK

10For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers,
especially those of the circumcision, 11whose mouths must be stopped, who
subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake
of dishonest gain. 12One of them, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans *are*
always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." 13This testimony is true. Therefore
rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, 14not giving heed to
Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth. 15To the
pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing
is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled. 16They profess to

know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.

## SOUL NOTE

**Promises Kept** *(1:2)* The power of any promise depends on the character of the person who is making the promise. God promised eternal life "before time began." Those who accept Jesus Christ as Savior will obtain the fulfillment of that promise. We can be certain that the promise will be fulfilled, because it is not in God's character to lie. Because we can trust in the character of God, we can also trust in His promise of eternal life in heaven with Him. Such a promise should motivate us to live for Him each day. **Topic: God's Promises**

## PERSONALITY PROFILE

# TITUS-CHOOSING GODLY MEN

# (TITUS 1:6)

Titus served as the apostle Paul's ambassador to Crete. They spent time on the island spreading the gospel, and Paul left his young disciple behind to strengthen the local churches. The letter Paul sent Titus served as a job description for a crucial task. Paul knew that the success of Titus's efforts would depend on his ability to identify a

few good and godly men.

Paul and Titus were fishers of men. They preached a gospel that functioned like a huge net. People of all different backgrounds, experiences, and levels of maturity were drawn to Christ. That diverse gathering of people had to be sorted out and organized. Character qualities had to be identified. Leadership qualities had to be utilized. Titus had the difficult task of spotting those who were on their way to maturity in Christ. He had to further equip and encourage them to serve others as leaders in the church.

On Crete, Paul told Titus to start with the men. He gave Titus a list of traits to look for in a man who would make a good elder among believers. The qualities Paul listed still measure a man's leadership potential. In fact, those qualities (Titus 1:5-9) include most of the male issues facing men today. Titus was on the lookout for men who were:

- Blameless-who didn't leave problems unsettled in their lives.
- Faithful to one wife.
- Raising healthy children.
- Living out a humble relationship with God.
- Not self-willed, quick-tempered, violent, or greedy.
- Practicing hospitality and loving good things.
- Thinking clearly and pursuing justice, holiness, and self-control
- Effectively modeling and teaching the Christian faith.

The church of Jesus Christ still longs for people who will live out their faith with such character. When such leaders are in place, the gospel spreads its net in even wider circles, and more and more people come to Christ. Titus was looking for leaders who had what it takes to care for souls.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about men's issues Being A Real Man.

See also the key passage note at Titus 2:2.

**KEY PASSAGE**

# INFILTRATORS

# (1:16)

False teachers had infiltrated the church in Crete. They were claiming to be believers but undermining the gospel by teaching bad doctrine. Paul explained their error: “They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him.”

Today, false teachers continue to profess to know God and His word but offer incorrect teaching. Believers should know the Bible so as to perceive a false teacher quickly. Every teaching should be consistent with God’s Word. Younger or immature believers, however, may be enticed by a false teacher who has style and uses appealing words. Even if believers cannot perceive an error in the teaching, Paul wrote that a false teacher’s life will reveal the truth. The teacher’s actions and attitudes will speak volumes about their priorities and what they really believe. We must always be discerning about the teachers we listen to. Not everything that sounds good is good for you.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about cults Sweet Equilibrium: A Healthy, Balanced Christian Faith. See also the personality profile of Simon The Sorcerer-the Trap Of False Religion.

## QUALITIES OF A SOUND CHURCH

**2** But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine: 2that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience; 3the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things- 4that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, 5to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.

6Likewise, exhort the young men to be sober-minded, 7in all things showing yourself *to be* a pattern of good works; in doctrine *showing* integrity, reverence, incorruptibility,[a] 8sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you.[a]

9*Exhort* bondservants to be obedient to their own masters, to be well pleasing in all *things*, not answering back, 10not pilfering, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things.

## TRAINED BY SAVING GRACE

11For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, 12teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, 13looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, 14who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself *His* own special people, zealous for good works.

15Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you.

**KEY PASSAGE**

# GODLY EXAMPLES

# (2:2)

The "older men" to whom this verse refers are not necessarily elders or leaders in the church. These are the senior members of the church community, and that stature carried a responsibility to be examples to the young Christian men. Paul identified four characteristics that older Christian men should model in the church and to the community:

- *Be sober* can mean the opposite of drunkenness, but a broader meaning describes being balanced, showing moderation and clear-headedness.
- Be *reverent* means worthy of respect, dignified, honorable.
- Be *temperate* means having self-control, monitoring one's words and actions, being sensible about how to live in a heathen society.
- Be *sound in faith, in love, in patience* reveals a soundness in life, with healthy personal faith, positive relationships, and earnest steadfastness.

Christian men, whatever their age, have the responsibility to live well before God and before others who are watching them.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about men's issues Being A Real Man. See also the personality profile of Titus-choosing Godly Men.

**KEY PASSAGE**

# MODELING

# (2:3-5)

Christian older women have a responsibility to set a good example for the younger women. These older women in Paul's day had lived much of their lives before knowing Christ. They could help the younger women to avoid their mistakes by teaching about the change Christ had worked in their lives and by modeling the qualities of a godly lifestyle. Older women are to be respectable, good teachers, not gossips, and not heavy drinkers. Then they can teach Christian young women.

An important lesson for young women is that they learn to place a high priority on the family. Young women should be taught to love their husbands and children, placing those needs before their own. Christian young women, married or not, must be discreet, pure, and good. No matter what other activities fill their lives, they are responsible for their homes, and married women must submit to their husbands as the head of the household. Women honor Christ when they place Him first and follow His guidelines for living.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about women's issues Women Of God. See also the personality profile of The Virtuous Woman.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Watched** *(2:7, 8)* As the leader of the church in Crete, Titus was to

be a positive example to all the believers, showing a “pattern of good works,” always teaching sound doctrine, and always speaking sound words. He also had to teach the Christian men and women how to live for God (2:1-6) so that they, in turn, could be examples to others. Christians are always being watched-younger believers are learning about maturing in the faith by watching more mature believers. We ought to be positive examples to others in our words and in our actions. After all, we are Christ’s representatives. **Topic: Mentoring**

## GRACES OF THE HEIRS OF GRACE

**3** Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready
for every good work, [2]to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle,
showing all humility to all men. [3]For we ourselves were also once foolish,
disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice
and envy, hateful and hating one another. [4]But when the kindness and the
love of God our Savior toward man appeared, [5]not by works of righteousness
which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the
washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, [6]whom He poured
out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, [7]that having been
justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of
eternal life.

[8]This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly,
that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good
works. These things are good and profitable to men.

## AVOID DISSENSION

[9]But avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about
the law; for they are unprofitable and useless. [10]Reject a divisive man after
the first and second admonition, [11]knowing that such a person is warped and
sinning, being self-condemned.

## FINAL MESSAGES

[12]When I send Artemas to you, or Tychicus, be diligent to come to me at
Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there. [13]Send Zenas the
lawyer and Apollos on their journey with haste, that they may lack nothing.
[14]And let our *people* also learn to maintain good works, to *meet* urgent needs,
that they may not be unfruitful.

## FAREWELL

[15]All who *are* with me greet you. Greet those who love us in the faith.

Grace *be* with you all. Amen.

## SOUL NOTE

**Indisputable** *(3:9-11)* In his warning about false teachers, Paul told Titus to reject the divisive people and to “avoid foolish disputes” with them about issues that had nothing to do with salvation in Christ. Paul warned Titus against getting involved in quarrels over petty issues, and, when such debates arose, Titus was to rebuke the false teachers for their divisiveness. Divisive people insist on their own opinions without knowing God’s Word. They stir up conflict that can divide the church. Such behavior must be stopped. Differences of opinion and style are inevitable in the church and can be healthy, but severe conflict over petty issues should have no place in the fellowship.**Topic: Conflict**

# Philemon



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# Philemon

It's awkward and painful when we have to confront a person who has wronged us horribly. It's one thing to talk abstractly about forgiveness; it's another matter altogether to actually have to forgive. That kind of situation is the true test of the power of the gospel. It's also the story behind the apostle Paul's letter to Philemon.

Philemon was a Colossian Christian (and slave owner) who had come to faith under Paul's ministry (10). Some time later, one of Philemon's slaves (a man named Onesimus) apparently stole from him and fled to Rome. In the sovereign plan of God, Onesimus encountered Paul and was converted to Christ.

The change in Onesimus was genuine, and he proved to be a great help and comfort to the imprisoned Paul. The apostle realized, however, that Onesimus needed to return to his master. This short epistle functioned as a kind of letter of reference. Paul pleaded with Philemon to forgive Onesimus and to welcome him home as a "beloved brother" (16). Paul depended on Philemon's spiritual maturity to respond in forgiveness and acceptance.

Paul's brief note to Philemon demonstrates the amazing providence of God at work, as He brings people to faith. It reminds us that the gospel is all about second chances. It fleshes out a vivid lesson in forgiving deep wrongs. Above all, it points to the power of the gospel to transform human relationships. Onesimus left Colosse a lowly slave; he returned a precious brother. What a change Christ makes!

## GREETING

**1** Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy *our* brother,

To Philemon our beloved *friend* and fellow laborer, [2]to the beloved[a] Apphia, Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house:

[3]Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

## PHILEMON'S LOVE AND FAITH

[4]I thank my God, making mention of you always in my prayers, [5]hearing of your love and faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints, [6]that the sharing of your faith may become effective by the acknowledgment of every good thing which is in you[a] in Christ Jesus. [7]For we have[a] great joy[b] and consolation in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed by you, brother.

## THE PLEA FOR ONESIMUS

[8]Therefore, though I might be very bold in Christ to command you what is fitting, [9]*yet* for love's sake I rather appeal *to you*-being such a one as Paul, the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ- [10]I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten *while* in my chains, [11]who once was unprofitable to you, but now is profitable to you and to me.

[12]I am sending him back.[a] You therefore receive him, that is, my own heart, [13]whom I wished to keep with me, that on your behalf he might minister to me in my chains for the gospel. [14]But without your consent I wanted to do nothing, that your good deed might not be by compulsion, as it were, but voluntary.

[15]For perhaps he departed for a while for this *purpose*, that you might receive him forever, [16]no longer as a slave but more than a slave-a beloved brother, especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

## PHILEMON'S OBEDIENCE ENCOURAGED

[17]If then you count me as a partner, receive him as *you would* me. [18]But if he has wronged you or owes anything, put that on my account. [19]I, Paul, am writing with my own hand. I will repay-not to mention to you that you owe me even your own self besides. [20]Yes, brother, let me have joy from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in the Lord.

[21]Having confidence in your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say. [22]But, meanwhile, also prepare a guest room for me, for I trust that through your prayers I shall be granted to you.

**FAREWELL**

[23]Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you, [24]*as do* Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow laborers.

[25]The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with your spirit. Amen.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Back Together** *(10-12)* A conflict was definitely brewing. Onesimus, a runaway slave and thief, was in a bad position. Both Philemon and Onesimus had become Christians under Paul's ministry at separate times and in separate places. Although Philemon had every right under Roman law to have his slave beaten or killed, Paul urged him to accept Onesimus as a brother in Christ. Believers may have conflicts over any number of situations, but they can be handled best when believers remember what they have in common-salvation in Christ. We often have the right to exact justice, but, as Paul told Philemon, we need to show mercy and grace. **Topic: Conflict**

# Hebrews



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# Hebrews

Old habits die hard. Some habits have been a part of our lives for so long that we accept them as normal. The thought of changing our pattern threatens our very existence. Sometimes it's easier to stay in a rut than to let God change us. This is true in the spiritual realm as well **O** as the material. Consider the recipients of the Book of Hebrews.

Many of these Jewish Christians struggled with the temptation to return to the familiarity and comfort of Judaism-especially as they began to face persecution from their countrymen because of their newfound faith in Jesus. The unidentified author of Hebrews (variously thought to be Paul, Clement, Barnabas, or others) warned these Jewish believers not to "drift away" (2:1), but, rather, to "go on to perfection" (6:1).

The argument of Hebrews is simple: Jesus Christ is superior. He is superior to the Old Testament prophets, to the angels, and to Moses. Christ's priesthood is also superior to Aaron's because Christ is a perfect High Priest, the mediator of a New Covenant who made the once-for-all sacrifice for human sin (9:11-14). Christ alone is worthy of our faith (ch. 11, 12).

If, as Hebrews brilliantly demonstrates, Jesus is the all-sufficient Messiah, and if Christianity represents the God-ordained consummation of all the hopes and promises of Judaism, then isn't it the height of foolishness for any believer-Jew or Gentile-to revert to inferior doctrines and dead-end habits? Hebrews calls us to accept the positive changes that come with faith in Jesus Christ.

**SOUL CONCERNS IN**

## HEBREWS

**PERFECTIONISM (10:1)**

## FAITH (11:6)

## GOD'S SUPREME REVELATION

**1** God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the
fathers by the prophets, [2]has in these last days spoken to us by *His* Son,
whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the
worlds; [3]who being the brightness of *His* glory and the express image of His
person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by
Himself[a] purged our[b] sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,
[4]having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance
obtained a more excellent name than they.

## THE SON EXALTED ABOVE ANGELS

[5]For to which of the angels did He ever say:
"You are My Son,
Today I have begotten You"?[a]
And again:

"I will be to Him a Father,
And He shall be to Me a Son"?[b]
[6]But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says:
"Let all the angels of God worship Him."[a]
[7]And of the angels He says:
"Who makes His angels spirits
And His ministers a flame of fire."[a]
[8]But to the Son *He says:*
"Your throne, O God, *is* forever and ever;
A scepter of righteousness *is* the scepter of Your kingdom.
[9]You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness;
Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You
With the oil of gladness more than Your companions."[a]
[10]And:

"You, LORD, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth,
And the heavens are the work of Your hands.
[11] They will perish, but You remain;

And they will all grow old like a garment;
12 Like a cloak You will fold them up,
And they will be changed.
But You are the same,
And Your years will not fail.” [a]
13 But to which of the angels has He ever said:
“Sit at My right hand,
Till I make Your enemies Your footstool”?[a]
14 Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?

## DO NOT NEGLECT SALVATION

**2** Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard,
lest we drift away. [2]For if the word spoken through angels proved
steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward,
[3]how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first
began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard
*Him*, [4]God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various
miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?

## THE SON MADE LOWER THAN ANGELS

[5]For He has not put the world to come, of which we speak, in subjection to
angels. [6]But one testified in a certain place, saying:

"What is man that You are mindful of him,
Or the son of man that You take care of him?
[7] You have made him a little lower than the angels;
You have crowned him with glory and honor,[a]
And set him over the works of Your hands.
[8] You have put all things in subjection under his feet."[a]

For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing *that is* not put
under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him. [9]But we see
Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death
crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste
death for everyone.

## BRINGING MANY SONS TO GLORY

[10]For it was fitting for Him, for whom *are* all things and by whom *are* all
things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation
perfect through sufferings. [11]For both He who sanctifies and those who are
being sanctified *are* all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call
them brethren, [12]saying:

"I will declare Your name to My brethren;
In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You."[a]

[13]And again:

"I will put My trust in Him."[a]
And again:

"Here am I and the children whom God has given Me."[b]

[14]Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, [15]and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. [16]For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham. [17]Therefore, in all things He had to be made like *His* brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. [18]For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Neglect or Accept?** *(2:3)* The author of Hebrews was issuing a wake-up call to his readers not to "neglect so great a salvation." To "neglect" here means hearing about the offer of salvation in Christ and then setting it aside without accepting it. The danger of neglect is that the offer will be forgotten in the midst of life's busyness. If people neglect the offer, they will have "no escape" on the day of judgment. People must accept this great offer of salvation in Christ. There will be no better offer anytime or anywhere. Tomorrow may be too late. **Topic: Salvation**

## THE SON WAS FAITHFUL

**3** Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the
Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus, [2]who was faithful
to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also *was faithful* in all His house. [3]For
this One has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as He
who built the house has more honor than the house. [4]For every house is built
by someone, but He who built all things *is* God. [5]And Moses indeed *was*
faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which
would be spoken *afterward*, [6]but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose
house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm
to the end.[a]

## BE FAITHFUL

[7]Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says:

"Today, if You will hear His voice,

[8] Do not harden Your hearts as in the rebellion,
In the day of trial in the wilderness,
[9] Where Your fathers tested Me, tried Me,
And saw My works forty years.
[10] Therefore I was angry with that generation,
And said, 'They always go astray in *their* heart,
And they have not known My ways.'
[11] So I swore in My wrath,
'They shall not enter My rest.' "[a]

[12]Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in
departing from the living God; [13]but exhort one another daily, while it is
called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.
[14]For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our
confidence steadfast to the end, [15]while it is said:

"Today, if you will hear His voice,
Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion."[a]

**FAILURE OF THE WILDERNESS WANDERERS**

16 For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, *was it* not all who came out of
Egypt, *led* by Moses? 17 Now with whom was He angry forty years? *Was it*
not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? 18 And to
whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did
not obey? 19 So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

## THE PROMISE OF REST

**4** Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any
of you seem to have come short of it. 2For indeed the gospel was preached
to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them,[a]
not being mixed with faith in those who heard *it.* 3For we who have believed
do enter that rest, as He has said:

"So I swore in My wrath,
'They shall not enter My rest,' "[a]

although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. 4For He
has spoken in a certain place of the seventh *day* in this way: "And God rested
on the seventh day from all His works";[a] 5and again in this *place:* "They shall
not enter My rest."[a]

6Since therefore it remains that some *must* enter it, and those to whom it
was first preached did not enter because of disobedience, 7again He
designates a certain day, saying in David, "Today," after such a long time, as
it has been said:

"Today, if you will hear His voice,
Do not harden your hearts."[a]

8For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have
spoken of another day. 9There remains therefore a rest for the people of God.
10For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as
God *did* from His.

## THE WORD DISCOVERS OUR CONDITION

11Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to
the same example of disobedience. 12For the word of God *is* living and
powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the
division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the
thoughts and intents of the heart. 13And there is no creature hidden from His
sight, but all things *are* naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we *must*
*give* account.

**OUR COMPASSIONATE HIGH PRIEST**

[14]Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* confession. [15]For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are, yet* without sin. [16]Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.
HEBREWS 4:12

**KEY PASSAGE**

# COME BOLDLY

# (4:14-16)

An amazing fact of the Christian faith is that the infinite God became a finite human being. Although without sin, Jesus Christ as a man experienced the weaknesses, temptations, pain, and difficulties of human existence. Thus, we have a Savior who can “sympathize with our weaknesses.” He understands temptation, because He faced it. He understands weakness, because He experienced it. He understands pain, because He felt it.

People who live with chronic or acute physical or emotional pain

have a Savior who truly understands. Far from sitting in the heavens simply feeling sorry for sick and sinful humanity, He clothed Himself with our humanness. When we come to Christ with our hurts, He reaches out with human arms, truly understanding how we feel. He is able to help us. Christ does not always take away the pain, but He does tell us to bring it to Him. Whatever our pain or difficulty, we are encouraged to "come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of n[a]ed."

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about pain Pain: Problem, Puzzle, Parable. See also the personality profile of the man at the pool of Bethesda The Man At The Pool: Freedom From Pain.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Hidden Strength** *(4:14-16)* Most people try to hide their weaknesses and failures. God knows all our weaknesses, however, and He sympathizes with them. Even more, He offers mercy and grace to help us. Christ understands because as a human being He experienced the challenges and temptations we face, "yet without sin." He knows that we are weak and need Him. He wants to give us the strength to endure our weaknesses and confront our temptations. We can "come boldly to the throne of grace," knowing that He wants to help us.
**Topic: Weakness**

## QUALIFICATIONS FOR HIGH PRIESTHOOD

**5** For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things
*pertaining* to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. [2]He
can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he
himself is also subject to weakness. [3]Because of this he is required as for the
people, so also for himself, to offer *sacrifices* for sins. [4]And no man takes this
honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron *was.*

## A PRIEST FOREVER

[5]So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, *but it* was
He who said to Him:

"You are My Son,
Today I have begotten You."[a]

[6]As *He* also *says* in another *place:*

"You *are* a priest forever
According to the order of Melchizedek";[a]

[7]who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and
supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save
Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, [8]though He was a
Son, *yet* He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. [9]And having
been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey
Him, [10]called by God as High Priest "according to the order of Melchizedek,"
[11]of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become
dull of hearing.

## SPIRITUAL IMMATURITY

[12]For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need *someone* to
teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come
to need milk and not solid food. [13]For everyone who partakes *only* of milk *is*
unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. [14]But solid food
belongs to those who are of full age, *that is,* those who by reason of use have
their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

## SOUL NOTE

**Radical Obedience** *(5:8, 9)* Jesus demonstrated obedience even through suffering by undergoing a painful execution in order to obey His Father's plan. He knows what it means to obey God in the midst of trying circumstances. Christ's radical obedience is comforting because He knows and shares in our sorrows. Believers are called to radical obedience, too. At times, we too will be called on to learn real obedience through suffering, and at those times we can turn to Jesus, because He knows exactly how to help us. **Topic: Obedience**

## THE PERIL OF NOT PROGRESSING

**6** Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary *principles* of Christ, let
us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from
dead works and of faith toward God, [2]of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying
on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. [3]nd this we
will[a] do if God permits.

[4]For *it is* impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted
the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, [5]and have
tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, [6]if they fall
away,[a] to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for
themselves the Son of God, and put *Him* to an open shame.

[7]For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears
herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God;
[8]but if it bears thorns and briers, *it is* rejected and near to being cursed, whose
end *is* to be burned.

## A BETTER ESTIMATE

[9]But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things
that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner. [10]For God *is* not
unjust to forget your work and labor of[a] love which you have shown toward
His name, *in that* you have ministered to the saints, and do minister. [11]And
we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance
of hope until the end, [12]that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those
who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

## GOD'S INFALLIBLE PURPOSE IN CHRIST

[13]For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by
no one greater, He swore by Himself, [14]saying, "Surely blessing I will bless
you, and multiplying I will multiply you."[a] [15]And so, after he had patiently
endured, he obtained the promise. [16]For men indeed swear by the greater, and
an oath for confirmation *is* for them an end of all dispute. [17]Thus God,
determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the

immutability of His counsel, confirmed *it* by an oath, [18]that by two immutable things, in which it *is* impossible for God to lie, we might[a] have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before *us.*

[19]This *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the *Presence* behind the veil, [20]where the forerunner has entered for us, *even* Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast.
HEBREWS 6:19

## THE KING OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

7 For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who
met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him,
2 to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all, first being translated “king
of righteousness,” and then also king of Salem, meaning “king of peace,”
3 without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning
of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest
continually.

4 Now consider how great this man *was,* to whom even the patriarch
Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils. 5 And indeed those who are of the sons of
Levi, who receive the priesthood, have a commandment to receive tithes from
the people according to the law, that is, from their brethren, though they have
come from the loins of Abraham; 6 but he whose genealogy is not derived
from them received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the
promises. 7 Now beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better.
8 Here mortal men receive tithes, but there he *receives them,* of whom it is
witnessed that he lives. 9 Even Levi, who receives tithes, paid tithes through
Abraham, so to speak, 10 for he was still in the loins of his father when
Melchizedek met him.

## NEED FOR A NEW PRIESTHOOD

11 Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood (for under
it the people received the law), what further need *was there* that another priest
should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called
according to the order of Aaron? 12 For the priesthood being changed, of
necessity there is also a change of the law. 13 For He of whom these things are
spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no man has officiated at the
altar.

14 For *it is* evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses
spoke nothing concerning priesthood.[a] 15 And it is yet far more evident if, in
the likeness of Melchizedek, there arises another priest 16 who has come, not
according to the law of a fleshly commandment, but according to the power

of an endless life. [17]For He testifies:[a]

"You *are* a priest forever
According to the order of Melchizedek."[b]

[18]For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness, [19]for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, *there is the* bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.

## GREATNESS OF THE NEW PRIEST

[20]And inasmuch as *He was* not *made priest* without an oath [21](for they have become priests without an oath, but He with an oath by Him who said to Him:

"The LORD has sworn
And will not relent,
'You *are* a priest forever[a]
According to the order of
Melchizedek' "),[b]

[22]by so much more Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant.

[23]Also there were many priests, because they were prevented by death from continuing. [24]But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. [25]Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

[26]For such a High Priest was fitting for us, *who is* holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; [27]who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. [28]For the law appoints as high priests men who have weakness, but the word of the oath, which came after the law, *appoints* the Son who has been perfected forever.

## THE NEW PRIESTLY SERVICE

**8** Now *this is* the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a
High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in
the heavens, [2]a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the
Lord erected, and not man.

[3]For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices.
Therefore *it is* necessary that this One also have something to offer. [4]For if
He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer
the gifts according to the law; [5]who serve the copy and shadow of the
heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to
make the tabernacle. For He said, "See *that* you make all things according to
the pattern shown you on the mountain."[a] [6]But now He has obtained a more
excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant,
which was established on better promises.

## A NEW COVENANT

[7]or if that first *covenant* had been faultless, then no place would have been
sought for a second. [8]Because finding fault with them, He says: "Behold, the
days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the
house of Israel and with the house of Judah- [9]not according to the covenant
that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead
them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant,
and I disregarded them, says the LORD. [10]For this *is* the covenant that I will
make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My
laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and
they shall be My people. [11]None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none
his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for all shall know Me, from the least of
them to the greatest of them. [12]For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness,
and their sins and their lawless deeds[a] I will remember no more."[b]

[13]In that He says, "A new *covenant,*" He has made the first obsolete. Now
what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.

## THE EARTHLY SANCTUARY

**9** Then indeed, even the first *covenant* had ordinances of divine service and
the earthly sanctuary. [2]For a tabernacle was prepared: the first *part*, in
which *was* the lampstand, the table, and the showbread, which is called the
sanctuary; [3]and behind the second veil, the part of the tabernacle which is
called the Holiest of All, [4]which had the golden censer and the ark of the
covenant overlaid on all sides with gold, in which *were* the golden pot that
had the manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant; [5]and
above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these
things we cannot now speak in detail.

## LIMITATIONS OF THE EARTHLY SERVICE

[6]Now when these things had been thus prepared, the priests always went
into the first part of the tabernacle, performing the services. [7]But into the
second part the high priest *went* alone once a year, not without blood, which
he offered for himself and *for* the people's sins *committed* in ignorance; [8]the
Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet
made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing. [9]It *was* symbolic
for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which
cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the
conscience-[10]*concerned* only with foods and drinks, various washings, and
fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation.

## THE HEAVENLY SANCTUARY

[11]But Christ came *as* High Priest of the good things to come,[a] with the
greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this
creation. [12]t with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He
entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.
[13]For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the
unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, [14]how much more shall the
blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot
to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?
[15]And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of

death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

## THE MEDIATOR'S DEATH NECESSARY

16For where there *is* a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. 17For a testament *is* in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives. 18Therefore not even the first *covenant* was dedicated without blood. 19For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, 20saying, "This *is* the blood of the covenant *which* God has commanded you."[a] 21Then likewise he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry. 22And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.

## GREATNESS OF CHRIST'S SACRIFICE

23Therefore *it was* necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. 24For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, *which are* copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; 25not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another-26He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. 27And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, 28so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.

## ANIMAL SACRIFICES INSUFFICIENT

**10** For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, *and* not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. 2For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins. 3But in those *sacrifices there is* a reminder of sins every year. 4For *it is* not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.

## CHRIST'S DEATH FULFILLS GOD'S WILL

5Therefore, when He came into the world, He said:

"Sacrifice and offering You did not desire,
But a body You have prepared for Me.
6 In burnt offerings and *sacrifices* for sin
You had no pleasure.
7 Then I said, 'Behold, I have come-
In the volume of the book it is written of Me-
To do Your will, O God.' "[a]

8 Peviously saying, "Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and *offerings* for sin You did not desire, nor had pleasure *in them* " (which are offered according to the law), 9then He said, "Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God."[a] He takes away the first that He may establish the second. 10By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all.*

## CHRIST'S DEATH PERFECTS THE SANCTIFIED

11And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. 12But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, 13from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. 14For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.

15But the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us; for after He had said before,

16 “This *is* the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says
the LORD: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write
them,”[a] 17 *then He adds,* “Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember
no more.”[a] 18 Now where there is remission of these, *there is* no longer an
offering for sin.

## HOLD FAST YOUR CONFESSION

19 Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of
Jesus, 20 by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the
veil, that is, His flesh, 21 and *having* a High Priest over the house of God, 22 let
us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts
sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.
23 Let us hold fast the confession of *our* hope without wavering, for He who
promised *is* faithful. 24 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love
and good works, 25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as *is*
the manner of some, but exhorting *one another,* and so much the more as you
see the Day approaching.

## THE JUST LIVE BY FAITH

26 For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth,
there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, 27 but a certain fearful expectation
of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries.
28 Anyone who has rejected Moses’ law dies without mercy on the testimony
of two or three witnesses. 29 Of how much worse punishment, do you
suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God
underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a
common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? 30 For we know Him who
said, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,”[a] says the Lord.[b] And again, “The
LORD will judge His people.”[c] 31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of
the living God.

32 But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you
endured a great struggle with sufferings: 33 partly while you were made a
spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became

companions of those who were so treated; [34]for you had compassion on me[a] in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven.[b] [35]Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. [36]For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise:

[37] "For yet a little while,
*And* He[a] who is coming will come and will not tarry.
[38] Now the[a] just shall live by faith;
But if *anyone* draws back,
My soul has no pleasure in him."[b]
[39]But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.

"Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him."
HEBREWS 10:38

And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works.
HEBREWS 10:24

**KEY PASSAGE**

# GOD'S WORK

# (10:12-14)

Everyone would like to look perfect, act perfect, and do perfect work. Aside from a few people receiving "perfect" scores at the Olympics, most of us will find perfection elusive in every area of life. No matter how much we try, we fail. If we seek to live the perfect Christian life, our thoughts or attitudes will trip us up before we even get out of bed in the morning!

So what does it mean for believers that Christ's sacrifice "perfected forever those who are being sanctified"? Believers have been made perfect in God's eyes because of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. At the same time, however, we are "being sanctified," being made perfect and holy progressively through our walk with Him. We are considered perfect, even though we have a long way to go. As we let God work in us, He perfects us. Instead of measuring perfection by worldly standards, we should seek to obey God, looking forward to the day when He will finally make us perfect for life with Him in our perfect eternal home.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Perfectionism. See also the personality profile of Paul's Imperfect Perfection.

## PERFECTIONISM

CHRIS THURMAN

(HEBREWS 10:1)

**F**ew ways of thinking are as harmful as perfectionism. Perfectionists believe that they should never make mistakes and that it is a

catastrophe when they do. They tend to become quite upset when people or situations are out of their control and don't go the way they "should." They expect more from themselves and others than is reasonable and often become angry and bitter as a result. Though perfectionism in people is fairly common, it carries a high price tag in terms of causing emotional problems, relationship difficulties, and spiritual burnout.

**WHAT IS PERFECTIONISM?**

Two perspectives are helpful to consider when defining perfectionism.

Theologically, perfectionism is the destructive belief that people can be equal to God. Specifically, perfectionistic people think they should be all-knowing (omniscient), all-powerful (omnipotent), and everywhere at once (omnipresent). When people think they should know everything, they beat themselves up for mistakes. When they think they should be totally powerful, they become upset when things are out of their control. When they believe that they should accomplish the work of ten people in a given day, they become depressed and discouraged over what "little" they did accomplish. While God calls us to be "perfect," it is an ideal that He is asking us to move in the direction of, not something we can literally be. Only God knows it all, controls it all, and fills up the universe with His presence. Finite human beings know very little, can't control others, and can only accomplish the work of one person on a given day. God accepts that about us, and we need to as well.

Psychologically, perfectionism has several facets as well. Perfectionists are *idealistic* in that they frequently think about how things "should" be, not how they really are. Perfectionists set *impossibly high goals* which lead to discouragement, failure, and ultimately quitting. They are *product- minded*, believing that contentment, happiness, and a sense of accomplishment are not permissible until their current project or activity has been completed.

The "process" is overlooked because the end result has not been reached, thus there is no "joy in the journey." Perfectionists often feel that they have to *be the best* at what they do. To simply do one's best is not good enough. Perfectionists also *equate their worth with their performance*. They only feel worthwhile as people if they perform well. Since day-to-day performance in various areas of life fluctuates, a perfectionist's sense of worth fluctuates as well.

The theological and psychological components of perfectionism destroy any chance people have at an emotionally and spiritually healthy life. So what can be done to help the perfectionist?

## HOW TO DEFEAT PERFECTIONISM

Several steps can be taken to help perfectionists become more realistic in their view of life and personal abilities.

•*Be humble*-Perfectionists must humble themselves before God and repent of being prideful enough to think they can be His equal.

•*Be reality-focused*-Perfectionists need to face life as it really is, not focus on how it "should" be.

•*Set attainable goals*-Perfectionists need to set goals that are small, realistic, and achievable in the here and now. Long-term goals need to be broken into short-term, tangible goals.

•*Set reasonable time limits*-Spending too much time on an activity in order to do it perfectly needs to be replaced with prioritizing activities so that each is given a reasonable amount of time.

•*Accept doing "good enough" on certain tasks*-Given the number of tasks people must complete each day, not every one of those tasks has to be, or can be, done exceptionally well. In areas of less importance, perfectionists need to allow themselves to do "good enough" and move on to the next task.

•*Stop black-white thinking*-Thinking in all-or-nothing terms often makes perfectionists miss the shade of gray in a given situation. By not thinking in extremes, perfectionists can have a more accurate perspective.

•*Learn from mistakes*-Everyone makes mistakes. The key is to learn from the mistakes.

•*Confess sin to others*-Acknowledging imperfections to others (rather than keeping them secret) can help release people from the pull of perfectionism. By sharing moral imperfections and personality flaws, perfectionists invite others to see them as they really are. Living a more transparent life builds healthy relationships and is critical for personal growth.

•*Find joy in the journey*-Becoming more like Christ is a process. Each step people take toward being more mature is pleasing to God and is a step further than where they were before. Perfectionists need to take time to stop and enjoy where they are in life.

•*Find worth in God*-Perfectionists need to find their worth not in what they do or how well they do it, but in being God's creation.

Knowing the theological and psychological aspects of perfectionism is only the beginning. Perfectionists must continue to grow in their knowledge of and love for Christ. Perfectionists must remember Paul's words, "Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on" (Phil. 3:12). God will bless them as they seek to live for Him every day.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of perfectionism include:

• Proverbs 16:18

• 2 Corinthians 12:9

- Galatians 3:3; 5:16
- Philippians 1:6; 2:12; 3:1-9
- Colossians 2:16-23

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on perfectionism at Hebrews 10:12-14. See also the personality profile of Paul's Imperfect Perfection.

## BY FAITH WE UNDERSTAND

**11** Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not
seen. [2]For by it the elders obtained a *good* testimony.

[3]By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God,
so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.

## FAITH AT THE DAWN OF HISTORY

[4]By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through
which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts;
and through it he being dead still speaks.

[5]By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, "and was not
found, because God had taken him";[a] for before he was taken he had this
testimony, that he pleased God. [6]But without faith *it is* impossible to please
*Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a
rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

[7]By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with
godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he
condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is
according to faith.

## FAITHFUL ABRAHAM

[8]By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which
he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he
was going. [9]By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as *in* a foreign country,
dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same
promise; [10]for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder
and maker *is* God.

[11]By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she
bore a child[a] when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful
who had promised. [12]Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were
born *as many* as the stars of the sky in multitude-innumerable as the sand
which is by the seashore.

**THE HEAVENLY HOPE**

13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having
seen them afar off were assured of them,[a] embraced *them* and confessed that
they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. 14For those who say such
things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. 15And truly if they had
called to mind that *country* from which they had come out, they would have
had opportunity to return. 16But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly
*country.* Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has
prepared a city for them.

**THE FAITH OF THE PATRIARCHS**

17By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had
received the promises offered up his only begotten *son*, 18of whom it was
said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called,"[a] 19concluding that God *was* able to
raise *him* up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a
figurative sense.

20By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.

21By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph,
and worshiped, *leaning* on the top of his staff.

22By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departure of
the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones.

**THE FAITH OF MOSES**

23By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his
parents, because they saw *he was* a beautiful child; and they were not afraid
of the king's command.

24By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of
Pharaoh's daughter, 25choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of
God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, 26esteeming the reproach of
Christ greater riches than the treasures in[a] Egypt; for he looked to the reward.

27By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he
endured as seeing Him who is invisible. 28By faith he kept the Passover and

the sprinkling of blood, lest he who destroyed the firstborn should touch them.

29By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry *land*, *whereas* the Egyptians, attempting *to do* so, were drowned.

**BY FAITH THEY OVERCAME**

30By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days.31By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace.

32And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also *of* David and Samuel and the prophets: 33who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, 34quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. 35Women received their dead raised to life again.

Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection.

36Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. 37They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted,[a] were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented-38of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, *in* dens and caves of the earth.

39And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, 40God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.

**KEY PASSAGE**

# UNSEEN YET VERY REAL

## (11:1-6)

To have faith means more than just to believe. Hebrews defines faith as “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Faith starts out certain. When people believe that God will fulfill His promises, they are showing true faith-even when they don’t see evidence despite trusting in the character of God, believing His promises, and knowing that His rewards are sure. Jesus said to Thomas, “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed” (John 20:29).

When people have faith in God, they know without a doubt that He will keep His promises. They live and make choices in this world based on the unseen reality of their future home in heaven. They persevere in their faith despite pain, hardship, or persecution, because they are convinced that the unseen God is with them. In short, faith in God makes all the difference, both now and for eternity.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Faith. See also the personality profile of Abraham: Stepping Out On Faith.

### SOUL NOTE

**Believe** *(11:6)* Many people claim to believe in God, but do they really *know* Him? To know God requires faith-a willingness to believe that though unseen, God exists; a willingness to trust that though unseen, His rewards are certain. When people have faith, they discover that they can have a personal relationship with God through trusting in His Son, the Savior sent as a provision for their sins. Do

you simply believe that there is a God, or do you have a personal relationship with Him? There's a big difference. **Topic: Knowing God**

**FAITH**

# JERRY FALWELL

## (HEBREWS 11:6)

**F**aith is the most important element in life-for without it, it is impossible to please God. At the core, faith is an act of trust by which we commit ourselves to someone or something. Faith is believing. Believing in the object of our trust. Believing in ourselves. Believing in another person. Ultimately, believing in God.

Faith is so important that it is mentioned over three hundred times in the Bible. The first reference to believing in God is found in the story of Abraham. The Scripture says that Abraham "believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness" (Gen. 15:6). This particular step of faith is so significant that the above statement is repeated three times in the New Testament (Rom. 4:3; Gal. 3:6; James 2:23).

### OBJECT OF OUR FAITH

The power of our faith rests in the object of our faith. At the foundation of all love is a belief in the object that is loved. If we do not believe in a person, we cannot love him or her. The same is true in our spiritual journey. We must begin with God: believing that He

exists, believing that He cares, and believing that His love is real.

The New Testament term for faith (Greek, *pistis* ) means a "firm persuasion." It is a belief or conviction based on confidence in God's promises. The Old Testament word for faith is *'aman*, meaning to "establish" or "confirm." It is the basis of the word *amen,* which comes from the same root. The main elements of faith involve an acknowledgment of God's revealed truth and a personal surrender to Him. The object of Abraham's faith was not just the promise of God; his faith rested in God Himself. The key to the Christian life is our faith in Jesus Christ and His sacrificial and atoning death for our sins. We not only believe that He died on the Cross as a fact of history, but we believe that He died for our sins personally.

Our salvation is "by grace . . . through faith" (Eph. 2:8). It is based on God's grace and experienced personally by faith in Him. He is the object of our faith and His death for our sins makes possible the forgiveness of our sins. When we trust what Jesus did for us on the Cross, we receive the gift of eternal life (John 3:16-18). God has done for us what we could not do for ourselves. So He tells us to stop trying to save ourselves and trust what He has already done for us as a sufficient payment for our sins.

## REWARD OF OUR FAITH

Faith is the key that unlocks the door of heaven. Hebrews 11:6 reminds us, "Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." Romans 1:16, 17 adds, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes . . . as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith.'"

Faith is also the key to getting our prayers answered. When the desperate woman touched Jesus for healing, He re-sponded: "Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace, and be healed

of your affliction" (Mark 5:34). Jesus also said: "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you" (Matt. 7:7). We cannot make God answer our prayers because we don't always see His complete will and purpose in our lives. But generally there is a correlation to our faith and His response.

Hebrews 11 lists the Old Testament heroes of the faith. Each one trusted God in a unique way. Their confidence in God's promises resulted in personal obedience to His will for their lives. They clung to the hope that God would eventually triumph over what was challenging them. Thus, Abraham obeyed, Sarah conceived, Isaac blessed, Jacob worshiped, Joseph instructed, Moses forsook Egypt, and the children of Israel passed through the Red Sea on their way to the Promised Land (Heb. 11:8-29).

**EVIDENCE OF OUR FAITH**

James reminds us that saving faith and righteous works go hand in hand (James 2:14-24). Neither can be isolated from the other. Faith is the *root* of our salvation; good works are the *fruit* of our salvation. Works alone cannot save us. They are the result of our salvation and not the cause of it. Just as an apple tree will bear apples, so faith will produce good works: "For a good tree does not bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. For every tree is known by its own fruit" (Luke 6:43, 44).

Faith and works go hand in hand. We are saved by faith alone in what Jesus has done for us. But saving faith, if it is real, will result in faithfulness. The evidence of such faith will be demonstrated by the changes it produces in our lives. When someone truly believes in Jesus Christ, their belief will change the way they live. Faith certainly changed the lives of people in biblical times. And it is still changing lives today.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of faith include:

- Habakkuk 2:4
- Matthew 6:30-34
- Luke 17:5
- Romans 3:22-28; 5:1
- 2 Timothy 4:7
- Hebrews 12:2
- 2 Peter 1:1-9

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on faith at Hebrews 11:1-6. See also the personality profile of Abraham: Stepping Out On Faith.

## THE RACE OF FAITH

**12** Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares *us*, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

## THE DISCIPLINE OF GOD

3 For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. 4 You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin. 5 And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons:

> For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.
> HEBREWS 12:3

*"My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD,*
*Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him;*
6 *For whom the LORD loves He chastens,*
*And scourges every son whom He receives."*[a]

7 If[a] you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? 8 But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. 9 Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected *us*, and we paid *them* respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? 10 For they indeed for a few days chastened *us* as seemed *best* to them, but He for *our* profit, that *we* may be partakers of His holiness. 11 Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

## RENEW YOUR SPIRITUAL VITALITY

12 Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees,
13 and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed.

14 Pursue peace with all *people,* and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord:
15 looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled;
16 lest there *be* any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright.
17 For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears.

## THE GLORIOUS COMPANY

18 For you have not come to the mountain that[a] may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness[b] and tempest,
19 and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, so that those who heard *it* begged that the word should not be spoken to them anymore.
20 (For they could not endure what was commanded: "And if so much as a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned[a] or shot with an arrow."[b]
21 And so terrifying was the sight *that* Moses said, "I am exceedingly afraid and trembling."[a] )

22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels,
23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn *who are* registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect,
24 to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than *that of* Abel.

## HEAR THE HEAVENLY VOICE

25 See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more *shall we not escape* if we turn away from Him who *speaks* from heaven,
26 whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I shake[a] not only the earth, but also heaven."[b]
27 Now this, "Yet once more," indicates the removal

of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain.

[28]Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may[a] serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. [29]For our God *is* a consuming fire.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Get in the Race** *(12:1-4)* In order to run well, runners must let go of any weights that slow them down and just focus on the finish line. Likewise, believers must set aside any weight of sin in order to "run with endurance" toward the finish line of life. We know we'll finish, because the Savior is "the author and finisher of our faith," and He stands at the finish line to welcome us into eternity. When the hurdles of life are looming ahead of us and when the race seems too difficult, we need to get our eyes fixed on Jesus. **Topic: Faith**

**SOUL NOTE**

**For Our Good** *(12:5-11)* Children don't enjoy discipline. But parents know that tough discipline is sometimes required in order to teach an important lesson. The same is true for God's children. Though they love God, believers are sometimes disobedient-rebelling against His rules. God's discipline proves that He loves His Discipline may come in the form of consequences, pain, or trials, but its goal is to children. Discipline may come in the form of consequences, pain, or trials, but its goal is to mold and shape us. Like a loving Father, God disciplines

us because He wants to keep us safe and help us mature. **Topic:** **Child Discipline**

**KEY PASSAGE**

# WEED IT OUT

## (12:12-29)

Believers need to look out for each other-helping those who are feeling weak and guiding those who are heading in the wrong direction. This will guard against “any root of bitterness” that might spring up within the fellowship. This phrase may refer to the bitterness of unbelief that can poison a church and the bitterness between people that can poison relationships.

Bitterness, once planted, tends to grow quickly and cause trouble. Bitterness that is allowed to take root in our lives will spring up into actions and words that cannot be taken back. Believers can avoid the root of bitterness by dealing with their feelings immediately. When hurt or doubt are allowed to remain in one’s life, they provide hospitable soil for the root of bitterness. With God’s help, we can keep that root from having a place to grow, and if bitterness has already taken root, weed it out.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Bitterness. See also the personality profile of Saul And The Poison Of Bitter Fruit.

## CONCLUDING MORAL DIRECTIONS

**13** Let brotherly love continue. [2]Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by
so *doing* some have unwittingly entertained angels. [3]Remember the
prisoners as if chained with them-those who are mistreated-since you
yourselves are in the body also.

[4]Marriage *is* honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators
and adulterers God will judge.

[5]*Let your* conduct *be* without covetousness; *be* content with such things as
you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."[a]
[6]So we may boldly say:

> *"The* LORD *is my helper;*
> *I will not fear.*
> *What can man do to me?"*[a]

## CONCLUDING RELIGIOUS DIRECTIONS

[7]Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to
you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of *their* conduct. [8]Jesus
Christ *is* the same yesterday, today, and forever. [9]Do not be carried about[a]
with various and strange doctrines. For *it is* good that the heart be established
by grace, not with foods which have not profited those who have been
occupied with them.

[10]We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no
right to eat. [11]For the bodies of those animals, whose blood is brought into
the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp.
[12]Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood,
suffered outside the gate. [13]Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the
camp, bearing His reproach. [14]For here we have no continuing city, but we
seek the one to come. [15]Therefore by Him let us continually offer the
sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of *our* lips, giving thanks to His
name. [16]But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices
God is well pleased.

[17]Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.
HEBREWS 13:8

**PRAYER REQUESTED**

[18]Pray for us; for we are confident that we have a good conscience, in all things desiring to live honorably. [19]But I especially urge *you* to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.

**BENEDICTION, FINAL EXHORTATION, FAREWELL**

[20]Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, [21]make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you[a] what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom *be* glory forever and ever. Amen.

[22]And I appeal to you, brethren, bear with the word of exhortation, for I have written to you in few words. [23]Know that *our* brother Timothy has been set free, with whom I shall see you if he comes shortly.

[24]Greet all those who rule over you, and all the saints. Those from Italy greet you.

[25]Grace *be* with you all. Amen.

**KEY PASSAGE**

INTIMACY

## (13:4)

God created sex and designed it to be enjoyed within the confines of the marriage relationship. God doesn't pervert sex; people do. To God, "marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled." Along with the characteristics that make for all good relationships-such as speaking kindly, being patient, listening carefully, etc.-marriage alone provides the opportunity for a man and woman to experience what God intends for their pleasure.

Married couples should also protect their sexual relationship because God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterers. Immorality and adultery destroy marriages by cheapening the intimate act of sex. Because sex creates such a unique bond, immorality and adultery cause pain and devastation in a marriage.

Believers must seek to strengthen their marriages and not deprive each other of the sexual intimacy that unites them (1 Cor. 7:3-5). They should guard that aspect of their life together, making time to be with each other and to renew their intimacy.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Sex In Marriage. See also the personality profile of Solomon And The Shulamite: The Language Of True Love.

### SOUL NOTE

**God Is There** *(13:5)* Loneliness is part of the human experience. But being alone is different from being lonely. When people feel lonely, they feel like they don't belong, like no one cares, unloved and unwanted. When believers feel lonely, they need to remember God's great promise, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." No matter

how painful or difficult our situation, no matter how alone we feel, God is there. We can look to Him for deliverance, commit the situation to His care, and take comfort in His presence. God is always with us. **Topic: Loneliness**

## SOUL NOTE

**Loving Shepherds** *(13:17)* The words, "obey those who rule over you," refer to believers obeying their spiritual authorities-pastors, elders, teachers, and so forth. Wise and godly leaders, called by God into positions of spiritual authority, have the heavy responsibility to "give account" to God as they care for the souls and spiritual growth of those in their care. Many leaders face a constant stream of turmoil, complaints, and judgmentalism. We can ease their burden by praying for them, encouraging them, and seeking to be helpful and supportive. **Topic: Obedience**

# James



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# James

A sportswear company has one of the most successful advertising slogans ens ever: “Just do it!” In fact, it has become part of international pop culture. Everyone knows it’s a call to action-to get moving and get in shape. You might say that “Just do it!” is also a pretty good summary of the Book of James-and not a bad slogan for the Christian life.

James, a half brother of Jesus, became a leader of the church at Jerusalem (Acts 15:13). Written around A.D. 46, the Book of James is a package of succinct observations about the relationship between faith and practice. It’s the most practical of all New Testament letters. “Faith without works is dead,” James declares (2:20), in effect telling us to practice what we preach. His point is that believers should demonstrate their beliefs by the way they behave (2:18-26). James deals with such down-to-earth, everyday issues as hypocrisy, gossip, materialism, worldly wisdom, and prayer. He reminds us that pride is the source of all conflicts, and that humility is the key to a successful Christian life. “Submit to God . . . draw near to God . . . humble yourselves,” he urges, for God “will lift you up” (4:7-10).

This convicting and challenging letter makes it clear that people will never really know what Christians believe until they see the manner in which they live. Like a simple “how to” manual for Christian living, the Book of James commands us to “Just do it!”-to get moving, to get our souls in shape, and then to put our faith on display through Christlike actions.

**SOUL CONCERNS IN**

## JAMES

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HEALING/RECOVERY (5:14)

## GREETING TO THE TWELVE TRIBES

**1** James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,

To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad:

Greetings.

## PROFITING FROM TRIALS

[2]My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, [3]knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. [4]But let patience have *its* perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. [5]If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. [6]But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. [7]For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; [8]*he is* a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

## THE PERSPECTIVE OF RICH AND POOR

[9]Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation, [10]but the rich in his humiliation, because as a flower of the field he will pass away. [11]For no sooner has the sun risen with a burning heat than it withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beautiful appearance perishes. So the rich man also will fade away in his pursuits.

## LOVING GOD UNDER TRIALS

[12]Blessed *is* the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. [13]Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. [14]But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. [15]Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

[16]Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. [17]Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with

whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. [18]Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures.

## QUALITIES NEEDED IN TRIALS

[19]So then,[a] my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; [20]for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

## DOERS-NOT HEARERS ONLY

[21]Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

[22]But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. [23]For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror;

[24]for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.

[25]But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues *in it*, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.

[26]If anyone among you[a] thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion *is* useless. [27]Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, *and* to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.
JAMES 1:21

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# JAMES: GRACE UNDER FIRE

## (JAMES 1)

Older brothers often influence their younger brothers profoundly, and it can be stressful on a younger brother if the older brother has many skills and abilities. Imagine the stress of having a *perfect* older brother-literally. James did, and His name was Jesus.

Jesus apparently had several brothers, none of whom believed in Him during His ministry (John 7:5). Eventually, however, Jesus' brothers came around and were present at Pentecost (Acts 1:14). (Jesus' brother James is not to be confused with the two disciples of the same name.)

James received a special resurrection appearance from his Brother (1 Cor. 15:7). Clearly, Jesus had special work for James to do: Leading the newborn Christian church in Jerusalem. James became one of the "pillars" of that fellowship, along with Peter and John (Gal. 2:9). With leadership, however, comes stress, and leading the large church in Jerusalem was no exception.

The record in the Book of Acts describes conflict, persecution, martyrdom, imprisonment, famine, and many other painful trials for the Jerusalem believers. Fortunately, the church had clearheaded leaders to handle these stresses wisely and to help the believers remain faithful. James's wisdom showed as he handled one of the most difficult conflicts the young church would face-the issue of

whether Jews and Gentiles could be Christians together and worship together. His logical thinking and godly wisdom revealed in his decision about this matter unified the young church, making it stronger than ever (Acts 15).

Therefore, James knew what he was talking about when he wrote, "Count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience" (James 1:2, 3). His advice for dealing with the stresses of life was apparently advice he himself followed-ask God for wisdom, and don't doubt that He will give it.

Stress cannot be avoided, but it can become a teaching tool in our lives when we let God have control. Ask Him for wisdom, trust Him for guidance, and love Him no matter what.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about stress Stress Management. See also the key passage note at 2 Corinthians 4:9.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Joy-Full** *(1:2-4)* James, the leader of the church in Jerusalem, advised believers to be joyful during trials and troubles. Everyone faces trials in one form or another. We cannot control what we will encounter, but we can control the stress level that situations cause. Instead of being stressed, we can try being joyful. This is not a natural reaction, but one that the Holy Spirit can provide. It means choosing an attitude that looks expectantly to the lessons God will teach and the wisdom He will provide. There's no better prescription for dealing with stress! **Topic: Stress**

**KEY PASSAGE**

# ASKING FOR IT

# (1:5)

People admire wisdom in others. Wise people have the proper perspective and can make sensible and sensitive decisions. Such people seem to be few and far between. Among believers, however, the percentage of wise people should be high, for James writes, “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God . . . and it will be given to him.”

Wisdom begins with God, who is its source. The first step to being wise is to have proper awe and reverence for God, and then to trust Him with one’s life. We become wiser as we become more and more like Christ. God’s wisdom is “pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy” (James 3:17). As we study and apply God’s Word, yielding our lives daily to Christ, we need only ask God to give us His wisdom, and He promises He will.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Wisdom. See also the personality profile of Solomon: Having Wisdom Vs. Using Wisdom.

## SOUL NOTE

**Make Up Your Mind** *(1:5)* Life is full of choices: The "right" choice is not always clear, and the enemy of the better is often the good. Sometimes we must choose between two good options. Whatever the choice, we need God's wisdom to see life from His perspective and make good decisions in difficult circumstances. Fortunately, wisdom is fairly easy to obtain: James says to ask God and He will freely give it. God will generously supply all the wisdom we need for every decision we face. But when we ask, we need to be willing to do what He says! **Topic: Decision Making**

## SOUL NOTE

**Strength to Resist** *(1:12-15)* Temptation comes from evil desires inside us, not from God. It begins with an evil thought that becomes sin when we act on it. God does not tempt His people, but He will allow Satan to tempt us in order for us to refine our faith and grow in our dependence on God. And He will not allow us to be tempted more than we can bear (1 Cor. 10:13). When temptation raises its head, often unexpectedly, we can resist it by counting the costs and turning to God, asking Him for help, and choosing to obey Him. He will give us the strength we need. **Topic: Temptation**

## SOUL NOTE

**Listen Up** *(1:19)* Communication is more than just talking. If two

people are talking at the same time, they aren't communicating- they're just making noise. Communication involves both parties taking turns speaking and listening. Good communication, wrote James, occurs when people are quicker to listen than they are to speak. We want to speak and make our opinions known, but we must also be willing to listen to others. We show respect for others when we listen intently and then speak carefully. **Topic: Communication**

## SOUL NOTE

**Do It!** *(1:22)* Many people sit in church and listen to the sermon, only to forget what they heard upon exiting the sanctuary. James says, "Be doers of the word, and not hearers only." It is important to read, listen to, and know God's Word, but it is also important to obey it. We can measure the effectiveness of our Bible study and attentiveness to the Sunday sermon by our behavior and attitudes during the entire week. How much is our faith affecting how we live? It should make a huge difference, for "faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead" (2:17). **Topic: Change/Maturity**

## KEY PASSAGE

# FOR THE CHILDREN

# (1:27)

From politics to book titles, people regularly express their concern for children. Whatever the motives of others might be, believers should be leading the way in showing compassion toward the helpless in society. To “visit orphans and widows in their trouble,” wrote James, reveals a person’s “pure and undefiled religion before God.” Caring for orphans, helpless children, was a high priority in the early church and a mark of true Christian discipleship.

When children face difficult problems in their homes, believers need to understand the great impact they can have in a child’s life. Many solid believers trace their faith, not to their parents, but to another loving Christian adult.

In many cases, the problems may require professional intervention. Many times, however, coming alongside as a friend or supportive adult can help a child with problems to feel loved and gain self-esteem. When we direct them toward Jesus, we have given them the best gift of all. In whatever way we can, it’s our duty to care for the “orphans” among us.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about children problems Problems In Children. See also the personality profile of Tamar-a Legacy Of Trials.

## BEWARE OF PERSONAL FAVORITISM

**2** My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, *the Lord* of glory, with partiality. [2]For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes, [3]and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, "You sit here in a good place," and say to the poor man, "You stand there," or, "Sit here at my footstool," [4]have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?

[5]Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world *to be* rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? [6]But you have dishonored the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts? [7]Do they not blaspheme that noble name by which you are called?

[8]If you really fulfill *the* royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself,"[a] you do well; [9]but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors. [10]For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one *point*, he is guilty of all. [11]For He who said, "Do not commit adultery,"[a] also said, "Do not murder."[b] Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. [12]So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty. [13]For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

## FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD

[14]What *does it* profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? [15]If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, [16]and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what *does it* profit? [17]Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

[18]But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your[a] works, and I will show you my faith by my[b] works.

19 You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe-
and tremble! 20 But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without
works is dead?[a] 21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he
offered Isaac his son on the altar? 22 Do you see that faith was working
together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? 23 And the
Scripture was fulfilled which says, “Abraham believed God, and it was
accounted to him for righteousness.”[a] And he was called the friend of God.

24 You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.

25 Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she
received the messengers and sent *them* out another way?

26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead
also.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Playing Favorites** *(2:1-9)* James warned the believers against showing prejudice. They were not to fawn over a rich person while ignoring a poor one. People often want to be associated with those who are successful, popular, and powerful. God demands impartiality, however, for all people are equally valuable in His eyes. Favoritism goes against God’s command to love one’s neighbor as oneself. He wants us to respect all people and treat them equally, regardless of their background or economic status. Each person is God’s creation. **Topic: Prejudice**

# A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO PREJUDICE

SABRINA D. BLACK AND PARIS M. FINNER-WILLIAMS

(James 2:1-9)

**U**nreasonable. Intolerant. Unjust. Thoughts. Opinions. Attitudes. Prejudice is symbolized by a number of terse descriptions. At its basic level, prejudice describes a person or group that is predisposed to make premature judgments toward other individuals or groups without a fair review of the objective facts. Prejudice can hide under the surface as hostile and resentful feelings and can manifest itself as an unfounded dislike of certain people. Christians, however, are called to respond differently to the stronghold of prejudice, with Christ as the power source for change.

## THE EFFECTS OF PREJUDICE

Prejudice is incompatible with a godly spirit. A spirit of prejudice negatively affects the way people relate to others and the way they perceive situations. For example, prejudiced people short-circuit the fellowship that God intends for His children to share because they refuse involvement with situations and groups of people who are different. Prejudice can lead to strongholds or patterns that make it difficult to be reasonable, just, and tolerant of others.

Personal prejudice can have a negative impact on the way people see themselves, too. If people see themselves as uniquely separate from others because of prejudice, they create a false idea of themselves. Prejudice can also affect people's relationship with God. Ungodly behavior, thoughts, and attitudes lead them further away from becoming like Christ.

Prejudice can lead to discrimination. Prejudice is attitudes, thoughts, or opinions; discrimination puts those attitudes, thoughts, and opinions into action. Discriminating behavior and negative actions violate the substantial rights, privileges, and equal protection granted to others by the laws of the land and mandated by Scripture. Not all prejudgment, however, will result in discriminatory behavior and actions. People do not have to outwardly discriminate against others in order for prejudice to be dormant in their hearts.

*God's Nature*

Many may argue that prejudice is a matter of personal opinion. "I can't help the way I feel." However, Christians are instructed to exercise personal choices based on what they see in the character of God. "Now therefore, let the fear of the LORD be upon you . . . for there is no iniquity with the LORD our God, no partiality, nor taking of bribes" (2 Chr. 19:7).

The Bible says that God does not show favoritism: "There is no partiality with God" (Rom. 2:11). His unbiased nature toward a diverse world is the foundation of John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." Imagine the diversity of the entire created world. The differences in race, culture, shape, size, religion, occupation, and interest are too numerous to count. However, imitating God's nature, Christians can learn to love like God and celebrate the diversity of the world without partiality.

*God's Instructions*

As the love of God flows through Christians, they are drawn together as a body and begin to relate to one another as instructed in the Bible. In the New Testament alone, there are dozens of references to how Christians should relate to "one another." For example:

- "be kindly affectionate to one another" (Rom. 12:10);

- “be of the same mind toward one another” (Rom. 12:16);
- “love one another” (Rom. 13:8);
- “pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another” (Rom. 14:19);
- “the members should have the same care for one another” (1 Cor. 12:25).
- “through love serve one another” (Gal. 5:13);
- “be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another” (Eph. 4:32);
- “bearing with one another, and forgiving one another” (Col. 3:13).

Prejudice causes the whole body of Christ to suffer. “For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ” (1 Cor. 12:12). In the unified body of Christ, there is no allowance for prejudiced attitudes and biased opinions. Such ungodliness turns members of Christ’s body against themselves.

## ELIMINATING PREJUDICE

People who wish to overcome prejudice need to have renewed minds (Eph. 4:23) by studying the Word of God and acquiring the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:5). As a result, Christ enables them to remove bias, discrimination, division, fear, anxiety, and judgment from their personal thoughts. In exchange, Christ helps them to exhibit impartiality, acceptance, unity, faith, love, peace, honor, hope, and humility.

Although a world without prejudice may be impossible, we as Christians are to demonstrate impartiality in our individual lives. First, we must remember that we are fearfully and wonderfully made- and so are others (Ps. 139:14). We must look past the outward differences and see the beauty of God’s creation. We must increase

our exposure toward those who are different in order to engender feelings of similarity instead of feelings of separation. We can confess and acknowledge our sin to God when we have not responded to all people in a Christlike manner. We can also ask Him to forgive us and help us have a renewed mind that demonstrates our repentance concerning prejudicial attitudes and actions. Eliminating prejudice begins one life at a time.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of prejudice include:

- 1 Samuel 16:7
- Proverbs 14:31
- Luke 10:29-37
- 1 Timothy 4:12-5:1

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on prejudice at Esther 3:6. See also the personality profile of Haman's Prejudice: Playing With Fire.

## THE UNTAMABLE TONGUE

**3** My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall
receive a stricter judgment. [2]For we all stumble in many things. If anyone
does not stumble in word, he *is* a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole
body. [3]Indeed,[a] we put bits in horses' mouths that they may obey us, and we
turn their whole body. [4]Look also at ships: although they are so large and are
driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the
pilot desires. [5]Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things.

See how great a forest a little fire kindles! [6]And the tongue *is* a fire, a
world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the
whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell.
[7]For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed
and has been tamed by mankind. [8]But no man can tame the tongue. *It is* an
unruly evil, full of deadly poison. [9]With it we bless our God and Father, and
with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. [10]Out of
the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things
ought not to be so. [11]Does a spring send forth fresh *water* and bitter from the
same opening? [12]Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear
figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh.[a]

## HEAVENLY VERSUS DEMONIC WISDOM

[13]Who *is* wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good
conduct *that* his works *are done* in the meekness of wisdom. [14]But if you
have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against
the truth. [15]This wisdom does not descend from above, but *is* earthly, sensual,
demonic. [16]For where envy and self-seeking *exist,* confusion and every evil
thing *are* there. [17]But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then
peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without
partiality and without hypocrisy. [18]Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in
peace by those who make peace.

## SOUL NOTE

**Before You Speak** *(3:5-10)* James compares the damage the tongue can do to a raging fire. People dare not be careless in what they say, thinking they can apologize later, because hurtful words cause deep wounds and lasting scars. A few words spoken in anger can destroy a relationship that it took years to build. Before speaking, we would do well to picture our tongues as sparks that can start a destructive fire and cause irreversible damage. Kind words, however, can build up the spirit and strengthen the bonds of friendship and love. The tongue may be small, but it can cause great harm or do great good. Which it does is up to us. **Topic: Communication**

## KEY PASSAGE

# A DANGEROUS SPARK

# (3:5-18)

Gossip is idle talk or the spread of rumors about the private affairs of others. Seldom is gossip helpful and uplifting; rather, it usually centers around less-than-positive information or rumors. Even if what is being spread is true, the person passing the information along usually has less-than-positive motives. The Bible says that “a whisperer separates the best of friends,” “reveals secrets,” and causes

"strife" (Prov. 16:28; 20:19; 26:20). The gossip's words, like a spark on dry timber, can create a firestorm that destroys friendships, relationships, and reputations.

Christians can use their time and words more wisely than by listening to or spreading rumors and half-truths. When the local gossip calls to talk, we can let the person know, clearly and finally, that we will not listen. When we're talking about other people, we should pass our words through an inner filter of truthfulness, kindness, and love. We ought to train ourselves to not listen to or pass along gossip, for the consequences are far too hurtful to others.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about gossip The Power Of Gossip. See also the personality profile of Diotrephes: Talking Too Much.

## PRIDE PROMOTES STRIFE

**4** Where do wars and fights *come* from among you? Do *they* not *come* from
your *desires for* pleasure that war in your members? [2]You lust and do not
have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet[a] you
do not have because you do not ask. [3]You ask and do not receive, because
you ask amiss, that you may spend *it* on your pleasures. [4]Adulterers and[a]
adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with
God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an
enemy of God. [5]Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit
who dwells in us yearns jealously"?

[6]But He gives more grace. Therefore He says:

"God resists the proud,

But gives grace to the humble."[a]

## HUMILITY CURES WORLDLINESS

[7]Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.
[8]Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse *your* hands, *you*
sinners; and purify *your* hearts, *you* double-minded. [9]Lament and mourn and
weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and *your* joy to gloom.
[10]Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.

> Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.
> JAMES 4:8

## DO NOT JUDGE A BROTHER

[11]Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a
brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But
if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. [12]There is one
Lawgiver,[a] who is able to save and to destroy. Who[b] are you to judge
another?[c]

**DO NOT BOAST ABOUT TOMORROW**

13 Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will[a] go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit”;14 whereas you do not know what *will happen* tomorrow. For what *is* your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. 15 Instead you *ought* to say, “If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.” 16 But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.

17 Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do *it,* to him it is sin.

**KEY PASSAGE**

# BEFORE A FALL

# (4:6-10)

The Bible consistently warns against pride. “God resists the proud,” writes James. Pride brings shame, strife, and foolishness (Prov. 11:2; 13:10; 14:3). Proud people are “an abomination” for “pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall” (Prov. 16:5, 18).

Pride hurts one’s relationship with God because proud people think they don’t need Him. Pride hurts one’s relationships with others because proud people are self-centered and feel superior. Pride makes people blind to their own sinfulness. God opposes the proud, for their pride is sinful and He knows their danger to themselves and to others.

The antidote to pride is a good dose of humility. Sometimes proud people are humbled through circumstances or even tragedy. When

God gets their attention, He offers them grace. Humility is not weakness; instead, it is the willingness to “submit to God.” When we humble ourselves before Him, He promises to lift us up.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about pride Pride Problems. See also the personality profile of the king of Tyre The Pride Of The King Of Tyre.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Rush to Judgment** *(4:11, 12)* Discipline is necessary for those in the fellowship who are involved in destructive sin. But when believers judge one another, they act against God’s law. This passage refers to individuals who readily take God’s judgment into their own hands, often over minor issues. When believers are too zealous to judge others, they cause hurt and division. Jesus said, “Judge not, that you be not judged” (Matt. 7:1). Instead of a critical spirit, we should show understanding, compassion, and love. **Topic: Judgmentalism**

## RICH OPPRESSORS WILL BE JUDGED

**5** Come now, *you* rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming
upon *you!* [2]Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten.
[3]Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness
against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in
the last days. [4]Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields,
which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have
reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.[a] [5]You have lived on the earth in
pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as[a] in a day of slaughter.
[6]You have condemned, you have murdered the just; he does not resist you.

## BE PATIENT AND PERSEVERING

[7]Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See *how* the
farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it
receives the early and latter rain. [8]You also be patient. Establish your hearts,
for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

[9]Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned.[a]
Behold, the Judge is standing at the door! [10]My brethren, take the prophets,
who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience.
[11]Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the
perseverance of Job and seen the end *intended by* the Lord-that the Lord is
very compassionate and merciful.

[12]But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or
with any other oath. But let your “Yes” be “Yes,” and *your* “No,” “No,” lest
you fall into judgment.[a]

## MEETING SPECIFIC NEEDS

[13]Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let
him sing psalms. [14]Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of
the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of
the Lord. [15]And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise
him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. [16]Confess *your*

trespasses[a] to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. [17]Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. [18]And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.

> Let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.
> JAMES 5:20

**BRING BACK THE ERRING ONE**

[19]Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, [20]let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul[a] from death and cover a multitude of sins.

**KEY PASSAGE**

# PRAYER FOR HEALING

# (5:14-16)

The anointing by the elders described here is a valuable show of support for a sick person. The oil has no magic, nor does the touch of the elders. And James is not saying that Christians should avoid doctors or medicines, for God works through those as well. Instead, this ceremony focuses on placing complete faith in God. And when a sick person knows that others are praying for them, that person feels

supported and loved.

If healing is to occur, the Lord will do it. Sometimes He performs a miracle that cannot be explained naturally; sometimes He works through doctors and medicines; sometimes it's just the body's natural, God-given healing processes at work. And then there are cases where God performs the ultimate healing by taking the person to be with Him. The true "prayer of faith" acknowledges God's sovereignty over each person's life. The prayer offered in faith reveals complete trust in God to do His will. Healing prayer should be sought by all those who hurt.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Healing And Recovery. See also the personality profile of Peter: A Job To Do.

**HEALING AND RECOVERY**

# DAN ALLENDER

## (James 5:14)

**E**veryone needs healing, because everyone is born into sin. In addition, in this fallen world people face hurts, pain, sickness, difficulties, and traumas. People are broken by the sins of others, as well as by their own. Sin tears apart the fabric of relationships and mars the wholeness of intimacy. When broken, people are alienated from themselves, others, and God. Evil infiltrates, dividing the parts and scattering them to increase the sense of alienation through felt distance and misunderstanding.

The result is not only a profound inner emptiness, but also a tendency to fend for oneself while rejecting others' care and involvement. Needing and trusting becomes too risky. The more one is broken and wounded, the more one ventures down the spiral of isolation and independence from others. These behaviors involve an interplay of arrogance ("I can do it on my own") and self-righteousness ("Whatever went wrong, it's not my fault"), resulting in greater blindness and self-deception. Broken and wounded people need healing that comes from a renewed relationship with God and with others.

## THE MYSTERY OF HEALING

Jesus heals through His wounds. The prophet Isaiah foresaw this when he wrote of Jesus, "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed" (Is. 53:5). Peter understood this as he also wrote that Jesus "bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness-by whose stripes [we] were healed" (1 Pet. 2:24). People are reconciled to God through Jesus' suffering. Because of this, we have the possibility of seeing that which was once divided and scattered brought back together, healed.

When people accept Christ's sacrifice on their behalf, when they embrace His broken body, their hearts are opened to recover a personal relationship with Him. The mystery of His love compels people to face the depths of their brokenness and alienation. God's kindness breaks people's hearts over their sin, irresistibly draws their souls to His provision, and helps them to seek healing and recovery.

In order to heal people's lives, God must perform major surgery. In the process of healing them, He exposes the rampant sinfulness that He died to cure. The process of healing and recovery is not always easy, nor is it instantaneous. Deep wounds will take time to heal. Sin is embedded in every fiber of people's beings. The healing process

means going “under the knife” of the Master Surgeon to allow Him to deal with the sickness. Only then can people be healed and begin the process of recovery.

## THE PARADOX OF HEALING

No one will experience complete healing and recovery until they go to glory in heaven. Christ died for people’s sins, and those who accept that sacrifice are considered righteous before God. However, people must still struggle with the sin nature, and they need to come to God daily for healing and recovery from sin. People’s bodies, souls, and relationships will continue to groan for the healing that will only be experienced in the presence of God. So, in a very real sense, God’s people are already healed, but not yet healed. This paradox is beyond our human comprehension.

Another paradox exists in the need for healing. James encourages believers to pray over sick people, anointing them with oil (James 5:14). Clearly, God should be petitioned when people are ill. However, this is not a formula for certain recovery; it is submission to God regarding His will for that person. God may choose not to heal. Why? Because that very illness, that weakness that so disturbs, can be used by God to help people. God took Paul’s physical weakness, for example, and used it to glorify Himself. Paul wrote, “A thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me. . . . I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness’” (2 Cor. 12:7-9). Though Paul had repeatedly asked that the “thorn” be removed, God told Paul that He would make His power perfect through Paul’s weakness. God did not leave Paul helpless, however. God promised His grace to help Paul endure through his struggles. (That promise is extended to us as well.) Paul could gladly boast about his weakness so that Christ’s power would rest on him: “For when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor. 12:10).

In other words, when we can't do it alone, then we have to depend on God to do it in us. Therefore, we can boast, not about being healed, but about being weak enough for God to use. God's work of healing and recovery is not always to take away our wounds; rather, His work may simply be to enable us to join with Christ in His suffering and to glorify Himself through it.

We may ask God to heal, and rejoice if He does so. We may also rejoice, however, when He chooses instead to use our weaknesses as a platform to display His grace and power in our lives. Through suffering, we may bring help and hope to others who are suffering in the same way. We can then point them to our Savior. Through our wounds, others may be invited to make an appointment with the Great Physician.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of healing/recovery include:

- Exodus 15:26
- 2 Kings 20:1-11
- Psalms 18:6-19; 41:4; 103:3
- Isaiah 43:2
- Jeremiah 3:22; 30:17
- Malachi 4:2
- 1 Corinthians 12:9

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on healing/recovery at James 5:14-16. See also the personality profile of Peter: A Job To Do.

# 1 Peter



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# 1 Peter

Sometimes believing in Christ can be hazardous. In fact, millions have died simply for being followers of Christ. What is most disturbing, however, is that more Christians were martyred in the 20th century than in the previous nineteen centuries combined. Indeed, at this very moment, some 200 million followers of Jesus worldwide face the chilling prospect of being arrested, tortured, and even killed for their faith.

The apostle Peter's first letter (A.D. 63-64) reminds us that from the very beginning, persecution has been part of the Christian experience. Peter presented Christ as the believer's hope and example during times of trial. The aged apostle comforted his hurting brethren with reminders of their great salvation and future inheritance (1:1-12). He challenged them to lives of holiness in a pagan world (1:13-2:12), and he counseled a submissive attitude as the God-honoring response. That's the single best way to model the truth of Christianity (2:13-3:12) in a hostile culture.

No one likes being the object of rejection or abuse. In fact, most will go to great lengths to avoid suffering. But some degree of persecution is assured to all who strive to live godly lives (2 Tim. 3:12). If your faith is under siege today, take heart. Jesus suffered the same "fiery trial" and stands with us in all our troubles. Best of all, He gave us an example that we should "follow His steps" (1 Pet. 2:21).

**SOUL CONCERNS IN**

## 1 PETER

JEALOUSY (2:1)

MARITAL COMMUNICATION (3:1-9)

## GREETING TO THE ELECT PILGRIMS

**1** Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,

To the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, [2]elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ:

Grace to you and peace be multiplied.

## A HEAVENLY INHERITANCE

[3]Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, [4]to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, [5]who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

[6]In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, [7]that the genuineness of your faith, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, [8]whom having not seen[a] you love. Though now you do not see *Him,* yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, [9]receiving the end of your faith-the salvation of *your* souls.

[10]Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace *that would come* to you, [11]searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. [12]To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us[a] they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven-things which angels desire to look into.

## LIVING BEFORE GOD OUR FATHER

13 Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest *your* hope
fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus
Christ; 14 as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts,
*as* in your ignorance; 15 but as He who called you *is* holy, you also be holy in
all *your* conduct, 16 because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy."[a]

17 And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to
each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay *here* in
fear; 18 knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, *like*
silver or gold, from your aimless conduct *received* by tradition from your
fathers, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish
and without spot. 20 He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the
world, but was manifest in these last times for you 21 who through Him
believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that
your faith and hope are in God.

**THE ENDURING WORD**

22 Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the
Spirit[a] in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure
heart, 23 having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible,
through the word of God which lives and abides forever,[a] 24 because

"All flesh *is* as grass,
And all the glory of man[a] as the flower of
the grass.
The grass withers,
And its flower falls away,
25 But the word of the LORD endures
forever."[a]

Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you.

## SOUL NOTE

**Refiner's Fire** *(1:6-9)* When subjected to intense heat, gold is refined. Impurities are burned away and pure gold remains. Like gold, faith tested by the fire of trials and difficulties is strengthened and purified. Believers learn that their faith depends on God alone. Such faith is precious to God. When we face trials, we can "greatly rejoice," for we know that God will strengthen our faith if we continue to hold on to Him. **Topic: Trials**

**2** Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil
speaking, 2as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you
may grow thereby,[a] 3if indeed you have tasted that the Lord *is* gracious.

**THE CHOSEN STONE AND HIS CHOSEN PEOPLE**

4Coming to Him *as to* a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen
by God *and* precious, 5you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual
house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God
through Jesus Christ. 6Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture,

"Behold, I lay in Zion
A chief cornerstone, elect, precious,
And he who believes on Him will by no
means be put to shame."[a]

7Therefore, to you who believe, *He is* precious;
but to those who are disobedient,[a]
"The stone which the builders rejected
Has become the chief cornerstone,"[b]

8and

"A stone of stumbling
And a rock of offense."[a]

They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were
appointed.

9But you *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His
own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you
out of darkness into His marvelous light; 10who once *were* not a people but
*are* now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have
obtained mercy.

**LIVING BEFORE THE WORLD**

11Beloved, I beg *you* as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts
which war against the soul, 12having your conduct honorable among the
Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by *your*
good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.

**SUBMISSION TO GOVERNMENT**

13 Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's
sake, whether to the king as supreme, 14 or to governors, as to those who are
sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and *for the* praise of those who
do good. 15 For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to
silence the ignorance of foolish men- 16 as free, yet not using liberty as a
cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God. 17 Honor all *people.* Love the
brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.

**SUBMISSION TO MASTERS**

18 Servants, *be* submissive to *your* masters with all fear, not only to the
good and gentle, but also to the harsh. 19 For this *is* commendable, if because
of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. 20 For
what credit *is it* if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently?
But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this *is*
commendable before God. 21 For to this you were called, because Christ also
suffered for us,[a] leaving us[b] an example, that you should follow His steps:

22 "Who committed no sin,
Nor was deceit found in His mouth";[a]
23 who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He
did not threaten, but committed *Himself* to Him who judges righteously;
24 who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having
died to sins, might live for righteousness-by whose stripes you were healed.
25 For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the
Shepherd and Overseer[a] of your souls.

**JEALOUSY:**
**A CONSUMING PASSION**

# TIM CLINTON

## (1 Peter 2:1)

**E**mpty and exhausted in his marriage, the husband muttered, “Her jealousy is driving me crazy-I’ve had it.” Before he sat down, his wife launched right into her tirade.

“She was tall, blond, and had a dazzling smile. And boy, was she a major flirt with my husband! I hated her right away. The moment my husband saw her, I knew he was attracted to her.”

As the woman continued talking, it became obvious that she had a serious jealousy problem. Jealous of her sister, her friends, and her neighbors, now she was jealous of a woman she didn’t even know. Wallowing in anger and self-pity, she had allowed her jealousy to consume her emotions and taint her marriage. Feeling smothered and wrongly accused, her husband was pulling away in frustration. She was becoming panicky, predicting that her husband would leave her or have an affair, but behaving in a way that increased the odds of her dark predictions coming true.

### DEFINING JEALOUSY

Jealousy and envy are siblings, the perverse children of a toxic mix of anger, anxiety-based insecurity, and an obsessive habit of comparing oneself (usually poorly) with others. There is also a root of fear in most jealousy-the fear of losing the love or praise of one’s object of love or affection.

Jealousy usually involves three people. The jealous person becomes fixated with a (usually misperceived) rival, who is viewed as competing for the attention of the beloved. While the rival is the object of sometimes intense hatred and opposition, jealous residues nearly always spill over and adversely affect relations with the

beloved. Many divorces, broken family relations, or failed business partnerships are the result of unremitting jealousy and suspicion.

The Bible says that destructive jealousy is like a torrent if it is not tamed and overcome (Prov. 27:4). Obsessive, fixated, consuming love that is "strong as death," easily produces a powerful jealousy that is "as cruel as the grave" (Song 8:6).

Yet jealousy is not always inherently bad. Scripture describes the Lord as "a jealous God" (Ex. 34:14), whose wrath is poured out on anything that usurps His name and authority. God is jealous for the church (2 Cor. 11:2), and Paul warns us not to provoke God's jealousy by turning away from Him to idols (1 Cor. 10:20-22).

## OVERCOMING NEGATIVE JEALOUSY

There is a legitimate role for jealousy. Marriage, or any deep commitment to a relationship, will create a strong feeling of attachment. In this context, the absence of some jealousy can mean that one lacks care and commitment to the relationship. Sometimes, in fact, there is good reason to be jealous. A spouse's secretive behavior, or inordinate time spent outside the home, can raise legitimate concerns.

When carried to extremes, however, pathological jealousy can dominate a relationship. Some spouses, having faced abuse or abandonment in their childhood, bring this pathology into a marriage. Unresolved issues from one's past can be the impetus to a vicious cycle of dysfunctional jealousy. A chronically jealous partner, for example, will use self-pity, lies, threats, and other manipulations to control a relationship. When the other resists, the jealous person reacts by becoming more controlling. The other resists further, may confide in a friend or seek relief outside the marriage, and that further fuels the jealousy and worst-case predictions. The consuming cycle is gaining speed and heading to disaster.

So how can people overcome jealousy before it reaches that point of disaster?

- *By listening to others.* If good friends and loved ones comment on their jealousy, it's a good sign that a problem exists and should be faced.
- *By being honest with themselves*. Rather than react with "I'm not jealous," they must ask, "Do I try to control and manipulate my loved one? What or who is causing these jealous feelings? Am I pushing my loved ones away? Do I attempt to make my loved ones account for every minute, look, or thought?"
- *By spending time with God.* Those dealing with jealousy must soak each question above in prayer, asking God to reveal the truth and to give them the courage to act on it. They must ask God to transform their need for security into dependence on and confidence in Him.
- *By transforming the beloved in their mind.* Jealous people can use their anxious thoughts and suspicions as cues to stop their dark reactions, take a deep cleansing breath, pray, and get control. Then they should pray for the beloved, think about all the positives in the relationship, and consider what special things they could do, right then, to show love to him or her. A phone call, a touch, or a gift could do wonders-for both people.

People who have a jealous spouse may need to do some self-evaluation. They first need to assess whether they are in fact doing something that provokes the jealousy. If so, then they must stop that activity for a time in order to show the spouse their commitment to the relationship. They may need to increase their loving actions toward their spouse. If they aren't provoking it, they must not cave in to manipulative behavior, or they will see more of it. They must talk honestly and civilly with their spouse about the problem. Counseling or mediation may be necessary if civil communication is not possible on this issue.

Jealousy can destroy even strong marriages. We need to guard our relationships so we will not be sowing seeds of jealousy.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of jealousy include:

- Genesis 4:3-8; 37:1-36
- 1 Samuel 18:8, 9
- Proverbs 6:34; 12:12; 14:30; 27:4
- Philippians 4:11-13
- 1 Timothy 6:6, 7

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on jealousy at Numbers 5:29. See also the personality profile of Rachel And Leah: Jealous Sisters.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Evils of Envy** *(2:1)* God's people have been purchased at a great price-"the precious blood of Christ" (1:19). Believers should be so grateful to the One who called them to be holy that they desire to be that way in every aspect of their conduct (1:15). This means "laying aside all envy" because envy has no usefulness in God's kingdom. Envy causes hurt, dissension, and division. People who compare themselves to others will feel either superior or inferior. God wants us to stop comparing our looks, possessions, jobs, or abilities with those of others, and to focus on being His child and serving Him. **Topic: Jealousy**

## SOUL NOTE

**Drink Your Milk** *(2:2, 3)* Believers should never stop growing up. Just as "newborn babes" constantly desire and need milk to help them grow, believers should always crave God's Word, for they constantly need its nourishment. Like milk, the essential food for babies, God's Word sustains believers' spiritual lives. If we desire to continue to grow closer to Christ, to mature in our faith, and to be powerful in our service, we need to nourish ourselves by studying God's Word every day. **Topic: Spiritual Growth**

## KEY PASSAGE

# ON YOUR HONOR

# (2:17)

**Honor** In order to "honor all people," we must show proper respect, value, and esteem to everyone. From the rich corporate executive to the common menial servant, all people were created by God and honorable in His sight. No matter what race, color, background, family life, social position, economic status, or educational attainment, all people are to be treated as God's precious creations.

Believers honor others by not making comparisons. Comparing ourselves to others can make us feel either inferior or superior to them-then we may not feel that we can or want to share God's message of salvation with them. When we honor people, however, we see them as God sees them-in need-thus, we want to show them His love. We respect the rich and powerful person by being kind, caring,

and compassionate. We respect the humble janitor by acting the same way. When we show honor to every one of God's creations, we honor Him. Honor is a gift that offers deep grace to our relationships.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about honor Lighthouse Of Honor. See also the personality profile of The Wise Men: Honoring The King.

## SUBMISSION TO HUSBANDS

**3** Wives, likewise, *be* submissive to your own husbands, that even if some
do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of
their wives, 2when they observe your chaste conduct *accompanied* by fear.
3Do not let your adornment be *merely* outward-arranging the hair, wearing
gold, or putting on *fine* apparel- 4rather *let it be* the hidden person of the
heart, with the incorruptible *beauty* of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very
precious in the sight of God. 5For in this manner, in former times, the holy
women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to
their own husbands, 6as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose
daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror.

## A WORD TO HUSBANDS

7Husbands, likewise, dwell with *them* with understanding, giving honor to
the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as *being* heirs together of the grace of
life, that your prayers may not be hindered.

## CALLED TO BLESSING

8Finally, all *of you be* of one mind, having compassion for one another;
love as brothers, *be* tenderhearted, *be* courteous;[a] 9not returning evil for evil
or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were
called to this, that you may inherit a blessing. 10For

> *"He who would love life*
> *And see good days,*
> *Let him refrain his tongue from evil,*
> *And his lips from speaking deceit.*
> 11 *Let him turn away from evil and do good;*
> *Let him seek peace and pursue it.*
> 12 *For the eyes of the* LORD *are on the*
> *righteous,*
> *And His ears are open to their prayers;*
> *But the face of the* LORD *is against those*

*who do evil."*[a]

**SUFFERING FOR RIGHT AND WRONG**

13 And who *is* he who will harm you if you become followers of what is
good? 14 But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, *you are*
blessed. "And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled."[a] 15 But
sanctify the Lord God[a] in your hearts, and always *be* ready to *give* a defense
to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness
and fear; 16 having a good conscience, that when they defame you as
evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed.
17 For *it is* better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for
doing evil.

**CHRIST'S SUFFERING AND OURS**

18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He
might bring us[a] to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the
Spirit, 19 by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, 20 who
formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited[a] in
the days of Noah, while *the* ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is,
eight souls, were saved through water. 21 There is also an antitype which now
saves us-baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a
good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 22 who
has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities
and powers having been made subject to Him.

**TALKING SENSE**

# TIM & JULIE CLINTON

## (1 Peter 3:1-9)

**T**im stood in the foyer of a crowded restaurant watching the lunch crowd pour in-no sign of Julie. In a restaurant several miles away, Julie stood in the crowded foyer peering at **T** the door-waiting for Tim. We had planned lunch the night before and discussed it again that morning. Somehow we blew it. Fortunately a phone call solved the problem.

Miscommunicating lunch plans is a minor incident. But how, during serious discussions or heartfelt talks, do couples completely confuse each other? Quite often, according to some marital experts. Up to 90 percent of couples seeking counseling say communication and "talk" issues are at the root of their problems.

No wonder so many couples feel out of touch with each other in the absence of effective and encouraging communication-nothing holds more potential for enriching intimacy.

### THE QUALITY OF COMMUNICATION

The interactive process of communication can be understood and analyzed in a five-part manner. Human communication is (1) a message by one person or group that is (2) sent in verbal or written form to (3) another person or group who (4) receives the message and (5) understands its meaning in a certain way. Perfect communication is when the intent of the message sent is understood fully and exactly by the receiver. Again, perfection is rarely, if ever, attained.

Imperfect communication occurs because of static, distractions, and misunderstandings all along the process. The message constructed may not exactly represent the intention of the sender. The way it is sent may be poor or incomplete. The receiver may not be

listening well. The understanding of the received message is affected by the historical, emotional, gender, and values filters of the hearer.

How can we improve the quality of our communication? Genuineness, empathy, and respect on the part of both the speaker and the listener are vital to improving communication between spouses.

Consider the amount of time you and your spouse spend together as a couple. Many couples spend an average of only four minutes a day in meaningful conversation.

Couples cite lack of time as their primary communication roadblock for three reasons:

1. Some spouses are overloaded with responsibilities and commitments. They need to examine their commitments and determine what their priorities are and should be.
2. Other couples don't make time. They *have* the time to talk with their spouse, but they instead fill that time with phone calls, television, shopping trips, sports, friends, and other activities.
3. Still others are angry or bitter. Whatever the situation, if they shut out their partners, they do themselves and their marriage a great disservice.

Although couples may not actually be *choosing* not to spend time in conversation, they still communicate. They constantly send messages-positive or negative, verbal or nonverbal. Therefore, they must work effectively to *control* their communication.

For instance, a casual shrug of the shoulders may be a way of saying, "I'm not sure," but a spouse may interpret it as, "I'm not really concerned about that." Married couples must make every attempt to keep their intentions and their language clear. Because most people are under pressure, there can be an abundance of anger and tension in relationships. Evidence of this is hard-hitting, such as

nagging, criticism, badgering, and yelling. James 3 tells of the tremendous damage the tongue can cause.

Even during conflict, discussions with one's partner should be honest, respectful, and spoken in love. Communication should be purposeful, goal-oriented, and free of hidden agendas. Sensitivity to timing is helpful (for example, not bringing up a difficult situation at the dinner table).

In volatile situations, this can be difficult. Scripture points out how shameful and foolish it is to answer a matter before it's fully heard and understood: "He who answers a matter before he hears it; it is folly and shame to him" (Prov. 18:13). Communication involves both sending and receiving messages. Of these two, listening is the most important.

## SCRIPTURAL ADVICE FOR QUALITY COMMUNICATION

Consider these other Scripture-based principles of communication:

*Be a good listener.*

"Be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath" (James 1:19).

*Reflect on and think through what is being spoken.*

"He who disdains instruction despises his own soul, but he who heeds rebuke gets understanding" (Prov. 15:32).

*Be sensitive to and respectful of your partner.*

"Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice" (Eph. 4:31).

"Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered" (1 Pet.

3:7).

*Speak the truth-but always in love.*

"Speaking the truth in love . . . grow up in all things into Him who is the head-Christ" (Eph. 4:15).

"Do not lie to one another" (Col. 3:9).

*Don't fight or respond in anger.*

"Be angry, and do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your wrath"(Eph. 4:26). "The beginning of strife is like releasing water; therefore stop contention before a quarrel starts" (Prov. 17:14).

*Confess and forgive when necessary.*

"Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another" (James 5:16).

"Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you" (Eph. 4:32).

We firmly believe in spiritual intimacy. True growth as a couple is impossible apart from God. Reading a devotional together and praying together and for each other draws couples closer to God and each other.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of marital communication include:

- Proverbs 12:17, 18; 15:23; 17:4, 7
- Matthew 12:33-37
- 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

- Ephesians 4:15, 29-32
- James 3:1-12

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on marital communication at 1 Peter 3:8. See also the personality profile of Aquila and Priscilla The Teamwork Of Aquila And Priscilla.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Beautiful** *(3:3, 4)* These words do not mean that women cannot style their hair or wear jewelry. Peter's point was that women should not let their adornment merely consist of outward trappings. Instead, Christian women should focus on developing "the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit." Christian women certainly can have flattering hairstyles, clothing, and jewelry, but they should not be obsessed with their outward appearance. Their focus should always be on Christ and on developing character that is pleasing to God. Women who develop Christlike character are truly beautiful.
**Topic: Women's Issues**

**SOUL NOTE**

**Love and Honor** *(3:7)* Husbands should honor their wives. Both Paul and Peter wrote that wives should submit to their husbands (Eph. 5:22; 1 Pet. 3:1); yet, both also wrote that husbands should love and honor their wives. A man who honors his wife will love, respect, encourage, and protect her. He will listen to her opinions, take her advice when he can, consider her needs, and encourage her gifts.

When a husband treats his wife this way, she will have no fear of following the biblical instruction to be submissive to him. This paves the way for a healthy marriage and family.
**Topic: Honor**

**KEY PASSAGE**

# LET'S TALK

## (3:8)

This verse gives a recipe for building unity among believers. While these ingredients apply to believers in general, they go double for building unity in a marriage.

1. *Be of one mind.* Spouses will not agree on everything, but they should work toward having "one mind." One may have to give in to the other so the two can be united, especially in important decisions.

2. Have *compassion*. Knowing that the other person truly cares enables spouses to share their deepest thoughts and feelings with each other.

3. *Love*. While it seems obvious, love can be the most difficult thing to maintain. Spouses should show the kind of love described in 1 Corinthians 13.

4. *Be tenderhearted* and *courteous.* This means having an attitude that puts the other person's needs ahead of one's own.

5. *Blessing* one's spouse. This means always wanting the best for him or her.

Spouses who follow this recipe of honor will find vitality and will communicate effectively.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about marital communication Talking Sense. See also the personality profile of Aquila and Priscilla The Teamwork Of Aquila And Priscilla.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Word Watch** *(3:10)* These words are for all Christians facing trials. Despite outward circumstances, believers can still "love life and see good days" because of their relationship with God. Verses 10-12 quote from Psalm 34, a psalm for people in trouble. The first recommendation is for us to watch what we say. Speaking "evil" can refer to any type of speech that displeases God; "deceit" refers to deliberately misleading by lying. A believer's communication should instead be comforting, encouraging, and uplifting. Positive communication pleases God and helps others.
**Topic: Communication**

**4** Therefore, since Christ suffered for us[a] in the flesh, arm yourselves also
with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from
sin, 2that he no longer should live the rest of *his* time in the flesh for the lusts
of men, but for the will of God. 3For we *have spent* enough of our past
lifetime[a] in doing the will of the Gentiles-when we walked in lewdness, lusts,
drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries. 4In regard
to these, they think it strange that you do not run with *them* in the same flood
of dissipation, speaking evil of *you*.5They will give an account to Him who is
ready to judge the living and the dead. 6For this reason the gospel was
preached also to those who are dead, that they might be judged according to
men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.

## SERVING FOR GOD'S GLORY

7But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in
your prayers. 8And above all things have fervent love for one another, for
"love will cover a multitude of sins."[a] 9*Be* hospitable to one another without
grumbling. 10As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as
good stewards of the manifold grace of God. 11If anyone speaks, *let him
speak* as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, *let him do it* as with the
ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through
Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever.
Amen.

## SUFFERING FOR GOD'S GLORY

12Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try
you, as though some strange thing happened to you; 13but rejoice to the
extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed,
you may also be glad with exceeding joy. 14If you are reproached for the
name of Christ, blessed *are you*, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon
you.[a] On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. 15But
let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in
other people's matters. 16Yet if *anyone suffers* as a Christian, let him not be
ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.[a]

17 For the time *has come* for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if
*it begins* with us first, what will *be* the end of those who do not obey the
gospel of God? 18 Now 19 Therefore let those who suffer according to the will
of God commit their souls *to Him* in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.

"If the righteous one is scarcely saved,
Where will the ungodly and the sinner
appear?"[a]

**KEY PASSAGE**

# FAITH UNDER FIRE

## (4:12-16)

**Suffering** Believers should "not think it strange concerning the fiery trial" that they face. "Trial" here refers to persecution for the faith. Not all suffering is the result of godly Christian conduct (4:15). Many times, however, loyalty to Christ will bring suffering. At those times, believers can rejoice and "be glad with exceeding joy" because they are considered worthy of suffering for Christ.

Sometimes God allows suffering to come into believers' lives in order to strengthen their faith. Suffering provides the opportunity to trust God. Believers can rejoice because of what God will do in their lives and what He promises for their future. When we suffer, we are in good company, for Christ also suffered, He understands, and He will be with us all the way. We can commit our lives to Him (1 Pet. 4:19).

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about suffering Suffering And Glory. See also the personality profile of Job's Suffering.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Leap of Loyalty** *(4:19)* Nothing happens to believers that surprises God. He may allow suffering for a time, knowing that it will strengthen His people's faith. A believer's suffering should be "according to the will of God," however, not due to their own sinful or irresponsible actions. When we face suffering because of our loyalty to Christ, we must remember that, like everything else, our suffering is under God's control. We can commit our lives to Him, knowing that He is completely faithful and trustworthy. He will remain with us through our suffering, and in the end bring us to glory.
**Topic: Suffering**

## SHEPHERD THE FLOCK

**5** The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a
witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will
be revealed: 2Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as
overseers, not by compulsion but willingly,[a] not for dishonest gain but
eagerly; 3nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples
to the flock; 4and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the
crown of glory that does not fade away.

## SUBMIT TO GOD, RESIST THE DEVIL

5Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to *your* elders. Yes, all
of *you* be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for

"God resists the proud,
But gives grace to the humble."[a]

6Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may
exalt you in due time, 7casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.

8Be sober, be vigilant; because[a] your adversary the devil walks about like a
roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. 9Resist him, steadfast in the faith,
knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the
world. 10But may[a] the God of all grace, who called us[b] to His eternal glory by
Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen,
and settle *you*. 11To Him *be* the glory and the dominion forever and ever.
Amen.

## FAREWELL AND PEACE

12By Silvanus, our faithful brother as I consider him, I have written to you
briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God in which
you stand.

13She who is in Babylon, elect together with *you*, greets you; and *so does*
Mark my son. 14Greet one another with a kiss of love.

Peace to you all who are in Christ Jesus. Amen.

## KEY PASSAGE

# GIVE IT TO GOD

# (5:7)

**Discouragement** Discouragement often occurs when people shoulder their own worries, cares, and fears, and then begin to collapse under the weight. Discouragement is not a godly attitude because it reveals an unwillingness to trust God. Discouragement can be dealt a death blow, however, when we constantly cast all our cares upon God, because He cares for us.

Casting our cares on God takes a great amount of trust and humility. We need to give Him all of our cares-not just the ones we think are big enough or important enough. God will even shoulder the cares that we have brought upon ourselves-we can give them *all* to Him. His shoulders are big enough to carry all of our fears, worries, and troubles. When we give our cares to God, we can brush off our discouragement and get back to work. We have much to do for God!

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about discouragement Overcoming Discouragement. See also the personality profile of Nehemiah-rising Above Discouragement.

## SOUL NOTE

**Steadfast** *(5:8-10)* The moment a person becomes a Christian, Satan tries to make them ineffective through sin or through struggles with discouragement or suffering. Believers must be sober and vigilant, resisting Satan by remaining "steadfast in the faith." This is a strong defensive action. Satan is a defeated enemy, so believers need not fear him. When we resist Satan, he will flee (James 4:7). We resist Satan through maintaining our steadfast faith in Christ, wearing the armor that God provides (Eph. 6:10-20), and remembering that we are not alone in our suffering. The same sufferings are being experienced by believers everywhere. Through these sufferings, He will "establish, strengthen, and settle" His people. **Topic: Spiritual Warfare**

# 2 Peter



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# 2 Peter

What kind of people join unbiblical religious cults? Eccentrics? The mentally incompetent? Those with no religious heritage? Surprisingly, many members of aberrant groups actually grew up in homes that adhered to orthodox Christian doctrine!

In A.D. 64-66, the apostle Peter recognized (in Asia Minor) the presence of large numbers of eloquent false teachers intent on luring away unsuspecting believers. To warn these members of God's flock of the dangers of such religious "wolves," Peter wrote his second epistle. He called these spiritual hucksters "brute beasts" (2:12) and railed against their "covetous practices" (2:14). As a concerned shepherd his desire was to protect his Christian brothers and sisters from the seductive words of these "slaves of corruption" (2:19) who were destined for punishment (2:9).

By contrast, Peter also emphasized the "prophetic word" inspired by the Holy Spirit (1:19-21). This is the message of the prophets and the apostles (3:2). Peter even referred to Paul's letters as "the Scriptures" (3:15, 16). In short, Peter argued, it is God's truth, not finite human wisdom, that is the surest protection from error.

Peter's closing words are, "Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (3:18). To avoid being led astray, we must commit our souls to God's slow but sure maturing process. We must be students of God's Word, holy in our conduct, and assured of the Lord's imminent return. The result will be a life that will bring God glory, both now and forever.

**SOUL CONCERN IN**

## 2 PETER

SPIRITUAL GROWTH (1:5-11)

## GREETING THE FAITHFUL

**1** Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ,

To those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ:

2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of
Jesus our Lord, 3 as His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to
life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and
virtue, 4 by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious
promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature,
having escaped the corruption *that is* in the world through lust.

## FRUITFUL GROWTH IN THE FAITH

5 But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue,
to virtue knowledge, 6 to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance,
to perseverance godliness, 7 to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly
kindness love. 8 For if these things are yours and abound, *you will be* neither
barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For he who
lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he
was cleansed from his old sins.

10 Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election
sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; 11 for so an entrance
will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord
and Savior Jesus Christ.

## PETER'S APPROACHING DEATH

12 For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these
things, though you know and are established in the present truth.

13 Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by
reminding *you,* 14 knowing that shortly I *must* put off my tent, just as our Lord
Jesus Christ showed me. 15 Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you
always have a reminder of these things after my decease.

**THE TRUSTWORTHY PROPHETIC WORD**

16 For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to
you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of
His majesty. 17 For He received from God the Father honor and glory when
such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: “This is My beloved
Son, in whom I am well pleased.” 18 And we heard this voice which came
from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.

19 And so we have the prophetic word confirmed,[a] which you do well to
heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the
morning star rises in your hearts; 20 knowing this first, that no prophecy of
Scripture is of any private interpretation,[a] 21 for prophecy never came by the
will of man, but holy men of God[a] spoke *as they were* moved by the Holy
Spirit.

**SPIRITUAL GROWTH**

JOHN ORTBERG

(2 Peter 1:5-11)

**T**he purpose of Paul’s life was to help people experience spiritual growth: “Him [Christ] we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus” (Col. 1:28). With all of the energy God powerfully stirred up in him, Paul labored to present everyone “perfect in Christ.” Given the intensity with which Paul lived and the passion for growth in Christ that he had, it is evident that spiritual growth is vitally important.

So what is spiritual growth? It is the developmental process through which a follower of Christ gradually becomes characterized by those traits that marked Jesus Himself. It involves a life of increasing wonder, awe, joy, simplicity, worship, gratitude, love, servanthood, humility, courage, and truth, among other qualities, such as those listed in 2 Peter 1:5-10. Sheldon Vanauken wrote that the best argument for Christianity is Christians-their joy, their certainty, their completeness. Guess what he said is the best argument *against* Christianity? The same answer-Christians, when they are somber, joyless, self-righteous, smug, narrow, repressive.

Therefore, it becomes terribly important for Christians to understand what true spiritual growth is, and what it is not.

## MISCONCEPTIONS OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH

People commonly fall into two errors when considering what part of spiritual growth is their responsibility and which part is God's responsibility. The first error is when people think of spiritual growth as their own responsibility-turning it into no more than a moral self-improvement project. They may even become militaristic in their commitment to live more virtuous lives. One glaring problem with this approach is that it relies heavily on human willpower, which has obvious limitations. Over time this approach makes people susceptible to spiritual venom in various forms:

• *Legalism,* which is the measurement of spiritual growth in superficial, mechanical ways designed to create a sense of being different from those outside the faith.

• *Judgmentalism,* which is the comparison of one's own spiritual growth with others' in a condescending manner.

• *Fatigue and defeat,* which can set in because of the life-sucking nature of such an approach.

The second error is when people see their role in the process of spiritual growth as to do nothing. A distorted view of grace fuels the belief that any of their own effort might be an affront to God's sovereignty or even a denial of His grace. Inevitably, they get stuck in a mire of passivity, which will not breed spiritual growth.

## STEPS FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Jesus told a parable describing the growth of the kingdom of God as seed scattered on the ground by the farmer. Day and night the seed grows-though the farmer does not know how (Mark 4:26-29). What is true for the growth of the kingdom is also true for individual spiritual growth. People cannot control their own spiritual growth any more than a farmer can control the growth of the seeds in the ground. Growth is always a gift from God. Yet the farmer *was* involved in the process, and so we too must participate in our own spiritual growth.

The role that we play is crucial, and can be understood by identifying three key elements of spiritual growth.

*Disciplines*

Certain practices are indispensable if we want to open ourselves up to spiritual growth. Solitude, the withdrawing from society and stimulation to be alone with the Father, was irreplaceable in the life of Jesus and His followers (Mark 1:12, 35-37; 6:31, 32). The study of and meditation on Scripture are crucial to the renewing of our minds (Rom. 12:2). Silence and prayer, worship and service, giving and celebrating-these are the types of practices that should be in the lives of followers of Christ who are interested in growing spiritually. These activities please God and are also instrumental, indeed essential, in developing loving, joy-filled, truthful lives.

*Relationships*

Certain relationships help Christlike qualities to be formed in us.

Spiritual friendships provide us with other people who intentionally help us pay attention to what God is doing in our lives. Confessional relationships offer us a safe place to speak of our struggles, temptations, and sins. Corporate gatherings for worship and learning mark our minds and hearts, and remind us that spiritual growth is not an individualistic endeavor. Being a member of a community inevitably involves knowing "difficult" people. How we learn to work with these people can help us gauge how far we have to grow if we are to love as Jesus did.

*Experiences*

Certain experiences open us up to growth. Suffering, pain, and trials are crucial teachers of our souls (James 1:2). The Holy Spirit works in our lives in various ways. He convicts us of sin, guides us into truth, and assures us of God's love (John 16:5-15; Rom. 8:12-17). Cross-cultural experiences often shake up old patterns of thinking and living, awakening us to the reality of a God who is far larger than our own lives. Shifts in perspective encourage us to think outside our comfortable box.

Spiritual growth is a "phenomenon" difficult to fully comprehend. As Paul experienced in his life, the struggles are worth the end result. It is eminently important that we focus not on where we begin, but where we are presently and where we finish. May we be able to say with Paul, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. 4:7). May our lives be living testimonies to the power of the God.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of spiritual growth include:

- Proverbs 2:1-6
- John 3:30; 15:1, 2, 4
- Romans 12:1, 2

- Ephesians 4:14, 15
- 2 Timothy 2:15

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on spiritual growth at Psalm 1. See also the personality profile of Matthew: A Changed Life.

**KEY PASSAGE**

# PRECIOUS PROMISES

# (1:4)

God gives great promises to all who have trusted in His Son as their Savior. When God looks at believers, He sees Christ's sacrifice on the Cross to take away sin. So He sees His people as righteous, and He bestows upon them "exceedingly great and precious promises."

Promises are only as good as the person who makes them. With God, a promise is an unbreakable covenant, a total commitment. Because God is faithful and trustworthy, we know that what He says in His Word will surely come to pass. His precious promises of salvation, transformation, and glorification will come true for all believers. God's promises of punishment and eternal separation will also come true for those who reject Him. Because of God's promises, we can be confident about the present and the future. God is in control, and He always keeps His promises. Name them, claim them, believe them.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about God's promises Finding The Courage To Believe. See also the personality profile of Noah: Floating On God's Promises.

**KEY PASSAGE**

# MOST VALUABLE?

# (1:5-9)

What people value says much about their character. Some people value possessions, position, power, or wealth. But here are listed the life traits believers should value above all else. These values reveal a person's spiritual maturity.

Christians have faith in Christ, but faith that isn't put into action is dead and useless (James 2:17). Dead faith is still faith, but it isn't *doing* anything for God. Alive faith is working faith. It's not to be saved that believers need to add to their faith; they add these characteristics so that they will "be neither barren nor unfruitful." Believers who desire to mature in their faith and be fruitful for Christ will add such characteristics as virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, kindness, and love.

Christ gives us His divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4), but we are responsible to use that nature to set aside sinful desires and follow Him. We have to value Christ above all else.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about values Christian Values In Contemporary Society. See also the personality profile of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego Three Men And A Powerful God.

## SOUL NOTE

**Last Words** *(1:13-15)* Peter faced death calmly, knowing that he was merely putting off the “tent” of his body and moving on to be with Christ in heaven. Peter wanted to make sure the believers had a reminder of the gospel message that had brought them salvation, and of the power of God that had brought them true life. Believers should live each day reminding those around them-through words and actions-about the power of God. What legacy are we leaving for our loved ones? If we had to say our last words today, what would we say? **Topic: Life Transitions**

## DESTRUCTIVE DOCTRINES

**2** But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be
false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies,
even denying the Lord who bought them, *and* bring on themselves swift
destruction. [2]And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom
the way of truth will be blasphemed. [3]By covetousness they will exploit you
with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and
their destruction does[a] not slumber.

## DOOM OF FALSE TEACHERS

[4]For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast *them* down to hell
and delivered *them* into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; [5]and
did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, *one of* eight *people,* a
preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly;
[6]and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned *them*
to destruction, making *them* an example to those who afterward would live
ungodly; [7]and delivered righteous Lot, *who was* oppressed by the filthy
conduct of the wicked [8](for that righteous man, dwelling among them,
tormented *his* righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing *their*
lawless deeds)-[9]*then* the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of
temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of
judgment, [10]and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust
of uncleanness and despise authority. *They are* presumptuous, self-willed.
They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries, [11]whereas angels, who are
greater in power and might, do not bring a reviling accusation against them
before the Lord.

## DEPRAVITY OF FALSE TEACHERS

[12]But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed,
speak evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their
own corruption, [13]*and* will receive the wages of unrighteousness, *as* those
who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime. *They are* spots and
blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you,

[14]having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. *They have* a heart trained in covetous practices, *and are* accursed children. [15]They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the *son* of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; [16]but he was rebuked for his iniquity: a dumb donkey speaking with a man's voice restrained the madness of the prophet.

[17]These are wells without water, clouds[a] carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.[b]

**DECEPTIONS OF FALSE TEACHERS**

[18]For when they speak great swelling *words* of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped[a] from those who live in error. [19]While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage. [20]For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. [21]For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known *it*, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. [22]But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: "A dog returns to his own vomit,"[a] and, "a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire."

**KEY PASSAGE**

# WHEN WE SHOULDN'T BE TOLERANT

# (2:12-22)

Peter didn't leave much room for doubt about how he perceived false teachers. As these evil men infiltrated the churches, bringing with them their false teachings, wrong motives, and sinful lifestyles, they harmed many believers. They claimed to be followers of Christ, having heard the gospel message, but then they distorted that message. Peter wrote that "it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment" (2:21).

Peter did not say that believers should be tolerant and understanding of these false teachers. He did not say that the false teachers should be treated carefully and lovingly. Instead, he called them evil and commanded believers not to be deceived by them.

Overall, believers should be tolerant, accepting people from many different races and backgrounds. This is vital for the growth of the church. But we should not tolerate anyone who teaches what is opposed to God's Word.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about tolerance Truth And Tolerance. See also the personality profile of Micaiah: When The Truth Is Not Tolerated.

## GOD'S PROMISE IS NOT SLACK

**3** Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in *both of* which I stir up
your pure minds by way of reminder), [2]that you may be mindful of the
words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the
commandment of us,[a] the apostles of the Lord and Savior, [3]knowing this
first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own
lusts, [4]and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the
fathers fell asleep, all things continue as *they were* from the beginning of
creation." [5]For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens
were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, [6]by which
the world *that* then existed perished, being flooded with water. [7]But the
heavens and the earth *which* are now preserved by the same word, are
reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

[8]But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day *is* as a
thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. [9]The Lord is not slack
concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward
us,[a] not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

## THE DAY OF THE LORD

[10]But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the
heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with
fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.[a]
[11]Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner *of persons*
ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, [12]looking for and hastening
the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be
dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?
[13]Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a
new earth in which righteousness dwells.

## BE STEADFAST

[14]Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be

found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless; [15]and consider *that* the longsuffering of our Lord *is* salvation-as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, [16]as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable *people* twist to their own destruction, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures.

[17]You therefore, beloved, since you know *this* beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; [18]but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

To Him *be* the glory both now and forever. Amen.

# 1 John



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# 1 John

Those who are older and wiser in the Lord can provide helpful counsel and comfort. Perhaps you know firsthand the blessing of such a godly advisor. If not, consider the apostle John as a candidate for your personal mentor. Once legendary for his fiery temper (and nicknamed a "son of thunder"), John was transformed by Christ into the "apostle of love." He eventually became the elder statesman of the Christian church.

At the end of the first century, a disturbing number of believers began drifting away from the truth about Jesus Christ. They were tantalized by early forms of a heretical belief called gnosticism, which rejected the incarnation of Christ and His physical death and resurrection, and usually led to a lifestyle of immorality. John wrote, in part, to oppose such false teaching.

John also wrote to help those who were unstable in the faith. Using a series of contrasts-light vs. darkness (1:5-7; 2:9-11); truth vs. error (2:20, 21); righteousness vs. lawlessness (3:4-9); and life vs. death (3:13-15)-John clearly and simply explained Christian beliefs. His goal was to help young believers affirm their faith with certainty and have assurance of their salvation (5:6-13).

This aged, wise apostle also used this letter as an occasion to describe the Christian life as a life of intimate fellowship with Jesus (1:3) and with other believers (1:7). We are called to "love one another" (4:7), John argued, because God is love (4:8).

Read 1 John carefully, and ponder the words of this dear old man of God who has so much relevant counsel for modern-day believers.

**SOUL CONCERN IN**

## 1 JOHN

# LOVE LANGUAGES (4:12)

## WHAT WAS HEARD, SEEN, AND TOUCHED

**1** That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have
seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have
handled, concerning the Word of life-[2]the life was manifested, and we have
seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the
Father and was manifested to us-[3]that which we have seen and heard we
declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our
fellowship *is* with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. [4]And these
things we write to you that your[a] joy may be full.

## FELLOWSHIP WITH HIM AND ONE ANOTHER

[5]This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you,
that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. [6]If we say that we have
fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the
truth. [7]But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship
with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all
sin.

[8]If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in
us. [9]If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to
cleanse us from all unrighteousness. [10]If we say that we have not sinned, we
make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

**KEY PASSAGE**

# PAID IN FULL

# (1:9)

Sin is disobeying God. Although God created people to be good and holy, He also gave them the choice to disobey-and they did. Since the first sin, all people have been born with a sin nature. God is holy, and He cannot have a relationship with sinful people-unless something is done about the sin. But instead of sending punishment upon sinful human beings, God took the punishment Himself: “While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). Through His death Christ paid the penalty for sin so that we could have a relationship with God.

The problem, however, is that we still have our sin natures. We still sin, but we can come to God and be forgiven. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” When we confess, God forgives, because His Son paid the penalty. We will never be completely sinless in this life, but as believers our lives should be characterized by the desire to follow Christ and avoid sin.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about sin Victorious Living. See also the personality profile of Isaiah-set Free From Sin.

**2** My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And
if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the
righteous. [2]And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours
only but also for the whole world.

## THE TEST OF KNOWING HIM

[3]Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.
[4]He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a
liar, and the truth is not in him. [5]But whoever keeps His word, truly the love
of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. [6]He who
says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.

[7]Brethren,[a] I write no new commandment to you, but an old
commandment which you have had from the beginning. The old
commandment is the word which you heard from the beginning.[b] [8]Again, a
new commandment I write to you, which thing is true in Him and in you,
because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining.

[9]He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until
now. [10]He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for
stumbling in him. [11]But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in
darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has
blinded his eyes.

## THEIR SPIRITUAL STATE

[12] I write to you, little children,
Because your sins are forgiven you
for His name's sake.
[13] I write to you, fathers,
Because you have known Him *who is*
from the beginning.
I write to you, young men,
Because you have overcome the
wicked one.
I write to you, little children,

Because you
have known
the Father.
14 I have written to
you, fathers,
Because you
have known
Him *who is*
from the beginning.
I have written to
you, young
men,
Because you are strong, and the word
of God abides in you,
And you have overcome the wicked
one.

**DO NOT LOVE THE WORLD**

15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the
world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that *is* in the world-the
lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life-is not of the Father
but is of the world. 17 And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he
who does the will of God abides forever.

**DECEPTIONS OF THE LAST HOUR**

18 Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the[a]
Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we
know that it is the last hour. 19 They went out from us, but they were not of
us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but *they
went out* that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.

20 But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things.[a]
21 I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because
you know it, and that no lie is of the truth.

22 Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist

who denies the Father and the Son. [23]Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.

**LET TRUTH ABIDE IN YOU**

[24]Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father. [25]And this is the promise that He has promised us-eternal life.

> I have written to you, fathers, because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one.
> 1 JOHN 2:14

[26]These things I have written to you concerning those who *try to* deceive you. [27]But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will[a] abide in Him.

**THE CHILDREN OF GOD**

[28]And now, little children, abide in Him, that when[a] He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming. [29]If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him.

**3** Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God![a] Therefore the world does not know us,[b] because it did not know Him. 2Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. 3And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

**SIN AND THE CHILD OF GOD**

4Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. 5And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin. 6Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him.

7Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. 8He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. 9Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.

**THE IMPERATIVE OF LOVE**

10In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor *is* he who does not love his brother. 11For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, 12not as Cain *who* was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous.

13Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you. 14We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love *his* brother[a] abides in death. 15Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

**THE OUTWORKING OF LOVE**

16By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also

ought to lay down *our* lives for the brethren. [17]But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?

[18]My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. [19]And by this we know[a] that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him. [20]For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. [21]Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God. [22]And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. [23]And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us[a] commandment.

**THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH AND THE SPIRIT OF ERROR**

[24]Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.

**SOUL NOTE**

**God's Own** *(3:1)* No one can love more than God. The thought of God's astounding love bestowed on sinful humanity is beyond understanding. It's incomprehensible that while we were still sinners in rebellion against God, Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8). Through that sacrifice, God brought His own to Himself, bestowing the title and relationship of "children." He allows us to call Him Father. No believer should ever feel alone, worthless, or unimportant. Everyone who has faith in Christ is a beloved child of God! **Topic: Self-Esteem**

**KEY PASSAGE**

# BEING BILINGUAL

## (3:18)

People say “I love you” in many ways besides speaking the words. In fact, while words are important, saying words without backing them up with actions will make the words meaningless. John wrote to believers, “Let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.”

When expressing love to a spouse, children, or dear friends, we should consider their “language.” Certainly they will understand the words, but they will hear the message better through certain kinds of actions. For some people, their love language is physical touch; for others, a gift will show love; still others would prefer to have quality time. As we learn what “language” our loved ones speak, we then can add to our words the deeds that will show our love.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about love languages The Languages Of Love. See also the personality profile of Mary: Speaking Love’s Language.

**SOUL NOTE**

**In Deed!** *(3:18)* To understand true love, we need only to look at the Cross, where Christ performed the ultimate act of love. Christ loved us so much that He died for us. This should motivate us to love others. This means not just saying we love people but really loving them by our actions. We can love our families by showing respect, patience, and understanding in many ways. We can love our neighbors as we reach out in kindness. We can love the needy of the world by sharing our possessions with them. Loving actions reveal the truth and depth of our love. **Topic: Love**

**4** Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of
God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. [2]By this
you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has
come in the flesh is of God, [3]and every spirit that does not confess that[a] Jesus
Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the *spirit* of the
Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the
world.

[4]You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who
is in you is greater than he who is in the world. [5]They are of the world.
Therefore they speak *as* of the world, and the world hears them. [6]We are of
God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By
this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

**KNOWING GOD THROUGH LOVE**

[7]Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who
loves is born of God and knows God. [8]He who does not love does not know
God, for God is love. [9]In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that
God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live
through Him. [10]In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us
and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins. [11]Beloved, if God so
loved us, we also ought to love one another.

**SEEING GOD THROUGH LOVE**

[12]No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in
us, and His love has been perfected in us. [13]By this we know that we abide in
Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. [14]And we have
seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son *as* Savior of the world.
[15]Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he
in God. [16]And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God
is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.

**THE CONSUMMATION OF LOVE**

[17]Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in

the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. [18]There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. [19]We love Him[a] because He first loved us.

**OBEDIENCE BY FAITH**

[20]If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can[a] he love God whom he has not seen? [21]And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God *must* love his brother also.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Battle Lines** *(4:4)* There are two types of people in this world-Christians and non-Christians. Christians worship God; non-Christians, no matter what they say, worship Satan. They may not formally be members of the occult religion, but their refusal to accept Christ puts them on Satan’s side. Satan is already a defeated enemy, so believers can continue their work for God’s kingdom fearlessly. For as powerful as Satan’s army appears to be, Christ is greater by far: “He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.” **Topic: Occult**

**SOUL NOTE**

**Love Story** *(4:7)* God authored the concept of love. When people

become believers, they learn how to “love one another” because the Spirit within shows them how as they yield to His leading. Christian relationships ought to be the most loving in the world. Christians who meet each other for the first time experience a bond of love that transcends understanding. The love that binds Christians makes for solid and eternal relationships. The love in our relationships reveals God in us. **Topic: Relationships**

**SOUL NOTE**

**Through Us** *(4:12)* No one has ever seen God, but God reveals Himself to the world through His frail and imperfect people by perfecting His love in them. As believers go into the world living their faith, they reveal God to everyone they meet. Their love reveals God’s presence in their lives. When believers show love toward one another and to the unbelieving world, God makes Himself known and His love is “perfected” in them. God often shows His love through His people. What does our love for others say on God’s behalf? **Topic: Love**

**SOUL NOTE**

**Too Many Critics** *(4:19-21)* When believers hate one another, they certainly are not showing love. At times, a critical spirit will cause believers’ relationships to become strained as they judge each other. Believers will always disagree on some matters, but they should still be able to celebrate their unity in Christ. Those with critical spirits,

however, will be unable to love others. If they cannot love their fellow believers whom they can see, how can they possibly love the invisible God? Believers who claim to love God but hate others are lying to themselves, God, and everyone else. **Topic: Judgmentalism**

## THE LANGUAGES OF LOVE

# GARY D. CHAPMAN

## (1 John 4:12)

**T**he euphoria of "falling in love" is one of life's highest emotions. Being "in love" makes people willing to "climb the highest mountain," or "swim the deepest sea" just to be together. Why is it that within a few years of marriage, many people lose these high emotions? I believe the answer lies in failing to speak each other's emotional "love language." Falling in love and staying in love are two very different, though related, experiences.

"Falling in love" begins with warm, bubbly emotions for a member of the opposite gender and quickly escalates into an emotional obsession. Though the Bible does not focus on this romantic emotional experience, it does acknowledge its reality (Judg. 14:1-3; Song 4:1-7; 5:10-16). Research shows that this emotional obsession lasts about two years. A successful marriage cannot be built upon this temporary emotional high.

"Staying in love"-keeping warm emotions alive for the long term-is Scripture's challenge for couples. People's most basic emotional need

is to feel loved. Husbands are instructed to love their wives (Eph. 5:25) and wives are to love their husbands (Titus 2:4). In the Bible, the word "love" does not refer to an emotion, but to an attitude and behavior (including both actions *and* words). Love is the attitude that stems from choosing to look out for the other's interest first; then loving behavior follows.

God is the supreme example of love. He cares about people, so He took action to meet our needs. Scripture instructs us to love one another as God has loved us. In fact, if we do not choose to love each other, it signifies that we do not know God (1 John 4:7, 8). God's love draws us to Him, and then to others (1 John 4:9-11).

In human relationships, love is very similar. People must *choose* the attitude of love and then express it by their behavior. Such behavior touches the heart and emotions of those they love and moves them to reciprocate. In marriage the emotional need is met when husband and wife express reciprocal love. If one spouse is not showing love, then the other must still follow the example of God, who loved us while we were still sinners (Rom. 5:8).

## SPEAKING LOVE LANGUAGES

We all need love, but we need for it to be expressed in different ways. What makes one person feel loved will not necessarily make another feel loved. Sincerity is not enough. People must learn to speak other people's "love language." It is common in marriage to genuinely express love to one's spouse while failing to connect emotionally.

There are five basic love languages. Each of us has a primary love language. The primary love language speaks more deeply to a person than the other languages can. Love given in people's primary love language makes them feel truly loved. The key to keeping love alive in marriage is learning the primary love language of one's spouse and speaking it regularly. The same is true with children.

Following are descriptions of the five love languages.

*Words of Affirmation*

This love language uses words to build up the other person. First Corinthians 8:1 states that "love edifies," or builds up. One way to express love is to encourage the other person. Even the smallest affirmation goes a long way. Whether spoken or in writing, the goal is that the other person feels affirmed.

*Gifts*

This love language uses tokens of appreciation. Gifts (even inexpensive ones) tell people that they are thought about and loved. Sometimes thoughts about someone are best communicated in a gift, a tangible reminder of being loved.

*Acts of Service*

This love language does actions that one person knows the other person would appreciate. The Bible challenges people to not just say "I love you," but to love "in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:18). Even small acts count. Asking what can be done to help a spouse or child is a great way to start.

*Quality Time*

This love language gives undivided attention. Going to breakfast, sitting on the couch while talking, and taking a walk together are all examples. The activity is unimportant, but focusing on each other is. Time is a powerful communicator of love.

*Physical Touch*

This love language gives tender, caring touch. Jesus took the time to have children come to Him despite being busy (Mark 10:16). An embrace, a kiss, and a hand on the shoulder are all expressions of

love. People are never too old for physical touch.

## DISCOVERING LOVE LANGUAGES

Keeping love alive in a marriage and meeting the emotional needs of one's children requires learning and speaking each other's love languages. We can discover other people's love languages by asking three questions:

1. How do they most often express love to me? (Generally people give love in the way that they would like to receive it.)

2. What do they complain about most often? (Complaints reveal their inner needs.)

3. What do they request most often? (Usually their requests reveal a pattern which will indicate their primary love language.)

Discovering the primary love language of our spouse or child gives us the information necessary to effectively meet their emotional needs. The chances increase for reciprocated love if love is first expressed in the other's primary love language. Loving our spouse and children unconditionally, using their primary love languages, has the potential of working miracles in our marriages and families.

## FURTHER MEDITATION:

Other passages to study about the issue of love languages include:

- Proverbs 3:12
- Mark 12:30-33
- Luke 6:38
- John 3:16; 14:15, 21-23
- Romans 5:5, 8; 8:35-39
- 1 Corinthians 13

- Ephesians 4:32

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on love languages at 1 John 3:18. See also the personality profile of Mary: Speaking Love's Language.

**5** Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone
who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him. [2]By this
we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His
commandments. [3]For this is the love of God, that we keep His
commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome. [4]For whatever
is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has
overcome the world-our[a] faith. [5]Who is he who overcomes the world, but he
who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

## THE CERTAINTY OF GOD'S WITNESS

[6]This is He who came by water and blood-Jesus Christ; not only by water,
but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the
Spirit is truth. [7]For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the
Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one. [8]And there are three that
bear witness on earth:[a] the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three
agree as one.

[9]If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is
the witness of God which[a] He has testified of His Son. [10]He who believes in
the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has
made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has
given of His Son. [11]And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal
life, and this life is in His Son. [12]He who has the Son has life; he who does
not have the Son of God does not have life. [13]These things I have written to
you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you
have eternal life,[a] and that you may *continue to* believe in the name of the
Son of God.

## CONFIDENCE AND COMPASSION IN PRAYER

[14]Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything
according to His will, He hears us. [15]And if we know that He hears us,
whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of
Him.

[16]If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin *which does* not *lead* to death, he

will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not *leading* to death. There is sin *leading* to death. I do not say that he should pray about that. [17]All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not *leading* to death.

**KNOWING THE TRUE-REJECTING THE FALSE**

[18]We know that whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keeps himself,[a] and the wicked one does not touch him.

[19]We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies *under the sway of* the wicked one.

[20]And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

[21]Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Without a Doubt** *(5:13)* Christians need have no doubts about their faith. Those who believe in the name of the Son of God can *know* that they have eternal life. Other religions offer merely the hope of eternal life-if one has been good enough, done more good deeds than bad, or has sacrificed enough for others. Christians, however, can know for sure that they will be with Christ forever in heaven. We may face doubts, difficulties, and times of spiritual dryness, but through it all, we can know that we have eternal life, now and forever. **Topic: Belief**

**KEY PASSAGE**

# MAKING CHOICES

## (5:14)

God promises eternal life to those who believe. He also promises a continuing relationship with His people, “If we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.” Believers have the ultimate Guide to walk them through life, helping them make right decisions.

How can believers know God’s will as they make decisions? First, they should consider whether they truly want to know what God wants and if they truly want to follow His leadership. Then they should pray and study God’s words for guidance. The Holy Spirit will help them interpret what God is doing in and around them in the decision-making process. Believers learn how to seek God’s will, asking not what they want, but what He wants for them. When the answer comes, believers know it and can act upon it.

Whatever decisions we face-large or small-God will guide us. We need only ask Him, truly seeking His will, and He will answer.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about decision making Decision Making And The Will Of God. See also the personality profile of Joshua The Godly Decision Making Of Joshua.

## SOUL NOTE

**Whatever We Ask** *(5:14, 15)* The promise that we will have whatever we ask is not a blank check. Believers cannot merely pray for anything and then get it. The context refers to prayers “according to His will.” In other words, when we pray, we seek God’s will in the matter. We make our request, but we submit ourselves to God’s wisdom about what we should have. We know that when we pray, God hears and will answer in the best possible way. **Topic: Prayer**

# 2 John



## Chapter in 2 John

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# 2 John

*"Tolerance!"* is the slogan of the postmodern generation. The idea is that no one has the right to judge anyone or anything. It seems that unquestioning acceptance (if not outright sanction) is being touted as the highest virtue. To the apostle John, however, such blanket endorsement only looked foolish, not to mention dangerous.

Second John was written around A.D. 90 to challenge believers to measure everything against the litmus test of New Testament Christianity. The early church had a practice of supporting traveling teachers by housing them and providing for their needs. But John warned believers to use discernment in receiving professing believers into their homes (10). Not everyone who claims the name of Christ really teaches the truth. John especially emphasized the "doctrine of Christ" as a key element in gauging what is true: What does a person or his teaching say about Jesus? This is significant because those who are in error about the person of Christ do not really know God (9).

The tone of this letter is warm and intimate. Whether John was writing to a specific person or to a whole church body, he began his short note by affirming holy living, and he concluded by saying that he longed for a "face to face" visit (12). Here are the twin virtues of obedience and love-the highest and best proofs of a genuine Christian faith.

Be careful how you live, and what ideas you accept. As we confront the onslaught of myriad religious beliefs in a pluralistic society, John's warnings remain unusually relevant.

**SOUL CONCERN IN**

## 2 JOHN

OBEDIENCE (6)

## GREETING THE ELECT LADY

The Elder,

1 To the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth, and not only I,
but also all those who have known the truth, 2 because of the truth which
abides in us and will be with us forever:

3 Grace, mercy, *and* peace will be with you[a] from God the Father and from
the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

## WALK IN CHRIST'S COMMANDMENTS

4 I rejoiced greatly that I have found *some* of your children walking in truth,
as we received commandment from the Father. 5 And now I plead with you,
lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment to you, but that which we
have had from the beginning: that we love one another. 6 This is love, that we
walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, that as you
have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it.

## BEWARE OF ANTICHRIST DECEIVERS

7 For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess
Jesus Christ *as* coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.
8 Look to yourselves, that we[a] do not lose those things we worked for, but *that*
we[b] may receive a full reward.

9 Whoever transgresses[a] and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does
not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father
and the Son. 10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do
not receive him into your house nor greet him; 11 for he who greets him shares
in his evil deeds.

## JOHN'S FAREWELL GREETING

12 Having many things to write to you, I did not wish *to do so* with paper
and ink; but I hope to come to you and speak face to face, that our joy may be
full.

[13]The children of your elect sister greet you. Amen.

**SOUL NOTE**

**One Truth** *(1-4)* One truth exists, and that truth is found in Jesus Christ, who is "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). John wrote this letter to help believers remain in the truth and not stray into false teachings. In order to resist false notions and ideas, believers must remain grounded in God's Word. When we know the Bible, we learn the truth and will see when any teaching contradicts it. We must continue "walking in truth," for then we will be able to see what is false and steer clear of it. **Topic: Truth**

**SOUL NOTE**

**Love Revealed** *(6)* Loving God means obeying Him. When we love God, we desire to "walk according to His commandments," meaning that we want to obey Him. That obedience reveals our love for Him. Love for God doesn't focus merely on feelings, although those certainly are involved; it's about what we do. God's commandments are found in His Word. We obey not because we are trying to be good enough to be saved or to have a certain amount of good deeds to outweigh bad deeds. We obey because we love God and desire to please Him. **Topic: Obedience**

## SOUL NOTE

**True or False?** *(7)* Jesus had warned that false teachers would arise and lead many people astray (Matt. 7:15; 24:11, 24). False teachers will teach any number of doctrines that might sound good but are contradictory to God's Word and, therefore, are lies. Believers can discern false teaching by discovering what the teacher believes about Jesus Christ. Some will teach that Jesus did not actually come in the flesh; others will teach that Jesus was merely flesh and not God. If anyone contradicts the Bible's definition of Christ being both human and divine, then that person is a false teacher. **Topic: Cults**

# OBEDIENCE

## DAWSON MCALLISTER

**(2 John 6)**

**I**t has been said that one of the things that made Alexander the Great so imposing was the commitment his soldiers showed to him. Alexander and a small band of soldiers approached a small fortified city one day and sought to seize it. Alexander demanded to see the king and asked for his surrender. The king, not impressed with the small band of soldiers, refused.

Alexander asked the king to gather the people of the city atop the city wall to watch a demonstration. As the townspeople gathered, Alexander ordered his soldiers to march single file toward a nearby cliff. One by one, the soldiers plunged to their doom until Alexander ordered those who remained back to his side.

At the sight of such overwhelming devotion, the king immediately surrendered the city. The king had realized that if Alexander's men were willing to commit suicide at his mere command, nothing could stop his eventual overthrow of the city.

Think of the difference that it would make if Christians today had the same mentality as Alexander's soldiers-obedience at any cost. Obedience is not always easy or popular. Often it is very difficult and costly. Whether it is obeying a parent, a boss, a command in Scripture, or a prompting from the Holy Spirit, obedience is easy to talk about and difficult to do. Nonetheless, it is something that God clearly requires of His children.

## OBEDIENCE RELINQUISHES SELF

Obedience requires an abandonment of self and a dependence upon Christ. Sometimes Christ requires more than we are willing to give. Sometimes He leads in a direction where we do not want to go. At those times, our focus must be on Christ and not on our circumstances or ourselves.

When God commanded Abraham to lay his son upon the altar, Abraham surely had questions and doubts about the direction in which God was leading. In Genesis 22:2 God said, "Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you."

Imagine the pain and disbelief Abraham felt as God said those words! God was acknowledging how important Isaac was to

Abraham, yet demanding that Abraham offer Isaac as a sacrifice. Inconceivable. Against all logic. No doubt, Abraham reasoned that he must have misinterpreted God's command, that he must have heard God wrong. Abraham probably had a very sleepless night-praying, begging, pleading, and bargaining. It was a total act of selflessness for Abraham to be willing to give up the special son that God had given him.

## OBEDIENCE REQUIRES TRUST

Perhaps the greatest reason obedience is so difficult is the trust factor. Obeying God requires a certain level of trust in Him. It's hard to obey someone if we don't trust them. Abraham was willing to sacrifice his son because of his firm belief in God. He believed that God would fulfill all He had promised.

When talking to his servants, Abraham said, "Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you" (Gen. 22:5). He had full trust that *both* he and Isaac would return from the mountain.

Again, Abraham expressed his trust in God when he told Isaac, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering" (Gen. 22:8). Abraham believed God and had trust that He would provide a sacrifice in place of Isaac. Imagine the trust that it took for Abraham to raise the knife in the air. Until the final moment when God's angel intervened, Abraham was carrying out the act that God had commanded him to do. Abraham obeyed because he trusted.

## OBEDIENCE RESULTS IN BLESSING

The fruit of obedience is blessing, though the blessings are not always readily apparent. Any time we are disobedient, we are moving outside the realm of God's will for our lives, thus we are subject to the consequences that result from our actions. If we obey God's commands, however, the greatest blessing of all is ours-remaining in

Christ and His love. “This is love, that we walk according to His commandments” (2 John 6).

God promised Abraham many years of blessing because of his great obedience: “Because you . . . have not withheld your son, your only son-blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven” (Gen. 22:16, 17). Not only would Abraham be blessed, but also his descendants would be blessed for generations to come.

Jesus obeyed the Father and had total dependence on Him. How much more should we be dependent on the Father! Jesus’ example is the ultimate example of obedience. Although He had to go before God in agonizing prayer, Jesus obeyed the will of His Father. He endured the scorn of the Cross and the suffering of mankind’s sin, because it was God’s will: “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will” (Matt. 26:39).

Mark Twain once said, “Always do right. This will gratify most people, and astonish the rest.” Cynical society almost boasts of doing the wrong thing and is utterly amazed when people of faith display selflessness and trust. However, for the Christian, obedience is not just an option. Though difficult, costly, and demanding, the life of a Christian is based upon total dependence on Christ and obedience to His will.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of obedience include:

- Deuteronomy 6:1-25
- Matthew 8:27
- Romans 2:8
- Philippians 2:5-8

- Hebrews 11:8

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on obedience at 1 Samuel 15:22. See also the personality profile of Saul's Disobedience.

# 3 John



## Chapter in 3 John

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# 3 John

Every church has at least one: a person with an agenda. It might be a covert quest for honor and acclaim. It might be a hidden desire to gain control. But the end result is usually the same: friction and fighting-leading to a diminished impact and a tarnishing of Christ's reputation in the world.

The apostle John's third letter deals with just this issue, in a congregation thought to have been located in Asia Minor. Third John was addressed to Gaius, a Christian and dear friend who was known for his ministry of hospitality to itinerant preachers. John's intent was to warn Gaius to stand against the erroneous ideas and authoritarian conceits of another church member named Diotrephes.

The three men mentioned by John-Gaius, "whom I love in truth" (1); Diotrephes, "who loves to have the preeminence" (9), and Demetrius, who "has a good testimony" (12)-provide a glimpse into the life of the early church. These men (together with the apostle) mirror the kinds of people commonly found in churches today. John was the mature elder, concerned with guarding the truth. Gaius and Demetrius were faithful servants who walked in the truth, demonstrated love, and enjoyed a good reputation. Diotrephes, on the other hand, was a troublemaker, an arrogant, self-centered glory-seeker, who apparently refused to host legitimate and worthy missionaries.

What kind of church member are you? Without a healthy soul, you'll never develop a genuine love for God or His people. And lacking that, you'll be remembered with disdain, if you're remembered at all.

## GREETING TO GAIUS

The Elder,

1 To the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth:

2 Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health,
just as your soul prospers. 3 For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and
testified of the truth *that is* in you, just as you walk in the truth. 4 I have no
greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.[a]

## GAIUS COMMENDED FOR GENEROSITY

5 Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do for the brethren and[a] for
strangers, 6 who have borne witness of your love before the church. *If* you
send them forward on their journey in a manner worthy of God, you will do
well, 7 because they went forth for His name's sake, taking nothing from the
Gentiles. 8 We therefore ought to receive[a] such, that we may become fellow
workers for the truth.

## DIOTREPHES AND DEMETRIUS

9 I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence
among them, does not receive us. 10 Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind
his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not
content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those
who wish to, putting *them* out of the church.

11 Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. He who does good
is of God, but[a] he who does evil has not seen God.

12 Demetrius has a *good* testimony from all, and from the truth itself. And
we also bear witness, and you know that our testimony is true.

## FAREWELL GREETING

13 I had many things to write, but I do not wish to write to you with pen and
ink; 14 but I hope to see you shortly, and we shall speak face to face.

Peace to you. Our friends greet you. Greet the friends by name.

## SOUL NOTE

**Health Maintenance** *(2)* Concern for people's physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being go together. Some people think the body doesn't matter, so they either neglect themselves and the bodies God gave them, or they indulge in sinful behavior, thinking that it doesn't matter. Both attitudes are mistaken. We should not obsess with our appearance or health, but we should do our best to maintain a certain level of health so that we can serve God to the best of our ability. It's wrong to neglect or indulge ourselves; instead, we should keep a healthy balance so that we can be ready to serve God wherever He may call us. **Topic: Health/Spirituality**

## SOUL NOTE

**Honorable Mention** *(5-8)* When churches care for their missionaries and teachers, they honor God and "become fellow workers for the truth." All believers are called to share the Good News and make disciples, but not all are called to travel, preach, or serve as missionaries. But certainly everybody can support those who do. Gaius was commended for being hospitable to these traveling teachers, and that goes for all of us. We please God when we receive workers hospitably, help meet their needs, make them comfortable, and then send them on their way "in a manner worthy of God." God's laborers for the truth deserve honor. **Topic: Honor**

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# DIOTREPHES: TALKING TOO MUCH

## (3 JOHN 9, 10)

Some people in the Bible show up only once, but lessons from their lives have lasted forever. To have been a positive example would be one thing; to go down in history as an arrogant leader who was "prating against" John and other leaders "with malicious words" is unfortunate indeed. That's what happened to this ancient church leader named Diotrephes.

Diotrephes had apparently become a leader in the church, but he liked his position a little too much. He loved "to have the preeminence," wrote John, and he felt threatened by anyone else. Thus, he refused to give hospitality to traveling preachers and forbade anyone else in the church from doing so.

Perhaps worst of all was his malicious gossip. Diotrephes spoke evil about the other church leaders and traveling preachers, but his words were no more than nonsense. Many in the church were either too untrained in Scripture to see his evil, or too afraid of him to speak up. In any case, Diotrephes's words were causing deep division and great difficulty, and he had to be stopped.

Gossip has a way of hurting and dividing people. Rumors spread like wildfire, leaving destruction in their wake. The next time a spark of gossip flies our way, we should snuff it out completely. We dare not make the mistake of setting a great fire by passing along a little

spark. The only sparks we should pass along are the sparks of Christ's love. That warm and welcoming fire should burn continually.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about gossip The Power Of Gossip. See also the key passage note at James 3:5-18.

# Jude



## Chapter in Jude

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# Jude

"They wear you down," sighed the exhausted woman as she slumped on the park bench. "They keep on and on until finally you just don't have the energy to fight anymore!" She was talking about her "active" children; yet such words could just as easily apply to the plight of the godly among those who are busily making mischief for the church.

Jude was a Jewish Christian (many believe this was the brother of Jesus and James; Matt. 13:55) who wrote a powerful defense of the Christian faith (sometime between A.D. 66 and 80) to challenge young believers to "contend earnestly for the faith" (3). His letter is a resounding call to action. Its urgent message is that quitting is out of the question, because the danger is too great, and the stakes are too high.

This brief letter captures our imagination with a series of dramatic word pictures that describe the false teachers who seemed to hover around every New Testament congregation. They are called "dreamers" (8), "brute beasts"

(10), "clouds without water," "trees without fruit" (12), "raging waves of the sea," and "wandering stars" (13). Their mischief is nothing to wink at. They are rebellious, reserved for a judgment like Sodom and Gomorrah's.

Jude ends his letter by encouraging his readers to build themselves up in the faith. Spiritual growth and spiritual discipline go hand in hand. Without them there can be no spiritual prosperity.

If your soul is worn down, you need the stirring challenge of Jude. Ask God to speak words of strength and renewal into your heart today.

**SOUL CONCERN IN**

## JUDE

TOLERANCE (3, 4)

## GREETING TO THE CALLED

**1** Jude, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James,

To those who are called, sanctified[a] by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ:

2 Mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you.

## CONTEND FOR THE FAITH

3 Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. 4 For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God[a] and our Lord Jesus Christ.

## OLD AND NEW APOSTATES

5 But I want to remind you, though you once knew this, that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe. 6 And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day; 7 as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

8 Likewise also these dreamers defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries. 9 Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, “The Lord rebuke you!” 10 But these speak evil of whatever they do not know; and whatever they know naturally, like brute beasts, in these things they corrupt themselves. 11 Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah.

## APOSTATES DEPRAVED AND DOOMED

12 These are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without
fear, serving *only* themselves. *They are* clouds without water, carried about[a]
by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the
roots; 13 raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame; wandering
stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.

14 Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also,
saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, 15 to
execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all
their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all
the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him."

## APOSTATES PREDICTED

16 These are grumblers, complainers, walking according to their own lusts;
and they mouth great swelling *words*, flattering people to gain advantage.
17 But you, beloved, remember the words which were spoken before by the
apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ: 18 how they told you that there would be
mockers in the last time who would walk according to their own ungodly
lusts. 19 These are sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Spirit.

## MAINTAIN YOUR LIFE WITH GOD

20 But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith,
praying in the Holy Spirit, 21 keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for
the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

22 And on some have compassion, making distinction;[a] 23 but others save
with fear, pulling *them* out of the fire,[a] hating even the garment defiled by the
flesh.

## GLORY TO GOD

24 Now to Him who is able to keep you[a]
from stumbling,
And to present *you* faultless
Before the presence of His glory with

exceeding joy,
25 To God our Savior,[a]
Who alone is wise,[b]
*Be* glory and majesty,
Dominion and power,[c]
Both now and forever.
Amen.

## SOUL NOTE

**Praise the Lord** *(24, 25)* The closing words of Jude's letter form a doxology of praise to God. No matter what false teachers might try to do or say against God and His Word, God will watch over His people. He alone will keep them from stumbling and present them "faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy." We praise Him for this great promise. One day He will bring us to Himself and rejoice to have us with Him. We can trust Him because He is "God our Savior," wise, glorious, majestic, and powerful forever. **Topic: Praise and Worship**

## TRUTH AND TOLERANCE

# JOSH MCDOWELL

## (Jude 3, 4)

**O**n the surface, the word “tolerance” appears as a benign manner of getting along with people who are different. “What’s true for you is true for you. No problem.” The seemingly innocent idea of tolerance has become the cardinal virtue, the sole absolute, of society. Children hear it preached every day in school and the media. Yet few people understand what society really means by tolerance, nor do they realize that it is the central doctrine of an entire cultural movement. As a result, few recognize the threat it poses to their children, their churches, and their faith.

### ONE WORD, TWO MEANINGS

The traditional definition of tolerance means simply to recognize and respect others’ beliefs and practices without necessarily agreeing or sympathizing with them. This attitude, that everyone has a right to their own opinion, is what tolerance means to most people.

But today’s definition is vastly different. This new tolerance considers every individual’s beliefs, values, lifestyle, and truth claims as equally valid. Not only do people have an equal right to their beliefs, but all beliefs are equal. The new tolerance goes beyond respecting a person’s rights; it demands praise and endorsement of that person’s beliefs, values, and lifestyle. This fundamental change in meaning-and thinking-represents one of the greatest shifts in history. And most people are missing it. This new tolerance has many alarming implications, and unless Christian churches, families, and educators recognize and respond to it, the new millennium is likely to be a dangerous time.

When presented with Jesus Christ and the historical evidence of His life and resurrection, people who opposed Christianity used to

say, “Prove it!” and “I don’t believe you.” But there is a recent startling shift. Now, the opposition invariably says, “How dare you say that?” or “Who do you think you are?” or “You are intolerant!” The issue is no longer the truth of the message, but the right to proclaim it. In the new cultural climate, any unpopular message can be labeled “intolerant” and therefore be repressed.

Because the new tolerance declares all beliefs equally valid, Christians will face increasing pressure to be silent about their convictions-in school, at work, and in the public square-because to speak out will be seen as an intolerant judgment of others’ beliefs and lifestyles. Such pressure will pose severe problems not only for Christians, but for their families and children as well. The rise of the new tolerance is intolerant of anything that claims to be the one way, the only way. This makes the sharing of one’s faith an increasingly dangerous proposition.

Christians may puzzle over why a crucifix, a Christian symbol, suspended in a jar of urine is considered art, yet displaying a homosexual symbol in a jar of urine would be decried as a hate crime. Society has shifted from a Judeo-Christian culture to an increasingly and aggressively antiJudeo-Christian culture. As the new tolerance permeates today’s culture, a new wave of unpopularity-and even persecution-is likely to be encountered, not only by Christians, but also by observant Jews and possibly Muslims, because these faiths profess to be based on divine revelation as well.

Our own government has encouraged a public-private partnership to teach “tolerance” to middle school children. Funding for this tolerance campaign would come from both government and private industry under the guise of protecting our children against “hate crimes.”

## WHAT DOES THE LORD REQUIRE?

It is not too late to avoid such scenarios, but doing so will require

effort. Christians must humbly pursue truth. It may be difficult to speak the truth in today's climate, but Jesus said, "The truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). Pursuing truth in this context means countering the new doctrines of tolerance. It means teaching children to embrace all people, but not all beliefs. It means showing them how to listen to and learn from all people without necessarily agreeing with them. It means helping them to courageously but humbly speak the truth, even if it makes them the object of scorn or hatred. Christians must always remember, however, that when the apostle Peter said, "Always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you," he added, "with meekness and fear" (1 Pet. 3:15). The key is to aggressively live in love and humbly stand up for the truth.

Christians must also aggressively practice love. Everyone loves love, it seems, but few recognize how incompatible love is with the new tolerance. Tolerance simply avoids offending someone; Christians must help their children live in love, which actively seeks to promote the good of another person. Tolerance says, "You must approve of what I do." Love responds, "I must do something harder; I will love you, even when your behavior offends me." Tolerance says, "You must agree with me." Love responds, "I must do something harder; I will tell you the truth, because I am convinced that 'the truth shall make you free.' " Tolerance says, "You must allow me to have my way." Love responds, "I must do something harder; I will plead with you to follow the right way, because I believe you are worth the risk."

The dreadful potential of the new tolerance can be averted, but only with a renewed commitment to truth, justice, and love. And, as it happens, that powerful trio of virtues can do more than prevent disaster-it can bring out true community and culture in the midst of diversity and disagreement.

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of tolerance include:

- Psalm 119:142-160
- Proverbs 2:1-6
- Matthew 5:7
- 1 Corinthians 8:13; 10:31
- 2 Timothy 3:16

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on tolerance at 2 Peter 2:12-22. See also the personality profile of Micaiah: When The Truth Is Not Tolerated.

# Revelation



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# Revelation

Global thermonuclear war . . . a collision with a giant asteroid . . . an attack by extraterrestrials. . . . Hollywood never lacks for creative ideas about how the world will end. Yet while many of these theories are entertaining, none is as gripping or as worthwhile as what God Himself has revealed in the final book of the Bible.

Revelation is a series of prophetic visions given to the apostle John, likely around A.D. 95. Christians have long debated how Revelation should be interpreted. Amid varying opinions, one thing is certain-the triumph of Jesus Christ. The risen, glorified Savior appeared to His servant John and unveiled a panoramic view of future events. Certain events will trigger God's last-days countdown, leading to the defeat of the current world system and the return of Jesus Christ to establish His kingdom on earth.

Revelation combines end-time visions with epistle-like instructions. It predicts the future even as it gives us hope for the present. It pulls back the curtain of time and reveals the eternal destiny of the human race-the new heaven and new earth-where the long-lost paradise of Eden will finally be regained.

The great theme of this glorious book is restoration. All that humanity has lost by sinful rebellion against God will be regained by the grace of God and the ultimate triumph of Christ. Let your soul feast on the truth that believers in Jesus *will* share Christ's triumph forever!

**SOUL CONCERN IN**

## REVELATION

ETERNAL LIFE (21:22)

## INTRODUCTION AND BENEDICTION

**1** The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His
servants-things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified *it*
by His angel to His servant John, 2who bore witness to the word of God, and
to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw. 3Blessed *is* he who
reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things
which are written in it; for the time *is* near.

## GREETING THE SEVEN CHURCHES

4John, to the seven churches which are in Asia:

Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to
come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, 5and from Jesus
Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the
kings of the earth.

To Him who loved us and washed[a] us from our sins in His own blood,
6and has made us kings[a] and priests to His God and Father, to Him *be* glory
and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

7Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they
who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him.
Even so, Amen.

8"I am the Alpha and the Omega, *the* Beginning and *the* End,"[a] says the
Lord,[b] "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

## VISION OF THE SON OF MAN

9I, John, both[a] your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom
and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the
word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. 10I was in the Spirit on the
Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet, 11saying, "I
am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last," and,[a] "What you see,
write in a book and send *it* to the seven churches which are in Asia:[b] to
Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and

to Laodicea.”

12 Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I
saw seven golden lampstands, 13 and in the midst of the seven lampstands
*One* like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded
about the chest with a golden band. 14 His head and hair *were* white like wool,
as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; 15 His feet *were* like fine
brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters;
16 He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-
edged sword, and His countenance *was* like the sun shining in its strength.
17 And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand
on me, saying to me,[a] “Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. 18 I *am*
He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And
I have the keys of Hades and of Death. 19 Write[a] the things which you have
seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.
20 The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the
seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven
churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw[a] are the seven churches.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Jesus’ Own** *(1:5)* Revelation gives an awe-inspiring picture of Jesus as the King of kings, the Ruler over all of earth’s other monarchs. At His word, God’s enemies will be rounded up to be judged. Believers will have nothing to fear, however, for they will have a part in Christ’s reign and will assist Him in His kingdom. King Jesus loved us so much that He sacrificed His life for us, and will return someday to take us to be with Him. We are God’s beloved children-His most treasured possession. When we feel overwhelmed, we can picture our great King and remember that He will soon return for us. **Topic: Self-**

## Esteem

## THE LOVELESS CHURCH

**2** “To the angel of the church of Ephesus write,

‘These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands: [2]“I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; [3]and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name’s sake and have not become weary. [4]Nevertheless I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love. [5]Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place-unless you repent. [6]But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

[7]“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.” ’

> “Be faithful until death, and I will
> give you the crown of life.”
> REVELATION 2:10

## THE PERSECUTED CHURCH

[8]“And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write,

‘These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life: [9]“I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and *I know* the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but *are* a synagogue of Satan. [10]Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw *some* of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

[11]“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.” ’

## THE COMPROMISING CHURCH

12 "And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write,

'These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword: 13 "I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne *is.* And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas *was* My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. 14 But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. 15 Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.[a] 16 Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.

17 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives *it.*" '

## THE CORRUPT CHURCH

18 "And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write,

'These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass: 19 "I know your works, love, service, faith,[a] and your patience; and *as* for your works, the last *are* more than the first. 20 Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow[a] that woman[b] Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce[c] My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. 21 And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent.[a] 22 Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their[a] deeds. 23 I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works.

24 "Now to you I say, and[a] to the rest in Thy-atira, as many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I will[b] put

on you no other burden. [25]But hold fast what you have till I come. [26]And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations-

[27] ‘He shall rule them with a rod of iron;
They shall be dashed to pieces like the
potter’s vessels’[a] -

as I also have received from My Father; [28]and I will give him the morning star.

[29]“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” ’

**SOUL NOTE**

**Heart Search** *(2:18-23)* Sometimes people think they can hide portions of their lives from everyone. They try to hide angry tempers, deep jealousies, or sexual sin. In His message to the church in Thyatira, Christ clearly stated that He “searches the minds and hearts” (2:23). Nothing is hidden from Him. No sexual sin can escape His notice. People may think they are getting away with it, but God knows. Everywhere we go, everything we say, think, or do is seen by God. That understanding alone should help us to steer clear of sexual sin. **Topic: Sexual Sin**

**THE DEAD CHURCH**

**3** “And to the angel of the church in Sardis write,

“These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: “I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. 2Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God.[a] 3Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you. 4You[a] have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. 5He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.

6“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” ’

**THE FAITHFUL CHURCH**

7“And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write,

‘These things says He who is holy, He who is true, “He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens”:[a] 8“I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it;[a] for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name. 9Indeed I will make *those* of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie-indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you. 10Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. 11Behold,[a] I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown. 12He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And *I will write on him* My new name.

13 “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” ’

**THE LUKEWARM CHURCH**

14 “And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans[a] write,

‘These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: 15 “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. 16 So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot,[a] I will vomit you out of My mouth. 17 Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’-and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked-18 I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, *that* the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. 19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. 20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. 21 To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

22 “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” ’ ”

> “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.”
> REVELATION 3:20

**THE THRONE ROOM OF HEAVEN**

**4** After these things I looked, and behold, a door *standing* open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard *was* like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, “Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this.”

[2]Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and *One* sat on the throne. [3]And He who sat there was[a] like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and *there was* a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald. [4]Around the throne *were* twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns[a] of gold on their heads. [5]And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices.[a] Seven lamps of fire *were* burning before the throne, which are the[b] seven Spirits of God.

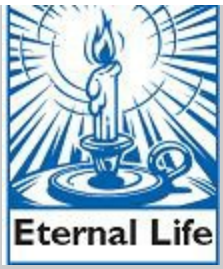
[6]Before the throne *there was*[a] a sea of glass, like crystal. And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, *were* four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back. [7]The first living creature *was* like a lion, the second living creature like a calf, the third living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth living creature *was* like a flying eagle. [8]*The* four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying:

> “Holy, holy, holy,[a]
> Lord God Almighty,
> Who was and is and is to come!”

[9]Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, [10]the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying:

[11] “You are worthy, O Lord,[a]
To receive glory and honor and power;
For You created all things,
And by Your will they exist[b] and were

created."




**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# JOHN'S GLIMPSES OF HEAVEN

# (REVELATION 4)

Heaven: This word gets tossed around and used in many ways: "This vacation spot is heavenly." When they feel particularly healthy and happy, some might say, "I'm in heaven." In any case, the word always has a positive connotation. When something is "heavenly," it's a good recommendation.

If the apostle John were among us today, he would be astounded at our shortsighted analogies, however. He *saw* heaven, and was sent by God to write about it. His power-packed book of Revelation reveals to believers a glimpse of their future home.

The Book of Revelation, for all the writing and arguing that has taken place about the unfolding of its events, does give us some certainties about heaven. In the end, God's people will be there. John described a peaceful place: "God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain" (Rev. 21:4). It will be a beautiful place: John describes precious stones, gates of pearl, and streets of gold (Rev. 21:10-21). It will be a glorious place: "The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it.

The Lamb is its light" (Rev. 21:23). Heaven is an eternal place, where God's people "shall reign forever and ever" (Rev. 22:5).

This world is not our final home; in reality, we are pilgrims on a journey. People give their lives to Christ because of the promise of His presence and peace on this earth *and* the promise of eternal life in heaven with Him. As they learn that they can trust God's promises, they know that the reality of heaven awaits them.

When we read the awesome account of John's glimpses of heaven, our finite minds can barely grasp the concept. But we *can* grasp the concept of a promise kept. God has promised eternal life and a home in heaven with Him. What we envision now will turn out to be a pale shadow of the reality. What a glorious gift God has prepared for all who believe!

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about eternal life Eternal Life In Heaven. See also the key passage note at 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

**THE LAMB TAKES SCROLL**

**5** And I saw in the right *hand* of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written
inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals. 2Then I saw a strong angel
proclaiming with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose
its seals?” 3And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able
to open the scroll, or to look at it.

4So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read[a] the
scroll, or to look at it. 5But one of the elders said to me, “Do not weep.
Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to
open the scroll and to loose[a] its seven seals.”

6And I looked, and behold,[a] in the midst of the throne and of the four
living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had
been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of
God sent out into all the earth. 7Then He came and took the scroll out of the
right hand of Him who sat on the throne.

**WORTHY IS THE LAMB**

8Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the
twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and
golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. 9And they
sang a new song, saying:

“You are worthy to take the scroll,
And to open its seals;
For You were slain,
And have redeemed us to God by Your
blood
Out of every tribe and tongue and
people and nation,

10 And have made us[a] kings[b] and priests to
our God;
And we[c] shall reign on the earth.”

[11]Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne,
the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand
times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, [12]saying with a loud voice:

"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain
To receive power and riches and
wisdom,
And strength and honor and glory and
blessing!"

[13]And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the
earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying:

"Blessing and honor and glory and power
*Be* to Him who sits on the throne,
And to the Lamb, forever and ever!"[a]

[14]Then the four living creatures said, "Amen!" And the twenty-four[a] elders
fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever.[b]

**SOUL NOTE**

**Worthy Is the Lamb** *(5:5, 6)* In his vision of God's throne room, the apostle John witnessed a wounded Lamb, the only One found worthy to open the seven seals of the scroll. The wounded Lamb is Jesus Christ, who sacrificed Himself on the Cross for our sins. His blood has ransomed us from slavery to sin so that we can become His holy people (5:9). Only Christ, who is also the conquering Lion of Judah (5:5), can preside over the unfolding of human history. Without Him, our lives would amount to utter futility. But with Him, our lives are being woven into the beautiful tapestry of God's salvation history. No wonder He deserves all glory, honor, and power (5:13). **Topic: Knowing Jesus**

## FIRST SEAL: THE CONQUEROR

**6** Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals;[a] and I heard one of the
four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, “Come and see.”
2 And I looked, and behold, a white horse. He who sat on it had a bow; and a
crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.

## SECOND SEAL: CONFLICT ON EARTH

3 When He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature
saying, “Come and see.”[a] 4 Another horse, fiery red, went out. And it was
granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth, and that *people*
should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword.

## THIRD SEAL: SCARCITY ON EARTH

5 When He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say,
“Come and see.” So I looked, and behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it
had a pair of scales in his hand. 6 And I heard a voice in the midst of the four
living creatures saying, “A quart[a] of wheat for a denarius,[b] and three quarts
of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil and the wine.”

## FOURTH SEAL: WIDESPREAD DEATH ON EARTH

7 When He opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living
creature saying, “Come and see.” 8 So I looked, and behold, a pale horse. And
the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him. And
power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with
hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth.

## FIFTH SEAL: THE CRY OF THE MARTYRS

9 When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those
who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they
held. 10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, “How long, O Lord, holy
and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the
earth?” 11 Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to

them that they should rest a little while longer, until both *the number of* their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they *were*, was completed.

## SIXTH SEAL: COSMIC DISTURBANCES

12 I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold,[a] there was a great
earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon[b]
became like blood. 13 And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree
drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. 14 Then the sky receded
as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out
of its place. 15 And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the
commanders,[a] the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid
themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, 16 and said to the
mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits
on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! 17 For the great day of His
wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”

## THE SEALED OF ISRAEL

7 After these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the
earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on
the earth, on the sea, or on any tree. 2 Then I saw another angel ascending
from the east, having the seal of the living God. And he cried with a loud
voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea,
3 saying, “Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the
servants of our God on their foreheads.” 4 And I heard the number of those
who were sealed. One hundred *and* forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the
children of Israel *were* sealed:

5 of the tribe of Judah twelve thousand
*were* sealed;
*a* of the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand
*were* sealed;
of the tribe of Gad twelve thousand *were*
sealed;
6 of the tribe of Asher twelve thousand
*were* sealed;
of the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand
*were* sealed;
of the tribe of Manasseh twelve
thousand *were* sealed;
7 of the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand
*were* sealed;
of the tribe of Levi twelve thousand
*were* sealed;
of the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand
*were* sealed;
8 of the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand
*were* sealed;
of the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand
*were* sealed;
of the tribe of Benjamin twelve thousand

*were* sealed.

**A MULTITUDE FROM THE GREAT TRIBULATION**

9 After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, 10 and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation *belongs* to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" 11 All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, 12 saying:

> "Salvation belongs to our God who
> sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"
> REVELATION 7:10

"Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom,
Thanksgiving and honor and power and
might,
*Be* to our God forever and ever.
Amen."

13 Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?"

14 And I said to him, "Sir,[a] you know."

So he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. 15 Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them. 16 They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; 17 for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters.[a] And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

## SEVENTH SEAL: PRELUDE TO THE SEVEN TRUMPETS

**8** When He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about
half an hour. 2And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to
them were given seven trumpets. 3Then another angel, having a golden
censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he
should offer *it* with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which
was before the throne. 4And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the
saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand. 5Then the angel took the
censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw *it* to the earth. And there
were noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake.

6So the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to
sound.

## FIRST TRUMPET: VEGETATION STRUCK

7The first angel sounded: And hail and fire followed, mingled with blood,
and they were thrown to the earth.[a] And a third of the trees were burned up,
and all green grass was burned up.

## SECOND TRUMPET: THE SEAS STRUCK

8Then the second angel sounded: And *something* like a great mountain
burning with fire was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became
blood. 9And a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the
ships were destroyed.

## THIRD TRUMPET: THE WATERS STRUCK

10Then the third angel sounded: And a great star fell from heaven, burning
like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water.
11The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became
wormwood, and many men died from the water, because it was made bitter.

## FOURTH TRUMPET: THE HEAVENS STRUCK

12 Then the fourth angel sounded: And a third of the sun was struck, a third
of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them were darkened. A
third of the day did not shine, and likewise the night.

13 And I looked, and I heard an angel[a] flying through the midst of heaven,
saying with a loud voice, “Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth,
because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are
about to sound!”

## FIFTH TRUMPET: THE LOCUSTS FROM THE BOTTOMLESS PIT

**9** Then the fifth angel sounded: And I saw a star fallen from heaven to the
earth. To him was given the key to the bottomless pit. [2]And he opened the
bottomless pit, and smoke arose out of the pit like the smoke of a great
furnace. So the sun and the air were darkened because of the smoke of the pit.
[3]Then out of the smoke locusts came upon the earth. And to them was given
power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. [4]They were commanded not
to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree, but only those
men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. [5]And they were not
given *authority* to kill them, but to torment them *for* five months. Their
torment *was* like the torment of a scorpion when it strikes a man. [6]In those
days men will seek death and will not find it; they will desire to die, and
death will flee from them.

[7]The shape of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle. On their
heads were crowns of something like gold, and their faces *were* like the faces
of men. [8]They had hair like women's hair, and their teeth were like lions'
*teeth.* [9]And they had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the sound of
their wings *was* like the sound of chariots with many horses running into
battle. [10]They had tails like scorpions, and there were stings in their tails.
Their power *was* to hurt men five months. [11]And they had as king over them
the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in Hebrew *is* Abaddon, but in
Greek he has the name Apollyon.

[12]One woe is past. Behold, still two more woes are coming after these
things.

## SIXTH TRUMPET: THE ANGELS FROM THE EUPHRATES

[13]Then the sixth angel sounded: And I heard a voice from the four horns of
the golden altar which is before God, [14]saying to the sixth angel who had the
trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river
Euphrates." [15]So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day

and month and year, were released to kill a third of mankind. [16]Now the number of the army of the horsemen *was* two hundred million; I heard the number of them. [17]And thus I saw the horses in the vision: those who sat on them had breastplates of fiery red, hyacinth blue, and sulfur yellow; and the heads of the horses *were* like the heads of lions; and out of their mouths came fire, smoke, and brimstone. [18]By these three *plagues* a third of mankind was killed-by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which came out of their mouths. [19]For their power[a] is in their mouth and in their tails; for their tails *are* like serpents, having heads; and with them they do harm.

[20]But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk. [21]And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries[a] or their sexual immorality or their thefts.

## THE MIGHTY ANGEL WITH THE LITTLE BOOK

**10** I saw still another mighty angel coming down from heaven, clothed with a cloud. And a rainbow *was* on his head, his face *was* like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire. 2He had a little book open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea and *his* left *foot* on the land, 3and cried with a loud voice, as *when* a lion roars. When he cried out, seven thunders uttered their voices. 4Now when the seven thunders uttered their voices,[a] I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven saying to me,[b] "Seal up the things which the seven thunders uttered, and do not write them."

5The angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised up his hand[a] to heaven 6and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things that are in it, the earth and the things that are in it, and the sea and the things that are in it, that there should be delay no longer, 7but in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets.

## JOHN EATS THE LITTLE BOOK

8Then the voice which I heard from heaven spoke to me again and said, "Go, take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the earth."

9So I went to the angel and said to him, "Give me the little book."

And he said to me, "Take and eat it; and it will make your stomach bitter, but it will be as sweet as honey in your mouth."

10Then I took the little book out of the angel's hand and ate it, and it was as sweet as honey in my mouth. But when I had eaten it, my stomach became bitter. 11And he[a] said to me, "You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings."

## THE TWO WITNESSES

**11** Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood,[a]
saying, “Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who
worship there. 2But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do
not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the
holy city underfoot *for* forty-two months. 3And I will give *power* to my two
witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days,
clothed in sackcloth.”

4These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the
God[a] of the earth. 5And if anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from
their mouth and devours their enemies. And if anyone wants to harm them, he
must be killed in this manner. 6These have power to shut heaven, so that no
rain falls in the days of their prophecy; and they have power over waters to
turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they
desire.

## THE WITNESSES KILLED

7When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the
bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them.
8And their dead bodies *will lie* in the street of the great city which spiritually
is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our[a] Lord was crucified. 9Then *those*
from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies three-
and-a-half days, and not allow[a] their dead bodies to be put into graves. 10And
those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send
gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell
on the earth.

## THE WITNESSES RESURRECTED

11Now after the three-and-a-half days the breath of life from God entered
them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them.
12And they[a] heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, “Come up here.”
And they ascended to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies saw them. 13In the

same hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. In the earthquake seven thousand people were killed, and the rest were afraid and gave glory to the God of heaven.

14 The second woe is past. Behold, the third woe is coming quickly.

> "The kingdoms of this world have
> become the kingdoms of our Lord
> and of His Christ, and He shall
> reign forever and ever!"
> REVELATION 11:15

**SEVENTH TRUMPET: THE KINGDOM PROCLAIMED**

15 Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms[a] of this world have become *the kingdoms* of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!" 16 And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God, 17 saying:

"We give You thanks, O Lord God
Almighty,
The One who is and who was and who
is to come,[a]
Because You have taken Your great
power and reigned.
18 The nations were angry, and Your wrath
has come,
And the time of the dead, that they
should be judged,
And that You should reward Your
servants the prophets and the saints,
And those who fear Your name, small
and great,
And should destroy those who destroy
the earth."

19 Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant[a] was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail.

## THE WOMAN, THE CHILD, AND THE DRAGON

**12** Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun,
with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars.
2 Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth.

3 And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon
having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. 4 His tail
drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the
dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her
Child as soon as it was born. 5 She bore a male Child who was to rule all
nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His
throne. 6 Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place
prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred
and sixty days.

## SATAN THROWN OUT OF HEAVEN

7 And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the
dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, 8 but they did not prevail, nor
was a place found for them[a] in heaven any longer. 9 So the great dragon was
cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the
whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

10 Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, “Now salvation, and
strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have
come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day
and night, has been cast down. 11 And they overcame him by the blood of the
Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to
the death. 12 Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe
to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to
you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time.”

## THE WOMAN PERSECUTED

13 Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he
persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male *Child.* 14 But the woman

was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent. [15]So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood. [16]But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth. [17]And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.[a]

**PERSONALITY PROFILE**

# MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL

## (REVELATION 12:7-12)

The Book of Revelation not only offers a long view of God's plan in history; it also offers a deeper of view of reality. For those who are tempted to think that reality ends with our senses, Revelation reminds us that the spiritual dimension dwarfs our own. The conflict rages, and the battles sometimes occur here on earth, in human lives. Parts of God's amazing creation have rebelled, and the battle lines can even divide a human heart.

Revelation 12 describes the two armies in this battle: On God's side are all of His angels (such as Michael, mentioned here), and all

of God's people; on the other side are Satan, his demons, and all who do not believe in Christ as Savior. As violent as the spiritual and physical battles may be, the outcome of the war has already been decided. The victory was assured in the sacrificial death of the Son of God on the cross of Calvary.

This passage also reminds us that in spiritual warfare, as in physical warfare, even the winning side often suffers casualties. History is filled with examples of Christians who have laid down their lives or been martyred for the cause of Christ. From the perspective of eternity and heaven, they are victors. As John described them, "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death" (Rev. 12:11). These are believers who, in the very act of dying, have won the battle. They understand that believers who have a firm hold on the reality of eternal life will not hold on to physical life at all costs.

Meanwhile, as long as this life lasts, Christians are involved as active participants in spiritual warfare. We are called to be faithful, and we are instructed to live the life of one who serves a Captain, the Lord Jesus Christ. We are invited to place our lives at His disposal, available to be used anytime, anywhere, to encourage each other along the way, and to pray always for our fellow soldiers in Christ.

**To Learn More:** Turn to the article about Spiritual Warfare. See also the key passage note at Ephesians 6:10-20.

## THE BEAST FROM THE SEA

**13** Then I[a] stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of
the sea, having seven heads and ten horns,[b] and on his horns ten crowns,
and on his heads a blasphemous name. 2Now the beast which I saw was like a
leopard, his feet were like *the feet of* a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a
lion. The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority. 3And *I*
*saw* one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly
wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast. 4So
they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they
worshiped the beast, saying, "Who *is* like the beast? Who is able to make war
with him?"

5And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he
was given authority to continue[a] for forty-two months. 6Then he opened his
mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle,
and those who dwell in heaven. 7It was granted to him to make war with the
saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe,[a]
tongue, and nation. 8All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose
names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the
foundation of the world.

9If anyone has an ear, let him hear. 10He who leads into captivity shall go
into captivity; he who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword.
Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

## THE BEAST FROM THE EARTH

11Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two
horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon. 12And he exercises all the
authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who
dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. 13He
performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on
the earth in the sight of men. 14And he deceives those[a] who dwell on the
earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast,
telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was

wounded by the sword and lived. [15]He was granted *power* to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed. [16]He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, [17]and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or[a] the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

[18]Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number *is* 666.

## THE LAMB AND THE 144,000

**14** Then I looked, and behold, a[a] Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with
Him one hundred *and* forty-four thousand, having[b] His Father's name
written on their foreheads. 2And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice
of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of
harpists playing their harps. 3They sang as it were a new song before the
throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn
that song except the hundred *and* forty-four thousand who were redeemed
from the earth. 4These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for
they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes.
These were redeemed[a] from *among* men, *being* firstfruits to God and to the
Lamb. 5And in their mouth was found no deceit,[a] for they are without fault
before the throne of God.[b]

## THE PROCLAMATIONS OF THREE ANGELS

6Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the
everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth-to every nation,
tribe, tongue, and people- 7saying with a loud voice, "Fear God and give
glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who
made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water."

8And another angel followed, saying, "Babylon[a] is fallen, is fallen, that
great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of
her fornication."

9Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone
worships the beast and his image, and receives *his* mark on his forehead or on
his hand, 10he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which
is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be
tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in
the presence of the Lamb. 11And the smoke of their torment ascends forever
and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his
image, and whoever receives the mark of his name."

12Here is the patience of the saints; here *are* those[a] who keep the

commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

13 Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me,[a] "Write: 'Blessed *are* the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' "

"Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them."

## REAPING THE EARTH'S HARVEST

14 Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat *One* like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. 15 And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, "Thrust in Your sickle and reap, for the time has come for You[a] to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe." 16 So He who sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped.

## REAPING THE GRAPES OF WRATH

17 Then another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.

18 And another angel came out from the altar, who had power over fire, and he cried with a loud cry to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, "Thrust in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe." 19 So the angel thrust his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth, and threw *it* into the great winepress of the wrath of God. 20 And the winepress was trampled outside the city, and blood came out of the winepress, up to the horses' bridles, for one thousand six hundred furlongs.

**SOUL NOTE**

**What Truly Matters** *(14:13)* This chapter paints a picture of stark contrasts. On one side, there is a joyful choir of people accompanying the victorious Christ up Mount Zion. On the other side stand those who have followed the beast into immorality, worshiped his image, and accepted his mark on their foreheads. Two destinies are contrasted-eternal life with God or eternal life without God. At the end, no last-minute changes will be possible. Where will you be for eternity? With Jesus or without Him? **Topic: Death**

**PRELUDE TO THE BOWL JUDGMENTS**

**15** Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete.

2 And I saw *something* like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark[a] *and* over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God. 3 They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying:

"Great and marvelous *are* Your works,
Lord God Almighty!
Just and true *are* Your ways,
O King of the saints![a]

4 Who shall not fear You, O Lord,
and glorify Your name?
For *You* alone *are* holy.
For all nations shall come and worship
before You,
For Your judgments have been
manifested."

5 After these things I looked, and behold,[a] the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened. 6 And out of the temple came the seven angels having the seven plagues, clothed in pure bright linen, and having their chests girded with golden bands. 7 Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God who lives forever and ever. 8 The temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power, and no one was able to enter the temple till the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed.

"Great and marvelous are
Your works, Lord God Almighty!
Just and true are Your ways,
O King of the saints!"

REVELATION 15:3

**16** Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels,
"Go and pour out the bowls[a] of the wrath of God on the earth."

### FIRST BOWL: LOATHSOME SORES

2 So the first went and poured out his bowl upon the earth, and a foul and
loathsome sore came upon the men who had the mark of the beast and those
who worshiped his image.

### SECOND BOWL: THE SEA TURNS TO BLOOD

3 Then the second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, and it became
blood as of a dead *man;* and every living creature in the sea died.

### THIRD BOWL: THE WATERS TURN TO BLOOD

4 Then the third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of
water, and they became blood. 5 And I heard the angel of the waters saying:

"You are righteous, O Lord,[a]
The One who is and who was and who
is to be,[b]
Because You have judged these things.
6 For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets,
And You have given them blood to drink.
For[a] it is their just due."

7 And I heard another from[a] the altar saying, "Even so, Lord God
Almighty, true and righteous *are* Your judgments."

### FOURTH BOWL: MEN ARE SCORCHED

8 Then the fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and power was
given to him to scorch men with fire. 9 And men were scorched with great
heat, and they blasphemed the name of God who has power over these
plagues; and they did not repent and give Him glory.

### FIFTH BOWL: DARKNESS AND PAIN

10 Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and

his kingdom became full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues because of the pain. [11]They blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and did not repent of their deeds.

**SIXTH BOWL: EUPHRATES DRIED UP**

[12]Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared. [13]And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs *coming* out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. [14]For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, *which* go out to the kings of the earth and[a] of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.

[15]"Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed *is* he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame."

[16]And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon.[a]

**SEVENTH BOWL: THE EARTH UTTERLY SHAKEN**

[17]Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, "It is done!" [18]And there were noises and thunderings and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth. [19]Now the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. And great Babylon was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath. [20]Then every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. [21]And great hail from heaven fell upon men, *each hailstone* about the weight of a talent. Men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, since that plague was exceedingly great.

## THE SCARLET WOMAN AND THE SCARLET BEAST

**17** Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked
with me, saying to me,[a] "Come, I will show you the judgment of the
great harlot who sits on many waters, 2with whom the kings of the earth
committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with
the wine of her fornication."

3So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a
woman sitting on a scarlet beast *which was* full of names of blasphemy,
having seven heads and ten horns. 4The woman was arrayed in purple and
scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her
hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication.[a]
5And on her forehead a name *was* written:

MYSTERY,
BABYLON THE GREAT,
THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS
AND OF THE
ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

6I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of
the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement.

## THE MEANING OF THE WOMAN AND THE BEAST

7But the angel said to me, "Why did you marvel? I will tell you the
mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven
heads and the ten horns. 8The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will
ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition. And those who dwell on
the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from
the foundation of the world, when they see the beast that was, and is not, and
yet is.[a]

9"Here *is* the mind which has wisdom: The seven heads are seven
mountains on which the woman sits. 10There are also seven kings. Five have

fallen, one is, *and* the other has not yet come. And when he comes, he must continue a short time. [11]The beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven, and is going to perdition.

[12]"The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast. [13]These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast. [14]These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those *who are* with Him *are* called, chosen, and faithful."

[15]Then he said to me, "The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues. [16]And the ten horns which you saw on[a] the beast, these will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire. [17]For God has put it into their hearts to fulfill His purpose, to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled. [18]And the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth."

## THE FALL OF BABYLON THE GREAT

**18** After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven,
having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory.
2 And he cried mightily[a] with a loud voice, saying, “Babylon the great is
fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for
every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird! 3 For all the
nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of
the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth
have become rich through the abundance of her luxury.”

4 And I heard another voice from heaven saying, “Come out of her, my
people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues. 5 For her
sins have reached[a] to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.
6 Render to her just as she rendered to you,[a] and repay her double according
to her works; in the cup which she has mixed, mix double for her. 7 In the
measure that she glorified herself and lived luxuriously, in the same measure
give her torment and sorrow; for she says in her heart, ‘I sit *as* queen, and am
no widow, and will not see sorrow.’ 8 Therefore her plagues will come in one
day-death and mourning and famine. And she will be utterly burned with fire,
for strong *is* the Lord God who judges[a] her.

## THE WORLD MOURNS BABYLON’S FALL

9 “The kings of the earth who committed fornication and lived luxuriously
with her will weep and lament for her, when they see the smoke of her
burning, 10 standing at a distance for fear of her torment, saying, ‘Alas, alas,
that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour your judgment has
come.’

11 “And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no
one buys their merchandise anymore: 12 merchandise of gold and silver,
precious stones and pearls, fine linen and purple, silk and scarlet, every kind
of citron wood, every kind of object of ivory, every kind of object of most
precious wood, bronze, iron, and marble; 13 and cinnamon and incense,
fragrant oil and frankincense, wine and oil, fine flour and wheat, cattle and

sheep, horses and chariots, and bodies and souls of men. [14]The fruit that your soul longed for has gone from you, and all the things which are rich and splendid have gone from you,[a] and you shall find them no more at all. [15]The merchants of these things, who became rich by her, will stand at a distance for fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, [16]and saying, ‘Alas, alas, that great city that was clothed in fine linen, purple, and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls! [17]For in one hour such great riches came to nothing.’ Every shipmaster, all who travel by ship, sailors, and as many as trade on the sea, stood at a distance [18]and cried out when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, ‘What *is* like this great city?’

[19]“They threw dust on their heads and cried out, weeping and wailing, and saying, ‘Alas, alas, that great city, in which all who had ships on the sea became rich by her wealth! For in one hour she is made desolate.’

[20]“Rejoice over her, O heaven, and *you* holy apostles[a] and prophets, for God has avenged you on her!”

**FINALITY OF BABYLON’S FALL**

[21]Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw *it* into the sea, saying, “Thus with violence the great city Babylon shall be thrown down, and shall not be found anymore. [22]The sound of harpists, musicians, flutists, and trumpeters shall not be heard in you anymore. No craftsman of any craft shall be found in you anymore, and the sound of a millstone shall not be heard in you anymore. [23]The light of a lamp shall not shine in you anymore, and the voice of bridegroom and bride shall not be heard in you anymore. For your merchants were the great men of the earth, for by your sorcery all the nations were deceived. [24]And in her was found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who were slain on the earth.”

## HEAVEN EXULTS OVER BABYLON

**19** After these things I heard[a] a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven,
saying, “Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power *belong* to
the Lord[b] our God! 2For true and righteous *are* His judgments, because He
has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication; and
He has avenged on her the blood of His servants *shed* by her.” 3Again they
said, “Alleluia! Her smoke rises up forever and ever!” 4And the twenty-four
elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sat on
the throne, saying, “Amen! Alleluia!” 5Then a voice came from the throne,
saying, “Praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both[a]
small and great!”

6And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of
many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, “Alleluia! For
the[a] Lord God Omnipotent reigns! 7Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him
glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself
ready.” 8And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and
bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

9Then he said to me, “Write: ‘Blessed *are* those who are called to the
marriage supper of the Lamb!’ ” And he said to me, “These are the true
sayings of God.” 10And I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me,
“See *that you do* not *do that!* I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren
who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is
the spirit of prophecy.”

## CHRIST ON A WHITE HORSE

11Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat
on him *was* called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and
makes war. 12His eyes *were* like a flame of fire, and on His head *were* many
crowns. He had[a] a name written that no one knew except Himself. 13He *was*
clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of
God. 14And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean,[a]
followed Him on white horses. 15Now out of His mouth goes a sharp[a] sword,

that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. [16]And He has on *His* robe and on His thigh a name written:

KING OF KINGS
AND LORD OF LORDS.

## THE BEAST AND HIS ARMIES DEFEATED

[17]Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, "Come and gather together for the supper of the great God,[a] [18]that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all *people*, free[a] and slave, both small and great."

[19]And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. [20]Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. [21]And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh.

**SATAN BOUND 1000 YEARS 20**Then

**20** Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. [2]He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is *the* Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; [3]and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.

**THE SAINTS REIGN WITH CHRIST 1000 YEARS**

[4]And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then *I saw* the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received *his* mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a[a] thou sand years. [5]But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This *is* the first resurrection. [6]Blessed and holy *is* he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

**SATANIC REBELLION CRUSHED**

[7]Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison [8]and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number *is* as the sand of the sea. [9]They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. [10]The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where[a] the beast and the false prophet *are.* And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

**THE GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT**

[11]Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. [12]And I saw the dead, smalland great, standing before God,[a] and books were

opened. And another book was opened, which is *the Book* of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. [13]The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. [14]Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.[a] [15]And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

**SOUL NOTE**

**Before the Judge** *(20:11-15)* In this heavenly courtroom, God Himself is the Judge. Everyone-small and great, poor and rich, the notorious and the reputable-will stand without any excuse before their Maker. The only thing that will matter is whether one's name has been written in the Book of Life. That book has no misprints, no omissions, no mistakes. No person can blame anyone else if their name is missing; and they can take no credit if their name is included. Each person can be sure that their name is written in the book by trusting Christ today. **Topic: Accountability**

## ALL THINGS MADE NEW

**21** Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the
first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. 2Then I, John,[a]
saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God,
prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3And I heard a loud voice from
heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and He will
dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with
them *and be* their God. 4And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes;
there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more
pain, for the former things have passed away.”

5Then He who sat on the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.” And
He said to me,[a] “Write, for these words are true and faithful.”

6And He said to me, “It is done![a] I am the Alpha and the Omega, the
Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely
to him who thirsts. 7He who overcomes shall inherit all things,[a] and I will be
his God and he shall be My son. 8But the cowardly, unbelieving,[a]
abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars
shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is
the second death.”

## THE NEW JERUSALEM

9Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the
seven last plagues came to me[a] and talked with me, saying, “Come, I will
show you the bride, the Lamb’s wife.”[b] 10And he carried me away in the
Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy[a]
Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, 11having the glory of God.
Her light *was* like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.
12Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at
the gates, and names written on them, which are *the names* of the twelve
tribes of the children of Israel: 13three gates on the east, three gates on the
north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west.

14Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the

names[a] of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. [15]And he who talked with me had a gold reed to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. [16]The city is laid out as a square; its length is as great as its breadth. And he measured the city with the reed: twelve thousand furlongs. Its length, breadth, and height are equal. [17]Then he measured its wall: one hundred *and* forty-four cubits, *according* to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel. [18]The construction of its wall was *of* jasper; and the city *was* pure gold, like clear glass. [19]The foundations of the wall of the city *were* adorned with all kinds of precious stones: the first foundation *was* jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, [20]the fifth sardonyx, the sixth sardius, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. [21]The twelve gates *were* twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl. And the street of the city *was* pure gold, like transparent glass.

**THE GLORY OF THE NEW JERUSALEM**

[22]But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. [23]The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it,[a] for the glory[b] of God illuminated it. The Lamb *is* its light. [24]And the nations of those who are saved[a] shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it.[b] [25]Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there). [26]And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it.[a] [27]But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes[a] an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

**SOUL NOTE**

**No More Pain** *(21:4)* No sorrow, no pain, no death! Such a place is

hard to imagine, because this world is filled with loss and sorrow. Revelation describes a better time and a better place, however, where grief and loss will not exist: heaven. God promises to “wipe away every tear” and that “there shall be no more pain.” No matter what we experience here, God promises a perfect future with Him. Through the hard times of today, we can trust this hope for the future. **Topic: Grief/Loss**

**SOUL NOTE**

**All Things New** *(21:5)* Everything that has been perverted by sin, death, and decay will be created over again at the end of history. All pain, sorrow, and death will pass away (21:4). Once again, everything will be perfect, straight from the hand of God. God promises that He will “make all things new.” Broken lives will be healed. Tears will cease. Souls will be renewed. Believers will be given heavenly bodies for living with God in paradise forever. This recreated and renewed world is God’s spectacular gift to those who have trusted in Him. We must stand strong for God; His promises will surely come to pass. **Topic: God’s Promises**

**SOUL NOTE**

**True Home** *(21:10-27)* Most people know the wonderful feeling of

having a place where they are wanted and cared for, a place that they can call their own. John described the heavenly home that is waiting for Jesus' followers. In the new Jerusalem, the streets are made of gold and the foundations adorned with jewels. And most importantly, God lives there. His glory gives light to the city. Although we may have a home we enjoy on this earth, one day we will reach our ultimate destination-our true home in heaven with God forever. We must be sure we are ready. **Topic: Eternal Life**

**ETERNAL LIFE IN HEAVEN**

# TIM LAHAYE

## (Revelation 21:22)

**T**he greatest hope of all humans is that they will live again someday in heaven forever. People of other religions may have another name for this place, like "nirvana" or "the happy hunting grounds," but the yearning to live again in a better place after death is an almost universal desire. Many think it is an intuitive quest placed in the human heart by God, a quest that can only be stifled by the most blatant atheism or rebellion.

While most people will admit to that innate yearning for life in a better world, only Christians and Jews have any definite knowledge of that place, for the Bible is the only true source of instruction. Perhaps we can imagine the Garden of Eden before the Fall. It was

exquisite: a place of indescribable beauty, plenty, and peace, not only between humans and animals, but the entire creation. Heaven will be even better. And that is the key-heaven is indescribable and beyond the imagination of twenty-first-century individuals.

## A PLACE PREPARED FOR US

Jesus Christ is the greatest of all authorities about heaven, for He lives there and is a living eyewitness to its glory. When He spoke about heaven while on earth, He called it, "My Father's house." Think of that! Heaven is the place where God lives, where His angels dwell, and where His people will spend eternity. Jesus said, "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:1-3). We have the promise of Jesus Christ Himself that He will take us to His Father's house.

Recently I visited Buckingham Palace in London, the home of the Queen of England. It is truly magnificent. We ordinary people can scarcely dream of living in such opulent splendor. Yet heaven, or "the Father's house," will be incredibly more beautiful. The last two chapters of the last book of the Bible, Revelation, describe some of the grandeur of heaven:

•*God will be with His people.*

"Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them" (Rev. 21:3).

"They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads" (Rev. 22:4).

•*Heaven will be a place of eternal joy.*

"God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain" (Rev. 21:4).

•*Heaven's beauty is indescribable.*

It is filled with the glory of God. "Her light was like a most precious stone. . . . The construction of its wall was of jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones. . . . The twelve gates were twelve pearls. . . . And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass" (Rev. 21:11, 18, 19, 21).

•*God is heaven's focal point.*

"The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light" (Rev. 21:23).

•*The river of life courses through it.*

"He showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb" (Rev. 22:1).

•*The tree of life grows there.*

"In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits" (Rev. 22:2).

•*Heaven is for God's people-those who have accepted Christ as Savior.*

"The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him" (Rev. 22:3).

Those who reject or neglect faith in Jesus will never see heaven. That is the tragedy of the ages, because Jesus died for the sins of the whole world. Unfortunately, however, all the world will not enjoy

heaven when they die because they have not received Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord. Let me be clear about this: He is the only means of forgiveness and salvation, for He alone died on the Cross for the sins of the world. And He alone was raised from the dead as a testimony of God's forgiveness.

One of the reasons Christians are so driven to share their faith with others is that they do not want anyone to miss God's wonderful plan for eternal life in heaven. But as the words of the famous old spiritual explain it, "Everybody talkin' 'bout heaven ain't goin' there." Only those individuals who have accepted Christ's sacrifice on their behalf-committing their past sins, their present life, and their eternal future to Jesus-will experience heaven.

The time is near. We do not know when Christ will return to take His people with Him, but we *do* know that He will come. As we await His return, we must continue to share our faith with others, hoping to bring them with us to heaven. What a glorious future awaits us! We can excitedly say with John, "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" (Rev. 22:20).

**FURTHER MEDITATION:**

Other passages to study about the issue of eternal life include:

- Job 19:25, 26
- Luke 10:20
- John 3:16; 5:24; 11:23, 24; John 17:1-3
- 1 Corinthians 15:12-57
- 1 John 5:11-13

**To Learn More:** Turn to the key passage note on eternal life at 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. See also the personality profile of the apostle John John's Glimpses Of Heaven.

### The River of Life

**22** And he showed me a pure[a] river of water of life, clear as crystal,
proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. [2]In the middle of its
street, and on either side of the river, *was* the tree of life, which bore twelve
fruits, each *tree* yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree *were* for
the healing of the nations. [3]And there shall be no more curse, but the throne
of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him.
[4]They shall see His face, and His name *shall be* on their foreheads. [5]There
shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord
God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.

### THE TIME IS NEAR

[6]Then he said to me, "These words *are* faithful and true." And the Lord
God of the holy[a] prophets sent His angel to show His servants the things
which must shortly take place.

[7]"Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed *is* he who keeps the words of the
prophecy of this book."

[8]Now I, John, saw and heard[a] these things. And when I heard and saw, I
fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these
things.

[9]Then he said to me, "See *that you do* not *do that.* For[a] I am your fellow
servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words
of this book. Worship God." [10]And he said to me, "Do not seal the words of
the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand. [11]He who is unjust, let him
be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let
him be righteous[a] still; he who is holy, let him be holy still."

### JESUS TESTIFIES TO THE CHURCHES

[12]"And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward *is* with Me, to give to
every one according to his work. [13]I am the Alpha and the Omega, *the*
Beginning and *the* End, the First and the Last."[a]

14 Blessed *are* those who do His commandments, [a] that they may have the
right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. 15 But[a]
outside *are* dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and
idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie.

16 "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the
churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning
Star."

> "And behold, I am coming quickly,
> and My reward is with Me, to give
> to every one according to his work."
> REVELATION 22:12

17 And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say,
"Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the
water of life freely.

**A WARNING**

18 For[a] I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this
book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add[b] to him the plagues that
are written in this book; 19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the
book of this prophecy, God shall take away[a] his part from the Book[b] of Life,
from the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book.

**I AM COMING QUICKLY**

20 He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming quickly."

Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

21 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all.[a] Amen.

# Endnotes

**1:2** [g] Words in italic type have been added for clarity. They are not found in the original Hebrew or Aramaic.

**1:26** [g] Syriac reads *all the wild animals of.*

**2:4** [g] Hebrew *toledoth*, literally *generations*

**2:14** [g] Or *Tigris*

**4:8** [a] Samaritan Pentateuch, Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate add *"Let us go out to the field."*

**4:15** [a] Following Masoretic Text and Targum; Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate read *Not so*.

**4:26** [a] Greek *Enos*

**5:9** [a] Hebrew *Qenan*

**6:3** [a] Septuagint, Syriac, Targum, and Vulgate read *abide.*

**6:5** [g] Following Masoretic Text and Targum; Vulgate reads *God;* Septuagint reads *LORD God.*

**7:22** [a]Septuagint and Vulgate omit *of the spirit.*

**9:1** [g] Compare Genesis 1:28

**9:9** [g] Literally *seed*

**10:3** [g] Spelled *Diphath* in 1 Chronicles 1:6

**10:4** [g] Spelled *Rodanim* in Samaritan Pentateuch and 1 Chronicles 1:7

**10:6** [a] Or *Phut*

**10:23** [g] Called *Meshech* in Septuagint and 1 Chronicles 1:17

**10:24** [g]Following Masoretic Text, Vulgate, and Targum; Septuagint reads *Arphaxad begot Cainan, and Cainan begot Salah* (compare Luke 3:35, 36).

**10:28** [g] Spelled *Ebal* in 1 Chronicles 1:22

**12:6** [g] Hebrew *Alon Moreh*

**12:9** [g] Hebrew *Negev*

**12:13** [a] Literally *my soul*

**13:1** [g] Hebrew *Negev*

**13:15** [g] Literally *seed*, and so throughout the book

**13:18** [g] Hebrew *Alon Mamre*

**14:1** [g] Hebrew *goyim*

**14:9** [g] Hebrew *goyim*

**14:13** [g] Hebrew *Alon Mamre*

**16:14** [g] Literally *Well of the One Who Lives and Sees Me*

**18:1** [g] Hebrew *Alon Mamre*

**18:11** [a] Literally *the manner of women had ceased to be with Sarah*

**19:17** [a] Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate read *they*.

**20:16** [g] Literally *it is a covering of the eyes for you*

**21:31** [g] Literally *Well of the Oath* or *Well of the Seven*

**22:5** [a] Or *young man*

**22:14** [g] Hebrew *YHWH Yireh*

**22:23** [g] Spelled *Rebecca* in Romans 9:10

**24:7** [g] Literally *seed*

**25:15** [g] Masoretic Text reads *Hadad.*

**25:25** [g] Literally *Hairy*

**25:26** [g] Literally *Supplanter*

**25:30** [g] Literally *Red*

**26:20** [g] Literally *Quarrel*

**26:21** [a] Literally *Enmity*

**26:22** [a] Literally *Spaciousness*

**26:33** [g] Literally *Oath or Seven*

**26:33** *b* Literally *Well of the Oath or Well of the Seven*

**28:19** [g] Literally *House of God*

**29:32** [g] Literally *See, a Son*

**29:33** [g] Literally *Heard*

**29:34** [g] Literally *Attached*

**29:35** [g] Literally *Praise*

**30:6** [g] Literally *Judge*

**30:8** [g] Literally *My Wrestling*

**30:11** [g]Following Qere, Syriac, and Targum; Kethib, Septuagint, and Vulgate read *in fortune*.

**30:11** ***b*** Literally *Troop* or *Fortune*

**30:13** [g] Literally *Happy*

**30:18** [g] Literally *Wages*

**30:20** [g] Literally *Dwelling*

**30:24** [g] Literally *He Will Add*

**31:47** [g] Literally, in Aramaic, *Heap of Witness*

**31:47** *b*Literally, in Hebrew, *Heap of Witness*

**31:49** [g] Literally *Watch*

**32:2** [g] Literally *Double Camp*

**32:28** [g] Literally *Prince with God*

**32:30** [g] Literally *Face of God*

**32:31** [a] Same as *Peniel,* verse 30

**33:17** [g] Literally *Booths*

**33:20** [g] Literally *God, the God of Israel*

**35:7** [g] Literally *God of the House of God*

**35:8** [g] Literally *Terebinth of Weeping*

**35:18** [g] Literally *Son of My Sorrow*

**35:18** ***b*** Literally *Son of the Right Hand*

**35:27** [a] Literally *Town of Arba*

**36:11** [g] Spelled *Zephi* in 1 Chronicles 1:36

**36:16** [g] Samaritan Pentateuch omits *Chief Korah*.

**36:22** [g] Spelled *Homam* in 1 Chronicles 1:39

**36:23** [g] Spelled *Alian* in 1 Chronicles 1:40

**36:23** ***b***Spelled *Shephi* in 1 Chronicles 1:40

**36:24** [g]Following Masoretic Text and Vulgate (*hot springs*); Septuagint reads *Jamin;* Targum reads *mighty men;* Talmud interprets as *mules.*

**36:26** [a] Hebrew *Dishan*

**36:26** ***b***Spelled *Hamran* in 1 Chronicles 1:41

**36:27** [g] Spelled *Jaakan* in 1 Chronicles 1:42

**36:39** [g]Spelled *Hadad* in Samaritan Pentateuch, Syriac, and 1 Chronicles 1:50

**36:39** ***b***Spelled *Pai* in 1 Chronicles 1:50

**36:40** [g] Spelled *Aliah* in 1 Chronicles 1:51

**37:36** [a] Masoretic Text reads *Medanites*.

**38:29** [g] Literally *Breach* or *Breakthrough*

**39:23** [g] Literally *his hand*

**41:51** [g] Literally *Making Forgetful*

**41:52** [g] Literally *Fruitfulness*

**41:56** [g] Literally *all that was in them*

**46:10** [g] Spelled *Nemuel* in 1 Chronicles 4:24

**46:10** ***b***Called *Jarib* in 1 Chronicles 4:24

**46:10** [c]Called *Zerah* in 1 Chronicles 4:24

**46:13** [g] Spelled *Puah* in 1 Chronicles 7:1

**46:13** ***b***Same as *Jashub* in Numbers 26:24 and 1 Chronicles 7:1

**46:16** [g] Spelled *Zephon* in Samaritan Pentateuch, Septuagint, and Numbers 26:15

**46:16** ***b***Called *Ozni* in Numbers 26:16

**46:16** [c] Spelled *Arod* in Numbers 26:17

**46:21** [g] Called *Hupham* in Numbers 26:39

**46:23** [g] Called *Shuham* in Numbers 26:42

**46:24** [g] Spelled *Jahziel* in 1 Chronicles 7:13

**46:24** ***b***Spelled *Shallum* in 1 Chronicles 7:13

**47:21** [g]Following Masoretic Text and Targum; Samaritan Pentateuch, Septuagint, and Vulgate read *made the people virtual slaves*.

**50:11** [g] Literally *Mourning of Egypt*

**1:5** [a] Literally *who came from the loins of*

**1:5** ***b*** Dead Sea Scrolls and Septuagint read *seventy-five* (compare Acts 7:14).

**1:22** [a] Samaritan Pentateuch, Septuagint, and Targum add *to the Hebrews.*

**2:10** [a] Literally *Drawn Out*

**2:22** [a] Literally *Stranger There*

**4:9** [a] That is, the Nile

**4:25** [a] Literally *his*

**6:3** [a] Hebrew *YHWH*, traditionally *Jehovah*

**6:15** [g]Spelled *Nemuel* in Numbers 26:12

**8:23** [g] Literally *set a ransom* (compare Exodus 9:4 and 11:7)

**12:40** [g] Samaritan Pentateuch and Septuagint read *Egypt and Canaan.*

**13:19** [g] Genesis 50:25

**14:25** [a]Samaritan Pentateuch, Septuagint, and Syriac read bound.

**15:23** [g] Literally *Bitter*

**16:31** [g] Literally *What?* (compare Exodus 16:15)

**17:7** [g] Literally *Tempted*

**17:7** [b] Literally *Contention*

**17:15** [g] Hebrew *YHWH Nissi*

**18:3** [g] Compare Exodus 2:22

**18:4** [g] Literally *My God Is Help*

**18:12** [g]Following Masoretic Text and Septuagint; Syriac, Targum, and Vulgate read *offered.*

**19:18** [a] Septuagint reads *all the people.*

**23:17** [g] Hebrew *YHWH*, usually translated *LORD*

**23:31** [g] Hebrew *Nahar*, the Euphrates

**28:4** [g] That is, an ornamented vest

**28:30** [g] Literally *the Lights and the Perfections* (compare Leviticus 8:8)

**29:37** [g] Compare Numbers 4:15 and Haggai 2:11-13

**30:29** [g] Compare Numbers 4:15 and Haggai 2:11-13

**31:10** [g] Or *woven garments*

**32:13** [g] Genesis 13:15 and 22:17

**34:28** [g] Literally *Ten Words*

**35:19** [g] Or *woven garments*

**39:1** [a] Or *woven garments*

**39:41** [a] Or *woven garments*

**6:18** [g] Compare Numbers 4:15 and Haggai 2:11-13

**6:27** [g] Compare Numbers 4:15 and Haggai 2:11-13

**6:30** [g]The Most Holy Place when capitalized

**7:21** [a] Following Masoretic Text, Septuagint, and Vulgate; Samaritan Pentateuch, Syriac, and Targum read *swarming thing* (compare 5:2).

**8:8** [g] Literally *the Lights and the Perfections* (compare Exodus 28:30)

**10:18** [g] The Most Holy Place when capitalized

**13:2** [g]Hebrew *saraath*, disfiguring skin diseases, including leprosy, and so in verses 2-46 and 14:1- 32

**13:47** [a] A mold, fungus, or similar infestation, and so in verses 47-59

**14:34** [g] Decomposition by mildew, mold, dry rot, etc., and so in verses 34-53

**16:33** [a] That is, the Most Holy Place

**21:7** [g] Literally *he*

**1:14** [g] Spelled *Reuel* in 2:14

**2:14** [g] Spelled *Deuel* in 1:14 and 7:42

**3:9** ***a***Samaritan Pentateuch and Septuagint read *Me*.

**3:28** [q]Some manuscripts of the Septuagint read *three*.

**4:7** [g] Literally *the continual bread*

**4:28** [g] Literally *hand*

**4:33** [g] Literally *hand*

**7:8** [a] Literally *hand*

**7:42** [g] Spelled *Reuel* in 2:14

**11:3** [g] Literally *Burning*

**11:25** [a] Targum and Vulgate read *did not cease.*

**11:34** [g] Literally *Graves of Craving*

**13:8** [a] Septuagint and Vulgate read *Oshea.*

**13:16** [a] Septuagint and Vulgate read *Oshea*.

**13:24** [g] Literally *Cluster*

**14:8** [g]Exodus 3:8

**14:18** [g] Exodus 34:6, 7

**15:16** [g] Compare Exodus 12:49

**19:9** [g] Literally *impurity*

**20:13** [g] Literally *Contention*

**21:3** [g] Literally *Utter Destruction*

**21:14** [g]Ancient unknown places; Vulgate reads *What He did in the Red Sea.*

**21:20** [g] Hebrew *Jeshimon*

**22:5** [g] That is, the Euphrates

**22:5** [b] Or *the people of Amau*

**23:10** [g] Or *dust cloud*

**23:15** [g] Following Masoretic Text, Targum, and Vulgate; Syriac reads *call;* Septuagint reads *go and ask God*.

**23:28** [g] Hebrew *Jeshimon*

**24:9** [g]Genesis 49:9

**24:17** [g] Hebrew *Sheth* (compare Jeremiah 48:45)

**24:24** [g] Hebrew *Kittim*

**24:24** ***b*** Literally *he* or *that one*

25:1 [a]Hebrew Shittim

**26:12** [g] Spelled *Jemuel* in Genesis 46:10 and Exodus 6:15

**26:12** ***b***Called *Jarib* in 1 Chronicles 4:24

**26:13** [g] Called *Zohar* in Genesis 46:10

**26:15** [g] Called *Ziphion* in Genesis 46:16

**26:16** [g] Called *Ezbon* in Genesis 46:16

**26:17** [g] Spelled *Arodi* in Samaritan Pentateuch, Syriac, and Genesis 46:16

**26:23** [q]Hebrew *Puvah* (compare Genesis 46:13 and 1 Chronicles 7:1); Samaritan Pentateuch, Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate read *Puah.*

**26:23** *b* Samaritan Pentateuch, Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate read *Puaites.*

**26:30** [g] Called *Abiezer* in Joshua 17:2

**26:35** [g] Called *Bered* in 1 Chronicles 7:20

**26:39** [g] Masoretic Text reads *Shephupham*, spelled *Shephuphan* in 1 Chronicles 8:5.

**26:39** ***b***Called *Huppim* in Genesis 46:21

**26:40** [g] Called *Addar* in 1 Chronicles 8:3

**26:42** [g] Called *Hushim* in Genesis 46:23

**26:48** [g] Spelled *Jahziel* in 1 Chronicles 7:13

**32:41** [g] Literally *Towns of Jair*

**33:8** [a]Many Hebrew manuscripts, Samaritan Pentateuch, Syriac, Targum, and Vulgate read *from Pi Hahiroth* (compare verse 7).

**33:45** [a]Same as *Ije Abarim,* verse 44

**33:49** [g] Hebrew *Abel Shittim*

**1:1**[g] Hebrew *arabah*

**1:1**[*b*] One manuscript of the Septuagint, also Targum and Vulgate, read Red Sea.

**1:4** [g] Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate read *and* (compare Joshua 12:4).

**1:7 *a***Hebrew *arabah*

**2:11** [g] Hebrew rephaim

**2:20** [g] Hebrew *rephaim*

**3:11** [g] Hebrew *rephaim*

**3:13** [g] Hebrew *rephaim*

**3:14** [g] Literally *Towns of Jair*

**4:48** [a]Syriac reads *Sirion* (compare 3:9).

**6:3** [a] Exodus 3:8

**6:4** [g] Or *The* LORD *is our God, the* LORD *alone* (that is, the only one)

**7:5** [a] Hebrew *Asherim,* Canaanite deities

**11:9** [g]Exodus 3:8

**11:14** [g]Following Masoretic Text and Targum; Samaritan Pentateuch, Septuagint, and Vulgate read *He*.

**11:24** [a] That is, the Mediterranean

**14:5** [q] Or *addax*

**20:8** [g] Following Masoretic Text and Targum; Samaritan Pentateuch, Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate read *lest he make his brother's heart faint*.

**23:4** [g] Hebrew *Aram Naharaim*

**23:17** [g] Hebrew *qedeshah*, feminine of *qadesh* (see note *b*)

**23:17***b*Hebrew *qadesh,* that is, one practicing sodomy and prostitution in religious rituals

**26:3** [g] Septuagint reads *my*.

**26:5** [a] Or *Aramean*

**26:9** [g]Exodus 3:8

**26:15** [g]Exodus 3:8

**27:3** [g]Exodus 3:8

**28:56** [g] Literally *her eye shall be evil toward*

**29:19** [g] Or *stubbornness*

**32:44** [g] Hebrew *Hoshea* (compare Numbers 13:8, 16)

**32:43** [g] A Dead Sea Scroll fragment adds *And let all the gods (angels) worship Him* (compare Septuagint and Hebrews 1:6).

**33:16** [g] Genesis 49:26

**34:2** [g] That is, the Mediterranean

**2:1** [a] Hebrew *Shittim*

**3:1** [a] Hebrew *Shittim*

**5:1** [a]Following Kethib; Qere, some Hebrew manuscripts and editions, Septuagint, Syriac, Targum, and Vulgate read *they*.

**5:3** [a] Hebrew *Gibeath Haaraloth*

**5:6** [g]Exodus 3:8

**5:9** [g] Literally *Rolling*

**7:1** [g] Called *Zimri* in 1 Chronicles 2:6

**7:26** [g] Literally *Trouble*

**8:31** [g]Deuteronomy 27:5, 6

**10:28** [g] Following Masoretic Text and most authorities; many Hebrew manuscripts, some manuscripts of the Septuagint, and some manuscripts of the Targum read *it*.

**10:40** [g] Hebrew *Negev*, and so throughout this

**11:8** [g] Hebrew Misrephoth Maim

**11:13** [g] Hebrew *tel*, a heap of successive city ruins

**11:16** [g] Hebrew *arabah*

**13:5** [a] Or *Giblites*

**13:6** [g] Hebrew *Misrephoth Maim*

**15:8** [g] Literally *Giants*

**15:40** [a] Or *Lahmam*

**16:2** [g] Septuagint reads *Bethel* (that is, Luz).

**16:7** [g]Or *Naaran* (compare 1 Chronicles 7:28)

**17:2** [g] Called *Jeezer* in Numbers 26:30

**18:16** [g] Literally *Giants*

**18:18** [a] Or *Beth Arabah* (compare 15:6 and 18:22)

**19:28** [g]Following Masoretic Text, Targum, and Vulgate; a few Hebrew manuscripts read *Abdon* (compare 21:30 and 1 Chronicles 6:74).

**21:37** [g] Following Septuagint and Vulgate (compare 1 Chronicles 6:78, 79); Masoretic Text, Bomberg, and Targum omit verses 36 and 37.

**22:14** [g] Literally *thousands*

**22:21** [g] Literally *thousands*

**22:30** [g] Literally *thousands*

**22:34** [g] Septuagint adds *and half the tribe of Manasseh.*

**24:2** [g] Hebrew *Nahar*, the Euphrates, and so in verses 3, 14, and 15

**1:9** [g] Hebrew *Negev*, and so throughout this book

**1:14** [g] Septuagint and Vulgate read *he urged her*.

**1:35** [a] Spelled *Shaalabbin* in Joshua

**2:3** [a] Septuagint, Targum, and Vulgate read *enemies to you*.

**2:5** [a] Literally *Weeping*

**2:13** [g]Canaanite goddesses

**3:7** [a] Name or symbol for Canaanite goddesses

**3:24** [g] Literally *his*

**4:10** [g] Literally *at his feet*

**5:15** [a]Following Septuagint, Syriac, Targum, and Vulgate; Masoretic Text reads *And my princes in Issachar*.

**5:15** ***b***Literally *at his feet*

**5:17** [a] Or *at ease*

**5:23** [g] Or *Angel*

**6:13** [g] Hebrew *adoni*, used of man

**6:15** [g]Hebrew *Adonai*, used of God

**6:24** [g] Hebrew *YHWH Shalom*

**6:25** [g] Hebrew *Asherah*, a Canaanite goddess

**6:32** [g] Literally *LetBaal Plead*

**7:22** [g] Hebrew *Beth Shittah*

**9:29** [g] Literally *hand*

**9:29** *b* Following Masoretic Text and Targum; Dead Sea Scrolls read *they;* Septuagint reads *I*.

**9:37** [g] Hebrew *Meonenim*

**10:4** [g]Literally *Towns of Jair* (compare Numbers 32:41 and Deuteronomy 3:14)

**10:12** [g] Some Septuagint manuscripts read *Midianites*.

**11:33** [g] Literally *Plain of Vineyards*

**13:25** [g] Literally *Camp of Dan* (compare 18:12)

**14:15** [g]Following Masoretic Text, Targum, and Vulgate; Septuagint and Syriac read *fourth.*

**15:17** [g] Literally *Jawbone Height*

**15:19** [g] Literally *Jawbone* (compare verse 14)

**15:19** ***b*** Literally *Spring of the Caller*

**16:19** [g] Following Masoretic Text, Targum, and Vulgate; Septuagint reads *he began to be weak.*

**17:5**[a] Hebrew *teraphim*

**18:7** [a]Following Masoretic Text, Targum, and Vulgate; Septuagint reads *with Syria*.

**18:12** [a] Literally *Camp of Dan*

**18:30** [a] Septuagint and Vulgate read *Moses.*

**19:22** [g] Literally *sons of Belial*

**19:24** [g] Literally *his*

**19:29** [g] Literally *with her bones*

**20:13** [g] Literally *sons of Belial*

**20:18** [a] Or *Bethel*

**20:26** [g] Or *Bethel*

**20:34** [g] Literally *they*

**20:45** [g] Septuagint reads *the rest.*

**21:2** [g] Or *Bethel*

**1:20**[a] Literally *Pleasant*

**1:20*b*** Literally *Bitter*

**3:9** [a] Or *Spread the corner of your garment over your maidservant*

**3:15** [a]Many Hebrew manuscripts, Syriac, and Vulgate read *she;* Masoretic Text, Septuagint, and Targum read *he*.

**4:1** [a] Hebrew *peloni almoni;* literally *so and so*

**4:4** [a]Following many Hebrew manuscripts, Septuagint, Syriac, Targum, and Vulgate; Masoretic Text reads *he*.

**4:5** [g] Literally *raise up*

**4:10** [g] Probably his civic office

**4:20** [g] Hebrew *Salmah*

**1:1** [a] Spelled *Eliel* in 1 Chronicles 6:34

**1:1** ***b***Spelled *Toah* in 1 Chronicles 6:34

**1:9** [g] Hebrew *heykal,* palace or temple

**1:16** [g] Literally *daughter of Belial*

**1:20** [g] Literally *Heard by God*

**1:23** [a]Following Masoretic Text, Targum, and Vulgate; Dead Sea Scrolls, Septuagint, and Syriac read *your*.

**1:24** [g] Dead Sea Scrolls, Septuagint, and Syriac read *a three-year-old bull.*

**2:1** [a] That is, strength

**2:12** [g]Literally *sons of Belial*

**2:22** [a]Following Masoretic Text, Targum, and Vulgate; Dead Sea Scrolls and Septuagint omit the rest of this verse.

**3:3** [a] Hebrew *heykal,* palace or temple

**3:15** [g] Following Masoretic Text, Targum, and Vulgate; Septuagint adds *and he arose in the morning*.

**4:1** [g]Following Masoretic Text and Targum; Septuagint and Vulgate add *And it came to pass in those days that the Philistines gathered themselves together to fight;* Septuagint adds further *against Israel*.

**4:13** [a]Following Masoretic Text and Vulgate; Septuagint reads *beside the gate watching the road.*

**4:21** [g] Literally *Inglorious*

**5:2** [a] A Philistine idol

**5:4** [g]Following Septuagint, Syriac, Targum, and Vulgate; Masoretic Text reads *Dagon*.

**5:6** [a]Probably bubonic plague. Septuagint and Vulgate add here *And in the midst of their land rats sprang up, and there was a great death panic in the city*.

**6:19** [a] Or *He struck seventy men of the people and fifty oxen of a man*

**7:3** [a] Canaanite goddesses

**7:4** [g] Canaanite goddesses

**7:12** [g] Literally *Stone of Help*

**8:16** [g] Septuagint reads *cattle*.

**9:21** [g] Literally *tribes*

**9:25** [a]Following Masoretic Text and Targum; Septuagint omits *He spoke with Saul on the top of the house;* Septuagint and Vulgate add *And he prepared a bed for Saul on the top of the house, and he slept.*

**10:1** [g]Following Masoretic Text, Targum, and Vulgate; Septuagint reads *His people Israel; and you shall rule the people of the Lord;* Septuagint and Vulgate add *And you shall deliver His people from the hands of their enemies all around them. And this shall be a sign to you, that God has anointed you to be a prince*.

**10:19** [g] Literally *thousands*

**12:8** [g]Following Masoretic Text, Targum, and Vulgate; Septuagint adds *and the Egyptians afflicted them*.

**12:10** [g] Canaanite goddesses

**12:11** [a] Syriac reads *Deborah*; Targum reads *Gideon*.

**12:11** ***b*** Septuagint and Syriac read *Barak;* Targum reads *Simson*.

**12:11** [c]Syriac reads *Simson*.

**13:1** [g] The Hebrew is difficult (compare 2 Samuel 5:4; 2 Kings 14:2; see also 2 Samuel 2:10; Acts 13:21).

**13:5** [a]Following Masoretic Text, Septuagint, Targum, and Vulgate; Syriac and some manuscripts of the Septuagint read *three*.

**13:15** [g] Following Masoretic Text and Targum; Septuagint and Vulgate add *And the rest of the people went up after Saul to meet the people who fought against them, going from Gilgal to Gibeah in the hill of Benjamin.*

**13:21** [a] About two-thirds shekel weight

**14:14** [g] Literally *half the area plowed by a yoke* (of oxen in a day)

**14:18** [g] Following Masoretic Text, Targum, and Vulgate; Septuagint reads *ephod*.

**14:18** ***b***Following Masoretic Text, Targum, and Vulgate; Septuagint reads *ephod*.

**14:41** [g]Following Masoretic Text and Targum; Septuagint and Vulgate read *Why do You not answer Your servant today? If the injustice is with me or Jonathan my son, O Lord God of Israel, give proof; and if You say it is with Your people Israel, give holiness.*

**14:47** [a] Septuagint and Vulgate read *prospered*.

**14:49** [g] Called *Abinadab* in 1 Chronicles 8:33 and 9:39

**16:7** [a]Septuagint reads *For God does not see as man sees;* Targum reads *It is not by the appearance of a man;* Vulgate reads *Nor do I judge according to the looks of a man*.

**16:11** [a]Following Septuagint and Vulgate; Masoretic Text reads *turn around;* Targum and Syriac read *turn away*.

**17:52** [a]Following Masoretic Text, Syriac, Targum, and Vulgate; Septuagint reads *Gath*.

**19:24** *g* Compare 1 Samuel 10:12

**20:25** [a]Following Masoretic Text, Syriac, Targum, and Vulgate; Septuagint reads *he sat across from Jonathan*.

**21:11** [g] Compare 1 Samuel 18:7

**23:15** [a] Or *in Horesh*

**23:23** [g] Literally *thousands*

**23:28** [g] Hebrew *Sela Hammahlekoth*

**25:1** [a]Following Masoretic Text, Syriac, Targum, and Vulgate; Septuagint reads *Maon*.

**25:17** [g] Literally *son of Belial*

**25:25** [g] Literally *Fool*

**25:44** [g] Spelled *Paltiel* in 2 Samuel 3:15

**27:8** [a] Or *Gezrites*

**28:13** [g] Hebrew *elohim*

**28:17** [a] Or *him*, that is, David

**29:5** [g]Compare 1 Samuel 18:7

**29:10** [g]Following Masoretic Text, Targum, and Vulgate; Septuagint adds *and go to the place which I have selected for you there; and set no bothersome word in your heart, for you are good before me. And rise on your way*.

**30:22** [g] Literally *men of Belial*

**30:30** [g] Or *Borashan*

**31:10** [g] Spelled *Beth Shean* in Joshua 17:11 and elsewhere

**2:8** [g] Called *Esh-Baal* in 1 Chronicles 8:33 and 9:39

**2:16** [g] Hebrew *Helkath Hazzurim*

**3:15** [g]Spelled *Palti* in 1 Samuel 25:44

**3:18** [a] Following many Hebrew manuscripts, Septuagint, Syriac, and Targum; Masoretic Text reads *he*.

**4:1** [a] That is, Ishbosheth

**4:4** [g] Called *Merib-Baal* in 1 Chronicles 8:34 and 9:40

**5:8** [g] Compare 1 Chronicles 11:6

**5:9** [g] Literally *The Landfill*

**5:14** [g] Spelled *Shimea* in 1 Chronicles 3:5

**5:15** [g]Spelled *Elishamaa*in 1 Chronicles 3:6

**5:20** [g] Literally *Master of Breakthroughs*

**5:25** [a]Following Masoretic Text, Targum, and Vulgate; Septuagint reads *Gibeon*.

**6:2** [g]Septuagint, Targum, and Vulgate omit *by the Name;* many Hebrew manuscripts and Syriac read *there*.

**6:3** [a] Septuagint adds *with the ark*.

**6:8** [a] Literally *Outburst Against Uzzah*

**7:11** [g] That is, a royal dynasty

**7:16** [g] Septuagint reads *Me*.

**7:22** [g] Targum and Syriac read *O LORD God*.

**8:4** [g] Or *seven thousand* (compare 1 Chronicles 18:4)

**8:8** [a] Spelled *Tibhath* in 1 Chronicles 18:8

**8:9** [g] Spelled *Tou* in 1 Chronicles 18:9

**8:10** [g] Spelled *Hadoram* in 1 Chronicles 18:10

**8:12** [g] Septuagint, Syriac, and some Hebrew manuscripts read *Edom.*

**8:13** [a] Septuagint, Syriac, and some Hebrew manuscripts read *Edomites* (compare 1 Chronicles 18:12).

**8:17** [g]Spelled Shavsha in 1 Chronicles 18:16

**9:11** [g] Septuagint reads *David's table*.

**10:16** [g] Hebrew *Hadarezer*

**10:16** *b* That is, the Euphrates

**10:19** [g] Hebrew *Hadarezer*

**11:21** [g] Same as *Jerubbaal* (Gideon), Judges 6:32ff

**12:22** [a] A few Hebrew manuscripts and Syriac read *God.*

**12:24** [g]Following Kethib, Septuagint, and Vulgate; Qere, a few Hebrew manuscripts, Syriac, and Targum read *she*.

**12:25** [a] Qere, some Hebrew manuscripts, Syriac, and Targum read *she*.

**12:25** ***b*** Literally *Beloved of the* LORD

**13:34** [a] Septuagint adds *And the watchman went and told the king, and said, "I see men from the way of Horonaim, from the regions of the mountains."*

**13:39** [g]Following Masoretic Text, Syriac, and Vulgate; Septuagint reads *the spirit of the king;* Targum reads *the soul of King David*.

**13:39** ***b***Following Masoretic Text and Targum; Septuagint and Vulgate read ceased *to pursue after*.

**14:4** [a] Many Hebrew manuscripts, Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate read *came*.

**15:7** [a]Septuagint manuscripts, Syriac, and Josephus read *four*.

**16:12** [g]Following Kethib, Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate; Qere reads *my eyes;* Targum reads *tears of my eyes*.

**17:25** [g] Spelled *Jether* in 1 Chronicles 2:17 and elsewhere

**17:25** ***b***Following Masoretic Text, some manuscripts of the Septuagint, and Targum; some manuscripts of the Septuagint read *Ishmaelite* (compare 1 Chronicles 2:17); Vulgate reads *of Jezrael*.

**18:12** [a] The ancient versions read *'Protect the young man Absalom for me!'*

**19:40** [g] Masoretic Text reads *Chimhan.*

**20:1** [g] Literally *man of Belial*

**20:14** [g] Literally *him*

**21:8** [a]Or *Merab* (compare 1 Samuel 18:19 and 25:44; 2 Samuel 3:14 and 6:23)

**21:12** [g] Spelled *Beth Shean* in Joshua 17:11 and elsewhere

**21:18** [g] Spelled *Sippai* in 1 Chronicles 20:4

**21:19**[g] Spelled *Jair* in 1 Chronicles 20:5

**21:21** [g] Spelled *Shammah* in 1 Samuel 16:9 and elsewhere

**22:2** [a] Compare Psalm 18

**22:8** [g]Following Masoretic Text, Septuagint, and Targum; Syriac and Vulgate read *hills* (compare Psalm 18:7).

**22:11** [g]Following Masoretic Text and Septuagint; many Hebrew manuscripts, Syriac, and Vulgate read *He flew* (compare Psalm 18:10); Targum reads *He spoke with power*.

**22:25** [a]Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate read *the cleanness of my hands in His sight* (compare Psalm 18:24); Targum reads *my cleanness before His word*.

**22:33** [g]Dead Sea Scrolls, Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate read *It is God who arms me with strength* (compare Psalm 18:32); Targum reads *It is God who sustains me with strength*.

**22:33** ***b***Following Qere, Septuagint, Syriac, Targum, and Vulgate (compare Psalm 18:32); Kethib reads *His*.

**22:34** [g] Following Qere, Septuagint, Syriac, Targum, and Vulgate (compare Psalm 18:33); Kethib reads *His*.

**22:46** [g]Following Septuagint, Targum, and Vulgate (compare Psalm 18:45); Masoretic Text reads *gird themselves*.

**23:8** [g] Literally *One Who Sits in the Seat* (compare 1 Chronicles 11:11) Masoretic Text and Targum; Septuagint

**23:8** *b* Following Masoretic Text and Targum; Septuagint and Vulgate read *the three*.

**23:9** [g]Spelled *Dodai* in 1 Chronicles 27:4***a***

**23:18** [g] Following Masoretic Text, Septuagint, and Vulgate; some Hebrew manuscripts and Syriac read *thirty;* Targum reads *the mighty men*.

**23:35** [g] Spelled *Hezro* in 1 Chronicles 11:37

**24:13** [g]Following Masoretic Text, Syriac, Targum, and Vulgate; Septuagint reads *three* (compare 1 Chronicles 21:12).

**24:16** [a] Or *Angel*

***24:16*** [b] Spelled *orman* in 1 Chronicles 21:15

**2:24** [g] That is, a royal dynasty

**4:8** [a] Literally *Son of Hur*

**4:9** [g] Literally *Son of Deker*

**4:10** [g] Literally *Son of Hesed*

**4:11** [g] Literally *Son of Abinadab*

**4:13**[a] Literally *Son of Geber*

**4:21** [g] That is, the Euphrates

**4:24** [g] That is, the Euphrates

**4:26** [g]Following Masoretic Text and most other authorities; some manuscripts of the Septuagint read *four* (compare 2 Chronicles 9:25).

**5:3** [g] Literally *them*

**5:11** [a]Following Masoretic Text, Targum, and Vulgate; Septuagint and Syriac read twenty *thousand.*

**5:16** [a]Following Masoretic Text, Targum, and Vulgate; Septuagint reads *three thousand six hundred.*

**5:17** [g] Literally *house*, and so frequently throughout this book

**6:1** [a]Following Masoretic Text, Targum, and Vulgate; Septuagint reads *fortieth*.

**6:3** [g]Hebrew *heykal;* here the main room of the temple, elsewhere called the holy place (compare Exodus 26:33 and Ezekiel 41:1)

**6:3** *b* Literally *it*

**6:5** [g] Hebrew *debir;* here the inner room of the temple, elsewhere called the Most Holy Place (compare verse 16)

**6:8** [a] Following Masoretic Text and Vulgate; Septuagint reads *upper story;* Targum reads *ground story*.

**6:27** [g] Literally *house*

**7:7** [a] Literally *floor*, that is, of the upper level

**7:13** [g] Hebrew *Hiram* (compare 2 Chronicles 2:13, 14)

**7:26** [a] Or *three thousand* (compare 2 Chronicles 4:5)

**7:40** [g] Hebrew *Hiram* (compare 2 Chronicles 2:13, 14)

**7:45** [g]Hebrew *Hiram* (compare 2 Chronicles 2:13, 14)

**8:17** [g]Literally *house*, and so in verses 18-20

**9:13** [g]Literally *Good for Nothing*

**9:15** [a] *Literally The Landfill*

**9:24** [g] Hebrew *Eloth* (compare 2 Kings 14:22)

**9:26** [g] Hebrew *Eloth* (compare 2 Kings 14:22)

**10:11** [g] Or *algum* (compare 2 Chronicles 9:10, 11)

**10:22** [g] Literally *ships of Tarshish*, deep-sea vessels

**10.22** [b] Or *peacocks*

**10:26** [g]Following Septuagint, Syriac, Targum, and Vulgate (compare 2 Chronicles 9:25); Masoretic Text reads *led*.

**10:29** [g] Literally *by their hands*

**11:33** [g]Following Masoretic Text and Targum; Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate read *he has*.

**12:11** [a] Literally *scorpions*

**12:14** [a] Literally *scorpions*

**12:31** [g] Literally *a house*

**13:12** [a] Septuagint, Syriac, Targum, and Vulgate read *showed him*.

**13:32** [g] Literally *houses*

**14:15** [a] That is, the Euphrates

**14:15** ***b*** Hebrew *Asherim*, Canaanite deities

**14:24** [g]Hebrew *qadesh*, that is, one practicing sodomy and prostitution in religious rituals

**14:31** [a] Spelled *Abijah* in 2 Chronicles 12:16ff

**15:6** [a]Following Masoretic Text, Septuagint, Targum, and Vulgate; some Hebrew manuscripts and Syriac read Abijam.

**15:12** [q] Hebrew *qedeshim*, that is, those practicing sodomy and prostitution in religious rituals

**15:13**[g] A Canaanite goddess

**16:33** [g] Hebrew *Asherah*, a Canaanite goddess

**16:34** [g] Compare Joshua 6:26

**18:19** [a] A Canaanite goddess

**18:31** [g] Genesis 32:28

**19:5** [a] Or *Angel*

**19:7** [a] Or *Angel*

**21:23** [g]Following Masoretic Text and Septuagint; some Hebrew manuscripts, Syriac, Targum, and Vulgate read *plot of ground* (compare 2 Kings 9:36).

**22:7** [a] Or *him*

**22:38** [g] Syriac and Targum read *they washed his armor*.

**22:46** [g] Hebrew *qadesh*, that is, one practicing sodomy and prostitution in religious rituals

**22:48** [a] Or *ships of Tarshish*

**1:3** [a] Or *Angel*

**1:15** [q] Or *Angel*

**1:17** [g] The son of Ahab king of Israel (compare 3:1)

**5:12** [a]Following Kethib, Septuagint, and Vulgate; Qere, Syriac, and Targum read *Amanah*.

**8:21** [g] Spelled *Jehoram* in verse 16

**9:27** [g] Literally *The Garden House*

**9:36** [g]1 Kings 21:23

**10:1** [g] Following Masoretic Text, Syriac, and Targum; Septuagint reads *Samaria;* Vulgate reads *city*.

**10:12** [a] Or *The Shearing House*

**10:21** [g] Literally *house*, and so elsewhere in this chapter

**11:12** [g] That is, the Law (compare Exodus 25:16, 21 and Deuteronomy 31:9)

**12:1** [g] Spelled *Joash* in 11:2ff

**12:4** [g] Compare Leviticus 27:2ff

**12:19** [a] Spelled *Jehoash* in 12:1ff

**12:20** [g] Literally *The Landfill*

**12:21** [g] Called *Zabad* in 2 Chronicles 24:26

**12:21** ***b***Called *Shimrith* in 2 Chronicles 24:26

**13:1** [a] Spelled *Jehoash* in 12:1ff

**13:6** [g] Hebrew *Asherah*, a Canaanite goddess

**13:10** [g] Spelled *Joash* in verse 9

**13:25** [a] Spelled *Joash* in verses 12-14, 25

**14:6** [g]Deuteronomy 24:16

**14:8** [g]Spelled *Joash* in 13:12ff and 2 Chronicles 25:17ff

**14:21** [g] Called *Uzziah* in 2 Chronicles 26:1ff, Isaiah 6:1, and elsewhere

**15:12** [g] 2 Kings 10:30

**15:13** [a] Called *Azariah* in 14:21ff and 15:1ff

**15:19** [a] That is, Tiglath-Pileser III (compare verse 29)

**15:33** [a] Spelled *Jerushah* in 2 Chronicles 27:1

**16:6** [a]Some ancient authorities read *Syrians.*

**17:10** [g] Hebrew *Asherim*, Canaanite deities

**18:2** [g]Called *Abijah* in 2 Chronicles 29:1ff

**18:4** [g] Hebrew *Asherah*, a Canaanite goddess

**18:4** [b] Literally *Bronze Thing*

**18:17** [a] A title, probably *Commander in Chief*

**18:17** ***b***A title, probably *Chief Officer*

***c***A title, probably *Chief of Staff* or *Governor*

**18:26** [g] Literally *Judean*

**19:31** [g]Following many Hebrew manuscripts and ancient versions (compare Isaiah 37:32); Masoretic Text omits *of hosts*.

**19:35** [a] Or *Angel*

**20:12** [g] Spelled *Merodach-Baladan* in Isaiah 39:1

**20:13** [g] Following many Hebrew manuscripts, Syriac, and Targum; Masoretic Text omits *all*.

**21:3** [g] Hebrew Asherah, a Canaanite goddess

**21:3** *b*The gods of the Assryians

**21:7** [a] A Canaanite goddess

**22:12** [g] *Abdon the son of Micah* in 2 Chronicles 34:20

**23:4** [g] A Canaanite goddess

**23:4** *b*The gods of the Assyrians

**23:6** [g] Hebrew *Asherah*, a Canaanite goddess

**23:7** [g]Hebrew *qedeshim,* that is, those practicing sodomy and prostitution in religious rituals

**23:10** [g] Kethib reads *Sons*.

**23:19** [g]Following Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate; Masoretic Text and Targum omit *the* LORD.

**23:27** [g] 1 Kings 8:29

**23:34** [a] That is, Jehoahaz

**24:17** [a] Literally *his*

**25:4** [g] Literally *he*

**25:4** [b] Or *Arabah*, that is, the Jordan Valley

**25:23** [g] Spelled *Jezaniah* in Jeremiah 40:8

**25:27** [g] Literally *Man of Marduk*

**1:2** [a] Hebrew *Qenan*

**1:4** [g]Following Masoretic Text and Vulgate; Septuagint adds *the sons of Noah*.

**1:6** [a] Spelled *Riphath* in Genesis 10:3

**1:7** [a] Spelled *Tarshish* in Genesis 10:4

**1:7** ***b***Spelled *Dodanim* in Genesis 10:4

**1:9** [g] Spelled *Sabtah* in Genesis 10:7

**1:9** ***b***Spelled *Raamah* in Genesis 10:7

**1:17** [g] Spelled *Mash* in Genesis 10:23

**1:19** [g] Literally *Division*

**1:22** [g] Spelled *Obal* in Genesis 10:28

**1:30** [g]Spelled *Hadar* in Genesis 25:15

**1:36** [g] Spelled *Zepho* in Genesis 36:11

**1:36** *b*Compare Genesis 36:12

**1:40** [g] Spelled *Alvan* in Genesis 36:23

**1:40** *b*Spelled *Shepho* in Genesis 36:23

**1:41** [g] Spelled *Hemdan* in Genesis in Genesis 36:26

**1:42** [g] Spelled *Akan* in Genesis 36:27

**1:50** [g] Spelled *Hadar* in Genesis 36:39

**1:50** ***b***Spelled *Pau* in Genesis 36:39

**1:51** [g]Spelled *Alvah* in Genesis 36:40

**2:7** [a] Spelled *Achan* in Joshua 7:1 and elsewhere

**2:9** [g] Spelled *Caleb* in 2:18, 42

**2:11** [g]Spelled *Salmon* in Ruth 4:21 and Luke 3:32

**2:13** [g]Spelled *Shammah* in 1 Samuel 16:9 and elsewhere

**2:17** [g] Compare 2 Samuel 17:25

**2:19** [g] Spelled *Ephrathah* elsewhere

**2:52** [g] Same as *the Manahethites*, verse 54

**3:1** [g] Called *Chileab* in 2 Samuel 3:3

**3:5** [g] Spelled *Shammua* in 14:4 and 2 Samuel 5:14

**3:5** ***b***Spelled *Bathsheba* in 2 Samuel 11:3

**3:5** [c]Called *Eliam* in 2 Samuel 11:3

**3:6** [g] Spelled *Elishua* in 14:5 and 2 Samuel 5:15

**3:6** ***b***Spelled *Elpelet* in 14:5

**3:8** [a] Spelled *Beeliada* in 14:7

**3:10** [g] Spelled *Abijam* in 1 Kings 15:1

**3:11** [g]Spelled *Jehoram* in 2 Kings 1:17 and 8:16

**3:11** ***b***Spelled *Jehoash* in 2 Kings 12:1

**3:12** [g]Called *Uzziah* in Isaiah 6:1

**3:15** [g]Called *Jehoahaz* in 2 Kings 23:31

**3:16** [g] Compare 2 Kings 24:17

**3:17** [g]Also called *Coniah* in Jeremiah 22:24 and *Jehoiachin* in 2 Kings 24:8

**3:17**[b] Or *Jeconiah thecaptive were*

**4:9** [g] Literally *He Will Cause Pain*

**4:13** [g] Septuagint and Vulgate add *and Meonothai*.

**4:14** [g] Literally *Valley of Craftsmen*

**4:17**[a] Literally *she*

**4:18** [a] Or *His Judean wife*

**4:23** [g] Literally *Plants*

**4:23** [b] Literally *Hedges*

**4:24** [g] Called *Jachin* in Genesis 46:10

**4:24** ***b***Called *Zohar* in Genesis 46:10

**4:33** [g]Or *Baalath Beer* (compare Joshua 19:8)

**5:6** [a] Hebrew *Tilgath-Pilneser*

**5:26** [g] Hebrew *Tilgath-Pilneser*

**6:16** [g] Hebrew *Gershom* (alternate spelling of *Gershon*, as in verses 1, 17, 20, 43, 62, and 71)

**6:26** [g] Compare verse 35

**6:26** ***b***Spelled *Zuph* in verse 35 and 1 Samuel 1:1

**6:26** [c]Compare verse 34

**6:27** [a]Compare verse 34

**6:28** [g]Following Septuagint, Syriac, and Arabic (compare verse 33 and 1 Samuel 8:2)

**6:28** [b] Hebrew *Vasheni*

**6:34** [g] Spelled *Elihu* in 1 Samuel 1:1

**6:34** *b*Spelled *Tohu* in 1 Samuel 1:1

**6:58** [g] Spelled *Holon* in Joshua 21:15

**6:59** [g] Spelled *Ain* in Joshua 21:16

**6:60** [g] Spelled *Almon* in Joshua 21:18

**6:77** [g] Hebrew *Rimmono,* alternate spelling of *Rimmon;* see 4:32

**7:1** [a] Spelled *Puvah* in Genesis 46:13

**7:12** [g] Called *Hupham* in Numbers 26:39

**7:13** [g]Spelled *Jahzeel* in Genesis 46:24

**7:13** ***b***Spelled *Shillem* in Genesis 46:24

**7:14** [g] The son of Gilead (compare Numbers 6:30, 31)

**7:15** [g] Compare verse 12

**7:15** [b] Literally *the second*

**7:15** [c]Compare Numbers 26:30-33

**7:23** [g] Literally *In Tragedy*

**7:27** [a] Hebrew *Non*

**7:28** [g]Many Hebrew manuscripts, Bomberg, Septuagint, Targum, and Vulgate read *Gazza*.

**7:31** [a] Or *Birzavith* or *Birzoth*

**7:32** [g] Spelled *Shemer* in verse 34

**7:32** [b] Spelled *Helem* in verse 35

**7:37** [a] Spelled *Jether* in verse 38

**8:1** [a] Spelled *Ahiram* in Numbers 26:38

**8:3** [g] Called *Ard* in Numbers 26:40

**8:32** [a]Spelled *Shimeam* in 9:38

**8:33** [a] Also the son of Gibeon (compare 9:36, 39)

**8:33** *b*Called *Jishui* in 1 Samuel 14:49

**8:33** [c]Called *Ishbosheth* in 2 Samuel 2:8 and elsewhere

**8:34** [g] Called *Mephibosheth* in 2 Samuel 4:4

**8:36** [a] Spelled *Jarah* in 9:42

**8:37** [g] Spelled *Rephaiah* in 9:43

**9:37** [g] Called *Zecher* in 8:31

**9:38** [g] Spelled *Shimeah* in 8:32

**9:41** [g] Spelled *Tarea* in 8:35

**9:41** ***b*** Following Arabic, Syriac, Targum, and Vulgate (compare 8:35); Masoretic Text and Septuagint omit *and Ahaz*.

**9:42** [g]Spelled *Jehoaddah* in 8:36

**9:43** [g] Spelled *Raphah* in 8:37

**11:8** [g] Literally *The Landfill*

**11:11** [g]Following Qere; Kethib, Septuagint, and Vulgate read *the thirty* (compare 2 Samuel 23:8).

**11:20** [g]Following Masoretic Text, Septuagint, and Vulgate; Syriac reads *thirty*.

**11:27** [g] Spelled *Harodite* in 2 Samuel 23:25

**11:27** ***b***Called *Paltite* in 2 Samuel 23:26

**11:30** [g] Spelled *Heleb* in 2 Samuel 23:29 and *Heldai* in 1 Chronicles 27:15

**11:31** [a] Spelled *Ittai* in 2 Samuel 23:29

**11:32** [a] Spelled *Hiddai* in 2 Samuel 23:30

**11:32** ***b***Spelled *Abi-Albon* in 2 Samuel 23:31

**11:33** [a] Spelled *Barhumite* in 2 Samuel 23:31

**11:39** [g] Spelled *Beerothite* in 2 Samuel 23:37

**13:6** [g]Called *Baale Judah* in 2 Samuel 6:2

**13:9** [g]Called *Nachon* in 2 Samuel 6:6

**13:11** [a] Literally *Outburst Against Uzza*

**14:4** [a] Spelled *Shimea* in 3:5

**14:5** [g] Spelled *Elishama* in 3:6

**14:5** [b] Spelled *Eliphelet* in 3:6

**14:7** [a] Spelled *Eliada* in 3:8

**14:11** [a] Literally *Master of Breakthroughs*

**15:18** [g] Following Masoretic Text and Vulgate; Septuagint omits *Ben*.

**16:22** [g] Compare verses 8-22 with Psalm 105:1-15

**16:33** [g] Compare verses 23-33 with Psalm 96:1-13

**16:34** [g] Compare verse 34 with Psalm 106:1

**16:36** [g] Compare verses 35, 36 with Psalm 106:47, 48

**17:10**[g] That is, a royal dynasty

**18:3** [g] Hebrew *Hadarezer*, and so throughout chapters 18 and 19

**18:4** [g] Or *seven hundred* (compare 2 Samuel 8:4)

**18:8** [g] Spelled *Betah* in 2 Samuel 8:8

**18:9** [g] Spelled *Toi* in 2 Samuel 8:9, 10

**18:10** [g] Spelled *Joram* in 2 Samuel 8:10

**18:12** [a] Or *Syrians* (compare 2 Samuel 8:13)

**18:16** [g] Spelled *Seraiah* in 2 Samuel 8:17

**19:6** [g] Hebrew *Aram Naharaim*

**19:6** *b* Spelled *Zoba* in 2 Samuel 10:6

**19:16** [a] That is, the Euphrates

**19:16** ***b***Spelled *Shobach* in 2 Samuel 10:16

**19:18** [g] Or *seven hundred* (compare 2 Samuel 10:18)

**19:18** ***b*** Or *horsemen* (compare 2 Samuel 10:18)

**20:3** [g] Septuagint reads *cut them.*

**20:4** [g]Spelled *Saph* in 2 Samuel 21:18

**20:5** [g]Spelled *Jaare-Oregim* in 2 Samuel 21:19

**20:7** [g]Spelled *Shimeah* in 2 Samuel 21:21 and *Shammah* in 1 Samuel 16:9

**21:12** [g] Or *seven* (compare 2 Samuel 24:13)

**21:12** ***b*** Or *Angel*, and so elsewhere in this chapter

**21:15** [a] Or *He*

**21:15** [b]Or *Your*

**21:15** [c] Spelled *Araunah* in 2 Samuel 24:16

**22:9** [g] Literally *Peaceful*

**23:7** [g]Spelled *Libni* in Exodus 6:17

**23:10** [g] Septuagint and Vulgate read *Zizah* (compare verse 11).

**23:15** [g] Hebrew *Gershom* (compare 6:16)

**23:16** [g] Spelled *Shubael* in 24:20

**24:15** ***a***Septuagint and Vulgate read *Aphses*.

**24:16** ***a*** Masoretic Text reads *Jehezkel.*

**24:20** ***a***Spelled *Shebuel* in 23:16

**24:22** ***a***Spelled *Shelomith* in 23:18

**24:23 *a*** Supplied from 23:19 (following some Hebrew manuscripts and Septuagint manuscripts)

**24:23** *b* Supplied from 23:19 (following some Hebrew manuscripts and Septuagint manuscripts)

**25:2** [g]Spelled *Jesharelah* in verse 14

**25:3** [g]Spelled *Jizri* in verse 11

**25:3** [b] *Shimei*, appearing in one Hebrew and several Septuagint manuscripts, completes the total of six sons (compare verse 17).

**25:4** [g] Spelled *Azarel* in verse 18

**25:4** [b] Spelled *Shubael* in verse 20

**25:4** [c]Spelled *Jeremoth* in verse 22

**25:5** [g] That is, to increase his power or influence

**25:11** [a] Spelled *Zeri* in verse 3

**25:14** [g] Spelled *Asharelah* in verse 2

**25:18** [g] Spelled *Uzziel* in verse 4

**25:20** [g] Spelled *Shebuel* in verse 4

**25:22** [g] Spelled *Jerimoth* in verse 4

**26:15** [g] Hebrew *asuppim*

**26:17** [g] Hebrew *asuppim*

**26:18** [g] Probably a court or colonnade extending west of the temple

**27:4** [g]Hebrew *Dodai,* usually spelled *Dodo* (compare 2 Samuel 23:9)

**27:8** [g]Spelled *Shammoth* in 11:27 and *Shammah* in 2 Samuel 23:11

**27:15** [g] Spelled *Heled* in 11:30 and *Heleb* in 2 Samuel 23:29

**29:1** [g] Literally *palace*

**29:8** [g] Possibly the same as *Jehieli* (compare 26:21, 22)

**29:19** [g] Literally *palace*

**1:5** [a] Some authorities read *it was there.*

**1:17** [a] Literally *by their hands*

**2:3** [g] Hebrew *Huram* (compare 1 Kings 5:1)

**2:12** [g]Hebrew *Huram* (compare 1 Kings 5:1)

**2:13** [g]Spelled *Hiram* in 1 Kings 7:13

**2:13** ***b*** Literally *father* (compare 1 Kings 7:13, 14)

**3:1** [g] Literally *He*, following Masoretic Text and Vulgate; Septuagint reads *the* LORD*;* Targum reads *the Angel of the* LORD.

**3:1** ***b***Spelled *Araunah* in 2 Samuel 24:16ff

**3:4** [a]The main room of the temple; elsewhere called the holy place (compare 1 Kings 6:3)

**3:4** ***b***Following Masoretic Text, Septuagint, and Vulgate; Arabic, some manuscripts of the Septuagint, and Syriac omit *one hundred and*.

**3:5** [g] Literally *house eighteen*

**3:15** [g] Literally *house*

**3:15** *b*Or *eighteen* (compare 1 Kings 7:15; 2 Kings 25:17; and Jeremiah 52:21)

**4:5** [g] Or *two thousand* (compare 1 Kings 7:26)

**4:16** [g] Literally *father*

**4:17** [g] Spelled *Zaretan* in 1 Kings 7:46

**5:7** [a] Literally *house*

**5:13** [g]Compare Psalm 106:1

**6:7** [a] Literally *house*, and so in verses 8-10

**6:12** [g] Literally *he* (compare 1 Kings 8:22)

**6:18** ***a***Literally *house*

**6:42** [g]Compare Psalm 132:8-10

**7:1** [a] Literally *house*

**7:3** [g] Compare Psalm 106:1

**7:6** [g] Compare Psalm 106:1

**7:8** [a] That is, the Shihor (compare 1 Chronicles 13:5)

**8:2** [g] Hebrew *Huram* (compare 2 Chronicles 2:3)

**8:16** [a]Following Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate; Masoretic Text reads *as far as*. Syriac, and Vulgate;

**8:17** [g]Hebrew *Eloth* (compare 2 Kings 14:22)

**9:10** [g]Or *almug* (compare 1 Kings 10:11, 12)

**9:11** [g]Or *almug* (compare 1 Kings 10:11, 12)

**9:16** [g]Or *three minas* (compare 1 Kings 10:17)

**9:21** [g]Hebrew *Huram* (compare 1 Kings 10:22)

**9:21** ***b***Literally *ships of Tarshish*, deep-sea vessels

**9:21** [c] Or *peacocks*

**9:26** [g] That is, the Euphrates

**10:11** [a] Literally *scorpions*

**10:14** [g]Following many Hebrew manuscripts, Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate (compare verse 10 and 1 Kings 12:14); Masoretic Text reads *I*.

**10:14** ***b*** Literally *scorpions*

**11:16** [g] Literally *after them*

**11:20** [g]Literally *daughter*, but in the broader sense of granddaughter (compare 2 Chronicles 13:2)

**12:16**[a] Spelled *Abijam* in 1 Kings 14:31

**13:2** [g] Spelled *Maachah* in 11:20, 21 and 1 Kings 15:2

**13:19** [a] Or *Ephron*

**15:8** [a]Following Masoretic Text and Septuagint; Syriac and Vulgate read *Azariah the son of Oded* (compare verse 1).

**15:16** [a] A Canaanite deity

**17:4**[a] Septuagint reads *LORD God*.

**18:6** [a] Or *him*

**19:8** [a] Septuagint and Vulgate read *for theinhabitants of Jerusalem*.

**20:1** [g] Following Masoretic Text and Vulgate; Septuagint reads *Meunites* (compare 26:7).

**20:2** [g] Following Masoretic Text, Septuagint, and Vulgate; some Hebrew manuscripts and Old Latin read *Edom*.

**20:21** [g] Compare Psalm 106:1

**20:25** ***a*** A few Hebrew manuscripts, Old Latin, and Vulgate read *garments;* Septuagint reads *armor*.

**20:26** [g] Literally *Blessing*

**21:17** [g] Elsewhere called *Ahaziah* (compare 2 Chronicles 22:1)

**22:2** [g]Or *twenty-two* (compare 2 Kings 8:26)

**22:5** [g] Also spelled *Joram* (compare verses 5 and 7; 2 Kings 8:28; and elsewhere)

**22:6** [g]Some Hebrew manuscripts, Septuagint, Syriac, Vulgate, and 2 Kings 8:29 read *Ahaziah.*

**22:11** [g] Spelled *Jehosheba* in 2 Kings 11:2

**23:11** [g] That is, the Law (compare 25:16, 21; 31:18)

**23:17** [g] Literally *house*

**24:25** [g] Septuagint and Vulgate read *son* (compare verses 20-22).

**24:26** [g] Or *Jozachar* (compare 2 Kings 12:21)

**24:26** [b] Or *Shomer* (compare 2 Kings 12:21)

**25:4** [g]Deuteronomy 24:16

**25:17** [a] Spelled *Jehoash* in 2 Kings 14:8ff

**26:1** [g]Called *Azariah* in 2 Kings 14:21ff

**26:2** [g] Hebrew *Eloth*

**26:5** [a]Several Hebrew manuscripts, Septuagint, Syriac, Targum, and Arabic read *fear*.

**26:12** [g] Literally *chief fathers*

**27:1** [g] Spelled *Jerusha* in 2 Kings 15:33

**28:16** [g] Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate read *king* (compare verse 20).

**28:20** [g] Hebrew *Tilgath Pilneser*

**29:1** [g] Spelled *Abi* in 2 Kings 18:2

**30:3** [g] That is, the first month (compare Leviticus 23:5); literally *at that time*

**31:2** [g] That is, the temple

**32:3** [g] Literally *mighty men*

**32:4** [g]Following Masoretic Text and Vulgate; Arabic, Septuagint, and Syriac read *king*.

**32:5** [g] Literally *The Landfill*

**32:18** [g] Literally *Judean*

**32:22** [g] Septuagint reads *gave them rest;* Vulgate reads *gave them treasures*.

**32:28** [g] Following Septuagint and Vulgate; Arabic and Syriac omit *folds for flocks;* Masoretic Text reads *flocks for sheepfolds*.

**32:30** [g] Literally *brought it straight* (compare 2 Kings 20:20)

**33:3** [g] The gods of the Assyrians

**33:11** [g] That is, nose hooks (compare 2 Kings 19:28)

**33:18** [g] Literally *words*

**33:19** [g] Septuagint reads *the seers.*

**34:6** [g] Literally *swords*

**34:8** [g] Literally *house*

**34:20** [g] *Achbor the son of Michaiah* in 2 Kings 22:12

**34:22** [g] Spelled *Tikvah* in 2 Kings 22:14

**34:22** ***b***Spelled *Harhas* in 2 Kings 22:14

**36:2** [a] Masoretic Text reads *Joahaz.*

**36:4** [g]Literally *his*

**36:4** ***b*** Masoretic Text reads *Joahaz.*

**36:9** [g] Some Hebrew manuscripts, Septuagint, Syriac, and 2 Kings 24:8 read *eighteen.*

**36:10** [g] Literally *his* (compare 2 Kings 24:17)

**2:1** [g] Compare this chapter with Nehemiah 7:6-73.

**2:2** [g] Spelled *Mispereth* in Nehemiah 7:7

**2:2** [b] Spelled Nehum in Nehemiah 7:7

**2:10** [g] Spelled *Binnui* in *Nehum* 7:15

**2:18** [a]Called *Hariph* in Nehemiah 7:24

**2:20** [g]Called *Gibeon* in Nehemiah 7:25

**2:24** [g]Called *Beth Azmaveth* in Nehemiah 7:28

**2:25** [g]Called *Kirjath Jearim* in Nehemiah 7:29

**2:40** [g]Spelled *Hodevah* in Nehemiah 7:43

**2:44**[a] Spelled Sia in Nehemiah 7:47

**2:50** [a]Spelled *Bazlith* in Nehemiah 7:52

**2:52** [g]Spelled *Bazlith* in Nehemiah 7:54

**2:55** [g]pelled Perida in Nehemiah 7:57

**2:57** [g]Spelled *Amon* in Nehemiah 7:59

**2:59**[a] Spelled Addon in Nehemiah 7:61

**2:59**[b] Literally seed

**2:61**[a] Or *Hakkoz*

**2:63**[a] Hebrew *Tirshatha*

**3:2** [g] Spelled *Jehozadak* in 1 Chronicles 6:14

**3:8** [g] Spelled *Jehozadak* in 1 Chronicles 6:14

**3:9** [a] Or *Hodaviah* (compare 2:40)

**3:10** [g] Following Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate; Masoretic Text reads *they stationed the priests*.

**3:11** [g]Compare Psalm 136:1

**4:8** [a] The original language of Ezra 4:8 through 6:18 is Aramaic.

**4:9** [g] Literally *Then*

**4:9** *b* Or *Susa*

**4:10** [g] That is, the Euphrates

**4:10** [b] Literally *and now*

**4:11** [g] Literally *and now*

**4:17** [g] Literally *and now*

**5:2** [a]Spelled *Jehozadak* in 1 Chronicles 6:14

**5:3** [a]That is, the Euphrates

**6:1** [g] Literally *house of the scrolls*

**6:2** [a] Probably *Ecbatana*, the ancient capital of Media

**7:12** ***a*** The original language of Ezra 7:12-26 is Aramaic.

**7:12** ***b***Literally *and now*

**8:5** [g]Following Masoretic Text and Vulgate; Septuagint reads *the sons of Zatho, Shechaniah*.

**8:10** [a]Following Masoretic Text and Vulgate; Septuagint reads *the sons of Banni, Shelomith*.

**8:17** [g]Following Vulgate; Masoretic Text reads *to Iddo his brother;* Septuagint reads *to their brethren*.

**10:18** [g] Spelled *Jehozadak* in 1 Chronicles 6:14

**10:29** [g] Or *Jeremoth*

**10:35** [a] Or *Cheluhi*, or *Cheluhu*

**10:37** [a] Or *Jaasu*

**10:43** [a] Or *Jaddu*

**1:1** [a] Or *Susa*

**1:5** [a] Literally *Him*

**1:5** ***b***Literally *His*

**1:8** [g] Leviticus 26:33

**1:9** [g]Deuteronomy 30:2-5

**2:7** [a] That is, the Euphrates, and so elsewhere in this book

**2:8** [a] Literally *house*

**2:10** [g] Literally *servant*, and so elsewhere in this book

**3:1** [g] Hebrew *Hammeah*, also at 12:39

**3:2** [a] Literally *On his hand*

**3:4** [a] Or *Hakkoz*

**3:5** [a] Literally *necks*

**3:7** [a] Literally *throne*

**3:8** [g] Literally *the son*

**3:16** [g] Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate read *tomb*.

**3:18** [g]Following Masoretic Text and Vulgate; some Hebrew manuscripts, Septuagint, and Syriac read *Binnui* (compare verse 24).

**3:20** [a] A few Hebrew manuscripts, Syriac, and Vulgate read *Zaccai*.

**3:21** [a] Or *Hakkoz*

**3:31** [g] Literally *Inspection* or *Recruiting*

**4:21** [g] Literally *them*

**5:13** [g] Literally *my lap*

**5:16** [g] Following Masoretic Text; Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate read *I*.

**6:6** [a] Hebrew *Gashmu*

**7:6** [g] Compare verses 6-72 with Ezra 2:1-70

**7:7** [a] Spelled *Mispar* in Ezra 2:2

**7:15** [g]Spelled *Bani* in Ezra 2:10

**7:24** [g]Called *Jorah* in Ezra 2:18

**7:25** [g]Called *Gibbar* in Ezra 2:20

**7:28** [g] Called *Azmaveth* in Ezra 2:24

**7:43** [g]Spelled *Hodaviah* in Ezra 2:40

**7:47** [g]Spelled *Siaha* in Ezra 2:44

**7:48** [a] Masoretic Text reads *Lebanah.*

**7:48** ***b*** Masoretic Text reads *Hogabah.*

**7:48** [c] Or *Shalmai*, or *Shamlai*

**7:52** [g] Spelled *Nephusim* in Ezra 2:50

**7:54** [g]Spelled *Bazluth* in Ezra 2:52

**7:57** [g] Spelled *Peruda* in Ezra 2:55

**7:59** [g] Spelled *Ami* in Ezra 2:57

**7:61** [g]Spelled *Addan* in Ezra 2:59

**7:63** [a] Or *Hakkoz*

**7:65** [g] Hebrew *Tirshatha*

**7:70** [a] Hebrew *Tirshatha*

**8:9** [a] Hebrew *Tirshatha*

**9:1** [g] Literally *earth on them*

**9:17** [g] Following Masoretic Text and Vulgate; Septuagint reads *in Egypt*.

**9:21** [g] Compare Deuteronomy 29:5

**9:22** [g] Literally *corners*

**9:22** [b] Following Masoretic Text and Vulgate; Septuagint omits *The land of*.

**9:29** [g]Leviticus 18:5

**11:9** [a] Or *Hassenuah*

**11:14** [a] Or *the son of Haggedolim*

**11:17** [a] Or *Michah*

**11:24** [g] Literally *at the king's hand*

**12:4** [a] Or *Ginnethon* (compare verse 16)

**12:14** [a] Or *Malluch* (compare verse 2)

**12:14** ***b***Or *Shechaniah* (compare verse 3)

**12:15** [a] Or *Rehum* (compare verse 3)

**12:15** [b] *Meremoth* (compare verse 3)

**12:17** [a] Or *Mijamin* (compare verse 5)

**12:17** ***b*** Or *Maadiah* (compare verse 5)

**12:20** [a] Or *Sallu* (compare verse 7)

**12:26** [g] Spelled *Jehozadak* in 1 Chronicles 6:14

**12:41** [a] Or *Mijamin* (compare verse 5)

**1:1** [g] Generally identified with Xerxes I (485-464 B.C.)

**1:2** [a] Or *Susa,* and so throughout this book

**2:3** [a] Hebrew *Hege*

**2:6** [a] Literally *Who*

**2:6** ***b***Same as *Jehoiachin*, 2 Kings 24:6 and elsewhere

**3:7** [a]Septuagint adds *to destroy the people of Mordecai in one day;* Vulgate adds *the nation of the Jews should be destroyed*.

**3:7** [b] Following Masoretic Text and Vulgate; Septuagint reads *and the lot fell on the fourteenth of the month*.

**3:13** [g] Septuagint adds the text of the letter here.

**4:17** [g] Septuagint adds a prayer of Mordecai here.

**5:1** [g] Septuagint adds many extra details in verses 1 and 2.

**8:10** [g] Literally *sons of the swift horses*

**8:12** [g] Septuagint adds the text of the letter here.

**9:17** [g] Literally *it*

**9:18** [g] Literally *it*

**9:25** [g] Literally *she* or *it*

**9:25*b*** Literally *his*

**10:3**[a] Literally *seed*. Septuagint and Vulgate add a dream of Mordecai here; Vulgate adds six more chapters.

**1:5** [g]Literally *blessed*, but used here in the evil sense, and so in verse 11 and 2:5, 9

**1:6** ***a***Literally *the Adversary*, and so throughout this book

**1:15** [g] Literally *Sheba* (compare 6:19)

**1:19** [a] Septuagint omits *across.*

**3:6** [a] Septuagint, Syriac, Targum, and Vulgate read *be joined*.

**3:24** [a] Literally *my bread*

**5:5** [g] Septuagint reads *They shall not be taken from evil men;* Vulgate reads *And the armed man shall take him by violence*.

**5:5** ***b***Septuagint reads *The might shall draw them off;* Vulgate reads *And the thirsty shall drink up their riches*.

**7:15** [g] Literally *my bones*

**7:20** [g] Following Masoretic Text, Targum, and Vulgate; Septuagint and Jewish tradition read *to You*.

**8:22** [g] Literally *will not be*

**9:13** [a] Hebrew *rahab*

**12:5** [a] Or *disaster*

**12:19** [a] Literally *priests*, but not in a technical sense

**12:24** [a] Literally *heart*

**13:27** [a] Literally *inscribe a print*

**13:28** [a] Literally *He*

**14:3** [a] Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate read *him.*

**14:17** [a] Literally *plaster over*

**15:11** [a] Septuagint reads *a secret thing.*

**16:13** [a] Literally *kidneys*

**16:14** [a] Vulgate reads *giant.*

**16:15** [a] Literally *horn*

**17:10**[g] Following some Hebrew manuscripts, Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate; Masoretic Text and Targum read *all of them*.

**18:17**[a] Literally *before the outside*, meaning distinguished, famous

**19:3**[a] A Jewish tradition reads *make yourselves strange to me.*

**20:20** [a] Literally *belly*

**21:13** [a] Or *Sheol*

**21:19** [a] Literally *his*

**21:24** [a] Septuagint and Vulgate read *bowels;* Syriac reads *sides;* Targum reads *breasts*.

**21:28** [a] Vulgate omits *the tent.*

**22:17** [a] Septuagint and Syriac read *us.*

**22:20** [a] Septuagint reads *substance*.

**22:25** [a] The ancient versions suggest *defense;* Hebrew reads *gold* as in verse 24.

**23:2**[a] Following Masoretic Text, Targum, and Vulgate; Septuagint and Syriac read *His*.

**24:19**[a] Or *Sheol*

**27:15** [a] Literally *his*

**27:18** [a] Following Masoretic Text and Vulgate; Septuagint and Syriac read *spider* (compare 8:14); Targum reads *decay*.

**27:19** [a] Following Masoretic Text and Targum; Septuagint and Syriac read *But shall not add* (that is, do it again); Vulgate reads *But take away nothing*.

**28:8** [a] Literally *sons of pride*, figurative of the great lions

**28:27** [a] Literally *it*

**29:6** [a] Masoretic Text reads *wrath;* ancient versions and some Hebrew manuscripts read *cream* (compare 20:17).

**30:11**[a] Following Masoretic Text, Syriac, and Targum; Septuagint and Vulgate read *His*.

**31:18** [a] Literally *her* (compare verse 16)

**31:20** [a] Literally *loins*

**31:26** [a] Literally *light*

**31:32** [a] Following Septuagint, Syriac, Targum, and Vulgate; Masoretic Text reads *road*.

**31:39** [a] Literally *its strength*

**32:4** [a] Vulgate reads *till Job had spoken.*

**32:7** [a] Literally *Days*, that is, years

**32:9** [a] Or *Men of many years*

**33:6** [a] Literally *as your mouth*

**33:28** [a] Or *my* (Kethib)

**33:28** ***b*** Or *my* (Kethib)

**36:12**[a] Masoretic Text reads *as one without knowledge*.

**36:14**[g] Hebrew *qedeshim*, that is, those practicing sodomy and prostitution in religious rituals

**37:12**[a] Literally *the world of the earth*

**38:32**[a] Literally *Constellations*

**38:36**[a] Literally *inward parts*

**39:3**[a] Literally *pangs*, figurative of offspring

**39:19[g]** Or *a mane*

**40:15**[a] A large animal, exact identity unknown

**41:1**[a] A large sea creature, exact identity unknown

**41:6**[a] Or *bargain over him*

**41:12**[a] Literally *keep silent about*

**41:25**[a] Or *purify themselves*

**42:10** [a] Literally *Job's captivity*, that is, what was captured from Job

**2:9** [g] Following Masoretic Text and Targum; Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate read *rule* (compare Revelation 2:27).

**2:12** [g]Septuagint and Vulgate read *Embrace discipline;* Targum reads *Receive instruction*.

**2:12**[b] Septuagint reads *the* LORD .

**4:3** [a]Many Hebrew manuscripts, Septuagint, Targum, and Vulgate read *made wonderful*.

**5:title** [g]Hebrew *nehiloth*

**6:title** [g]Hebrew *sheminith*

**7:title** [g]Hebrew *Shiggaion*

**7:6** [g]Following Masoretic Text, Targum, and Vulgate; Septuagint reads *O* LORD *my God*.

**8:title** [g]Hebrew *Al Gittith*

**8:5** [g]Hebrew *Elohim, God;* Septuagint, Syriac, Targum, and Jewish tradition translate as *angels.*

**9:title** [g]Hebrew *Muth Labben*

**9:16** [g] Hebrew *Higgaion*

**11:7** [q] Or *The upright beholds His countenance*

**12:title** [g] Hebrew *sheminith*

**18:13** [g]Following Masoretic Text, Targum, and Vulgate; a few Hebrew manuscripts and Septuagint omit *Hailstones and coals of fire*.

**19:4** [a]Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate read *sound;*

**22:title** [g]Hebrew *Aijeleth Hashahar*

**22:8** [a] Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate read *hoped; Targum reads praised.*

**22:16** [g] Following some Hebrew manuscripts, Septuagint, Syriac, Vulgate; Masoretic Text reads *Like a lion*.

**22:27** [g] Following Masoretic Text, Septuagint, and Targum; Arabic, Syriac, and Vulgate read *Him*.

**23:6** [a]Following Septuagint, Syriac, Targum, and Vulgate; Masoretic Text reads *return*.

**25:12** [a] Or *he*

**25:12**[b]Or *he*

**28:8** [g]Following Masoretic Text and Targum; Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate read *the strength of His people*.

**30:3** [a]Following Qere and Targum; Kethib, Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate read *from those who descend to the pit*.

**30:4** [q] Or *His holiness*

**32:title** [g]Hebrew *Maschil*

**33:7** [a]Septuagint, Targum, and Vulgate read *in a vessel*.

**34:7** [a] Or *Angel*

**35:5** [a]Or *Angel*

**37:36** [g]Following Masoretic Text, Septuagint, and Targum; Syriac and Vulgate read *I passed by*.

**42:title** [g]Hebrew *Maschil*

**42:2** [a]Following Masoretic Text and Vulgate; some Hebrew manuscripts, Septuagint, Syriac, and Targum read *I see the face of God*.

**42:5** [a]Following Masoretic Text and Targum; a few Hebrew manuscripts, Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate read *The help of my countenance, my God*.

**42:6** [a]Following Masoretic Text and Targum; a few Hebrew manuscripts, Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate put *my God* at the end of verse 5.

**44:title** [g]Hebrew *Maschil*

**44:4** [a]Following Masoretic Text and Targum; Septuagint and Vulgate read *and my God*.

**44:4***b* Following Masoretic Text and Targum; Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate read *Who commands*.

**45:title** [g] Hebrew *Shoshannim*

**45:title** [b] Hebrew *Maschil*

**48:14** [g]Following Masoretic Text and Syriac; Septuagint and Vulgate read *Forever*.

**49:11** [g]Septuagint, Syriac, Targum, and Vulgate read *Their graves shall be their houses forever*.

**49:12** [g]Following Masoretic Text and Targum; Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate read *understand* (compare verse 20).

**50:18** [g] Septuagint, Syriac, Targum, and Vulgate read *ran*.

**51:4** [a]Septuagint, Targum, and Vulgate read *in Your words*.

**52:title** [g]Hebrew *Maschil*

**53:title** [g]Hebrew *Maschil*

**54:title** [g]Hebrew *neginoth*

**54:title**[b] *Hebrew*

**55:title** [g]Hebrew *neginoth*

**55:title** [b] *Hebrew Maschil*

**56:title** [g] Hebrew *Jonath Elem Rechokim*

**57:title** [g]Hebrew *Al Tashcheth*

**58:title** [g]Hebrew *Al Tashcheth*

**59:title** [g] Hebrew *Al Tashcheth*

**59:9** [g]Following Masoretic Text and Syriac; some Hebrew manuscripts, Septuagint, Targum, and Vulgate read *my Strength*. Septuagint, Targum, and Vulgate

**59:10** [g] Following Qere; some Hebrew manuscripts, Septuagint, and Vulgate read *My God, His mercy;* Kethib, some Hebrew manuscripts and Targum read *O God, my mercy;* Syriac reads *O God, Your mercy*.

**59:15** [g]Following Septuagint and Vulgate; Masoretic Text, Syriac, and Targum read *spend the night*.

**60:title** [g]Hebrew *Shushan Eduth*

**60:12**[g] Compare verses 5-12 with 108:6-13

**61:title** [g] Hebrew *neginah*

**67:title** [g]Hebrew *neginoth*

**68:4** [g]Masoretic Text reads *deserts;* Targum reads *heavens* (compare verse 34 and Isaiah 19:1).

**68:23** [g]Septuagint, Syriac, Targum, and Vulgate read *you may dip your foot*.

**68:28** [g]Septuagint, read *Command,* Syriac, Targum, and Vulgate read *O God*.

**69:title** [g]Hebrew *Shoshannim*

**70:2** [a] Following Masoretic Text, Septuagint, Targum, and Vulgate; some Hebrew manuscripts and Syriac read *be appalled* (compare 40:15).

**72:5** [a]Following Masoretic Text and Targum; Septuagint and Vulgate read *They shall continue*.

**73:7** [a]Targum reads *face bulges;* Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate read *iniquity bulges*.

**74:title** [g]Hebrew *Maschil*

**75:title** [g]Hebrew *Al Tashcheth*

**76:title** [g]Hebrew *neginoth*

**76:2** [q] That is, Jerusalem

**78:title** [g]Hebrew *Maschil*

**80:title** [g]Hebrew *Shoshannim*

**80:title** [b] Hebrew *Eduth*

**80:11** [a] That is, the Mediterranean

**80:11** *b* That is, the Euphrates

**81:title** [g]Hebrew *Al Gittith*

**82:1** [g] Hebrew *elohim, mighty ones;* that is, the judges

**82:6** [g] Hebrew *elohim, mighty ones;* that is, the judges

**88:title** [g]Hebrew *Maschil*

**89:title** [g]Hebrew *Maschil*

**89:19** [g] Following many Hebrew manuscripts; Masoretic Text, Septuagint, Targum, and Vulgate read *holy ones*.

**90:1** [g] Septuagint, Targum, and Vulgate read *refuge*.

**91:3** [g] That is, one who catches birds in a trap or snare

**95:8** [a] Or *Meribah*

**95:8** *b* Or *Massah*

**97:12** [a] Or *His holiness*

**100:3** [g]Following Kethib, Septuagint, and Vulgate; Qere, many Hebrew manuscripts, and Targum read *we are His*.

**103:16** [g] Compare Job 7:10

**104:18** [g] Or *rock hyrax* (compare Leviticus 11:5)

**106:3** [g] Septuagint, Syriac, Targum, and Vulgate read *those who do*.

**106:32** [g] Or *Meribah*

**108:13** [q] Compare verses 6-13 with 60:5-12

**109:6** [a] Hebrew *satan*

**109:10** [a]Following Masoretic Text and Targum; Septuagint and Vulgate read *be cast out*.

**118:14** [g]Compare Exodus 15:2

**119:37** [g]Following Masoretic Text, Septuagint, and Vulgate; Targum reads *Your words*.

**124:7** [a] That is, persons who catch birds in a trap or snare

**132:6** [g] Hebrew *Jaar*

**139:11** [g]Vulgate and Symmachus read *cover*.

**139:14** [g]Following Masoretic Text and Targum; Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate read *You are fearfully wonderful*.

**139:20** [g] Septuagint and Vulgate read *They take your cities in vain*.

**142:title** [g]Hebrew *Maschil*

**143:9** [g] Septuagint and Vulgate read *To You I flee.*

**144:2** [g]Following Masoretic Text, Septuagint, and Vulgate; Syriac and Targum read *the peoples* (compare 18:47).

**145:5** [g]Following Masoretic Text and Targum; Dead Sea Scrolls, Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate read *They*.

**145:5** [b] Literally *on the words of Your wondrous works*

**145:13** [g]Following Masoretic Text and Targum; Dead Sea Scrolls, Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate add *The LORD is faithful in all His words, And holy in all His works.*

**84:title** [g]Hebrew *Al Gittith*

**84:7** [a]Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate read *The God of gods shall be seen*.

**1:12** [a] Or *the grave*

**1:21** [a] Septuagint, Syriac, and Targum read *top of the walls;* Vulgate reads *the head of multitudes*

**3:6**[a] Or *make smooth or straight*

**3:8** [a] Literally *navel*, figurative of the body

**3:8**[*b*] Literally *drink* or *refreshment*

**4:18** [g] Literally *light*

**5:5** [a] Or *Sheol*

**6:5** [a] That is, one who catches birds in a trap or snare

**6:22** [g] Literally *it*

**6:26** [g] Literally *a man's wife*, that is, of another

**7:22** [a]Septuagint, Syriac, and Targum read *as a dog to bonds;* Vulgate reads *as a lamb . . . to bonds.*

**7:27** [a] Or *Sheol*

**8:16** [g] Masoretic Text, Syriac, Targum, and Vulgate read *righteousness;* Septuagint, Bomberg, and some manuscripts and editions read *earth.*

**8:30** [g] A Jewish tradition reads *one brought up*.

**9:18** [a] Or *Sheol*

**10:21** [g] Literally *heart*

**11:5** [a] Or *make smooth* or *straight*

**11:21** [g] Literally *hand to hand*

**12:4** [g] Literally *A wife of valor*

**12:11** [a] Literally *heart*

**13:23** [g] Literally *what is swept away*

**14:14** [a] Literally *from above himself*

**14:23** [g] Literally *talk of the lips*

**14:29** [g] Literally *short of spirit*

**15:11** [a] Or *Sheol*

**15:11**[b] Hebrew *Abaddon*

**15:17** [a] Or *vegetables*

**15:24** [a] Or *Sheol*

**15:30** [g] Literally *fat*

**16:5** [g] Literally *hand to hand*

**17:1** [a] Or *sacrificial meals*

**17:22** [a] Or *makes medicine even better*

**17:23** [g] Literally *from the bosom*

**18:8** [a] A Jewish tradition reads *wounds*.

**18:24** [g] Following Greek manuscripts, Syriac, Targum, and Vulgate; Masoretic Text reads *may come to ruin.*

**19:16** [g] Literally *despises*, figurative of recklessness or carelessness

**19:18** [g] Literally *to put him to death;* a Jewish tradition reads *on his crying.*

**19:24** [a] Septuagint and Syriac read *bosom;* Targum and Vulgate read *armpit.*

**20:2** [g] Literally *fear* or *terror* which is produced by the king's wrath

**20:14** [g] Literally *evil, evil*

**20:27** [g] Literally *the rooms of the belly*

**20:30** [g] Literally *the rooms of the belly*

**21:4** [g] Or *lamp*

**21:6** [a]Septuagint reads *Pursue vanity on the snares of death;* Vulgate reads *Is vain and foolish, and shall stumble on the snares of death;* Targum reads *They shall be destroyed, and they shall fall who seek death*

**21:7** [g] Literally *drag them away*

**21:8** [a] Or *The way of a man is perverse and strange*

**21:14** [g] Literally *in the bosom*

**21:29** [g] Qere and Septuagint read *understands.*

**23:6** [g] Literally *one who has an evil eye*

**23:14** [a] Or *Sheol*

**24:28** [g] Septuagint and Vulgate read *Do not deceive.*

**26:10** [a] The Hebrew is difficult; ancient and modern translators differ greatly.

**26:15** [g] Compare 19:24

**27:20** [a] Or *Sheol*

**27:20**[b] Hebrew *Abaddon*

**29:10** [g] Literally *soul*

**29:11** [g] Literally *spirit*

**29:18** [a] Or *prophetic vision*

**29:24** [g] Literally *hears the adjuration*

**30:16** [a] Or *Sheol*

**30:26** [a] Or *hyraxes*

**30:28** [a] Or *lizard*

**30:31** [g] Exact identity unknown

**30:31*b*** A Jewish tradition reads *a king against whom there is no uprising.*

**31:8** [g] Literally *sons of passing away*

**31:10** [g] Verses 10 through 31 are an alphabetic acrostic in Hebrew (compare Psalm 119).

**31:10**[b] Literally *a wife of valor,* in the sense of all forms of excellence

**1:2** [g]Or *Absurdity, Frustration, Futility, Nonsense;* and so throughout this book

**2:8** [a] Exact meaning unknown

**2:25** [g]Following Masoretic Text, Targum, and Vulgate; some Hebrew manuscripts, Septuagint, and Syriac read *without Him.*

**3:21** [a]Septuagint, Syriac, Targum, and Vulgate read *Who knows whether the spirit . . . goes upward, and whether . . . goes downward to the earth?*

**5:6** [a] Literally *voice*

**8:10** [g]Some Hebrew manuscripts, Septuagint, and Vulgate read *praised*.

**9:2** [g] Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate read *good and bad*.

**9:14** [a]Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate read *bulwarks.*

**10:1** [g] Targum and Vulgate omit *putrefy*.

**11:5** [a] Or *spirit*

**12:6** [a]Following Qere and Targum; Kethib reads *removed;* Septuagint and Vulgate read *broken*.

**12:11** [g] Literally *masters of the assemblies*

**1:2** [a] A Palestinian young woman (compare 6:13). The speaker and audience are identified according to the number, gender, and person of the Hebrew words. Occasionally the identity is not certain.

**1:2** *b* Masculine singular, that is, the Beloved

**1:4** [g] Masculine singular, that is, the Beloved

**1:4** *b* Feminine singular, that is, the Shulamite

**1:4** [c] Masculine singular, that is, the Beloved

**1:4** *d* Masculine singular, that is, the Beloved

**1:7** [a] Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate read *wanders*.

**1:11** [g] Feminine singular, that is, the Shulamite

**2:17** [g] Literally *Separation*

**3:9** [g] A portable enclosed chair

**6:12** [g] Hebrew *Ammi Nadib*

**6:13** [g] Hebrew *Mahanaim*

**7:9** [a] Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate read *lips and teeth.*

**8:6** [a] Or *Sheol*

**8:6** ***b***Literally *A flame of YAH* (a poetic form of *YHWH, the* LORD)

**1:17** [a]Some ancient versions read *the oppressed.*

**1:29** [g] Following Masoretic Text, Septuagint, and Vulgate; some Hebrew manuscripts and Targum read *you*.

**3:6** [a] Literally *hand*

**7:3** [a] Literally *A Remnant Shall Return*

**7:14** [g] Literally *God-With-Us*

**7:20** [g] That is, the Euphrates

**8:1** [g] Literally *Speed the Spoil, Hasten the Booty*

**8:7** [a] That is, the Euphrates

**8:8** [g] Literally *God-With-Us*

**8:10** [g] Hebrew *Immanuel*

**9:3**[a] Following Qere and Targum; Kethib and Vulgate read *not increased joy;* Septuagint reads *Most of the people You brought down in Your joy*.

**10:16** [g]Following Bomberg; Masoretic Text and Dead Sea Scrolls read *YHWH* (*the LORD*).

**10:30** [g]Following Masoretic Text, Targum, and Vulgate; Septuagint and Syriac read *Listen to her, O Anathoth*.

**11:15** [g]Following Masoretic Text and Vulgate; Septuagint, Syriac, and Targum read *dry up*.

**11:15** *b* That is, the Euphrates

**12:2** [g]Exodus 15:2

**14:4** [a] Or *insolent*

**14:12** [g] Literally *Day Star*

**15:2** [g] Hebrew *bayith*, literally *house*

**15:4** [a]Following Masoretic Text, Targum, and Vulgate; Septuagint and Syriac read *loins*.

**15:5** [g] Or *The Third Eglath*, an unknown city (compare Jeremiah 48:34)

**15:9** [g] Following Masoretic Text and Targum; Dead Sea Scrolls and Vulgate read *Dibon;* Septuagint reads *Rimon*.

**15:9** ***b***Following Masoretic Text and Targum; Dead Sea Scrolls and Vulgate read *Dibon;* Septuagint reads *Rimon.*

**17:2** [a]Following Masoretic Text and Vulgate; Septuagint reads *It shall be forsaken forever;* Targum reads *Its cities shall be forsaken and desolate*.

**17:8** [g] Hebrew *Asherim*, Canaanite deities

**17:9** [a]Septuagint reads *Hivites;* Targum reads *laid waste;* Vulgate reads *as the plows*.

**17:9** *b* Septuagint reads *Amorites;* Targum reads *in ruins;* Vulgate reads *corn*.

**18:7** [a]Following Dead Sea Scrolls, Septuagint, and Vulgate; Masoretic Text omits *From;* Targum reads *To*.

**19:7** [g] That is, the Nile

**19:13** [a] That is, ancient Memphis

**19:15** [g] Compare Isaiah 9:14-16

**19:18** [a] Some Hebrew manuscripts, Arabic, Dead Sea Scrolls, Targum, and Vulgate read *Sun;* Septuagint reads *Asedek* (literally *Righteousness*).

**20:1** [g] Or *the Commander in Chief*

**21:8** [g] Dead Sea Scrolls read *Then the observer cried.*

**22:19** [a]Septuagint omits *he will pull you down;* Syriac, Targum, and Vulgate read *I will pull you down*.

**23:1** [g] Hebrew *Kittim*, western lands, especially Cyprus

**23:2** [g] Following Masoretic Text and Vulgate; Septuagint and Targum read *Passing over the water;* Dead Sea Scrolls read *Your messengers passing over the sea*.

**23:3** [g] That is, the Nile

**23:10** [g] That is, the Nile

**26:4** [a] Or *Rock of Ages*

**26:19** [g]Following Masoretic Text and Vulgate; Syriac and Targum read *their dead bodies;* Septuagint reads *those in the tombs*.

**27:2** [a]Following Masoretic Text (Kittel's *Biblia Hebraica*), Bomberg, and Vulgate; Masoretic Text (*Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*), some Hebrew manuscripts, and Septuagint read *delight;* Targum reads *choice vineyard*.

**27:9** [g] Hebrew *Asherim*, Canaanite deities

**27:12** [g] That is, the Euphrates

**29:1** [g] That is, Jerusalem

**30:7** [g] Literally *Rahab Sits Idle*

**33:2** [a]Septuagint omits *their;* Syriac, Targum, and Vulgate read *our*.

**33:8** [g]Following Masoretic Text and Vulgate; Dead Sea Scrolls read *witnesses;* Septuagint omits *cities;* Targum reads *They have been removed from their cities*.

**36:2** [a] A title, probably *Chief of Staff* or *Governor*

**36:11** [g] Literally *Judean*

**37:36** [a] Or *Angel*

**38:11** [g] Hebrew *YAH, YAH*

**38:11** [b] Following some Hebrew manuscripts; Masoretic Text and Vulgate read *rest;* Septuagint omits *among the inhabitants of the world;* Targum reads *land*.

**38:14** [g]Following Bomberg; Masoretic Text and Dead Sea Scrolls read *Lord.*

**38:15** [g]Following Masoretic Text and Vulgate; Dead Sea Scrolls and Targum read *And shall I say to Him;* Septuagint omits first half of this verse.

**39:1** [g]Spelled *Berodach-Baladan* in 2 Kings 20:12

**40:3** [a]Following Masoretic Text, Targum, and Vulgate; Septuagint omits *in the desert.*

**40:6** [g] Following Masoretic Text and Targum; Dead Sea Scrolls, Septuagint, and Vulgate read *I*.

**40:12** [a]Following Masoretic Text, Septuagint, and Vulgate; Dead Sea Scrolls read *waters of the sea;* Targum reads *waters of the world*.

**41:29** [g]Following Masoretic Text and Vulgate; Dead Sea Scrolls, Syriac, and Targum read *nothing; Septuagint omits the first line.*

**45:2** [g]Dead Sea Scrolls and Septuagint read *mountains;* Targum reads *I will trample down the walls;* Vulgate reads *I will humble the great ones of the earth.*

**48:16** [a] The Hebrew verb is singular.

**49:5** [g]Qere, Dead Sea Scrolls, and Septuagint read *is gathered to Him;* Kethib reads *is not gathered.*

**49:17** [g] Dead Sea Scrolls, Septuagint, Targum, and Vulgate read *builders*.

**49:24** [g]Following Masoretic Text and Targum; Dead Sea Scrolls, Syriac, and Vulgate read *the mighty;*

**51:23** [g] Literally *your soul*

**52:5** [a]Dead Sea Scrolls read *Mock;* Septuagint reads *Marvel and wail;* Targum reads *Boast themselves;* Vulgate reads *Treat them unjustly*.

**52:15** [a] Or *startle*

**53:9** [g] Literally *he* or *He*

**53:11** [g]Following Masoretic Text, Targum, and Vulgate; Dead Sea Scrolls and Septuagint read *From the labor of His soul He shall see light.*

**56:5** [g] Literally *him*

**57:8** [a] Literally *hand*, a euphemism

**62:4** [g] Literally *My Delight Is in Her*

**62:4** [b] Literally *Married*

**65:11** [g] Literally *Troop* or *Fortune*, a pagan deity

**65:11** ***b*** Literally *Number* or *Destiny*, a pagan deity

**66:19** [g]Following Masoretic Text and Targum; Septuagint reads *Put* (compare Jeremiah 46:9).

**2:10** [a] Hebrew *Kittim*, western lands, especially Cyprus

**2:10** ***b*** In the northern Arabian desert, representative of the eastern cultures

**2:16** [a]That is, Memphis in ancient Egypt

**2:18** [a]That is, the Euphrates

**10:13** [g] Psalm 135:7

**11:5** [g]Exodus 3:8

**12:5** [a] Or *thicket*

**12:10** [g] Literally *shepherds* or *pastors*

**13:4** [g] Hebrew *Perath*

**15:14** [g]Following Masoretic Text and Vulgate; Septuagint, Syriac, and Targum read *cause you to serve* (compare 17:4).

**17:2** [g] Hebrew *Asherim*, Canaanite deities

**17:8** [a] Qere and Targum read *see*.

**18:17** [a]Following Septuagint, Syriac, Targum, and Vulgate; Masoretic Text reads *look them in*.

**20:3** [g] Literally *Fear on Every Side*

**21:2** [g] Hebrew *Nebuchadrezzar*, and so elsewhere

**21:4** [a] Or *Babylonians*

**22:11** [g] Also called *Jehoahaz*

**22:24** [g] Also called *Jeconiah* and *Jehoiachin*

**23:6** [g] Hebrew YHWH Tsidkenu

**23:33** [g] Septuagint, Targum, and Vulgate read ‘You are the burden.’

**25:26** [g] A code word for Babylon (compare 51:41)

**26:18** [g] Literally house

**26:18** *b* Compare Micah 3:12

**27:1** [g]Following Masoretic Text, Targum, and Vulgate; some Hebrew manuscripts, Arabic, and Syriac read *Zedekiah* (compare 27:3, 12; 28:1).

**27:1** *b* Septuagint omits verse 1.

**31:32** [g]Following Masoretic Text, Targum, and Vulgate; Septuagint and Syriac read *and I turned away from them*.

**32:4** [g] Literally *mouth to mouth*

**32:22** [g]Exodus 3:8

**33:4** [g]Compare Isaiah 22:10

**33:5** [g] Compare 2 Kings 23:14

**33:16** [g] Compare 23:5, 6

**34:3** [g] Literally *mouth to mouth*

**36:4** [g] Literally *from Jeremiah's mouth*

**36:6** [g] Literally *from my mouth*

**36:17** [a] Literally

**36:26** [g] Hebrew *Hammelech*

**36:27** [g]Hebrew *Hammelech*

**36:32** [g] Literally *from Jeremiah's mouth*

**38:1** [a] Same as *Jehucal* (compare 37:3)

**38:2** [a]Compare 21:9

**38:6** [g] Hebrew *Hammelech*

**39:3** [a] A title, probably *Chief Officer;* also verse

**39:13** ***b*** A title, probably *Troop Commander;*

**39:4** [a]Or *the Arabah*, that is, the Valley Jordan Valley

40:8 [a]Spelled Jaazaniah in 2 Kings 25:23

**43:12** [g]Following Masoretic Text and Targum; Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate read *He*.

**43:13** [g] Literally *House of the Sun*, ancient On; later

**44:1** [g] That is, ancient Memphis

**45:1** [g]Literally *from Jeremiah's mouth*

**46:14** [a] That is, ancient Memphis

**46:19** [a] That is, ancient Memphis

**46:25** [a] A sun god

**46:25** *b* That is, ancient Thebes

**48:1** [g] Hebrew *Misgab*

**48:2** [a] A city of Moab

**48:4** [a]Following Masoretic Text, Targum, Vulgate; Septuagint reads *Proclaim it in Zoar* and Vulgate; Septuagint reads *Proclaim it in Zoar*.

**48:6** [a] Or *Aroer*, a city of Moab

**48:11** [g]The Hebrew uses masculine and feminine pronouns interchangeably in this chapter.

**48:31** [g]Following Dead Sea Scrolls, Septuagint, and Vulgate; Masoretic Text reads *He*.

**48:34**[a] Or The Third Eglath, an unknown city (compare Isaiah 15:5)

**49:1** [g]Hebrew *Malcam*,(compare Isaiah 15:5) literally *their king*, a god of the Ammonites; also called *Molech* (compare verse 3)

**49:10** [g] Compare Obadiah 5, 6

**49:16** [a] Compare Obadiah 3, 4

**49:19** [a] Or *thicket*

**49:27** [g] Compare Amos 1:4

**50:2** [g] A Babylonian god; sometimes spelled *Marduk*

**50:9** [a]Following some Hebrew manuscripts, Septuagint, and Syriac; Masoretic Text, Targum, and Vulgate read *a warrior who makes childless*.

**50:29** [g]Qere, some Hebrew manuscripts, Septuagint, and Targum add *to her*.

**50:31** [g]Following Masoretic Text and Targum; Septuagint and Vulgate read *The time of your punishment*.

**50:38** [a]Following Masoretic Text, Targum, and Vulgate; Syriac reads *sword;* Septuagint omits *A drought is*.

**50:44** [a] Or *thicket*

**51:1** [a] A code word for Chaldea (Babylonia); may be translated *The Midst of Those Who Rise Up Against Me*

**51:16** [g] Psalm 135:7

**51:41** [g] A code word for Babylon (compare Jeremiah 25:26)

**52:7** [a] Or *the Arabah*, that is, the Jordan Valley

**52:31** [a] Or *Awil-Marduk*

**1:7** [a] Vulgate reads *her Sabbaths*.

**1:8** [a] Septuagint and Vulgate read *moved* or *removed.*

**1:14** [g]Following Masoretic Text and Targum; Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate read *watched over*.

**2:20** [g] Vulgate reads *a span long*.

**3:13** [g] Literally *kidneys*

**3:53** [a]Septuagint reads *put to death.*

**3:65** [a] A Jewish tradition reads *sorrow of.*

**4:7** [a] Or *nobles*

**4:16** [a]Targum reads *anger*.

**5:5** [a] Literally *necks*

**1:1** [a] Following Masoretic Text, Septuagint, and Vulgate; Syriac and Targum read *a vision.*

**1:3** [a] Or *Babylonians,* and so elsewhere in this book

**1:20** [a]Literally *living creature;* Septuagint and Vulgate read *spirit of life;* Targum reads *creatures.*

**1:21** [a]Literally *living creature;* Septuagint and Vulgate read *spirit of life;* Targum reads *creatures.*

**1:22** [a] Following Septuagint, Targum, and Vulgate; Masoretic Text reads *living creature*.

**5:7** [a]Following Masoretic Text, Septuagint, Targum, and Vulgate; many Hebrew manuscripts and Syriac read *but have done* (compare 11:12).

**5:15** [g] Septuagint, Syriac, Targum, and Vulgate read *you*.

**9:3** [a] Literally *house*

**10:3** [g] Literally *house*, also in verses 4 and 18

**10:17** [a] Literally *they*

**10:17** ***b*** Literally *they*

**10:17** [c] Literally *they*

**11:19** [g] Literally *you*

**11:24** [g] Or *Babylon*, and so elsewhere in this book

**13:18**[g] Literally *over all the joints of My hands;* Vulgate reads *under every elbow;* Septuagint and Targum read *on all elbows of the hands*.

**16:43** [a]Following Septuagint, Syriac, Targum, and Vulgate; Masoretic Text reads *were agitated with Me*.

**16:50** [a]Vulgate reads *you saw;* Septuagint reads *he saw;* Targum reads *as was revealed to Me*.

**16:57** [a] Following Masoretic Text, Septuagint, Targum, and Vulgate; many Hebrew manuscripts and Syriac read *Edom*.

**17:7** [g]Following Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate; Masoretic Text and Targum read *one*.

**17:21** [g] Following Masoretic Text and Vulgate; many Hebrew manuscripts and Syriac read *choice men;* Targum reads *mighty men;* Septuagint omits *All his fugitives*.

**18:17** [g] Following Masoretic Text, Targum, and Vulgate; Septuagint reads *iniquity* (compare verse 8).

**19:7** [a]Septuagint reads *He stood in insolence;* Targum reads *He destroyed its palaces;* Vulgate reads *He learned to make widows*.

**19:10** [g]Literally *blood*, following Masoretic Text, Syriac, and Vulgate; Septuagint reads *like a flower on a pomegranate tree;* Targum reads *in your likeness*.

**20:6** [g]Exodus 3:8

**20:11** [g]Leviticus 18:5

**20:13** [g] Leviticus 18:5

**20:15** [g] Exodus 3:8

**20:21** [g]Leviticus 18:5

**20:29** [g] Literally *High Place*

**20:46** [g] Hebrew *Negev*

**22:24** [g]Following Masoretic Text, Syriac, and Vulgate; Septuagint reads *showered upon*.

**22:25** [g]Following Masoretic Text and Vulgate; Septuagint reads *princes;* Targum reads *scribes*.

**23:4** [a] Literally *Her Own Tabernacle* [b] Literally *My Tabernacle Is in Her*

**24:14** [g] Septuagint, Syriac, Targum, and Vulgate read *I*.

**26:7** [a] Hebrew *Nebuchadrezzar*, and so elsewhere in this book

**27:6** [g] Hebrew *Kittim*, western lands, especially Cyprus

**27:10** [g] Hebrew *Lud*

**27:10** ***b*** Hebrew *Put*

**29:3** [g] That is, the Nile

**29:5** [a]Following Masoretic Text, Septuagint, and Vulgate; some Hebrew manuscripts and Targum read *buried*.

**29:7** [a]Following Masoretic Text and Vulgate; Septuagint and Syriac read *hand*.

**29:10** [g] Or *tower*

**30:5** [a] Hebrew *Put* [b] Hebrew *Lud*

**30:13** [g] That is, ancient Memphis

**30:14** [g] That is, ancient Thebes

**30:15** [a] That is, ancient Pelusium

**30:17** [g] That is, ancient On (Heliopolis)

**30:18** [g] Spelled *Tahpanhes* in Jeremiah 43:7 and elsewhere

**30:18** ***b***Following many Hebrew manuscripts, Bomberg, Septuagint, Syriac, Targum, and Vulgate; Masoretic Text reads *refrained*.

**31:8** [a] Hebrew *armon*

**38:2** [g] Targum, Vulgate, and Aquila read *chief prince of* (also verse 3).

**38:5** [g] Hebrew *Cush*

**38:5***b*Hebrew *Put*

**39:1** [g] Targum, Vulgate and Aquila read *chief prince of*.

**39:11** [g] Literally *The Multitude of Gog*

**39:14** [g] Literally *those who pass through*

**40:5** [g] Literally *house*, and so elsewhere in this book

**41:1** [g]Hebrew *heykal*, here the main room of the temple, sometimes called the *holy place* (compare Exodus 26:33)

**41:17** [g] Literally *house*, here *the Most Holy Place*

**42:16** [g] Compare 40:5

**43:3** [a]Some Hebrew manuscripts and Vulgate read *He*.

**45:5** [a]Following Masoretic Text, Targum, and Vulgate; Septuagint reads *a possession, cities of dwelling*.

**47:19** [g] Hebrew *Negev*

**48:28** [g] Hebrew *Negev*

**48:35** [g] Hebrew *YHWH Shammah*

**1:11** [g] Hebrew *Melzar*, also in verse 16

**1:19** [g]Literally *talked with them*

**2:4** [g] The original language of Daniel 2:4b through 7:28 is Aramaic.

**2:25** [g] Literally *of the sons of the captivity*

**2:32** [a] Or *sides*

**2:33** [g]Or *baked clay*, and so in verses 34, 35, and 42

**2:49** [g] That is, the king’s court

**3:25** [a] Or *a son of the gods*

**3:28** [a]Or *angel*

**4:16** [g] Possibly *seven years*, and so in verses 23, 25, and 32

**4:34** [g] Literally *days*

**5:12** [g] Literally *untying knots*, and so in verse 16

**5:13** [g]Literally *of the sons of the captivity*

**5:24** [g] Literally *palm*

**5:25** [g] Literally *a mina* (50 shekels) from the verb “to number’’

**5:25** ***b*** Literally *a shekel* from the verb “to weigh’’

**5:25** [c] Literally *and half-shekels* from the verb “to divide’’

**5:28** [a] Aramaic *Paras*, consonant with *Peres*

**6:13** [g] Literally *of the sons of the captivity*

**6:18** [g] Exact meaning unknown

**7:1** [g] Literally *the head* (or *chief*) *of the words*

**7:10** [a] Or *judgment*

**7:17** [g] Representing their kingdoms (compare verse 23)

**7:25** [g] Literally *wear out*

**7:28** [g] Literally *the word*

**8:14** [g] Literally *evening-mornings*

**8:21** [g] Literally *king*, representing his kingdom (compare 7:17, 23)

**8:25** [g] Literally *hand*

**8:25** [b] Literally *hand*

**9:24** [g] Literally *sevens*, and so throughout the chapter

**9:24** [b] Following Qere, Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate; Kethib and Theodotion read *To seal up*.

**9:25** [a] Or *open square*

**9:25** *b* Or *moat*

**10:1** [q] Or *and ofgreat conflict*

**10:4** [g] Hebrew *Hiddekel*

**10:16** [a] Theodotion and Vulgate read *the son;* Septuagint reads *a hand*.

**11:6** [g] Literally *arm*

**11:6** [b] Literally *arm*

**11:8** [q] Or *molded images*

**11:14** [a] Or *robbers*, literally *sons of breakage*

**11:15** [g] Literally *arms*

**11:16** [g] Literally *hand*

**11:17** [a] Or *bring equitable terms*

**11:22** [g] Literally *arms*

**11:30** [g] Hebrew *Kittim*, western lands, especially Cyprus

**11:31** [g] Literally *arms*

**11:37** [a] Or *gods*

**1:6** [g] Literally *No-Mercy*

**1:6** ***b***Or *That I may forgive them at all*

**1:9** [g] Literally *Not-My-People*

**1:10** [g] Hebrew *loammi* (compare verse 9)

**2:1** [a] Hebrew *Ammi* (compare 1:9, 10)

**2:1** [b] Hebrew *Ruhamah* (compare 1:6)

**2:16** [g]Hebrew Ishi bHebrew Baali

**2:22** [g] Literally God Will Sow

**2:23** [g] Hebrew lo-ruhamah

**2:23** *b* Hebrew lo-ammi

**3:1** [g] Literally *friend* or *husband*

**4:7** [g] Following Masoretic Text, Septuagint, and Vulgate; scribal tradition, Syriac, and Targum read *They will change*.

**4:7** ***b***Following Masoretic Text, Septuagint, Syriac, Targum, and Vulgate; scribal tradition reads *My glory*.

**4:14** [g] Compare Deuteronomy 23:18

**4:18** [g]Hebrew is difficult; a Jewish tradition reads *Her rulers shamefully love, ‘Give!’*

**6:7** [a] Or *like Adam*

**7:6** [a] Following Masoretic Text and Vulgate; Syriac and Targum read *Their anger; Septuagint reads Ephraim.*

**7:14** [g] Following Masoretic Text and Targum; Vulgate reads *thought upon;* Septuagint reads *slashed themselves for* (compare 1 Kings 18:28).

**7:14 *b*** Following Masoretic Text, Syriac, and Targum; Septuagint omits *They rebel against Me; Vulgate reads They departed from Me.*

**7:16** [a] Or *upward*

**8:1** [a] Hebrew *shophar*, ram's horn

**8:10** [q] Or *begin to diminish*

**8:10** [b] Or *oracle*

**8:14** [a] Or *palaces*

**9:8** [a] That is, one who catches birds in a trap or snare

**10:5** [g] Literally *calves*

**10:9** [a] So read many Hebrew manuscripts, Septuagint, and Vulgate; Masoretic Text reads *unruliness.*

**10:10** [g] Or *in their two habitations*

**11:2** [a] Following Masoretic Text and Vulgate; Septuagint reads *Just as I called them;* Targum interprets as *I sent prophets to a thousand of them*.

**11:2** [b] Following Masoretic Text, Targum, and Vulgate; Septuagint reads *from My face*.

**11:3** [a]Some Hebrew manuscripts, Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate read *My arms*.

**11:4** [g] Literally *cords of a man*

**11:4** [b] Literally *jaws*

**11:7** [a] Or *upward*

**11:9** [q] Or *I will not enter a city*

**11:12** [a] Or *holy ones*

**12:3** [g] Compare Genesis 32:28

**13:2** [a] Or *those who offer human sacrifice*

**13:9** [g] Literally *it* or *he destroyed you*

**13:9** [b] Literally *in your help*

**13:10** [g] Septuagint, Syriac, Targum, and Vulgate read *Where is your king?*

**13:14** [a] Or *Sheol*

**13:14** ***b*** Septuagint reads *where is your punishment?*

**13:14** [c] Or *Sheol*

**13:14** [d] Septuagint reads *where is your sting?*

**13:16** [a] Septuagint reads *shall be disfigured*

**14:2** [g] Literally *bull calves;* Septuagint reads *fruit.*

**14:7** [g] Literally *remembrance*

**1:4** [g] Exact identity of these locusts is unknown.

**1:18** [g] Septuagint and Vulgate read *are made desolate*.

**2:6** [a] Septuagint, Targum, and Vulgate read *gather blackness.*

**2:8** [a] Literally *his own highway*

**2:8** *b* That is, they are not halted by losses

**2:23** [q] Or *the teacher of righteousness*

**2:25** [g] Compare 1:4

**3:8** [g] Literally *Shebaites* (compare Isaiah 60:6 and Ezekiel 27:22)

**1:1** [a]Compare 2 Kings 3:4

**2:7** [a] Or *trample on*

**3:9** [g] Following Masoretic Text; Septuagint reads *Assyria*.

**3:12** [g] The Hebrew is uncertain.

**4:1** [g] Literally *theirlords* or *their masters*

**4:4** [g] Or *years* (compare Deuteronomy 14:28)

**4:13** [a]Or *His*

**5:26** [g] A pagan deity

**5:26** ***b*** Septuagint and Vulgate read *tabernacle of Moloch.*

**5:26** [c] *A* pagan deity

**6:10** [g] Literally *bones*

**6:13** [g] Literally *Nothing*

**6:13** ***b*** Literally *Horns*, symbol of strength

**7:14** [g] Compare 2 Kings 3:4

**8:4** [g] Or *trample on* (compare 2:7)

**8:8** [a]That is, the Nile; some Hebrew manuscripts, Septuagint, Syriac, Targum, and Vulgate read *River;* Masoretic Text reads *the light.*

**8:14** [a] Or *Ashima*, a Syrian goddess

**9:2** [a] Or *Sheol*

**9:5** [a] That is, the Nile

**9:11** [g] Literally *booth*, figure of a deposed dynasty

**9:12** [g]Septuagint reads *mankind.*

*7 [a]Or wound, or plot*

*12* [a] *Literally on the day he became a foreigner*

***19*** [a]*Hebrew Negev*

*20 [a]Hebrew Negev*

***21*** [a]*Or deliverers*

**1:5** [g] Literally from upon them

**3:3** [a] Exact meaning unknown

**4:6** [a] Hebrew kikayon, exact identity unknown

**1:10** [g] Literally *House of Dust*

**1:11** [g] Literally *Going Out*

**1:12** [g] Literally *was sick*

**1:14** [g] Literally *Possession of Gath*

**1:14*b*** Literally *Lie*

**1:15** [g] Literally *Inheritance*

**2:5** [g] Literally *one casting a surveyor's line*

**2:6** [g] Literally *to these*

**2:6***b* Vulgate reads *He shall not take shame.*

**2:12** [g] Hebrew *Bozrah*

**3:2**[a] *Literally them*

**3:12** [g] Literally *house*

**4:3** [g] Compare Isaiah 2:2-4

**5:14** [g] Hebrew *Asherim*, Canaanite deities

**5:15** [a]Or *obeyed*

**6:5** [g] Hebrew *Shittim* (compare Numbers 25:1; Joshua 2:1; 3:1)

**6:14** [g] Or *Emptiness* or *Humiliation*

**6:14*b*** Targum and Vulgate read *You shall take hold.*

**6:16** [a]Following Masoretic Text, Targum, and Vulgate; Septuagint reads *of nations*.

**7:11** [a] Or *the boundary shall be extended*

**7:12** [g] Literally *he*, collective of the captives

**7:12**[b] Hebrew *arey mazor*, possibly *cities of Egypt*

**7:12**[c] Hebrew *mazor*, possibly *Egypt*

**7:12**[d] That is, the Euphrates

**7:15** [g] Literally *him,* collective for the captives

**7:19** [g]Literally *their*

**1:1** [a] Or *oracle*

**1:5** [a]Targum reads *burns*.

**2:1** [a]Vulgate reads *He who destroys.*

**2:3** [a]Literally *the cypresses are shaken;* Septuagint and Syriac read *the horses rush about;* Vulgate reads *the drivers are stupefied*.

**2:7** [a]Hebrew *Huzzab*

**2:10** [a]Compare Joel 2:6

**2:13** [a]Literally *her*

**3:8** [g]That is, ancient Thebes; Targum and Vulgate read *populous Alexandria*.

**3:8** ***b*** Literally *rivers*, that is, the Nile and the surrounding canals

**3:9** [a] Septuagint reads *her*.

**1:1** [a] Or *oracle*

**1:11** [g] Literally *spirit* or *wind*

**2:5** [a] Or *Sheol*

**2:6** [a] Syriac and Vulgate read *thick clay*.

**2:7** [a] Literally *those who bite you*

**2:13** [g] Literally *for what satisfies fire*, that is, for what is of no lasting value

**2:15** [g] Literally *Attaching* or *Joining*

**2:16** [g] Dead Sea Scrolls and Septuagint read *And reel!;* Syriac and Vulgate read *And fall fast asleep!*

**3:1** [a] Exact meaning unknown

**3:9** [g] Literally *rods* or *tribes* (compare verse 14)

**3:19** [g] Hebrew *YHWH Adonai*

**1:3** [g] Figurative of idols

**1:4** [g] Hebrew *chemarim*

**1:5** [g]Or *Malcam*, an Ammonite god, also called *Molech* (compare Leviticus 18:21)

**1:7** [g] Literally *set apart, consecrated*

**1:9** [g] Compare 1 Samuel 5:5

**1:11** [g] Literally *Mortar*, a market district of Jerusalem

**1:12** [g] Literally *on their lees*, that is, settled like the dregs of wine

**2:1** [a] Or *shameless*

**2:6** [a] Literally *excavations,* either underground huts or cisterns

**3:8** [g]Septuagint and Syriac read *for witness;* Targum reads *for the day of My revelation for judgment;* Vulgate reads *for the day of My resurection that is to come*.

**3:15** [g]Some Hebrew manuscripts, Septuagint, and Bomberg read *see;* Masoretic Text and Vulgate read *fear*.

**1:4** [g] Literally *house*, and so in verse 8

**2:3** [a] Literally *house*, and so in verses 7 and 9

**2:7** [a] Or *the desire of all nations*

**1:21** [g] Literally *these*

**4:9** [g] Literally *house*

**4:12** [g]Literally *into the hands of*

**5:6** [a] Hebrew *ephah*, a measuring container, and so elsewhere

**5:8** [a] Literally *stone*

**5:11** [g] That is, Babylon

**6:14** [g] Following Masoretic Text, Targum, and Vulgate; Syriac reads *for Heldai* (compare verse 10); Septuagint reads *for the patient ones*.

**7:2** [g] Literally *they* (compare verse 5)

**7:2**[b] Or *Sar-Ezer*

**7:2** [c] Hebrew *Bethel*

**7:7** [a] Hebrew *Negev*

**8:17** [g] Literally *his*

**9:1** [a] Or *oracle*

**9:10** [g]Psalm 72:8

**9:17** [a] Or *His*

**9:17**[b]Or *His*

**10:1** [a] That is, spring rain

**10:2** [a] Hebrew *teraphim*

**10:4** [a] Or *despot*

**10:11** [a] That is, the Nile

**11:3** [q] Or *floodplain, thicket*

**11:7** [a]Following Masoretic Text, Targum, and Vulgate; Septuagint reads *for the Canaanites.*

**11:7**[b] Or *Grace*, and so in verse 10

**11:7*c***Or *Unity*, and so in verse 14

**11:11** [g] Following Masoretic Text, Targum, and Vulgate; Septuagint reads *the Canaanites*.

**12:1** [a] Or *oracle*

**12:11** [g] Hebrew *Megiddon*

**13:6** [a]Or *hands*

**14:5** [q]Or *you;* Septuagint, Targum, and Vulgate read *Him.*

**14:9** [q] Compare Deuteronomy 6:4

**14:10** [g] Literally *She*

**14:21** [g] Or *on every pot . . . shall be (engraved) “HOLINESS TO THE LORD OF HOSTS’’*

**1:1** [a] Or oracle

**1:12** [g] Following Bomberg; Masoretic Text reads Or *Lord*.

**2:6** [a] Or *true instruction*

**2:12** [g] Talmud and Vulgate read *teacher and student.*

**3:17** [g] Literally *special treasure*

**1:6** [g]Words in italic type have been added for clarity. They are not found in the original Greek.

**1:7** [a] NU-Text reads *Asaph.*

**1:10** [g] NU-Text reads *Amos.*

**1:23** [g]Isaiah 7:14. Words in oblique type in the New Testament are quoted from the Old Testament.

**1:25** [a]NU-Text reads *a Son.*

**2:6** [a]Micah 5:2

**2:15** [g]Hosea 11:1

**2:18** [g] Jeremiah 31:15

**3:3** [g]Isaiah 40:3

**3:11** [a]M-Text omits *and fire.*

**3:16** [a] Or *he*

**4:4** [g]Deuteronomy 8:3

**4:6** [g]Psalm 91:11, 12

**4:7** [a]Deuteronomy 6:16

**4:10** [g] M-Text reads *Get behind Me.*

**4:10** ***b***Deuteronomy 6:13

**4:16** [g]Isaiah 9:1, 2

**5:21** [g]Exodus 20:13; Deuteronomy 5:17

**5:22** [g] NU-Text omits *without a cause.*

**5:27** [g] NU-Text and M-Text omit *to those of old.*

**5:27** ***b***Exodus 20:14; Deuteronomy 5:18

**5:32** [a] Or *fornication*

**5:38** [g]Exodus 21:24; Leviticus 24:20;Deuteronomy 19:21

**5:43** [g] Compare Leviticus 19:18

**5:44** [a]NU-Text omits three clauses from this verse, leaving, *"But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."*

**5:47** [a] M-Text reads *friends.*

**5:47** ***b***NU-Text reads *Gentiles.*

**6:4** [a]NU-Text omits *openly*.

**6:6** [a]NU-Text omits *openly*.

**6:13** [g]NU-Text omits *For Yours* through *Amen.*

**6:18** [g] NU-Text and M-Text omit *openly*.

**7:14** [g]NU-Text and M-Text read *How . . . !*

**8:15** [g]NU-Text and M-Text read *Him.*

**8:17** [g]Isaiah 53:4

**8:28** [g] NU-Text reads *Gadarenes.*

**8:31** [g]NU-Text reads *send us.*

**9:8** [a]NU-Text reads *were afraid.*

**9:13** [g]Hosea 6:6

**9:13** ***b***NU-Text omits *to repentance*.

**9:14** [g]NU-Text brackets *often* as disputed.

**9:35** [g]NU-Text omits *among the people.*

**9:36** [g]NU-Text and M-Text read *harassed.*

**10:3** [g] NU-Text omits *Lebbaeus, whose surname was.*

**10:4** [g]NU-Text reads *Cananaean.*

**10:8** [a]NU-Text reads *raise the dead, cleanse the lepers;* M-Text omits *raise the dead.*

**10:25** [g] NU-Text and M-Text read *Beelzebul.*

**10:36** [g] Micah 7:6

**11:2** [g]NU-Text reads *by* for *two of*.

**11:10** [g] Malachi 3:1

**11:19** [g]NU-Text reads *works*.

**11:23** [g] NU-Text reads *will you be exalted to heaven? No, you will be.*

**12:7** [g]Hosea 6:6

**12:8** [g] NU-Text and M-Text omit *even.*

**12:15** [g]NU-Text brackets *multitudes* as disputed.

**12:21** [g]Isaiah 42:1-4

**12:22** [g] NU-Text omits *blind and.*

**12:24** [g] NU-Text and M-Text read *Beelzebul*.

**12:35** [g] NU-Text and M-Text omit *of his heart.*

**13:15** [g] NU-Text and M-Text read *would.*

**13:15** *b*Isaiah 6:9, 10

**13:33** [a] Greek *sata,* approximately two pecks in all

**13:35** [g] Psalm 78:2

**13:51** [g]NU-Text omits *Jesus said to them.*

**13:51** ***b***NU-Text omits *Lord.*

**13:52** [a] Or *for*

**13:55** [g] NU-Text reads *Joseph.*

**14:24** [g] NU-Text reads *many furlongs away from the land.*

**14:30** [g]NU-Text brackets *that* and *boisterous* as disputed.

**14:33** [g]NU-Text omits *came and.*

**14:34** [a]NU-Text reads *came to land at.*

**15:4** [g]Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16

**15:4** *b*Exodus 21:17

**15:6** [g] NU-Text omits *or mother*.

**15:6** ***b***NU-Text reads *word*.

**15:8** [g]NU-Text omits *draw near to Me with their mouth, And.*

**15:9** [g]Isaiah 29:13

**15:39** [g]NU-Text reads *Magadan.*

**16:3** [q]NU-Text omits *Hypocrites.*

**16:4** [a]NU-Text omits *the prophet.*

**16:8** [q]NU-Text reads *you have no bread.*

**16:19** [a] Or *will have been bound . . . will have been loosed*

**17:4** [a]NU-Text reads *I will.*

**17:11** [a]NU-Text omits *first.*

**17:15** [g] Literally *moonstruck*

**17:20** [g] NU-Text reads *little faith.*

**17:21** [g] NU-Text omits this verse.

**17:22** [g] NU-Text reads *gathering together*.

**17:24** [g] NU-Text reads *Capharnaum* (here and elsewhere).

**17:27** [g]Greek *stater*, the exact amount to pay the temple tax (didrachma) for two

**18:11** [q] NU-Text omits this verse.

**18:16** [g]Deuteronomy 19:15

**18:19** [g] NU-Text and M-Text read *Again, assuredly, I say.*

**18:29** [g]NU-Text omits *at his feet.*

**18:29** ***b***NU-Text and M-Text omit *all*.

**18:35** [g]NU-Text omits *histrespasses.*

**19:4** [g]NU-Text reads *created.*

**19:4** *b*Genesis 1:27; 5:2

**19:5** [g]Genesis 2:24

**19:9** [q] Or *fornication*

**19:16** [g] NU-Text omits *Good.*

**19:17** [a]NU-Text reads *Why do you ask Me about what is good?*

**19:17** ***b***NU-Text reads *There is One who is good.*

**19:19** [g] Exodus 20:12-16; Deuteronomy 5:16-20

**19:19** *b*Leviticus 19:18

**19:20** [g] NU-Text omits *from my youth.*

**19:29** [g] NU-Text omits *or wife.*

**20:6** [g] NU-Text omits *idle*.

**20:7** [g] NU-Text omits the last clause of this verse.

**20:16** [g] NU-Text omits the last sentence of this verse.

**20:22** [g] NU-Text omits *and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with.*

**20:23** [g]NU-Text omits *and be baptized with the baptism that Iam baptized with.*

**21:1** [g] M-Text reads *Bethsphage*.

**21:4** [g] NU-Text omits *All*.

**21:5** [g]Zechariah 9:9

**21:7** [g]NU-Text reads *and He sat.*

**21:9** [g]Psalm 118:26

**21:12** [g] NU-Text omits *of God.*

**21: 13** [g]Isaiah 56:7

**21: 13** *b*Jeremiah 7:11

**21:16** [g] Psalm 8:2

**21:42** [g] Psalm 118:22, 23

**22:13** [g]NU-Text omits *take him away, and.*

**22:30** [g] NU-Text omits *of God.*

**22:32** [g]Exodus 3:6, 15

**22:37** [g]Deuteronomy 6:5

**22:39** [g]Leviticus 19:18

**22:44** [g] Psalm 110:1

**23:3** [g]NU-Text omits *to observe*.

**23:8** [g] NU-Text omits *the Christ.*

**23:14** [g] NU-Text omits this verse.

**23:17** [g]NU-Text reads *sanctified.*

**23:21** [a] M-Text reads *dwelt.*

**23:25** [g] M-Text reads *unrighteousness.*

**23:39** [g] Psalm 118:26

**24:6**[a] NU-Text omits *all.*

**24:7** [g]NU-Text omits *pestilences.*

**24:15** [g]Daniel 11:31; 12:11

**24:33** [a] Or *He*

**24:36** [g] NU-Text adds *nor the Son.*

**24:42** [g]NU-Text reads *day*.

**24:48** [g]NU-Text omits *his coming*.

**25:6** [g] NU-Text omits *is coming*.

**25:13** [g] NU-Text omits the rest of this verse.

**25:31** [g]NU-Text omits *holy*.

**25:44** [g]NU-Text and M-Text omit *Him.*

**26:3** [g] NU-Text omits *the scribes.*

**26:26** [g] M-Text reads *gave thanks for*.

**26:28** [g]NU-Text omits *new*.

**26:31** [g]Zechariah 13:7

**26:42** [g] NU-Text reads *if this may not pass away unless.*

**26:52** [g] M-Text reads *die*.

**26:59** [g]NU-Text omits *the elders.*

**26:60** [g]NU-Text puts a comma after *but found none,* does not capitalize *Even,* and omits *they found none.*

**26:60** ***b***NU-Text omits *false witnesses.*

**27:2** [a]NU-Text omits *Pontius.*

**27:10**[g] Jeremiah 32:6-9

**27:16**[g] NU-Text reads Jesus Barabbas.

**27:24** [g]NU-Text omits *just.*

**27:34** [g] NU-Text omits *sour*.

**27:35** [g] NU-Text and M-Text omit the rest of this verse.

**27:35** *b*Psalm 22:18

**27:41** [a] M-Text reads *with the scribes, the Pharisees, and the elders.*

**27:42** [g]NU-Text reads *He is the King of Israel!*

**27:42** ***b***NU-Text and M-Text read *we will believe in Him.*

**27:46** [g]Psalm 22:1

**27:56** [g] NU-Text reads *Joseph.*

**27:64** [g] NU-Text omits *by night.*

**28:2** [g] NU-Text omits *from the door*.

**28:9** [g] NU-Text omits the first clause of this verse.

**28:19** [g] M-Text omits *therefore*.

**28:20** [g] NU-Text omits *Amen.*

**1:2** [a]NU-Text reads *Isaiah the prophet.*

**1:2** *b* Malachi 3:1

**1:3** [g]Isaiah 40:3

**1:10** [g]NU-Text reads *out of*.

**1:14** [g]NU-Text omits *of the kingdom.*

**1:27** [g] NU-Text reads *What is this? A new doctrine with authority.*

**2:2** [a]NU-Text omits *Immediately*.

**2:16** [g]NU-Text reads *of the*.

**2:17** [g]NU-Text omits *to repentance*.

**3:5** [a]NU-Text omits *as whole as the other*.

**3:14** [g] NU-Text adds *whom He also named apostles.*

**3:15** [g]NU-Text omits *to heal sicknesses and.*

**3:16** [g]NU-Text reads *and He appointed the twelve: Simon. . . .*

**3:32** [g] NU-Text and M-Text add *and Your sisters*.

**4:4** [g] NU-Text and M-Text omit *of the air*.

**4:9** [g] NU-Text and M-Text omit *to them.*

**4:12** [q]Isaiah 6:9, 10

**4:40** [g]NU-Text reads *Have you still no faith?*

**5:1** [a]NU-Text reads *Gerasenes.*

**5:3** [a]NU-Text adds *anymore.*

**5:13** [g]NU-Text reads *And He gave.*

**6:11** [g]NU-Text reads *whatever place.*

**6:11** ***b***NU-Text omits the rest of this verse.

**6:15** [g]NU-Text and M-Text omit *or*.

**6:33** [g]NU-Text and M-Text read *they*.

**6:36** [g] NU-Text reads *something to eat* and omits the rest of this verse.

**6:44** [g]NU-Text and M-Text omit *about.*

**7:2** [a]NU-Text omits *when* and *they found fault.*

**7:7** [g]Isaiah 29:13

**7:8** [a]NU-Text omits the rest of this verse.

**7:10** [g]Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16

**7:10** *b*Exodus 21:17

**7:16** [g]NU-Text omits this verse.

**7:19** [a]NU-Text ends quotation with *eliminated*, setting off the final clause as Mark's comment that Jesus has declared all foods clean.

**7:24** [g]NU-Text omits *and Sidon.*

**8:14** [g]NU-Text and M-Text read *they*.

**8:17** [g]NU-Text omits *still*.

**8:26** [g]NU-Text reads *“Do not even go into the town.’’*

**9:23** [g]NU-Text reads *“ ‘If You can!’ All things. . . .’’*

**9:29** [g]NU-Text omits *and fasting*.

**9:40** [g] M-Text reads *against you is on your side.*

**9:44** [g]NU-Text omits this verse.

**9:46** [g]NU-Text omits the last clause of verse 45 and all of verse 46.

**9:48** [g]Isaiah 66:24

**9:49** [g]NU-Text omits the rest of this verse.

**10:6** [g]Genesis 1:27; 5:2

**10:8** [g]Genesis 2:24

**10:19** [g] Exodus 20:12-16; Deuteronomy 5:16-20

**10:24** [g] NU-Text omits *for those who trust in riches.*

**10:29** [g] NU-Text omits *or wife.*

**11:1** [a] M-Text reads *Bethsphage*.

**11:4** [a]NU-Text and M-Text read *a*.

**11:9** [g]Psalm 118:26

**11:10** [g] NU-Text omits *in the name of the Lord.*

**11:17** [g] Isaiah 56:7

**11:17** *b* Jeremiah 7:11

**11:26** [g] NU-Text omits this verse.

**12:4** [g]NU-Text omits *and at him they threw stones.*

**12:11** [g]Psalm 118:22, 23

**12:26** [g]Exodus 3:6, 15

**12:28** [g]NU-Text reads *seeing.*

**12:30** [g] Deuteronomy 6:4, 5

**12:30** ***b***NU-Text omits this sentence.

**12:31** [a] Leviticus 19:18

**12:33** [g] NU-Text omits *with all the soul.*

**12:36** [g] Psalm 110:1

**12:42** [a] Greek *lepta,* very small copper coins worth a fraction of a penny

**13:8** [g]NU-Text omits *and troubles.*

**13:9** [g] NU-Text and M-Text read *will stand.*

**13:11** [a]NU-Text omits *or premeditate*.

**13:14** [g] Daniel 11:31; 12:11

**13:14** ***b***NU-Text omits *spoken of by Daniel the prophet.*

**13:29** [a] Or *He*

**14:19** *g*NU-Text omits this sentence.

**14:22** [g]NU-Text omits *eat.*

**14:24** [g] NU-Text omits *new*.

**14:27** [a]NU-Text omits *because of Me this night.*

**14:27** *b*Zechariah 13:7

**14:65** [g]NU-Text reads *received Him with slaps.*

**14:70** [g]NU-Text omits *and your speech shows it.*

**15:4** [g] NU-Text reads *of which they accuse You.*

**15:8** [g] NU-Text reads *going up*.

**15:28** [g] Isaiah 53:12

**15:28** *b*NU-Text omits this verse.

**15:32** [a] M-Text reads *believe Him.*

**15:34** [g] Psalm 22:1

**15:39** [g] NU-Text reads *that He thus breathed His last.*

**16:8** [q]NU-Text and M-Text omit *quickly*.

**16:18** [g]NU-Text reads *and in their hands they will.*

**16:20** [g]Verses 9-20 are bracketed in NU-Text as not original. They are lacking in Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus, although nearly all other manuscripts of Mark contain them.

**1:1** [a] Or *are most surely believed*

**1:17** [g]Malachi 4:5, 6

**1:28** [g]NU-Text omits *blessed are you among women.*

**1:29** [g]NU-Text omits *when she saw him.*

**1:78** [g]NU-Text reads *shall visit.*

**2:5** [a]NU-Text omits *wife*.

**2:9** [a]NU-Text omits *behold.*

**2:14** [g]NU-Text reads *toward men of goodwill.*

**2:17** [g]NU-Text omits *widely*.

**2:21** [g]NU-Text reads *for His circumcision.*

**2:23** [g]Exodus 13:2, 12, 15

**2:24** [g]Leviticus 12:8

**2:33** [g]NU-Text reads *And His father and mother*.

**2:37** [g]NU-Text reads *a widow until she was eighty-four*.

**2:38** [g]NU-Text reads *to God*.

**2:40** [g]NU-Text omits *in spirit.*

**2:43** [g]NU-Text reads *And His parents.*

**3:2** [a]NU-Text and M-Text read *in the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas.*

**3:6** [g]Isaiah 40:3-5

**3:19** [g]NU-Text reads *his brother's wife.*

**3:24** [g]This and several other names in the genealogy are spelled somewhat differently in the NU-Text. Since the New King James Version uses the Old Testament spelling for persons mentioned in the New Testament, these variations, which come from the Greek, have not been footnoted.

**4:1** [a]NU-Text reads *in.*

**4:4** [g]Deuteronomy 8:3

**4:4** ***b***NU-Text omits *but by every word of God.*

**4:5** [g] NU-Text reads *And taking Him up, he showed Him.*

**4:8** [a]NU-Text omits *Get behind Me, Satan.*

**4:8** ***b***NU-Text and M-Text omit For.

**4:8** [c]Deuteronomy 6:13

**4:11** [g]Psalm 91:11, 12

**4:12** [g]Deuteronomy 6:16

**4:18** [g]NU-Text omits *to heal the brokenhearted.*

**4:19** [q]Isaiah 61:1, 2

**4:23** [g] Here and elsewhere the NU-Text spelling is *Capharnaum.*

**4:26** [g] Greek *Sarepta*

**4:41** [g]NU-Text omits *the Christ.*

**4:44** [a]NU-Text reads *Judea*.

**5:17** [g]NU-Text reads *present with Him to heal.*

**5:30** [g]NU-Text reads *But the Pharisees and their scribes.*

**5:33** [g]NU-Text omits *Why do,* making the verse a statement.

**5:36** [a]NU-Text reads *No one tears a piece from a new garment and puts it on an old one.*

**5:38** [g] NU-Text omits *and both are preserved.*

**5:39** [g]NU-Text omits *immediately*.

**5:39** ***b***NU-Text reads *good.*

**6:1** [a]NU-Text reads *on a Sabbath.*

**6:9** [a] M-Text reads *to kill.*

**6:10** [g] NU-Text and M-Text read *to him.*

**6:10** ***b***NU-Text omits *as whole as the other*.

**6:26** [g] NU-Text and M-Text omit *to you.*

**6:26** ***b***M-Text omits *all.*

**6:45** [g]NU-Text omits *treasure of his heart.*

**6:48** [a]NU-Text reads *for it was well built.*

**6:49** [g]NU-Text reads *collapsed.*

**7:10** [g]NU-Text omits *who had been sick.*

**7:19** [g]NU-Text reads *the Lord.*

**7:27** [g]Malachi 3:1

**7:28** [g]NU-Text reads *there is none greater than John.*

**7:31** [g]NU-Text and M-Text omit *And the Lord said.*

**8:3** [a]NU-Text and M-Text read *them.*

**8:10** [g]Isaiah 6:9

**8:26** [g] NU-Text reads *Gerasenes*.

**8:27** [g]NU-Text reads *who had demons and for a long time wore no clothes.*

**8:37** [a]NU-Text reads *Gerasenes*.

**8:45** [g]NU-Text omits *and those with him.*

**8:45** ***b***NU-Text omits *and You say, ‘Who touched Me?’*

**8:48** [g]NU-Text omits *be of good cheer*.

**8:49** [g]NU-Text adds *anymore*.

**8:51** [g]NU-Text adds *with Him.*

**8:51** ***b***NU-Text and M-Text read *Peter, John, and James.*

**8:54** [a]NU-Text omits *put them all outside.*

**9:23** [a]M-Text omits *daily*.

**9:35** [g]NU-Text reads *This is My Son, the Chosen One.*

**9:50** [a]NU-Text reads *you*.

**9:50** ***b***NU-Text reads *your*.

**9:54** [g] NU-Text omits *just as Elijah did.*

**9:55** [g]NU-Text omits the rest of this verse.

**9:56** [g] NU-Text omits the first sentence of this verse.

**10:1** [g] NU-Text reads *seventy-two others.*

**10:11** [g]NU-Text reads *our feet.*

**10:12** [g] NU-Text and M-Text omit *But.*

**10:15** [g]NU-Text reads *will you be exalted to heaven? You will be thrust down to Hades!*

**10:17** [a]NU-Text reads *seventy-two*.

**10:20** [g] NU-Text and M-Text omit *rather*.

**10:22** [g] M-Text reads *And turning to the disciples He said, "All . . . .*

**10:27** [g]Deuteronomy 6:5

**10:27** *b*Leviticus 19:18

**10:35** [g]NU-Text omits *when he departed.*

**10:39** [g] NU-Text reads *the Lord's*.

**10:41** [g]NU-Text reads *the Lord.*

**11:2** [g] NU-Text omits *Our* and *in heaven.*

**11:2** ***b***NU-Text omits the rest of this verse.

**11:4** [a]NU-Text omits *But deliver us from the evil one.*

**11:11** [a]NU-Text omits the words from *bread* through *for* in the next sentence.

**11:15** [g] NU-Text and M-Text read *Beelzebul*.

**11:29** [g]NU-Text omits *the prophet*.

**11:44** [g]NU-Text omits *scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites.*

**11:53** [g]NU-Text reads *And when He left there.*

**11:54** [g]NU-Text omits *and seeking* and *that they might accuse Him.*

**12:6** [q] Greek *assarion*, a coin of very small value

**12:15** [g] NU-Text reads *all covetousness.*

**12:31** [g] NU-Text reads *His kingdom, and these things.*

**12:39** [g] NU-Text reads *he would not have allowed.*

**13:9** [a]NU-Text reads *And if it bears fruit after that, well. But if not, you can cut it down.*

**13:15** [g] NU-Text and M-Text read *Hypocrites.*

**13:19** [g] NU-Text omits *large.*

**13:21** [a] Greek *sata,* approximately two pecks in all

**13:31** [g]NU-Text reads *In that very hour.*

**13:35** [g]NU-Text and M-Text omit *assuredly*.

**13:35** *b*Psalm 118:26

**14:3** [g]NU-Text adds *or not.*

**14:5** [g] NU-Text and M-Text read *son.*

**14:15** [g] M-Text reads *dinner*.

**15:8** [q]Greek *drachma,* a valuable coin often worn in a ten-piece garland by married women

**15:22** [g] NU-Text reads *Quickly bring.*

**16:6** [q] Greek *batos*, eight or nine gallons each (Old Testament *bath*)

**16:7** [a]Greek *koros*, ten or twelve bushels each (Old Testament *kor*)

**16:9** [a]NU-Text reads *it fails.*

**16:21** [g] NU-Text reads *with what fell.*

**17:3** [q] NU-Text omits *against you.*

**17:4** [a]M-Text omits *to you*.

**17:9** [g]NU-Text ends verse with *commanded;* M-Text omits *him.*

**17:21** [a]NU-Text reverses *here* and *there*.

**17:23** [g]NU-Text reverses *here* and *there*.

**17:36** [g] NU-Text and M-Text omit verse 36.

**18:20** [g] Exodus 20:12-16; Deuteronomy 5:16-20

**18:28** [a]NU-Text reads *our own.*

**19:5** [g]NU-Text omits *and saw him.*

**19:13** [g]The *mina* (Greek *mna,* Hebrew *minah* ) was worth about three months’ salary.

**19:29** [g] M-Text reads *Bethsphage*.

**19:38** [g] Psalm 118:26

**19:45** [g]NU-Text reads *those who were selling.*

**19:46** [g] NU-Text reads *shall be.*

**19:46** *b*Isaiah 56:7

**19:46** [c]Jeremiah 7:11

**20:5** [g] NU-Text and M-Text omit *then.*

**20:17** [g]Psalm 118:22

**20:19** [g] M-Text reads *but they were afraid.*

**20:23** [g] NU-Text omits *Why do you test Me?*

**20:30** [g]NU-Text ends verse 30 here.

**20:31** [g] NU-Text and M-Text read *the seven also left no children.*

**20:37** [g]Exodus 3:6, 15

**20:43** [g] Psalm 110:1

**21:4** [g]NU-Text omits *for God.*

**21:8** [g]NU-Text omits *Therefore.*

**21:36** [g] NU-Text reads *may have strength.*

**22:14** [g]NU-Text omits *twelve.*

**22:18** [g]NU-Text adds *from now on.*

**22:31** [g]NU-Text omits *And the Lord said.*

**22:37** [g] Isaiah 53:12

**22:44** [g] NU-Text brackets verses 43 and 44 as not in the original text.

**22:57** [g] NU-Text reads *denied it.*

**22:60** [g] NU-Text and M-Text read *a rooster*.

**22:61** [g]NU-Text adds *today*.

**22:64** [g]NU-Text reads *And having blindfolded Him, they asked Him.*

**22:68** [g] NU-Text omits *also* and *Me or let Me go.*

**23:2** [g] NU-Text reads *our*.

**23:6** [g]NU-Text omits *of Galilee.*

**23:15** [g]NU-Text reads *for he sent Him back to us.*

**23:17** [g] NU-Text omits verse 17.

**23:23** [g] NU-Text omits *and of the chief priests.*

**23:25** [g]NU-Text and M-Text omit *to them.*

**23:30** [g] Hosea 10:8

**23:34** [g] NU-Text brackets the first sentence as a later addition.

**23:38** [g] NU-Text omits *written* and *in letters of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew.*

**23:39** [g]NU-Text reads *Are You not the Christ?*

**23:42** [g]NU-Text reads *And he said, "Jesus, remember me.*

**23:44** [g]NU-Text adds *already.*

**23:45** [g]NU-Text reads *obscured*.

**23:46** [g] Psalm 31:5

**23:51**[g] NU-Text reads *who was waiting.*

**24:1** [g]NU-Text omits *and certain other women with them.*

**24:4** [g]NU-Text omits *greatly*.

**24:12** [g] NU-Text omits *lying*.

**24:13** [g] Literally *sixty stadia*

**24:17** [g]NU-Text reads *as you walk? And they stood still, looking sad.*

**24:40** [g]Some printed New Testaments omit this verse. It is found in nearly all Greek manuscripts.

**24:42** [g] NU-Text omits *and some honeycomb*.

**24:46** [g]NU-Text reads *written, that the Christ should suffer and rise.*

**24:49** [g]NU-Text omits *of Jerusalem.*

**24:53** [g]NU-Text omits *praising and.*

**24:53** ***b***NU-Text omits *Amen.*

**1:5** [a] Or *overcome*

**1:9** [a]Or *That was the true Light which, coming into the world, gives light to every man.*

**1:11** [g]That is, His own things or domain

**1:11** ***b***That is, His own people

**1:16** [g]NU-Text reads *For*.

**1:18** [g]NU-Text reads *only begotten God.*

**1:23** [g]Isaiah 40:3

**1:28** [g]NU-Text and M-Text read *Bethany*.

**1:42** [g]NU-Text reads *John.*

**1:51**[g] NU-Text omits hereafter.

**2:17** [g]NU-Text and M-Text read *will eat.*

**2:17** *b*Psalm 69:9

**2:22** [g] NU-Text and M-Text omit *to them.*

**3:13** [g]NU-Text omits *who is in heaven.*

**3:15** [g]NU-Text omits *not perish but.*

**4:42** [g]NU-Text omits *the Christ.*

**5:2** [a]NU-Text reads *Bethzatha*.

**5:4** [g]NU-Text omits *waiting for the moving of the water* at the end of verse 3, and all of verse 4.

**5:16** [g]NU-Text omits *and sought to kill Him.*

**6:11** [g]NU-Text omits *to the disciples, and the disciples.*

**6:19** [g] Literally *twenty-five or thirty stadia*

**6:22** [g]NU-Text omits *that* and *which His disciples had entered.*

**6:31** [g]Exodus 16:4; Nehemiah 9:15; Psalm 78:24

**6:45** [g]Isaiah 54:13

**6:45** ***b***M-Text reads *hears and has learned.*

**6:47** [g]NU-Text omits *in Me*.

**6:55** [a]NU-Text reads *true food* and *true drink.*

**6:69** [g]NU-Text reads *You are the Holy One of God.*

**7:1** [a] That is, the ruling authorities

**7:8** [a]NU-Text omits *yet*.

**7:16** [g]NU-Text and M-Text read *So Jesus.*

**7:26** [g] NU-Text omits *truly*.

**7:29** [g] NU-Text and M-Text omit *But.*

**7:33** [g]NU-Text and M-Text omit *to them.*

**7:39** [g]NU-Text reads *who believed.*

**7:39** ***b***NU-Text omits *Holy*.

**7:40** [g]NU-Text reads *some*.

**7:50** [g]NU-Text reads *before*.

**7:52** [a]NU-Text reads *is to rise*.

**7:53** [a]The words *And everyone* through *sin no more* (8:11) are bracketed by NU-Text as not original. They are present in over 900 manuscripts.

**8:2** [a] M-Text reads *very early*.

**8:4** [g] M-Text reads *we found this woman.*

**8:5** [a] M-Text reads *in our law Moses commanded.*

**8.5** ***b***NU-Text and M-Text read *to stone such.*

**8.5** [c]M-Text adds *about her*.

**8:6** [a]NU-Text and M-Text omit *as though He did not hear*.

**8:7** [a] M-Text reads *He looked up*.

**8:9** [g] NU-Text and M-Text omit *being convicted by their conscience.*

**8:10** [a]NU-Text omits *and saw no one but the woman;* M-Text reads *He saw her and said.*

**8.10** ***b***NU-Text and M-Text omit *of yours*.

**8:11** [g]NU-Text and M-Text add *from now on.*

**8:38** [g]NU-Text reads *heard from.*

**8:54** [q]NU-Text and M-Text read *our*.

**8:59** [g] NU-Text omits the rest of this verse.

**9:4** [g] NU-Text reads *We*.

**9:8** [a]NU-Text reads *a beggar*.

**9:9** [g] NU-Text reads *“No, but he is like him.’’*

**9:11** [g]NU-Text omits *the pool of*.

**9:35** [g]NU-Text reads *Son of Man.*

**10:8** [a]M-Text omits *before Me*.

**10:26** [g]NU-Text omits *as I said to you.*

**10:34** [g] Psalm 82:6

**10:38** [g]NU-Text reads *understand.*

**11:18** [g]Literally *fifteen stadia* know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You."

**11:30** [g]NU-Text adds *still.*

**11:31** [g]NU-Text reads *supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there.*

**11:41** [g] NU-Text omits *from the place where the dead man was lying.*

**11:50** [g]NU-Text reads *you.*

**12:1** [g]NU-Text omits *who had been dead.*

**12:5** [g] About one year’s wages for a worker

**12:7** [g] NU-Text reads *that she may keep.*

**12:13** [g] Psalm 118:26

**12:15** [g]Zechariah 9:9

**12:38** [g] Isaiah 53:1

**12:40** [g] Isaiah 6:10

**12:41** [g]NU-Text reads *because.*

**12:47** [g]NU-Text reads *keep them.*

**13:2** [g] NU-Text reads *And during supper*.

**13:18** [g] NU-Text reads *My bread.*

**13.18** *b*Psalm 41:9

**13:25** [g]NU-Text and M-Text add *thus.*

**14:2** [g] Literally *dwellings*

**14.2** ***b***NU-Text adds a word which would cause the text to read either *if it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?* or *if it were not so I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.*

**14:14** [g] NU-Text adds *Me*.

**14:15** [a]NU-Text reads *you will keep.*

**14:28** [g] NU-Text omits *I said.*

**15:2** [q] Or *lifts up*

**15:7** [g]NU-Text omits *you will.*

**15:25** [g] Psalm 69:4

**16:3** [g] NU-Text and M-Text omit *to you.*

**16:4** [g]NU-Text reads *their*.

**16:15** [a]NU-Text and M-Text read *He takes of Mine and will declare it to you.*

**16:33** [g] NU-Text and M-Text omit *will*.

**17:2** [g] M-Text reads *shall*.

**17:11** [g]NU-Text and M-Text read *keep them through Your name which You have given Me*.

**17:12** [g] NU-Text omits *in the world.*

**17.12** [b]NU-Text reads *in Your name which You gave Me. And I guarded them;* (or *it;*)

**17:20** [g] NU-Text and M-Text omit *will*.

**18:15** [a] M-Text reads *the other*.

**18:20** [g] NU-Text reads *where all the Jews meet.*

**19:3** [g]NU-Text reads *And they came up to Him and said.*

**19:7** [a]NU-Text reads *the law*.

**19:16** [g]NU-Text omits *and led Him away.*

**19:24** [g] Psalm 22:18

**19:28** [g] M-Text reads *seeing*.

**19:36** [g] Exodus 12:46; Numbers 9:12; Psalm 34:20

**19:37** [g]Zechariah 12:10

**20:16** [g] NU-Text adds *in Hebrew.*

**20:18** [g] NU-Text reads *disciples, "I have seen the Lord,"*. . .

**20:19** [g]NU-Text omits *assembled.*

**20:29** [g]NU-Text and M-Text omit *Thomas*.

**21:3** [g]NU-Text omits *immediately*.

**21:15** [g] NU-Text reads *John.*

**21:16** [g] NU-Text reads *John.*

**21:17** [g] NU-Text reads *John.*

**1:8** [a]NU-Text reads *My witnesses.*

**1:14** [g] NU-Text omits *and supplication.*

**1:15** [g]NU-Text reads *brethren.*

**1:20** [g]Psalm 69:25

**1:20** *b* Psalm 109:8

**1:20** [c] Greek *episkopen, position of overseer*

**2:1** [a] NU-Text reads *together*.

**2:21** [g]Joel 2:28-32

**2:23** [a]NU-Text omits *have taken.*

**2:28** [g]Psalm 16:8-11

**2:30** [a]NU-Text omits *according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ* and completes the verse with *He would seat one on his throne.*

**2:35** [g]Psalm 110:1

**2:41** [g]NU-Text omits *gladly*.

**2:47** [g]NU-Text omits*to the church.*

**3:20** [a]NU-Text and M-Text read *Christ Jesus, who was ordained for you before.*

**3:23** [g]Deuteronomy 18:15, 18, 19

**3:24** [g]NU-Text and M-Text read *proclaimed.*

**3:25** [g]Genesis 22:18; 26:4; 28:14

**4:11** [g]Psalm 118:22

**4:25** [g]NU-Text reads *who through the Holy Spirit, by the mouth of our father, Your servant David.*

**4:26** [g]Psalm 2:1, 2

**4:36** [g]NU-Text reads *Joseph.*

**5:23** [g]NU-Text and M-Text omit *outside.*

**5:24** [g]NU-Text omits *the high priest.*

**5:25** [g]NU-Text and M-Text omit *saying*.

**5:41** [g]NU-Text reads *the name;* M-Text reads *the name of Jesus.*

**6:1** [a] That is, Greek-speaking Jews

**6:8** [a] NU-Text reads *grace*.

**6:13** [g] NU-Text omits *blasphemous.*

**7:3** [g]Genesis 12:1

**7:7** [a] Genesis 15:14

**7:7** *b*Exodus 3:12

**7:14** [g] Or *seventy* (compare Exodus 1:5)

**7:28** [g]Exodus 2:14

**7:30** [g]NU-Text omits *of the Lord.*

**7:32** [g]Exodus 3:6, 15

**7:34** [g]Exodus 3:5, 7, 8, 10

**7:35** [g]Exodus 2:14

**7:37** [g]Deuteronomy 18:15

**7:37** ***b***NU-Text and M-Text omit *Him you shall hear*.

**7:40** [g]Exodus 32:1, 23

**7:43** [g]Amos 5:25-27

**7:50** [g]Isaiah 66:1, 2

**8:5** [a] Or *a*

**8:33** [g]Isaiah 53:7, 8

**8:37** [a]NU-Text and M-Text omit this verse. It is found in Western texts, including the Latin tradition.

**9:5** [g]NU-Text and M-Text omit the last sentence of verse 5 and begin verse 6 with *But arise and go.*

**9:17** [g] M-Text omits *Jesus.*

**9:20** [g]NU-Text reads *Jesus.*

**9:31** [g]NU-Text reads *church . . . was edified.*

**10:6** [g] NU-Text and M-Text omit the last sentence of this verse.

**10:21** [g]NU-Text and M-Text omit *who had been sent to him from Cornelius.*

**10:30** [g]NU-Text reads *Four days ago to this hour, at the ninth hour*.

**10:32** [g] NU-Text omits the last sentence of this verse.

**10:39** [g] NU-Text and M-Text add *also.*

**12:5** [g] NU-Text reads *constantly* (or *earnestly* ).

**12:25** [g] NU-Text and M-Text read *to.*

**13:6** [g] NU-Text reads *the whole island.*

**13:17** [a] M-Text omits *Israel.*

**13:22** [g] Psalm 89:20

**13:22** *b*1 Samuel 13:14

**13:23** [a] M-Text reads *for Israel salvation.*

**13:33** [g] Psalm 2:7

**13:34** [g] Isaiah 55:3

**13:35** [g]Psalm 16:10

**13:41** [g] Habakkuk 1:5

**13:42** [a] Or *And when they went out of the synagogue of the Jews;* NU-Text reads *And when they went out of the synagogue, they begged.*

**13:47** [g]Isaiah 49:6

**15:11** [a]NU-Text and M-Text omit *Christ.*

**15:17** [a] Amos 9:11, 12

**15:18** [g]NU-Text(combining with verse 17) reads *Says the Lord, who makes these things known from eternity (of old).*

**15:20** [a] Or *fornication*

**15:22** [g] NU-Text and M-Text read *Barsabbas.*

**15:24** [g]NU-Text omits *saying, “You must be circumcised and keep the law.’’*

**15:29** [a] Or *fornication*

**15:33** [g]NU-Text reads *to those who had sent them.*

**15:34** [g] NU-Text and M-Text omit this verse.

**16:7** [g]NU-Text adds *of Jesus.*

**17:5** [a]NU-Text omits *who were not persuaded;* M-Text omits *becoming envious.*

**17:18** [g]NU-Text and M-Text add *also.*

**17:26** [g] NU-Text omits *blood.*

**18:7** [a]NU-Text reads *Titius Justus.*

**18:17** [a]NU-Text reads *they all.*

**18:21** [g]NU-Text omits *I must* through *Jerusalem.*

**19:13** [g]NU-Text reads *I.*

**19:16** [g] M-Text reads *and they overpowered.*

**19:16** ***b***NU-Text reads *both of them.*

**19:24** [a] Greek *Artemis*

**19:27** [a]NU-Text reads *she be deposed from her magnificence.*

**19:37** [g] NU-Text reads *our*.

**20:8** [g] NU-Text and M-Text read *we*.

**20:24** [g]NU-Text reads *But I do not count my life of any value or dear to myself.*

**20:28** [g] M-Text reads *of the Lord and God.*

**20:34** [g] NU-Text and M-Text omit

**21:4** [g] NU-Text reads *the disciples.*

**21:8** [g]NU-Text omits *who were Paul's companions.*

**21:22** [g]NU-Text reads *What then is to be done? They will certainly.*

**21:25** [g] NU-Text omits *that they should observe no such thing, except.*

**21:29** [g] M-Text omits *previously*.

**22:9** [g]NU-Text omits *and were afraid.*

**22:20**[g] NU-Text omits *to his death.*

**23:5** [g]Exodus 22:28

**23:9** [g]NU-Text omits last clause and reads *what if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?*

**23:15** [g]NU-Text omits *tomorrow*.

**23:30** [g] NU-Text reads *there would be a plot against the man.*

**24:6** [a]NU-Text ends the sentence here and omits the rest of verse 6, all of verse 7, and the first clause of verse 8.

**24:9** [g]NU-Text and M-Text read *joined the attack.*

**24:15** [g]NU-Text omits *of the dead.*

**24:20** [g] NU-Text and M-Text read *say what wrongdoing they found.*

**24:26** [g] NU-Text omits *that he might release him.*

**25:2** [g] NU-Text reads *chief priests.*

**25:16** [g]NU-Text omits *to destruction,* although it is implied.

**26:17** [q]NU-Text and M-Text omit *now*.

**27:14** [g] NU-Text reads *Euraquilon.*

**27:16** [g]NU-Text reads *Cauda*.

**27:17** [g] M-Text reads *Syrtes*.

**28:19** [a] That is, the ruling authorities

**28:25** [g]NU-Text reads *your*.

**28:27** [g]Isaiah 6:9, 10

**28:29** [g]NU-Text omits this verse.

**1:16** [g]NU-Text omits *of Christ.*

**1:17** [g]Habakkuk 2:4

**1:29** [g]NU-Text omits *sexual immorality*.

**1:31** [g]NU-Text omits *unforgiving*.

**2:6** [a]Psalm 62:12; Proverbs 24:12

**2:17** [g] NU-Text reads *But if*.

**2:24** [g]Isaiah 52:5; Ezekiel 36:22

**3:4** [g]Psalm 51:4

**3:12** [g]Psalms 14:1-3; 53:1-3; Ecclesiastes 7:20

**3:13** [g]Psalm 5:9

**3:13** *b*Psalm 140:3

**3:14** [g]Psalm 10:7

**3:17** [g]Isaiah 59:7, 8

**3:18** [g]Psalm 36:1

**3:22** [g]NU-Text omits *and on all.*

**4:1** [g] Or *Abraham our (fore)father according to the flesh has found?*

**4:3** [a]Genesis 15:6

**4:8** [g]Psalm 32:1, 2

**4:17** [g]Genesis 17:5

**4:18** [g]Genesis 15:5

**4:22** [g]Genesis 15:6

**5:1** [a] Another ancient reading is, *let us have peace.*

**7:7** [g]Exodus 20:17; Deuteronomy 5:21

**8:1** [g] NU-Text omits the rest of this verse.

**8:26** [g]NU-Text omits *for us*.

**8:36** [g]Psalm 44:22

**9:3** [a] Or *relatives*

**9:7** [a]Genesis 21:12

**9:9** [g]Genesis 18:10, 14

**9:12** [g]Genesis 25:23

**9:13** [g] Malachi 1:2, 3

**9:15** [g]Exodus 33:19

**9:17** [g]Exodus 9:16

**9:25** [g]Hosea 2:23

**9:26** [g]Hosea 1:10

**9:27** [g]Isaiah 10:22, 23

**9:28** [g]NU-Text reads *For the LORD will finish the work and cut it short upon the earth.*

**9:29** [g] Literally, in Hebrew, *Hosts*

**9:29*b***Isaiah 1:9

**9:31** [g]NU-Text omits *of righteousness*.

**9:32** [g]NU-Text reads *by works.*

**9:33** [g]Isaiah 8:14; 28:16

**10:1** [g]NU-Text reads *them.*

**10:5** [g]Leviticus 18:5

**10:6** [g]Deuteronomy 30:12

**10:7** [g]Deuteronomy 30:13

**10:8** [g]Deuteronomy 30:14

**10:11** [g] Isaiah 28:16

**10:13** [g] Joel 2:32

**10:15** [g]NU-Text omits *preach the gospel of peace, Who.*

**10:15** ***b***Isaiah 52:7; Nahum 1:15

**10:16** [g] Isaiah 53:21

**10:18** [g] Psalm 19:4

**10:19** [g] Deuteronomy 32:21

**10:20** [g] Isaiah 65:1

**10:21** [g] Isaiah 65:2

**11:3** [g] 1 Kings 19:10, 14

**11:4** [g]1 Kings 19:18

**11:6** [g] NU-Text omits the rest of this verse.

**11:8** [q]Deuteronomy 29:4; Isaiah 29:10

**11:10** [g] Psalm 69:22, 23

**11:22** [g] NU-Text adds *of God.*

**11:26** [g] Or *delivered*

**11:27** [g]Isaiah 59:20, 21

**11:34** [g] Isaiah 40:13; Jeremiah 23:18

**11:35** [g] Job 41:11

**12:19** [g] Deuteronomy 32:35

**12:20** [g] Proverbs 25:21, 22

**13:9** [g] NU-Text omits *“You shall not bear false witness.’’*

**13:9***b* Exodus 20:13-15, 17; Deuteronomy 5:17-19, 21 *c* Leviticus 19:18

**14:6** [g] NU-Text omits the rest of this sentence.

**14:9** [q]NU-Text omits *and rose*.

**14:10** [g]NU-Text reads *of God.*

**14:11** [g] Isaiah 45:23

**14:18** [g]NU-Textreads *this*.

**14:21** [a]NU-Text omits *or is offended or is made weak.*

**14:22** [g]NU-Text reads *The faith which you have-have.*

**14:23** [g] M-Text puts Romans 16:25-27 here.

**15:3** [g]Psalm 69:9

**15:7** [g] NU-Text and M-Text read *you.*

**15:9** [g]2 Samuel 22:50; Psalm 18:49

**15:10** [g]Deuteronomy 32:43

**15:11** [g] Psalm 117:1

**15:12** [g] Isaiah 11:10

**15:14** [a] M-Text reads *others*.

**15:21** [g] Isaiah 52:15

**15:24** [g]NU-Text omits *I shallcome to you* (and joins *Spain* with the next sentence).

**15:29** [g] NU-Text omits *of the gospel.*

**16:5** [g]NU-NU-Text reads *Asia.*

**16:11** [a] Or *relative*

**16:16** [g]NU-Text reads *All the churches.*

**16:18** [g] NU-Text and M-Text omit *Jesus*.

**16:24** [g] NU-Text omits this verse.

**16:27** [g] M-Text puts Romans 16:25-27 after Romans 14:23.

**1:19** [g]Isaiah 29:14

**1:23** [a]NU-Text reads *Gentiles.*

**1:31** [g]Jeremiah 9:24

**2:1** [a]NU-Text reads mystery.

**2:4** [a]NU-Text omits human.

**2:9** [a]Isaiah 64:4

**2:13** [a]NU-Text omits Holy.

**2:16** [a]Isaiah 40:13

**3:19** [g]Job 5:13

**3:20** [g]Psalm 94:11

**4:3** [a] Literally *day*

**5:1** [a] NU-Text omits *named.*

**5:5** [a]NU-Text omits *Jesus.*

**5:7** [a]NU-Text omits *for us.*

**5:13** [g]Deuteronomy 17:7; 19:19; 22:21, 24; 24:7

**6:9** [a] That is, catamites

**6:16** [g]Genesis 2:24

**6:20** [g] NU-Text ends the verse at *body*.

**7:34** [a] M-Text adds *also.*

**7:37** [a] Or *virgin daughter*

**7:38** [g]NU-Text reads *his own virgin.*

**9:9** [g]Deuteronomy 25:4

**9:18** [g]NU-Text omits *of Christ.*

**9:20** [g]NU-Text adds *though not being myself under the law.*

**9:21** [g]NU-Text reads *God's law*.

***9:21*** [b]NU-Text reads *Christ's law*.

**9:22** [g]NU-Text omits *as*.

**10:7** [g]Exodus 32:6

**10:11** [a]NU-Text omits *all.*

**10:23** [g] NU-Text omits *for me*.

***10:23*** [b]NU-Text omits *for me*.

**10:26** [g] Psalm 24:1

**10:28** [g] NU-Text omits the rest of this verse.

***10:28*** [b]Psalm 24:1

**11:24** [g] NU-Text omits *Take, eat.*

***11:24*** ***b***NU-Text omits *broken.*

**11:27** [g] NU-Text and M-Text read *the blood.*

**11:29** [g]NU-Text omits *in an unworthymanner*.

**11:29** ***b***NU-Text omits *Lord's.*

**11:15** [g]NU-Text omits *to her*.

**12:2** [g] NU-Text and M-Text add *when.*

**12:9** [g] NU-Text reads *one*.

**12:13** [g] NU-Text omits *into*.

**12:31** [g] NU-Text reads *greater*.

**13:3** [q]NU-Text reads *so I may boast.*

**14:5** [g]NU-Text reads *and.*

**14:21** [g] Isaiah 28:11, 12

**14:25** [g]NU-Text omits *And thus*.

**14:34** [a]NU-Text omits *your*.

**14:38** [g]NU-Text reads *if anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized.*

**15:27** [g]Psalm 8:6

**15:32** [g] Isaiah 22:13

**15:39** [g] NU-Text and M-Text omit *of flesh.*

**15:45** [a]Genesis 2:7

**15:47** [g] NU-Text omits *the Lord.*

**15:49** [a] M-Text reads *let us also bear.*

**15:54** [g]Isaiah 25:8

**15:55** [g]Hosea 13:14

***15:55*** [b]NU-Text reads *O Death, where is your victory? O Death, where is your sting?*

**16:22** [a] Greek *anathema*

***16:22*** [b]Aramaic *Maranatha*

**1:10** [g] NU-Text reads *shall*.

**1:11** [g]M-Text reads *your behalf.*

**2:10** [a]NU-Text reads *For indeed, what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, I did it.*

**2:17** [g] M-Text reads *the rest.*

**3:6** [a] Or *spirit*

**4:13** [g]Psalm 116:10

**6:2** [g]Isaiah 49:8

**6:16** [g]NU-Text reads *we*.

**6:16***b* Leviticus 26:12; Jeremiah 32:38; Ezekiel 37:27

**6:17** [g]Isaiah 52:11; Ezekiel 20:34, 41

**6:18** [g] 2 Samuel 7:14

**8:4** [g]NU-Text and M-Text omit *that we would receive,* thus changing text to *urgency for the favor and fellowship . . . .*

**8:15** [g]Exodus 16:18

**8:16** [g] NU-Text reads *has put.*

**8:24** [g]NU-Text and M-Text omit *and.*

**9:4** [g] NU-Text reads *this confidence.*

**9:9** [g]Psalm 112:9

**9:10** [g]NU-Text reads *Now He who supplies . . . will supply . . . .*

**10:7** [g]NU-Text reads *even as we are.*

**10:8** [q]NU-Text omits *us*.

**10:17** [g] Jeremiah 9:24

**11:3** [g] NU-Text adds *and purity*.

**11:6** [g] NU-Text omits *been.*

**12:1** [g]NU-Text reads *necessary, though not profitable, to boast.*

**12:11** [g]NU-Text omits *inboasting.*

**12:19** [g] NU-Text reads *You have been thinking fora long time. . . .*

**13:1** [g]Deuteronomy 19:15

**13:2** [g] NU-Text omits *I write.*

**13:7** [g]NU-Text reads *we*.

**1:18** [a]NU-Text reads Cephas.

**2:11[a]**NU-Text reads *Cephas*.

**2:14** [g] NU-Text reads how can you.

**2:14** [b]Some interpreters stop the quotation here.

**3:1** [a]NU-Text omits *that you should not obey the truth*.

**3:1** ***b***NU-Text omits *among you*.

**3:6** [a]Genesis 15:6

**3:8** [g]Genesis 12:3; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14

**3:10** [g]Deuteronomy 27:26

**3:11** [g]Habakkuk 2:4

**3:12** [g]Leviticus 18:5

**3:13** [g]Deuteronomy 21:23

**3:16** [g]Genesis 12:7; 13:15; 24:7

**3:17** [a]NU-Text omits *in Christ*.

**4:4** [a] Or *made*

**4:7** [a]NU-Text reads *through God* and omits *through Christ*.

**4:15** [g]NU-Text reads *Where*.

**4:24** [g]NU-Text and M-Text omit *the*.

**4:27** [g]Isaiah 54:1

**4:30** [g]Genesis 21:10

**5:1** [a]NU-Text reads *For freedom Christ has made us free; stand fast therefore.*

**5:14** [g]Leviticus 19:18

**5:19** [g]NU-Text omits *adultery*.

**5:21** [g]NU-Text omits *murders*.

**6:14** [a] Or *by which* (the cross)

**1:10** [g]NU-Text and M-Text omit *both.*

**1:14** [g]NU-Text reads *which.*

**1:18** [q] NU-Text and M-Text read *hearts.*

**3:9** [a]NU-Text and M-Text read *stewardship* (dispensation).

**3:9** ***b***NU-Text omits *through Jesus Christ.*

**3:14** [g]NU-Text omits *of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

**4:6** [a]NU-Text omits *you;* M-Text reads *us.*

**4:8** [a]Psalm 68:18

**4:9** [a]NU-Text omits *first.*

**4:17** [g]NU-Text omits *the rest of*.

**4:25** [g]Zechariah 8:16

**4:26** [g]Psalm 4:4

**5:5** [a]NU-Text reads *For know this.*

**5:9** [a] NU-Text reads *light.*

**5:21** [g]NU-Text reads *Christ.*

**5:30** [g] NU-Text omits the rest of this verse.

**5:31** [g]Genesis 2:24

**6:3** [g]Deuteronomy 5:16

**6:9** [g] NU-Text reads He who is both their Master and yours.

**6:12** [g]NU-Text reads rulers of this darkness.

**1:1** [g] Literally *overseers*

**1:16** [g]NU-Text reverses the contents of verses 16 and 17.

**1:23** [g]NU-Text and M-Text read *But.*

**1:28** [g]NU-Text reads *of your salvation.*

**3:3** [a]NU-Text and M-Text read *who worship in the Spirit of God.*

**3:16** [g]NU-Text omits *rule* and the rest of the verse.

**4:3** [a] NU-Text and M-Text read *Yes.*

**4:13** [g]NU-Text reads *Him who.*

**4:23** [g]NU-Text reads *your spirit*.

**1:2** [a]NU-Text omits *and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

**1:6** [g] NU-Text and M-Text add *and growing.*

**1:14** [g]NU-Text and M-Text omit *through His blood.*

**1:27** [g] M-Text reads who.

**2:2** [a]NU-Text omits *both of the Father and.*

**2:7** [a]NU-Text omits *in it.*

**2:11** [g]NU-Text omits *of the sins.*

**2:18** [g]NU-Text omits *not*.

**2:20** [g]NU-Text and M-Text omit *Therefore.*

**3:24** [g]NU-Text omits *for*.

**4:8** [a]NU-Text reads *you may know our circumstances and he may.*

**4:12** [g]NU-Text reads *fully assured.*

**4:13** [g]NU-Text reads *concern.*

**4:15** [g]NU-Text reads *Nympha . . . her house.*

**1:1** [a]NU-Text omits *from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

**2:2** [a] NU-Text and M-Text omit *even.*

**2:11** [g]NU-Text and M-Text read *implored.*

**4:8**[g] NU-Text *reads who also gives*.

**4:14**[a] Or *those who through Jesus sleep*

**5:27** [a]NU-Text omits *holy*.

**1:10** [g]NU-Text and M-Text read *have believed.*

**2:2** [a]NU-Text reads *the Lord.*

**2:3** [a]NU-Text reads *lawlessness.*

**2:4** [g]NU-Text omits *as God.*

**2:7** [a] Or *he*

**2:7** [b] Or *he*

**3:6** [a]NU-Text and M-Text read *they*.

**1:17** [g]NU-Text reads *to the only God.*

**2:7** [a]NU-Text omits *in Christ.*

**3:1** [a] Literally *overseer*

**3:3** [a] NU-Text omits *not greedy for money*.

**3:16** [g]NU-Text reads *Who*.

**4:10** [g]NU-Text reads *we labor and strive.*

**4:12** [g]NU-Text omits *in spirit.*

**5:4** [g] NU-Text and M-Text omit *good and.*

**5:16** [g] NU-Text omits man or.

**5:18**[a] Deuteronomy 25:4

**5:18***b*Luke 10:7

**6:5** [g]NU-Text and M-Text read constant friction.

**6:5** *b*NU-Text omits this sentence.

**6:7** [a] NU-Text omits and it is certain.

**1:1** [a]NU-Text and M-Text read *Christ Jesus.*

**1:11** [g]NU-Text omits *of the Gentiles.*

**1:18** [q] *To me* is from the Vulgate and a few Greek manuscripts.

**2:3** [a] NU-Text reads *You must share.*

**2:7** [a]NU-Text reads *the Lord will give you.*

**2:19** [g]NU-Text and M-Text read *the Lord.*

**4:1** [g] NU-Text omits *therefore* and reads *and by* for *at*.

**4:22** [g]NU-Text omits *Jesus Christ.*

**1:4 *a***NU-Text reads *and Christ Jesus.*

**1:7** ***a***Literally *overseer*

**2:7 *a***NU-Text omits *incorruptibility*.

**2:8 *a***NU-Text and M-Text read *us.*

**2** [a] NU-Text reads *to our sister Apphia.*

**6** [a]NU-Text and M-Text read *us*.

7 [a]NU-Text reads *had.*

7 *b* M-Text reads *thanksgiving*.

**12** [a]NU-Text reads *back to you in person, that is, my own heart.*

**1:3**[g] NU-Text omits *by Himself*.

**1:3*b*** NU-Text omits *our*.

**1:5**[g] Psalm 2:7

**1:5*b*** 2 Samuel 7:14

**1:6**[g] Deuteronomy 32:43 (Septuagint, Dead Sea Scrolls); Psalm 97:7

**1:7**[q] Psalm 104:4

**1:9**[g] Psalm 45:6, 7

**1:12**[a]Psalm 102:25-27

**1:13***a*Psalm 110:1

**2:7** [a] NU-Text and M-Text omit the rest of verse 7.

**2:8** [a] Psalm 8:4-6

**2:12** [g]Psalm 22:22

**2:13** [g]2 Samuel 22:3; Isaiah 8:17

**2:13*b***Isaiah 8:18

**3:6** [a]NU-Text omits *firm to the end.*

**3:11** [g]Psalm 95:7-11

**3:15** [g]Psalm 95:7, 8

**4:2** [g]NU-Text and M-Text read *profit them, since they were not united by faith with those who heeded it.*

**4:3** [a]Psalm 95:113

**4:4** [g] Genesis 2:2

**4:5** [a]Psalm 95:11***a***Psalm

**4:7** [a]Psalm 95:7, 8

**5:5** [g]Psalm 2:7

**5:6** [g]Psalm 110:4

**6:3** [a] M-Text reads *let us do.*

**6:6** [a] Or *and havefallen away*

**6:10** [g]NU-Text omits *labor of.*

**6:14** [g]Genesis 22:17

**6:18** [a] M-Text omits *might*.

**7:14** [a] NU-Text reads *priests.*

**7:17** [a] NU-Text reads *it is testified.*

**7:17*b*** Psalm 110:4

**7:21** [a] NU-Text ends the quotation here.

**7:21*b*** Psalm 110:4

**8:5** [a] Exodus 25:40

**8:12** [a] NU-Text omits *and theirlawless deeds.*

**8:12**[b] Jeremiah 31:31-34

**9:11** [a] NU-Text reads *that have come*.

**9:20** [g]Exodus 24:8

**10:7** [a] Psalm 40:6-8

**10:9** [a] NU-Text and M-Text omit *O God.*

**10:16** [a] Jeremiah 31:33

**10:17** [a] Jeremiah 31:34

**10:30** [a] Deuteronomy 32:35

**10:30*b*** NU-Text omits *says the Lord.*

**10:30**[c]Deuteronomy 32:36

**10:34** [a] NU-Text reads *the prisoners* instead of *me in my chains.*

**10:34*b*** NU-Text omits *in heaven.*

**10:37** [a] Or *that which*

**10:38** [a] NU-Text reads *My just one.*

**10:38**[*b*] Habakkuk 2:3, 4

**11:5** [a] Genesis 5:24

**11:11** [a] NU-Text omits *she bore a child.*

**11:13** [a] NU-Text and M-Text omit *were assured of them.*

**11:18** [a] Genesis 21:12

**11:26** [a] NU-Text and M-Text read *of*.

**11:37** [a] NU-Text omits *were tempted.*

**12:6** [a] Proverbs 3:11, 12

**12:7** [a] NU-Text and M-Text read *It is for disciplinethat you endure; God . . . .*

**12:18** [a] NU-Text reads *to that which.*

**12:18*b*** NU-Text reads *gloom.*

**12:20** [a] NU-Text and M-Text omit the rest of this verse.

**12:20*b*** Exodus 19:12, 13

**12:21** [g] Deuteronomy 9:19

**12:26** [a] NU-Text reads *will shake*

**12:26** *b* Haggai 2:6

**12:28** [a] M-Text omits *may*

**13:5** [a] Deuteronomy 31:6, 8; Joshua 1:5

**13:6** [a] Psalm 118:6

**13:9** [a] NU-Text and M-Text read *away*.

**13:21** [a] NU-Text and M-Text read *us*.

**1:19** [g]NU-Text reads *Know this* or *This you know*.

**1:26** [g]NU-Text omits *among you*.

**2:8** [g] Leviticus 19:18

**2:11** [g]Exodus 20:14; Deuteronomy 5:18

**2:11** [b]Exodus 20:13; Deuteronomy 5:17

**2:18** [g]NU-Text omits *your*.

**2:18** ***b***NU-Text omits *my*.

**2:20** [g]NU-Text reads *useless.*

**2:23** [g]Genesis 15:6

**3:3** [a]NU-Text reads *Now if.*

**3:12** [g] NU-Text reads *Neither can a salty spring produce fresh water.*

**4:2** [g] NU-Text and M-Text omit *Yet.*

**4:4** [g]NU-Text omits *Adulterers and.*

**4:6** [g] Proverbs 3:34

**4:12** [g]NU-Text adds *and Judge.*

**4:12** ***b***NU-Text and M-Text read *But who.*

**4:12** [c]NU-Text reads *a neighbor*.

**4:13** [g]M-Text reads *let us.*

**5:4** [g] Literally, in Hebrew, *Hosts*

**5:5** [a]NU-Text omits *as.*

**5:9** [a] NU-Text and M-Text read *judged.*

**5:12** [a]M-Text reads *hypocrisy*.

**5:16** [g]NU-Text reads *Therefore confess your sins.*

**5:20** [g] NU-Text reads *his soul.*

**1:8** [a] M-Text reads *known.*

**1:12** [g]NU-Text and M-Text read *you.*

**1:16** [q]Leviticus 11:44, 45; 19:2; 20:7

**1:22** [g]NU-Text omits *through the Spirit.*

**1:23** [g]NU-Text omits *forever*.

**1:24** [g]NU-Text reads *all its glory*.

**1:25** [g]Isaiah 40:6-8

**2:2** [a] NU-Text adds *up to salvation.*

**2:6** [g]Isaiah 28:16

**2:7** [a]NU-Text reads *to those who disbelieve.*

**2:7** ***b***Psalm 118:22

**2:8** [g] Isaiah 8:14

**2:21** [g]NU-Text reads *you*.

**2:21** ***b***NU-Text and M-Text read *you.*

**2:22** [g]Isaiah 53:9

**2:25** [a] Greek *Episkopos*

**3:8** [a]NU-Text reads *humble*.

**3:12** [g]Psalm 34:12-16

**3:14** [g]Isaiah 8:12

**3:15** [g] NU-Text reads *Christ as Lord.*

**3:18** [g]NU-Text and M-Text read *you.*

**3:20** [g]NU-Text and M-Text read *when the longsuffering of God waited patiently.*

**4:1** [a]NU-Text omits *for us.*

**4:3** [a]NU-Text reads *time*.

**4:8** [g]Proverbs 10:12

**4:14** [g]NU-Text omits the rest of this verse.

**4:16** [g]NU-Text reads *name*.

**4:18** [g]Proverbs 11:31

**5:2** [a]NU-Text adds *according to God.*

**5:5** [a]Proverbs 3:34

**5:8** [a]NU-Text and M-Text omit *because.*

**5:10** [a]NU-Text reads *But the God of all grace . . . will perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.*

**5:10** ***b***NU-Text and M-Text read *you.*

**1:19** [q] Or *We also have the more sure prophetic word.*

**1:20** [q]Or *origin*

**1:21** [g]NU-Text reads *but men spoke from God.*

**2:3** [a] M-Text reads *will not.*

**2:17** [g]NU-Text reads *and mists*.

**2:17** ***b***NU-Text omits *forever*.

**2:18** [g]NU-Text reads *are barely escaping.*

**2:22** [g]Proverbs 26:11

**3:2** [a]NU-Text and M-Text read *commandment of the apostles of your Lord and Savior* or *commandment of your apostles of the Lord and Savior.*

**3:9** [a]NU-Text reads *you.*

**3:10** [g] NU-Text reads *laid bare* (literally *found*).

**1:4** [g] NU-Text and M-Text read *our*.

**2:7** [a] NU-Text reads *Beloved.* [b] NU-Text omits *from the beginning.*

**2:18** [g]NU-Text omits *the*.

**2:20** [g] NU-Text reads *you all know*.

**2:27** [a]NU-Text reads *you abide.*

**2:28** [g]NU-Text reads *if*.

**3: 1** [a]NU-Text adds *And we are*. [b] M-Text reads

**3:14** [g]NU-Text omits *his brother*.

**3:19** [g]NU-Text reads *we shall know*.

**3:23** [a]M-Text and *Christ has* omits *us.*

**4:3** [a]NU-Text omits *that* and *Christ has come in the flesh.*

**4:19** [g]NU-Text omits *Him.*

**4:20** [g]NU-Text reads *he cannot.*

**5:4** [a] M-Text reads *your*.

**5:8** [a]NU-Text and M-Text omit the words from *in heaven* (verse 7) through *on earth* (verse 8). Only four or five very late manuscripts contain these words in Greek.

**5:9** [a]NU-Text reads *God, that.*

**5:13** [g] NU-Text omits the rest of this verse.

**5:18** [g]NU-Text reads *him.*

**3** [a]NU-Text and M-Text read *us*.

**8** [a]NU-Text reads *you*.

**8** *b*NU-Text reads you.

**9** [a]NU-Text reads *goes ahead.*

**4** [a]NU-Text reads *the truth.*

5 [a]NU-Text adds *especially*.

**8** [a]NU-Text reads *support.*

**11** [a]NU-Text and M-Text omit *but.*

**1** [a]NU-Text reads *beloved.*

**4** [a]NU-Text omits *God.*

**12** [a]NU-Text and M-Text read *along*.

**22** [a]NU-Text reads *who are doubting* (or *making distinctions*).

**23** [g]NU-Text adds *and on some have mercy with fear* and omits *with fear* in first clause.

**24** [g] M-Text reads *them.*

**25** [a]NU-Text reads *To the only God our Savior.*

**25** ***b***NU-Text omits *Who . . . is wise* and adds *Through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

**25** [c]NU-Text adds *Before all time.*

**1:5** [a] NU-Text reads *loves us and freed; M-Text reads loves us and washed.*

**1:6** [a] NU-Text and M-Text read *a kingdom.*

**1:8** [a] NU-Text and M-Text omit *the Beginning and the End.*

**1.8** ***b***NU-Text and M-Text add *God.*

**1:9** [a] NU-Text and M-Text omit *both.*

**1:11** [g]NU-Text and M-Text omit *I am* through third *and.*

**1.11** ***b***NU-Text and M-Text omit *which are in Asia.*

**1:17** [g] NU-Text and M-Text omit *to me*.

**1:19** [g]NU-Text and M-Text read *Therefore, write.*

**1:20** [g]NU-Text and M-Text omit *which you saw*.

**2:15** [g]NU-Text and M-Text read *likewise* for *which thing I hate.*

**2:19** [g]NU-Text and M-Text read *faith, service.*

**2:20** [g] NU-Text and M-Text read *I have against you that you tolerate.*

**2:20** ***b***M-Text reads *your wife Jezebel*.

**2:20** [c] NU-Text and M-Text read *and teaches and seduces.*

**2:21** [a]NU-Text and M-Text read *time to repent, and she does not want to repent of her sexual immorality.*

**2:22** [g] NU-Text and M-Text read *her*.

**2:24** [g] NU-Text and M-Text omit *and.*

**2:24** ***b***NU-Text and M-Text omit *will*.

**2:27** [g]Psalm 2:9

**3:2** [a]NU-Text and M-Text read *My God.*

**3:4** [a]NU-Text and M-Text read *Nevertheless you have a few names in Sardis.*

**3:7** [g]Isaiah 22:22

**3:8** [a] NU-Text and M-Text read *which no one can shut.*

**3:11** [g] NU-Text and M-Text omit *Behold.*

**3:14** [g] NU-Text and M-Text read *in Laodicea.*

**3:16** [g] NU-Text and M-Text read *hot nor cold.*

**4:3** [g] M-Text omits *And He who sat there was* (which makes the description in verse 3 modify the throne rather than God).

**4:4** [g] NU-Text and M-Text read *robes, with crowns.*

**4:5** [g] NU-Text and M-Text read *voices, and thunderings.*

**4:5** ***b***M-Text omits *the*.

**4:6** [a]NU-Text and M-Text add *something like.*

**4:8** [a] M-Text has *holy* nine times.

**4:11** [g]NU-Text and M-Text read *our Lord and God.*

**4:11** ***b***NU-Text and M-Text read *existed.*

**5:4** [g] NU-Text and M-Text omit *and read.*

**5:5** [a] NU-Text and M-Text omit *to loose*.

**5:6** [a] NU-Text and M-Text read *I saw in the midst . . . a Lamb standing.*

**5:10** [g]NU-Text and M-Text read *them.*

**5:10** ***b***NU-Text reads *a kingdom*.

**5:10** [c]NU-Text and M-Text read *they*.

**5:13** [a] M-Text adds *Amen.*

**5:14** [a]NU-Text and M-Text omit *twenty-four*.

**5:14** ***b***NU-Text and M-Text omit *Him who lives forever and ever*.

**6:1** [a] NU-Text and M-Text read *seven seals.*

**6:3** [a] NU-Text and M-Text omit *and see.*

**6:6** [a] Greek *choinix;* that is, approximately one quart

**6:6** *b* This was approximately one day’s wage for a worker.

**6:12** [g] NU-Text and M-Text omit *behold.*

**6:12** ***b***NU-Text and M-Text read *the whole moon.*

**6:15** [g]NU-Text and M-Text read *the commanders, the rich men.*

**7:5** [g]In NU-Text and M-Text *were sealed* is stated only in verses 5a and 8c; the words are understood in the remainder of the passage.

**7:14** [g]NU-Text and M-Text read *My lord.*

**7:17** [a]NU-Text and M-Text read *to fountains of the waters of life.*

**8:7** [a] NU-Text and M-Text add *and a third of the earth was burned up.*

**8:13** [g]NU-Text and M-Text read *eagle*.

**9:19** [g]NU-Text and M-Text read *the power of the horses*.

**9:21** [g]NU-Text and M-Text read *drugs*.

**10:4** [g] NU-Text and M-Text read *sounded*.

**10:4** ***b***NU-Text and M-Text omit *to me*.

**10:5** [g] NU-Text and M-Text read *right hand*.

**10:11** [g]NU-Text and M-Text read *they*.

**11:1** [g] NU-Text and M-Text omit *And the angel stood*.

**11:4** [g] NU-Text and M-Text read *Lord*.

**11:8** [g] NU-Text and M-Text read *their*.

**11:9** [g] NU-Text and M-Text read *nations see . . . and will not allow.*

**11:12** [a] M-Text reads *I.*

**11:15** [g] NU-Text and M-Text read *kingdom . . . has become.*

**11:17** [g] NU-Text and M-Text omit *and who is to come.*

**11:19** [g] M-Text reads *the covenant of the Lord.*

**12:8** [g] M-Text reads *him.*

**12:17** [g] NU-Text and M-Text omit *Christ.*

**13:1** [g] NU-Text reads *he*.

**13:1** ***b***NU-Text and M-Text read *ten horns and seven heads.*

**13:5** [a] M-Text reads *make war*.

**13:7** [g] NU-Text and M-Text add *and people.*

**13:14** [a] M-Text reads *my own people*.

**13:17** [a]NU-Text and M-Text omit *or*.

**14:1** [g] NU-Text and M-Text read *the*.

**14:1** ***b***NU-Text and M-Text add *His name and.*

**14:4** [a]M-Text adds *by Jesus.*

**14:5** [g] NU-Text and M-Text read *falsehood.*

**14:5** ***b***NU-Text and M-Text omit *before the throne of God.*

**14:8** [g]NU-Text reads *Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, which has made;* M-Text reads *Babylon the great is fallen. She has made.*

**14:12** [g] NU-Text and M-Text omit *here are those.*

**14:13** [g] NU-Text and M-Text omit *to me.*

**14:15** [a]NU-Text and M-Text omit *for You.*

**15:2** [g] NU-Text and M-Text omit *over his mark.*

**15:3** [g] NU-Text and M-Text read *nations.*

**15:5** [g] NU-Text and M-Text omit *behold.*

**16:1** [g] NU-Text and M-Text read *seven bowls*.

**16:5** [g] NU-Text and M-Text omit *O Lord.*

**16:5** ***b*** NU-Text and M-Text read *who was, the Holy One.*

**16:6** [g]NU-Text and M-Text omit *For*.

**16:7** [g]NU-Text and M-Text omit *another from.*

**16:14** [g]NU-Text and M-Text omit *of the earth and.*

**16:16** [g] M-Text reads *Megiddo*.

**17:1** [g] NU-Text and M-Text omit *to me*.

**17:4** [a]M-Text reads *the filthiness of the fornication of the earth.*

**17:8** [g] NU-Text and M-Text read *and shall be present.*

**17:16** [g] NU-Text and M-Text read *saw, and the beast.*

**18:2** [g] NU-Text and M-Text omit *mightily*.

**18:5** [g] NU-Text and M-Text read *have been heaped up.*

**18:6** [g]NU-Text and M-Text omit *to you.*

**18:8** [g] NU-Text and M-Text read *has judged.*

**18:14** [g] NU-Text and M-Text read *been lost to you.*

**18:20** [g] NU-Text and M-Text read *saints and apostles.*

**19:1** [g] NU-Text and M-Text add *something like.*

**19:1** ***b*** NU-Text and M-Text omit *the Lord.*

**19:5** [g] NU-Text and M-Text omit *both.*

**19:6** [g] NU-Text and M-Text read *our*.

**19:12** [g] M-Text adds *names written, and.*

**19:14** [g] NU-Text and M-Text read *pure white linen.*

**19:15** [a] M-Text adds *two-edged*.

**19:17** [g]NU-Text and M-Text read *the great supper of God.*

**19:18** [g]NU-Text and M-Text read *both free.*

**20:4** [g]M-Text reads *the*.

**20:10** [g]NU-Text and M-Text add *also.*

**20:12** [g] NU-Text and M-Text read *the throne.*

**20:14** [g] NU-Text and M-Text add *the lake of fire.*

**21:2** [g] NU-Text and M-Text omit *John.*

**21:5** [g] NU-Text and M-Text omit *to me*.

**21:6** [g]M-Text omits *It is done.*

**21:7** [g] M-Text reads *overcomes, I shall give him these things.*

**21:8** [g]M-Text adds *and sinners.*

**21:9** [g]NU-Text and M-Text omit *to me.*

**21:9** ***b***M-Text reads *I will show you the woman, the Lamb's bride.*

**21:10** [g]NU-Text and M-Text omit *the great* and read *the holy city, Jerusalem.*

**21:14** [g] NU-Text and M-Text read *twelve names.*

**21:23** [g] NU-Text and M-Text omit *in it.*

**21:23** ***b*** M-Text reads *the very glory*.

**21:24** [g] NU-Text and M-Text omit *of those who are saved.*

**21:24** ***b***M-Text reads *the glory and honor of the nations to Him.*

**21:26** [g] M-Text adds *that they may enter in.*

**21:27** [g] NU-Text and M-Text read *anything profane, nor one who causes.*

**22:1** [g]NU-Text and M-Text omit *pure.*

**22:6** [g] NU-Text and M-Text read *spirits of the prophets.*

**22:8** [g] NU-Text and M-Text read *am the one who heard and saw.*

**22:9** [g] NU-Text and M-Text omit *For*.

**22:11** [g] NU-Text and M-Text read *do right*.

**22:13** [g]NU-Text and M-Text read *the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.*

**22:14** [g] NU-Text reads *wash their robes.*

**22:15** [g] NU-Text and M-Text omit *But.*

**22:18** [g] NU-Text and M-Text omit *For*.

**22:18** ***b***M-Text reads *may God add.*

**22:19** [g] M-Text reads *may God take away*.

**22:19** ***b***NU-Text and M-Text read *tree of life*.

**22:21** [a]NU-Text reads *with all;* M-Text reads *with all the saints.*