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Devotional Field Book



US Marine Corps

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FOREWORD

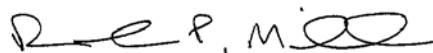
Marine Corps Reference Publication (MCRP) 6-12D, *Devotional Field Book*, is a resource for command religious programs in the Marine Corps. In addition to being a personal devotional guide for Marines and Sailors, it may be used in conducting divine services or lay led services. This MCRP was designed primarily to support those operations where limited printed resources are available for the command religious programs and is dedicated to the hope that it will lead others to the inexhaustible resources of God.

The scriptures, prayers, hymns, songs, statements of faith, and meditations contained in this publication were carefully chosen by chaplains, Marines, and Sailors. These selections have historically offered guidance, encouragement, and support to people in time of need.

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Reviewed and approved this date.

BY DIRECTION OF THE COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS



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THE MARINE'S PRAYER

Almighty Father, whose command is over all and whose love never fails, make me aware of thy presence and obedient to thy will. Keep me true to my best self, guarding me against dishonesty in purpose and deed, and helping me to live so that I can face my fellow Marines, my loved ones, and thee without shame or fear. Protect my family. Give me the will to do the work of a Marine and to accept my share of responsibilities with vigor and enthusiasm. Grant me the courage to be proficient in my daily performance. Keep me loyal and faithful to my superiors and to the duties my country and the Marine Corps have entrusted to me. Make me considerate of those committed to my leadership. Help me to wear my uniform with dignity, and let it remind me daily of the traditions which I must uphold. If I am inclined to doubt, steady my faith; if I am tempted, make me strong to resist; if I should miss the mark, give me courage to try again. Guide me with the light of truth and grant me wisdom by which I may understand the answer to my prayer. Amen.



GEORGE WASHINGTON'S PRAYER FOR THE NATION

Almighty God, we make our earnest prayer that Thou wilt keep the United States in thy holy protection, that Thou wilt incline the hearts of the citizens to cultivate a spirit of subordination and obedience to government, and entertain a brotherly affection and love for one another and for their fellow citizens of the United States at large. And finally that Thou wilt most graciously be pleased to dispose us all to do justice, to love mercy, and to demean ourselves with that charity, humility, and pacific temper of mind which were the characteristics of the Divine Author of our blessed religion, and without an humble imitation of whose examples in these things, we can never hope to be a happy nation. Grant our supplications, we beseech Thee, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

—Written at Newburg, June 8, 1783, and sent to the Governors of all the States

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CHAPTER 1

Statements of Faith

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CHRISTIANITY

The Apostolic Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended to the dead. On the third day He rose again.

He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

The Nicene Creed

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is seen and unseen. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, one in being with the Father. Through Him all things were made. For us and for our salvation He came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit He was born of the Virgin Mary, and became man. For our sake He was crucified under Pontius Pilate; He suffered, died, and was buried. On the third day, He rose again in fulfillment of the Scriptures: He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and His kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, Who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son He is worshipped and glorified. He has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN

Creed of Faith

I believe in one God, Father, Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages;

Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten, not created, of one essence with the Father, through Whom all things were made.

Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became man.

He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered and was buried;

And He rose on the third day, according to the Scriptures.

He ascended into the heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father;

And He will come again with glory to judge the living and dead. His kingdom shall have no end.

And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Creator of life, Who proceeds from the Father, Who together with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, Who spoke through the prophets.

In one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.

I confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the age to come. Amen.

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

The Articles of Faith of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

1. We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost.
2. We believe that men will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam's transgression.

3. We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.
4. We believe that the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel are: first, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; second, Repentance; third, Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; fourth, Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost.
5. We believe that a man must be called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof.
6. We believe in the same organization that existed in the Primitive Church, namely, apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, evangelists, and so forth.
7. We believe in the gift of tongues, prophecy, revelation, visions, healing, interpretation of tongues, and so forth.
8. We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God.
9. We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.
10. We believe in the literal gathering of Israel and in the restoration of the Ten Tribes; that Zion (the New Jerusalem) will be built upon the American continent; that Christ will reign personally upon the earth; and, that the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisiacal glory.
11. We claim the privilege of worshipping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may.
12. We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law.
13. We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men; indeed, we may say that we follow the admonition of Paul—We believe all things, we hope all things, we have endured many things, and hope to be able to endure all things. If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things.

JUDAISM

I am a Jew because the faith of Israel demands of me no abdication of my mind. I am a Jew because the faith of Israel asks every possible sacrifice of my soul. I am a Jew because in all places where there are tears and suffering the Jew weeps. I am a Jew because in every age when the cry of despair is heard the Jew hopes. I am a Jew because the message of Israel is the most ancient and the most modern. I am a Jew because Israel's promise is a universal promise. I am a Jew because for Israel the world is not finished; men will complete it. I am a Jew because for Israel man is not yet fully created; men are creating him. I am a Jew because Israel places man and his unity above nations and above Israel itself. I am a Jew because above man, image of the divine unity, Israel places the unity which is divine.

—Edmund Fleg (1874–1963)

The Rambam's Thirteen Principles of Jewish Faith

1. I believe with perfect faith that God is the Creator and Ruler of all things. He alone has made, does make, and will make all things.
2. I believe with perfect faith that God is One. There is no unity that is in any way like His. He alone is our God He was, He is, and He will be.
3. I believe with perfect faith that God does not have a body. Physical concepts do not apply to Him.
4. I believe with perfect faith that God is first and last.
5. I believe with perfect faith that it is only proper to pray to God. One may not pray to anyone or anything else.
6. I believe with perfect faith that all the words of the prophets are true.
7. I believe with perfect faith that the prophecy of Moses is absolutely true. He was the chief of all prophets, both before and after him.
8. I believe with perfect faith that the entire Torah that we now have is that which was given to Moses.
9. I believe with perfect faith that this Torah will not be changed, and that there will never be another given by God.
10. I believe with perfect faith that God knows all of man's deeds and thoughts.

11. I believe with perfect faith that God rewards those who keep His commandments, and punishes those who transgress Him.

12. I believe with perfect faith in the coming of the Messiah. How long it takes, I will await His coming every day.

13. I believe with perfect faith that the dead will be brought back to life when God wills it to happen.

—Maimonides (1137–1204)

ISLAM

Islam is one of the three monotheistic religions to arise in the Middle East; along with the other two—Judaism and Christianity—it stresses the Oneness and Uniqueness of God. The word “Allah” means “The God” in Islam. There is none worthy of worship but God and Muhammad is His Messenger.

Five Pillars of Islam

The pillars of Islam are considered obligatory for all Muslims although Sunni and Shia schools of law have slight variations. The pillars of Islam play important roles in intellectual and social dimensions of Islamic life. The five pillars of faith and practice are—

- ~The Shahada (witness).
- ~The Salah (prayer).
- ~The Zakat (purification of wealth).
- ~The Sawm or Siyam (fasting).
- ~The Hajj (pilgrimage).

The Shahada pillar in Arabic is, “La ilah ha il Allah, Muhammadan Rasul-Allah” and translates in English to, “[There is] No diety of worship but Allah [and] Muhammad is His Messenger” or, “There is no god but Allah” and “Muhammad is His Apostle.”

The second phrase of the Shahada declares that Muhammad is God’s messenger to humankind. Accepting the Judaeo-Christian Biblical tradition in large part, Muslims believe that God sent prophets and messengers to other nations in the past with the same revealed message that Muhammad was to recite to the Arabs. Muhammad’s mission brought the final positing of divine Truth, and thus Muhammad is regarded as the “Seal of the Prophets.”

The Salah pillar includes the belief that performing daily prayers is an act of communication between humans and God. Five daily prayers are considered a obligation for all Muslims and, on these occasions, preparations in ritual purity are required. The prayers are Fajr (early morning before the sunrise), Zuhr/Dhuhr (noon), Asr (mid afternoon), Maghrib (after sunset), and Isha (evening). The prayers must be performed while facing in the direction of Mecca or spelled Makkah (which is now Saudi Arabia). The congregational prayer of Friday (sermon is required) afternoon is compulsory and must be performed in a Mosque (a Muslim place of worship).

The Zakah is a form of giving to those who are less fortunate. It is obligatory upon all Muslims to give 2.5 percent of their savings on a yearly basis to the less fortunate. Giving the Zakat is considered an act of worship because it is a form of offering thanks to God for the means of material well-being one has acquired.

The Sawm/Siyam (fasting) is another form of offering thanks to God. It is obligatory to all Muslims to fast during the ninth month of the lunar calendar, Ramadan. During this month, Muslims refrain from food, drink, and physical intimacy from dawn (one and a half hours before sunrise) to dusk (one and a half hours before sunset). Those who are ill, pregnant, or traveling are excused from this type of fasting. However, they will be expected to make up the lost days of fasting at a later time. The breaking of a fast is a joyous occasion. Sawm, during Ramadan, or any time is recognized as physically demanding but spiritually rewarding.

The Hajj (pilgrimage) is a 10-day ritual performed in the last month (Dhu al-Hijja) of the lunar calendar. This fifth pillar requires all Muslims who are physically and financially capable to make Hajj to Makkah once during their lifetime. The actual rites and prayers take place at the sacred Ka'ba in Makkah and at nearby locations. Muslims associate the origin of the Hajj and the founding of the Ka'ba with the prophet Abraham. Millions of Muslims perform Hajj each year.

BUDDHISM

We take refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha.

HINDUISM

Hinduism came into existence more the 5,000 years ago making it one of the oldest existing religions to date. Hinduism is polytheistic (the belief in more than one god). Most Hindus believe in one god or goddess with several subordinate

gods or goddesses in support of their deity. There is a god or goddess for almost every aspect of life and/or force of nature. The following are just a few samples:

~Vishnu is believed to be a protector of the universe and its living creatures.

~Ganesha or Ganesh has the face of an elephant and is believed to solve or deter life's hardships.

~Shiva is a creator as well as a destroyer. He also represents the life cycle (birth, death, and rebirth or reincarnation).

~Indra is a god of the sky as well the god of war. He is well-known for fighting a demon who made the sky gray and dark.

CHAPTER 2

Prayers

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WELL-KNOWN PRAYERS

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. (*For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever.) Amen.

* =Protestant

Self-Dedication

Almighty God, draw our hearts to You, guide our minds, fill our imaginations, control our wills, so that we may be wholly Yours. Use us as You will, always to Your glory and the welfare of Your people. Amen.

Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi

Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; and where there is sadness, joy. O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

For Those in Our Country's Service in Time of War

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, let Thy protection be upon all those who are in the Service of our country; guard them from all harm and danger of body and soul; sustain and comfort those at home, especially in their hours of loneliness, anxiety, and sorrow; prepare the dying for death and the living for thy service; give success to our arms on land and sea and in the air; and grant unto us and all nations a speedy, just and lasting peace. Amen.

God, grant me serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference. Living one day at a time; enjoying one moment at a time; accepting hardship as a pathway to peace taking as Jesus did, this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it.

Trusting that you will make all things right if I surrender to your will; that I may be reasonably happy in this life, and supremely happy with you forever in the next. Amen.

—Reinhold Niebuhr

God of love and peace, sometimes we are trapped in situations when war is inevitable and we are called to fight to defend those things we hold dear. Help us to enter into such situations remembering your charge to love our enemies, to do good to those who curse us, and to pray for those who abuse us. Keep us mindful of these things, O Lord. In Jesus' name, Amen.

—Eli Fisher

Loving Christ, your call to love our enemies challenges us. Sometimes we fail. Teach us to love in ways that transform hate. Amen.

—George Graham

I am no longer my own but yours. Put me to what you will, rank me with whoever you will, put me to doing . . . Put me to suffering. Let me be empowered for you, or laid aside for you, exulted for you, or brought low for you. Let me be full, let me be empty.

Let me have all things. Let me have nothing. I freely and wholeheartly yield all things to your pleasure and disposal. And now, glorious and blessed God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, you are mine and I am yours. So be it. And this Covenant, now made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.

—John Wesley

It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view.
The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is even beyond our vision.
We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker.
We are prophets of a future not our own. Amen.

—Archbishop Oscar Romero

Dear God, I have no idea where I am going.

I do not see the road ahead of me.

I cannot know for certain where it will end. But I believe this:

I believe the desire to please you does in fact please you.

I hope I have that desire in everything I do.

I hope I never persist in anything apart from that desire.

Therefore I will trust you always, for though I may be lost—and in the shadow of death—I will not be afraid, because I know you will never leave me to face my troubles all alone.

—Thomas Merton

PERSONAL PRAYERS IN TIMES OF NEED

For the Morning

Good morning God and thank you for being with me this morning as I set out to face what this day has in store for me. I must admit, some mornings are harder to get out of the rack than others so I am relying on You for strength. With all the demands that are already awaiting to be met can sure take its toll on the mind, body and spirit. Now with that being said, I need to start off this day getting properly equipped to face this fast paced lifestyle that I have volunteered for while serving my country. So God as I walk about in Your strength please give me two things; wisdom to make those tough, quick decisions and patience with my fellow comrades in those moments when things don't quite go as planned. I need You God and I know without You I will not be able to handle all that is expected from me today. In Jesus' name Amen.

For the Evening

God, what a day it has been and this day isn't over just yet. For You and I both know that I can not go through a single day out here without Your love, protection and guidance. I know today there were times when I felt like I was in way over my head, yet You gave me the confidence to fight through, to adapt and overcome those situations—so thank You. I also know that throughout the day I said and did things that You didn't approve of so please forgive me. I am trying, I really am. Thank You for Your patience with me today and help me as I strive to be more like You and less like myself everyday. Now before I end this prayer continue to watch over my loved ones and let them know I love and miss them. I plan on talking to You again before I hit the rack tonight, but in case I forget

please know that I do care about You and thank You for Your help today. In Jesus' name Amen.

For Protection

Father God I come before You now asking for Your protection not only for me but for all of us out here. I know there are those back home who are praying for us too, but I just need to ask this of You for myself. So for those moments when it seems like "all hell could break loose" at any minute around us, please allow us to feel Your presence. During those particular moments speak to our hearts and let us hear Your words like "do not be afraid" and "peace be still." Those words of Yours comforted Your disciples when they faced uncertainties and I know they will comfort us as well. Although we are trained to take the fight to the enemy it doesn't free us at times from the fear of the unknown. So God in those moments when the hair on the back of our necks stand up, or our adrenalin is pumping and our hearts are pounding in our chest, understand that we rely on and need Your protection. Provide us with the confidence that You understand our prayer for protection and that we are vulnerable without You. In Jesus' name Amen.

For the Wounded

God I come before You now not for me, but on behalf of my brothers and sisters that were wounded today as they went about their duties to fight and defend this country. For those whose wounds are possibly life threatening, comfort them. Continue to provide the docs and corpsmen with wisdom as they tend to their wounds. For those Marines' and Sailors' loved ones back home in the states or wherever they come from, prepare their hearts for soon they will get the news and have more questions than answers. During those times when they feel helpless and can not hold him or her, wrap Your loving arms around them and comfort them like only You can do. I ask that You will heal all who are in need of care at this very moment whether they were seriously wounded or not. In closing for those that came close to be wounded today, may they thank You for sparing them and comfort them as they possibly retrace their steps of what might have been. In Jesus' name Amen.

For Trouble Sleeping

Father, please hear the cries of my heart as I lie here still awake because my mind will not let me rest. You and I know that dealing with these sleepless moments, whether it's during the day or at night, isn't normal. Going to sleep is one thing and staying asleep is something entirely different. Not getting the proper rest and living on the edge day after day is taking its toll on me. Please help me God! For I have tried to deal with it, yet nothing that I have done seems to be working so

that is why I am calling out to You for help. When I was little I heard that if you can't sleep, count sheep. Well as a Marine or Sailor far from home that doesn't seem to work. However, what will work is talking to the Shepherd of those sheep. At this moment, ease my mind, put those troubled thoughts to the side and make me lie down in green pastures beside those still waters. Comfort my troubled soul. I put my trust in You and thank You in advance for energizing my body and refreshing my soul. In Jesus' name Amen.

For Guidance

Psalm 32:8 states, "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you."

God, due to the environment I find myself in these days, I come before You asking for Your guidance. I need guidance as a warrior and as a man of faith. In this outfit, there are moments where if I am not fully engaged, focused and alert; my next step could be my last one. Father even though I place my life into Your hands, I am totally aware that tragedy may still find me. As one who is learning to trust You, when it comes to my life, I am willing to roll the dice and act out—Let Go and Let God. I want that peace and up until now, I know I haven't had it and it is time to make a change. As ready as I am to trust You with my life I know there will be times when I will question Your wisdom. Now if and when those moments occur, remind me of Jeremiah 29: 11 states, "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." So God with courage I stand before You and say wherever You lead me, I will follow. In Jesus' name Amen.

For Courage

God, in the Bible it often speaks about not being afraid. Joshua 1:9 states, "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord Your God will be with you wherever you go." God as bad as I want to believe that verse there are times when I find myself alone and afraid. There are things out there in the dark and in the light that just causes me to question my abilities and my trust in You. Whether it is on the battlefield, at sea or back in garrison there are times when I hate to admit it—I just lack the courage to face certain things. During those moments when the fear of the unknown has its way with me, help me to believe in You and trust Your word. Also when I find myself in future similar situations remind me of the courage I displayed the last time I was afraid. Now Father as I close, may my life be an example to others in those situations and may I always be ready to give an account of how it was You that provided me with the courage when I stood firm and demonstrated I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. In Jesus' name Amen.

For Help in Times of Trouble

Nahum 1:7 states, “The Lord is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in Him.”

God, as I stand here and look out I find my gut in turmoil as it appears that trouble is around every corner and it is looking for me. Now that might not be exactly the case, but that is how I feel at the moment and don't know what else to do besides to call upon Your holy name here and now. I know what the Bible says and I still remember the peace when You sheltered me from the storms while I was growing up. However, at this place and time in my life—I just don't feel safe. Recall to my attention other verses of scripture that I can cling to during these anxious moments. I know You are near and that You hear me. Protect me now my Father as I quote Psalm 34:7, “The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear Him, and He delivers them.” In Jesus' name Amen.

Before Battle

Heavenly Father, You know I have prepared myself mentally and physically to go in harms way as I take this fight to the enemy. As prepared as I am, I am fully aware that some things can only be experienced once I find myself in those moments of conflict. So when chaos breaks out around me, I ask that You will calm my spirit, keep me alert and focused on what my mission is in this uniform. God, for my loved ones that are praying for me while I am here, cling to them at this time and ease their minds for I know they worry about me out here. Let them know I love each and everyone of them and long to see them once my tour is complete. Now Father, as the time has come for us to load up and head out I want to thank You that I don't have to go out there all alone. For whether I live or die today, I am with You in Your care for now and eternally. In Jesus' name Amen.

After Battle

Our Father, Who art thou in Heaven hallowed be thy name. I just want to thank You for being with me and for bringing me safely through that last battle. I know there will be plenty more fights to engage in, but I thank You for sparing my life on this one. Now as I find myself back within the safety of these walls, help me to unwind from those recent encounters with the enemy. Help me to deal with all that I witnessed out there. For those memories that have the potential to be forever etched in my mind; give me peace and the courage to deal with them properly should they try to haunt me and rob my sleep. For the lives that perished out there today, both ours and theirs, oh may they rest in peace. For their loved ones, comfort them for their lives will be forever changed from this day forward. God my major prayer at this moment in my life is to help me to continue to

properly prepare myself for war, but never allow me to enjoy it. I know I will be forever changed once I leave here, yet with Your help, may I always feel Your peace about what I tried to do in this uniform everyday. Well once again, thank You for sparing my life and when I do have a moment to get some shut eye, I ask that I will find peace in the midst of this war so my body and mind receives the rest it needs out here. Amen.

Comfort for a Fallen Comrade

Psalm 34:18 says: the Lord is close to the brokenhearted; he rescues those who are crushed in spirit. God, you know my heart is broken because of the tragedy of (name) death. It just doesn't seem real and I am overwhelmed with the reality that I will never serve along side of (him/her) again. Knowing this pain of mine, you have to understand where my anger comes from when I cry out to you and say how unfair and cruel this appears for taking (name) from me. I find myself just like the psalmist in the Book of Psalm, when I question you and your timing one moment and in the same breath I know I must cling to you for hope. I know hope is possible because I know that those who believe in you, death is not the end, nor does it destroy the bonds that you forge in our lives. Though I can't see past today due to (his/her) death, I do know that in time, my heart will heal and before long, I will think of (name) without hurting. So God I ask that you give me the strength to go on in life and in doing so, that I might honor you and (name) in how I live out the rest of my life here on earth. Amen

Being Thankful

God, we all have heard of the saying "to stop and smell the roses" along the way. With that being said, help me I pray to pause for a moment and thank you for all the many blessings you have bestowed upon me. Due to the opportunities I have had to deploy to other parts of the world, I can't help but to be thankful for things such as: my family, my health, food, shelter, and water. For living in America where I can not only dream dreams, but have the opportunities to achieve them. I am also thankful for my religious beliefs and the freedom to worship as I see fit, the chance to serve you, my country and my fellow Marines and Sailors each and every day. God I hope you know my heart and know that all of the things that I just mentioned to you as well as many more; I pray that I will never take a single one for granted as long as I live. God in closing, if it ever appeared that I took your love and faithfulness for granted well I am sorry. For I know that without you I could not have made it thus far in life and as a (Marine/Sailor) while wearing this uniform. For without you, all of the things that mean to world to me I wouldn't have them. Therefore please know that when the things of life seemed more than I can handle and others aren't sure how I will make it through those

trying times, may I never be ashamed to say it was my God that carried me when I couldn't carry on. Amen

PERSONAL PRAYERS FOR HEALING AND RENEWAL

In the Morning

Lord God, almighty and everlasting Father, You have brought me in safety to this new day: preserve me with Your mighty power, that I may not fall into sin, nor be overcome by adversity; and in all I do, direct me to the fulfilling of Your purpose; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

In the Evening

Lord Jesus, stay with me, for evening is at hand and the day is past; be my companion in the way, kindle my heart, and awaken my hope, that I may know You as You are revealed in Scripture and the breaking of bread. Grant this for the sake of Your love. Amen.

For Rest

O God, My refuge and strength: in this place of unrelenting light and noise, enfold me in Your holy darkness and silence, that I may rest secure under the shadow of Your wings. Amen.

For Sleep

O heavenly Father, You give Your children sleep for the refreshing of soul and body: Grant me this gift, I pray; keep me in that perfect peace which You have promised those whose minds are fixed on You; and give me such a sense of Your presence, that in the hours of silence I may enjoy the blessed assurance of Your love; through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

For Guidance

Heavenly Father, in You I live and move and have my being: I humbly pray You so to guide and govern me by Your Holy Spirit, that in all the cares and occupations of this life I may not forget You, but may remember that I am ever walking in our sight; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

For Strength and Confidence

Gracious God, only source of life and health: Help, comfort, and relieve me, and give Your power of healing to those who minister to my needs; that my weakness

may be turned to strength and confidence in Your loving care; for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen.

In Times of Personal Distress

Lord Christ, You came into the world as one of us, and suffered as we do. As I go through the trials of life, help me to realize that You are with me at all times and in all things; that I have no secrets from You; and that Your loving grace enfolds me for eternity. In the security of Your embrace I pray. Amen.

For Protection

Christ, light of light, brightness indescribable, the Wisdom, power and glory of God, the Word made flesh: You overcame the forces of Satan, redeemed the world, then ascended again to the Father. Grant me, I pray, in this tarnished world, the shining of Your splendor. Send Your Archangel Michael to defend me, to guard my going out and coming in, and to bring me safely to Your presence, where You reign in the one, holy and undivided Trinity, to ages of ages. Amen.

ROMAN CATHOLIC

Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace. The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

The Rosary

A Catholic prays the rosary daily to calm his body as he focuses his mind and heart on specific events and mysteries in the history of man's salvation, which are listed below. As he prays, he calls to mind the many ways God reached out to man with His message of love and how human beings, especially the Blessed Virgin Mary, have responded to this message. It also encourages examination of one's own personal response.

The Joyful Mysteries—

~*The Annunciation*. The messenger of God announces to Mary that she is to be the Mother of God.

~*The Visitation*. Mary visits and helps her cousin Elizabeth.

~*The Nativity*. Mary gives birth to Jesus in a stable in Bethlehem.

~*The Presentation*. Jesus is presented in the temple.

~*Finding in the Temple*. Jesus is found in the temple.

The Sorrowful Mysteries—

~*Agony in the Garden*. Jesus undergoes His agony in the Garden of Gethsemane.

~*Scourging at the Pillar*. Jesus is scourged at the pillar.

~*Crowning with Thorns*. Jesus is crowned with thorns.

~*Carrying of the Cross*. Jesus carries the cross to Calvary.

~*The Crucifixion*. Jesus dies on the cross for our sins.

The Glorious Mysteries—

~*The Resurrection*. Jesus rises from the dead.

~*The Ascension*. Jesus ascends into heaven.

~*Descent of The Holy Spirit*. The Holy Spirit comes to the apostles and the Blessed Mother.

~*Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary*. The Mother of Jesus is taken into heaven.

~*Crowning of the Blessed Virgin Mary*. Mary is crowned queen of heaven and earth.

Luminous Mysteries—

~The Baptism of Lord Jesus.

~The Wedding Feast at Cana.

~The Proclamation of the Kingdom of God.

~The Transfiguration.

~The Institution of the Eucharist.

Stations of the Cross—

(At each Station of the Cross, contemplate the scene and pray a brief, heartfelt prayer.)

~Jesus is condemned to death on the cross (Mark 14:61–64).

~Jesus accepts His cross (John 19:14–17).

~Jesus falls the first time (John 15:18–20).

- ~Jesus meets His sorrowful Mother (John 19:25–27).
- ~Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus carry His cross (Mark 15:20–22).
- ~Veronica wipes the face of Jesus (Matthew 25:37–40).
- ~Jesus falls the second time (Isaiah 53:4–6).
- ~Jesus meets and speaks to the women of Jerusalem (Luke 23:27–28).
- ~Jesus falls the third time (Psalm 118:25–28).
- ~Jesus is stripped of His garments (Matthew 27:34–35).
- ~Jesus is nailed to the cross. (Luke 23:33–34).
- ~Jesus dies on the cross (Luke 23:44–46).
- ~Jesus is taken down from the cross and laid in his Mother’s arms (John 19:33–37).
- ~Jesus is placed in the tomb (Matthew 27:59–60).
- ~Jesus rises from the dead (Mark 16:1–6).

Act of Contrition

O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee, and I detest all my sins because of thy just punishments, but most of all because they offend Thee, my God, who art all good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve with the help of Thy grace to sin no more and to avoid the near occasion of sin. Amen.

Christopher Prayer

Father, grant that I might be a bearer of Christ Jesus, Your Son. Allow me to warm the often cold, impersonal scene of modern life with Your burning love. Strengthen me by Your Holy Spirit to carry out my mission of changing the world, or some definite part of it for the better. Despite my lamentable failures, bring home to me that my advantages are Your blessings to be shared with others.

Make me more energetic in setting right what I find wrong with the world, instead of complaining about it. Nourish in me a practical desire to build up, rather than to tear down, to reconcile instead of polarize, to go out on a limb rather than crave security. Never let me forget that it is far better to light a candle than to curse the darkness, and to join my light, one day, with Yours.

—As adapted by Father James Keller, M.M., founder of The Christophers

ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN

Trisagion Prayer

O heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, who are everywhere and fill all things, the treasury of blessings and giver of life, come and dwell within us and cleanse us from every blemish and save our souls, O Good One. Amen.

Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us.
Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us.
Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

All-Holy Trinity have mercy on us. Lord, be gracious to our sins. Master, forgive our transgressions. Holy One, visit us and heal our infirmities, for Your name's sake. Lord, have mercy; Lord, have mercy; Lord, have mercy.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Through the prayers of our holy fathers, Lord Jesus Christ our God have mercy on us and save us. Amen.

Morning Prayer

O Lord, grant that I may meet the coming day in peace. Help me in all things to rely upon Your holy will. In each hour of the day, reveal Your will to me. Bless my dealings with all who surround me. Teach me to treat all that shall come to me throughout the day with peace of soul, and with the firm conviction that Your will governs all. In all my deeds and words, guide my thoughts and feelings. In unforeseen events, let me not forget that all are sent by You. Teach me to act firmly and wisely, without embittering and embarrassing others. Give me the strength to bear the fatigue of the coming day, with all that it shall bring. Direct my wills. Teach me to pray. Pray within me. Amen.

Evening Prayer

At all times and in every hour, You are worshiped and glorified in heaven and on earth, Christ our God. Long in patience, great in mercy and compassion, You love the righteous and show mercy to sinners. You call all to salvation through the promise of good things to come. Lord, receive my prayers at the present time. Direct my life according to Your commandments. Sanctify my soul. Purify my body. Set my mind aright. Cleanse my thoughts and deliver me from all sorrow, evil, and distress. Surround me with Your holy angels that, guarded and guided by their host, I may arrive at the unity of the faith and the understanding of Your ineffable glory. For You are blessed to the ages of ages. Amen.

Prayer Before Reading Scripture

Shine within my heart, loving Master, the pure light of Your divine knowledge and open the eyes of my mind that I may comprehend the message of Your Gospel. Instill in me also reverence for Your blessed commandments, so that having conquered all sinful desires, I may pursue a spiritual life, thinking and doing all those things that are pleasing to You. For You, Christ our God, are the light of our souls and bodies, and to You I give glory together with Your Father who is without beginning and Your all holy, good, and life giving Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

Prayer for Forgiveness

Lord our God, whatever sins I have committed this day, in word, deed or thought, forgive me, for You are good and love all people. Grant me a peaceful and undisturbed sleep. Protect me from every abuse and plot of the evil one. Raise me up in due time that I may glorify You, for You are blessed, together with Your only begotten Son, and Your all Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

Lenten Prayer

During the period of the Great Fast (Great Lent), recite *The Prayer of Saint Ephraim the Syrian*, making a prostration after each verse.

The Prayer of Saint Ephraim the Syrian

May God have compassion on me and bless me; May His face shine upon me and have mercy on me.

O Lord and Master of my life, do not permit the spirit of laziness and meddling, the lust for power and idle talk to come into me. (Prostration).

Instead, grant me, Your servant, the spirit of prudence, humility, patience and love. (Prostration).

Yes, Lord and King, give me the power to see my own faults and not to judge my brother. (Prostration).

For You are blessed unto the ages of ages. Amen.

JEWISH

Shema

Hear, O Israel:

The Lord is our God; the Lord is One!

She-ma Yis-ra-eil:

A-do-nai e-lo-hei-nu; A-do-nai E-chad!

Blessed is his glorious kingdom forever and ever!

You shall love the Lord Your God with all Your heart, with all Your soul, with all Your might. Set these words that I command you this day upon your heart. Teach them faithfully to your children; speak of them in your home and on your way, when you lie down and when you rise up.

Bind them as a sign upon your hand; let them be a symbol before your eyes; inscribe them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Prayer on Starting a Journey

May it be Your will, Lord my God and God of my ancestors, to lead me on the way of peace and guide and direct my steps in peace, so that You will bring me happily to my destination safe and sound. Save me from danger on the way. Give me good grace, kindness, and favor, both in Your eyes and in the eyes of all whom I may meet. Hear this my prayer, for You are a God who listens to the heart's request. Fulfill for me Your words, "Behold I am sending before you an angel to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place which I have prepared." Blessed are You, O Lord, who hearkens to prayer.

Confession for the Critically Ill

Lord my God and God of my ancestors I acknowledge that in Your hand alone is my recovery of my death. May it be Your will that I be completely healed. Yet if it be Your will that I die, then I shall accept my death lovingly at Your hands. May my death be my atonement for all the sins, transgressions, and wrongs that I have done before You. May I receive a portion of that goodness which is stored

up for the righteous. Make me to know the path of life, the fullness of blissful joy in Your presence at Your right hand forevermore.

O You who are the Father of the fatherless and the guardian of the widow, protect my beloved family, whose souls are linked to mine. Into Your hand I commend my spirit; You have redeemed me, O God of truth. Amen and Amen.

When the End is Approaching

The Lord is King; the Lord was King; the Lord shall reign forever and ever [said three times].

Blessed is his glorious kingdom forever and ever [said three times].

The Lord, He is God [said seven times].

Hear, O Israel: the Lord is our God; the Lord is One!

She-ma Yis-ra-eil: A-do-nai E-lo-hei-nu; A-do-nai e-chad!

Mourner's Kaddish (an English Translation)

Let the glory of God be extolled, let His great name be hallowed, in the world whose creation He willed. May His kingdom soon prevail, in our own day, our own lives, and the life of all Israel, and let us say: Amen.

Let His great name be blessed for ever and ever.

Let the name of the Holy One, blessed is He, be glorified, exalted and honored, though He is beyond all the praises, songs, and adorations that we can utter, and let us say: Amen.

For us and for all Israel, may the blessing of peace and the promise of life come true, and let us say: Amen.

May He who causes peace to reign in the high heavens, let peace descend on us, on all Israel, and all the world, and let us say: Amen.

May the Source of peace send peace to all who mourn, and comfort to all who are bereaved. Amen.

Mourner's Kaddish

May the memory of the departed be a blessing:

Yit-ga-dal ve-yit-ka-dash she-mei ra-ba be-al-ma di-ve-r chi-re-u-tei, ve-yam-lich
mal-chu-tei be-cha-yei-chon u-ve-yo-mei-chon u-ve-cha-yei de-chol beit
Yis-ra-eil, ba-a-ga-la u-vi-ze-man ka-riv, ve-i-me-ru: a-mein.

Ye-hei she-mei ra-ba me-va-rach le-a-lam u-le-almei al-ma-ya.

Yit-ba-rach ve-fish-ta-bach, ve-yit-pa-ar ve-yit-ro- mam ve-yit-na-sei,
ve-yit-ha-dar ve-yit-a-leh ve-yit-ha-lal she-mei de-ku-de-sha, be-rich hu, le-ei-la
(le-ei-la me-kol) min kol bi-re-cha-ta ve-shi-ra-ta, tush-be-cha-ta ve-ne-che-ma-
ta, da-a-mi-ran be-al-ma, ve-I-me-ru: a-mein.

Ye-hei she-la-ma ra-ba min she-ma-ya ve-cha-yim a-lei-nu ve-al kol Yis-ra-eil,
ve-I-me-ru: a-mein.

O-se sha-lom bi-me-ro-mav, hu ya-a-he sha-lom altei-nu ve-al kol Yis-ra-eil,
ve-i-me-ru: a-mein.

Barechu

Bless the Lord, to whom our praise is due.

Ba-re-chu et A-do-nai ha-me-vo-rach.

Blessed be the Lord, to whom our praise is due, now and forever.

Ba-ruch A-do-nai ha-me-vo-rach le-o-lam va-ed.

ISLAMIC***Introduction to Islamic Prayer***

Muslims are commanded to perform five different prayers (Salats), five times a day. In Islam, the most important means of worshipping God is performing a prayer that is followed by a prescribed sequence of words with accompanying bodily positions. Every Muslim who has reached the age of puberty and is physically and/or mentally able to pray, will at the prescribed times (varied

according to geographical location and time of the year). A Muslim, at these prescribed times of prayer, must stop whatever they are doing and face Makkah in doing so Muslims are constantly reminding themselves to put God before all other concerns. The five prayers that are prayed throughout the day consist of the following:

~*Salat-ul-Fajr (morning prayer)*. This is the first of the five obligatory prayers of the day and it can be performed at any time between the breaking of the dawn and before sunrise.

~*Salat-ul-Zuhr/Dhuhr (noon prayer)*. This one begins after the sun declines from the zenith position until it is about midway from setting.

~*Salat-ul-Asr (mid afternoon prayer)*. This prayer begins soon after the sun passes the highest part of the sky and starts to descend towards the west.

~*Salat-ul-Maghrib (evening prayer)*. This prayer begins just after sunset and extends to a period of an hour and a half.

~*Salat-ul-Isha (night prayer)*. This prayer begins about an hour and a half after sunset and extends before dawn.

Purification and Preparation

In order to perform a salat, Islam requires that the environment within the place of prayer be clean. Before conducting prayers, a Muslim must be in a state of physical purity (clean as a result from bathing).

Adhan (Call to Prayer)

Allahu Akbar

Allahu Akbar

Ashadu anna la ilaha illa Allah

Ashadu anna la ilaha illa Allah

Ashadu anna Muhammadan rasul Allah

Ashadu anna Muhammadan rasul Allah

Haiya 'ala al-salat

Haiya 'ala al-salat

Haiya 'ala al-falah

Haiya 'ala al-falah
 Al-salat khayrun min al-nawm (said only at dawn)
 Al-salat khayrun min al-nawm (said only at dawn)

Allahu Akbar
 Allahu Akbar

La ilaha illa Allah

Call to Prayer (an English Translation)

God is most great

God is most great
 I bear witness there is no god but God

I bear witness there is no god but God
 I bear witness Muhammad is the Messenger of God
 I bear witness Muhammad is the Messenger of God
 Come to prayer

Come to prayer
 Come to success

Come to success
 Prayer is better than sleep (said only at dawn)
 Prayer is better than sleep (said only at dawn)

God is most great
 God is most great

There is no god but God

BUDDHIST MEDITATIONS

The spirit of Buddha is a great compassion and love to save all people by any and all means. It is the spirit of parents toward their children, nourishing, and protecting them; it is the spirit that prompts it to be ill with the sickness of people, to suffer with their suffering. "Your suffering is my suffering and Your happiness is my happiness," said Buddha, and he does not forget that spirit for a single moment, for it is the self-nature of Buddhahood to be compassionate. A

mother realizes her motherhood by loving her child; then the child reacting to its mother's love feels safe and at ease. The Buddha's spirit of compassion is stimulated according to the need of man; man's faith is the reaction to this spirit, and it leads him to enlightenment.

I take refuge in Buddha.

I take refuge in Dharma.

I take refuge in Sangha.

Invocation

Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammasam Buddhassa

Honor to Him, the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Awakened One.

Metta Sutra (Loving Kindness Prayer)

Having seen that all beings have a desire for happiness,
One should mindfully develop loving kindness towards all beings.

May I be happy and free from suffering,
and always like myself, may my friends, neutral persons, and the hostile be happy too.

May all beings in this village, in this state, in other countries, in our galaxy be ever happy.

May all persons, individuals, beings, creatures in all the galaxies be ever happy.
So too may all women, men, noble ones, non-noble ones, gods, humans, and beings in the lower worlds be happy.

May all beings throughout the universe be happy.

May I be free from hatred,
may I be free from affliction,
may I be free from worry,
may I live happily.

As I am so also may my parents, teachers, preceptors, friendly, indifferent and hostile beings be free from hatred.

May they be free from affliction,
may they be free from worry,
may they live happily,
may they be released from suffering,
may they not be deprived from fortune duly acquired,
All have karma as their own.

In this Metta Sutta, the Buddha said, “One skilled in good, wishing to attain peace should act thus:

One should be able, straight, upright, obedient, gentle, and humble.

One should be content, easy to support, with few duties, living lightly, controlled in senses, discreet, not impudent, balanced about family.

One should not do any slight wrong for which the wise might censure one.

May all beings be happy and secure!

May all beings have happy minds!

Whatever living beings there may be without exception, weak or strong, tall, large, middling, short, subtle, or gross, visible, or invisible, near or far, born or coming to birth,

May all beings have happy minds!

Let no one deceive another nor despise anyone anywhere.

Neither in anger nor enmity should anyone wish to harm another.

As a mother would risk her own life to protect her only child, even so towards all living beings one should cultivate a boundless heart.

One should cultivate, for all the world,

A heart of loving kindness above, below, and all around,

unobstructed, without hate or enmity.

Pañca-sila (The Five Precepts)

Pânâtipâtâ Veramani Sikkhâpadam Samâdiyâmi.

I undertake the precept to refrain from destroying living creatures.

Adinnâdânâ Veramani Sikkhâpadam Samâdiyâmi.

I undertake the precept to refrain from taking that which is not given.

Kâmesu Micchâcârâ Veramani Sikkhâpadam Samâdiyâmi.

I undertake the precept to refrain from sexual misconduct.

Musâvâdâ Veramani Sikkhâpadam Samâdiyâmi.

I undertake the precept to false speech

Surâ Mêraya Majja Pamâdatthânâ Verami Sikkhâpadam Samâdiyâmi.

I undertake the precept to refrain from intoxicating drinks and drugs which lead to carelessness.

Transference of Merit to the Departed

Idam me natinam hotu Sukhita hontu natayo

Let this (merit) accrue to our departed relatives
and may they be happy!

Idam me natinam hotu Sukhita hontu natayo

Let this (merit) accrue to our departed relatives
and may they be happy!

Idam me natinam hotu Sukhita hontu natayo

Let this (merit) accrue to our departed relatives
and may they be happy!
(change “Idam me” to “Idam vo” if repeating for others)

Ti-Sarana

Buddham saranam gacchami
Dhammam saranam gacchami
Sangham saranam gacchami
Dutiyampi Buddham saranam gacchami
Dutiyampi Dhammam saranam gacchami
Dutiyampi Sangham saranam gacchami
Tatiyampi Buddham saranam gacchami
Tatiyampi Dhammam saranam gacchami
Tatiyampi Sangham saranam gacchami

I go to the Buddha as my refuge.
I go to the Dhamma as my refuge.
I go to the Sangha as my refuge.
For the second time
I go to the Buddha as my refuge.
For the second time
I go to the Dhamma as my refuge
For the second time
I go to the Sangha as my refuge.
For the third time
I go to the Buddha as my refuge.
For the third time
I go to the Dhamma as my refuge.
For the third time
I go to the Sangha as my refuge.

HINDU

The following prayers are from the magazine, *The Gita, The Song of Eternal Wisdom*:

~I am one, invisible and eternal. I am everywhere. I am the all knowing. I am without beginning and end. I am beyond time. I am bigger than the biggest; I am smaller than the smallest.

~I see You, Infinite and Omnipresent. You are beginningless and endless. In You the whole universe abides. Salutations to You.

~If you are perplexed by the many conflicting theories that you have heard, abandoning all, seek refuge in me.

~He who works for me, he who looks upon me as his goal, and he who worships me, soon becomes free from attachment to the body and comes to me.

~Men of different faiths worship me in different forms for the fulfillment of their desires. Ultimately, they all come to me.

~Even such a man continues to perform his actions. Behold, Arjuna, I have nothing to seek in this world. Yet I engage myself in ceaseless activity. If I don't, others, following my example, may sink into indolence and become inactive.

~Just as air abides in space, so also all beings abide in me. Space abides in air, but does not need it for its sustenance. So also I abide in all beings and yet I am above and beyond them.

CHAPTER 3

Scriptures

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HEBREW BIBLE

Note: The following scriptures are contained in the New International Version of the Holy Bible.

Exodus 20 (The Ten Commandments)

And God spoke all these words: "I am the LORD Your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. "You shall have no other gods before Me. "You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD Your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate Me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love Me and keep My commandments. "You shall not misuse the name of the LORD Your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses His name.

"Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD Your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. "Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD Your God is giving you. "You shall not murder. "You shall not commit adultery. "You shall not steal. "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor. "You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

Deuteronomy 10

And now, O Israel, what does the LORD Your God ask of you, but to fear the LORD Your God, to walk in all His ways, to love Him, to serve the LORD Your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to observe the LORD's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good? To the LORD Your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it. Yet the LORD set His affection on your forefathers and loved them, and He chose you, their descendants, above all the nations as it is today. Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and do not be stiff-necked any longer. For the LORD Your God is God of gods and LORD of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, Who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the alien, giving him food and clothing. And you are to love those who are aliens, for you yourselves were

aliens in Egypt. Fear the LORD Your God and serve Him. Hold fast to Him and take your oaths in His name. He is your praise; He is Your God, Who performed for you those great and awesome wonders you saw with your own eyes. Your forefathers who went down into Egypt were seventy in all, and now the LORD Your God has made you as numerous as the stars in the sky. Your forefathers who went down into Egypt were seventy in all, and now the LORD Your God has made you as numerous as the stars in the sky.

Joshua 1

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD Your God will be with you wherever you go.

Joshua 24:15 (King James Version)

And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.

1 Samuel 16:7

But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.

Psalms 1

Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on His law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers. Not so wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

Psalms 23

The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want; He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside quiet waters; He restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of

my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Psalm 24:1–6

The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; for He founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters. Who may ascend the hill of the LORD? Who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false. He will receive blessing from the LORD and vindication from God His Savior. Such is the generation of those who seek Him, who seek your face, O God of Jacob.

Psalm 46:1–11

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells. God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day. Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall; He lifts His voice, the earth melts. The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. Come, and see the works of the LORD, the desolations He has brought on the earth. He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth; He breaks the bow, and shatters the spear, He burns the shields with fire. "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth."

The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.

Psalm 91

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, "He is My refuge and My fortress, My God, in Whom I trust." Surely He will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you will find refuge; His faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you make the Most High your dwelling—even the LORD, who is My refuge—then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent. For He will

command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your food against a stone. You will tread upon the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. “Because He loves me,” says the LORD, “I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges My name. He will call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life will I satisfy him and show him my salvation.”

Psalm 100

Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth. Worship the LORD with gladness; come before Him with joyful songs. Know that the LORD is God. It is He who made us, and we are His; we are His people, the sheep of His pasture. Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise; give thanks to Him and praise His name. For the LORD is good and His love endures forever; His faithfulness continues through all generations.

Psalm 121

I lift up my eyes to the hills—where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth. He will not let your foot slip—He who watches over you will not slumber; indeed, He who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The LORD watches over you—the LORD is your shade at the right hand; the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night. The LORD will keep you from all harm—He will watch over your life. The LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.

Psalm 130

Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD; O LORD, hear my voice. Let Your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy. If you, O LORD, kept a record of sins, O LORD, who could stand? But with You there is forgiveness; therefore You are feared. I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in His word I put my hope. My soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning. O Israel, put your hope in the LORD, for with the LORD is unfailing love and with Him is full redemption. He himself will redeem Israel from all their sins.

Psalm 139

O LORD, You have searched me and You know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; You perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; You are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue You know it completely, O LORD. You hem me in—behind and before;

You have laid Your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain. Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from Your presence? If I go up to the heavens, You are there; if I make my bed in the depths, You are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there Your hand will guide me, Your right hand will hold me fast. If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me," even the darkness will not be dark to You; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to You. For You created my inmost being; You knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise You because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from You when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, Your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in Your book before one of them came to be. How precious to me are Your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand. When I awake, I am still with you. If only You would slay the wicked O God! Away from me, you bloodthirsty men! They speak of You with evil intent; Your adversaries misuse Your name. Do I not hate those who hate You, O LORD, and abhor those who rise up against You? I have nothing but hatred for them; I count them my enemies. Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

Psalm 150

Praise the LORD. Praise God in His sanctuary; praise Him in His mighty heavens. Praise Him for His acts of power; praise Him for His surpassing greatness. Praise Him with the sounding of the trumpet, praise Him with the harp and lyre, praise Him with tambourine and dancing, praise Him with the strings and flute, praise Him with the clash of cymbals, praise Him with resounding cymbals. Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD.

Proverbs 3:5-6

Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.

Isaiah 55:8-9

"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways," declares the LORD. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.

Amos 3:7

Surely the Sovereign Lord does nothing without revealing His plans to His servants the prophets.

NEW TESTAMENT

Note: The following scriptures are contained in the New International Version of the Holy Bible.

Matthew 5 (The Beatitudes)

Now when He saw the crowds, He went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to Him, and He began to teach them saying: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

Matthew 6:24

No man can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one, and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve both God and money.

John 3:5

Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.”

John 3:16–17 (King James Version)

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

John 14:1–6

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, trust also in Me. In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with Me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going.” Thomas said to Him, “Lord, we don’t know where You are going, so how can we know the way?” Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

Romans 8:31–39

What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all—how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: “For Your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 12:9–21

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

1 Corinthians 13:1–13

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

1 Corinthians 15:12–21

But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that He raised Christ from the dead. But He did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men. But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those that have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection also comes through a man.

Ephesians 6:10–18

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done

everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

Philippians 4:5–13

Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your request to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you. I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at least you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through Him who gives me strength.

James 1:5

If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, Who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.

1 John 3:14–18

We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death. Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him. This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down His life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.

THE BOOK OF MORMON

1 Nephi 3:7

And it came to pass that I, Nephi, said unto my father: I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save He shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which He commandeth them.

2 Nephi 25:26

And we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins.

2 Nephi 32:3

Angels speak by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore, they speak the words of Christ. Wherefore, I said unto you, feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do.

Mosiah 2:17

And behold, I tell you these things that ye may learn wisdom; that ye may learn that when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of Your God.

Alma 32:21

And now as I said concerning faith—faith is not to have a perfect knowledge of things; therefore if ye have faith ye hope for things which are not seen, which are true.

Alma 37:35

O, remember, my son, and learn wisdom in thy youth; yea, learn in thy youth to keep the commandments of God.

Moroni 10:4–5

And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost. And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things.

THE DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS

Doctrine and Covenants 8:2–3

Yea, behold, I will tell you in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost, which shall come upon you and which shall dwell in your heart. Now, behold, this is the spirit of revelation; behold, this is the spirit by which Moses brought the children of Israel through the Red Sea on dry ground.

Doctrine and Covenants 10:5

Pray always that you may come off conqueror; yea, that you may conquer Satan, and that you may escape the hands of the servants of Satan that do uphold his work.

Doctrine and Covenants 14:7

And, if you keep my commandments and endure to the end you shall have eternal life, which gift is the greatest of all the gifts of God.

Doctrine and Covenants 25:12

For my soul delighteth in the song of the heart; yea, the song of the righteous is a prayer unto me, and it shall be answered with a blessing upon their heads.

Doctrine and Covenants 121:45–46

Let thy bowels also be full of charity towards all men, and to the household of faith, and let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distill upon thy soul as the dews from heaven. The Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion, and thy scepter an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth; and thy dominion shall be an everlasting dominion, and without compulsory means it shall flow unto thee forever and ever.

THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE

Moses 1:39

For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.

Moses 7:18

And the Lord called His people ZION, because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them.

THE HOLY QUR'AN*Al-Fatiha (The Opening) 1:1-7*

Bismi Allāhi alrahmani alraheemi Alhamdu lillāhi rabbi alAAalameena
Alrahmani alraheemi Maliki yawmi alddeeni Iyyaka naAAabudu waiyyaka
nastaAAeenu Ihdina alssirata almustaqeema Sirata allatheena anAAamta
AAalayhim ghayri almaghdoobi AAalayhim wala alddalleena

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful. Praise be to God, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds; Most Gracious, Most Merciful; Master of the Day of Judgment. Thee do we worship, and Thine aid we seek. Show us the straight way, The way of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy Grace, those whose (portion) is not wrath, and who go not astray.

Al-Baqara (The Cow) 2:255

Allahu la ilaha illa huwa alhayyu alqayyoomu la takhuthuhu sinatun wala nawmun lahu ma fee alssamawati wama fee alardi man tha allathee yashfaAAu AAindahu illa biithnihi yaAAalamu ma bayna aydeehim wama khalfahum wala yuheetoona bishayin min AAilmihillā bima shaa wasiAAa kursiyyuhu alssamawati waalarda wala yaooduhu hifhuhuma wahuwa alAAaliyyu alAAatheemu

God. There is no god but He, the Living, the Self-Subsisting, Eternal. No slumber can seize Him nor sleep. His are all things in the heavens and on earth. Who is there can intercede in His presence except as He permitteth? He knoweth what (appeareth to His creatures as) before or after or behind them. Nor shall they compass aught of His knowledge except as He willeth. His Throne doth extend over the heavens and the earth, and He feeleth no fatigue in guarding and preserving them for He is the Most High, the Supreme (in glory).

Al-Baqara (The Cow) 2:277

Inna allatheena amanoo waAAamiloo alssalihati waaqamoo alssalata waatawoo alzzakata lahum ajruhum AAinda rabbihim wala khawfun AAalayhim wala hum yahzanoona

Those who believe, and do deeds of righteousness, and establish regular prayers and regular charity, will have their reward with their Lord; on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.

Al-Imran (The Family of Imran) 3:64

Qul ya ahlal kitābi taAAalaw ilā kalimatin sawāin baynanā wabaynakum allā naAAabuda illā Allāha walā nushrika bihi shayan walā yattakhiḥa baAAadunā baAAadan arbāban min dooni Allāhi fain tawallaw faqooloo ishhadoo biannā muslimoona

Say: “O People of the Book! come to common terms as between us and you: That we worship none but God that we associate no partners with him; that we erect not, from among ourselves, Lords and patrons other than God.” If then they turn back, say ye: “Bear witness that we (at least) are Muslims (bowing to God’s Will).”

Al-An’am (The Cattle) 6:1–3

Alḥamdu lillāhi allathee khalaqa alssamāwati waalarda wajaAAala alththulumati waalnoora thumma allatheena kafaroo birabbihim yaAADiloona Huwa allathee khalaqakum min teenin thumma qada ajalun waajalun musamman AAindahu thumma antum tamtaroonā Wahuwa Allāhu fee alssamāwati wafee alardi yaAAalamu sirrakum wajahrakum wayaAAalamu mā taksiboona

Praise be to God, who created the heavens and the earth, and made darkness and the light. Yet those reject Faith hold (others) as equal with their Guardia-Lord. He it is created you from Clay, and then decreed a stated term (for you). And there is in His presence another determined term; yet ye doubt within yourselves! And He is God in the heavens and on earth. He knoweth what ye hide, and what ye reveal, and He knoweth the (recompense) which ye earn (by your deeds).

Al-A’raf (The Heights) 7:204

Waitha quria alquranu faistamiAAoo lahu waansitoo laAAallakum turḥamoona

When the Qur’an is read, listen to it with attention, and hold your peace: that ye may receive mercy.

Ash-Shura (The Consultation) 42:36

Fama ooteetum min shayin famataAAu alhayati alddunya wama AAinda Allahi khayrun waabqa lillatheena amanoo waAAala rabbihim yatawakkaloona

Whatever ye are given (here) is (but) a convenience of this life; but that which is with God is better and more lasting; (it is) for those who believe and put their trust in their Lord.

Al-Hashr (The Gathering) 59:22-23

Huwa Allahu allathee la ilaha illa huwa AAalimu alghaybi waalshshahadati huwa alrrahmanu alrraheemu Huwa Allahu allathee la ilaha illa huwa almaliku alquddosu alssalamu almuuminu almuhayminu alAAazeezu aljabbaru almutakabbiru subhana Allahi AAamma yushrikoona

God is He, than whom there is no other god who knows (all things) both secret and open; He, Most Gracious, Most merciful. God is He, than Whom there is no other god; the Sovereign, the Holy One, the Source of Peace (and Perfection), the Guardian of Faith, the Preserver of Safety, the Exalted in Might, the Irresistible, the Supreme: Glory to God. (High is He) above the partners they attribute to Him.

At-Taghabun (Loss and Gain) 64:16

Faittaqoo Allaha ma istataAAatum waismaAAoo waateAAoo waanfiqoo khayran lianfusikum waman yooqa shuhha nafsihi faolaika humu almuflihoona

So fear God as much as ye can; listen and obey; spend in charity for the benefit of your own souls. And those saved from the covetousness of their own souls, they are the ones that achieve prosperity.

BUDDHIST MEDITATION READINGS

The following readings were provided by the Buddhist Churches of America:

~Reverently we come before the shrine of the Buddha, the Holy One, Perfect One. With gratitude we have brought our offerings of love and devotion. We earnestly resolve to strive to understand the Holy Teaching, and to walk every day in the Blessed Path, so that we may attain the peace of Nirvāna.

~May the wisdom of the All-Compassionate One so shine within our hearts and minds, that the mists of error and the foolish vanity of self be dispelled. So shall we understand the changing nature of existence and reach spiritual peace.

~Buddha's compassion embraces all people and his never lessening desire is for their happiness. He loves people as parents love their children, and He wishes for them the highest blessedness, namely, that they might be able to pass beyond this ocean of life and death.

~As the sun shines upon the earth, awakening into growth the seeds that lie dormant in the soil, may the Light of Wisdom shine into our minds and truly awaken us to our ignorance and by this insight stir us to strive for a life of deeper understanding and enlightenment.

~On the long journey of human life, faith is the best companion; faith is the best refreshment by the way, and the greatest reward at the end. Faith is the hand that receives the Dharma, faith is the hand that receives the profit.

~The spirit of Buddha is great wisdom and compassion to save all people by any and all means. It is the spirit of a mother toward her child nourishing and protecting it; it is the spirit that prompts us to be ill with sickness of people, to suffer with their suffering. "Your suffering is my suffering and your happiness is my happiness," said Buddha, and he does not forget that spirit for a single moment, for it is the self-nature of Buddhahood to be compassionate. A mother realizes her motherhood by loving her child, then the child reacting to his mother's love feels safe and at ease. The Buddha's spirit of compassion is stimulated according to the needs of the individual; each person's faith is the reaction to this spirit, and it leads them to enlightenment.

The Way of the Bodhisattva

May I be a medicine for the sick and weary, nursing them until their afflictions are gone forever. I would be a protector of the helpless, a guide for travelers and their means for crossing a stream, a lamp for those who need a lamp, a bed for those who need a bed, a slave for those who need a slave. May all find happiness through my actions and let no one suffer because of me. Whether they love or hate me, may those feelings be the source of their fulfillment. Those who mock, accuse or wrong me, may they all attain enlightenment.

KEY SCRIPTURE VERSES IN TIMES OF NEED

Note: The following scriptures are contained in the New International Version of the Holy Bible.

When You Need Courage

Deuteronomy 20:1–4

When you go to war against your enemies and see horses and chariots and an army greater than yours, do not be afraid of them, because the LORD Your God, who brought you up out of Egypt, will be with you. When you are about to go into battle, the priest shall come forward and address the army. He shall say: “Hear, O Israel, today you are going into battle against your enemies. Do not be fainthearted or afraid; do not be terrified or give way to panic before them. For the LORD your God is the One who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies to give you victory.”

Deuteronomy 31:6

Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD Your God goes with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you.

Joshua 1:9

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD Your God will be with you wherever you go.

Joshua 10:25

Joshua said to them, “Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Be strong and courageous. This is what the LORD will do to all the enemies you are going to fight.”

Psalms 27:14

Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.

Isaiah 35:4

... say to those with fearful hearts, “Be strong, do not fear; Your God will come, He will come with vengeance; with divine retribution He will come to save you.”

Isaiah 41:10

So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am Your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.

Isaiah 43:1

But now, this is what the LORD says—He who created you, O Jacob, He who formed you, O Israel: Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are Mine.

1 Corinthians 16:13

Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong.

1 Peter 3:14

But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. “Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened.”

When You Need Guidance

1 Chronicles 16:11

Seek the LORD and His strength; seek His face continually.

Psalms 25:9

He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them His way.

Psalms 25:12

Who is the man who fears the LORD? He will instruct him in the way he should choose.

Psalms 32:8

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you.

Psalms 37:4–7

Delight yourself in the LORD and He will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD; trust in Him and He will do this: He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun. Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for Him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes.

Psalm 119:105

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

Proverbs 3:5–6

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.

Proverbs 12:26

A righteous man is cautious in friendship, but the way of the wicked leads them astray.

Proverbs 16:9

A man's heart plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps.

Jeremiah 29:11

For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.

Jeremiah 33:3

Call to Me and I will answer you, and I will tell you great and mighty things, which you do not know.

Matthew 6:33

Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Luke 11:9–10

So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks, it will be opened.

John 14:26

The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, Whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

James 1:5

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, Who gives to all generously and without reproach.

When You Need Protection in Times of Danger

2 Samuel 22:2-4

He said: “The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation. He is my stronghold, my refuge and my Savior—from violent men you save me. I call to the LORD, Who is worthy of praise, and I am saved from my enemies.”

Psalm 9:9

The LORD is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble.

Psalm 18:1-3

I love You, O LORD, my strength. The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in Whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. I call to the LORD, Who is worthy of praise, and I am saved from my enemies.

Psalm 27:1-6

The LORD is my light and my salvation whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life of whom shall I be afraid? When evil men advance against me to devour my flesh, when my enemies and my foes attack me, they will stumble and fall. Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear; though war break out against me, even then will I be confident. One thing I ask of the LORD, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to seek Him in His temple. For in the day of trouble He will keep me safe in His dwelling; He will hide me in the shelter of His tabernacle and set me high upon a rock. Then my head will be exalted above the enemies who surround me; at His tabernacle will I sacrifice with shouts of joy; I will sing and make music to the LORD.

Psalm 32:10

Many are the woes of the wicked, but the Lord’s unfailing love surrounds the man who trusts in Him.

Psalm 34:7

The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear Him, and He delivers them.

Psalm 37:27–28

Turn from evil and do good; then you will dwell in the land forever. For the LORD loves the just and will not forsake His faithful ones. They will be protected forever.

Psalm 41:1–3

Blessed is he who has regard for the weak; the LORD delivers him in times of trouble. The LORD will protect him and preserve his life; He will bless him in the land and not surrender him to the desire of his foes. The LORD will sustain him on his sickbed and restore him from his bed of illness.

Psalm 46:1

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.

Psalm 91

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, “He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.” Surely He will save you from the fowler’s snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you will find refuge; His faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you make the Most High your dwelling—even the LORD, who is my refuge—then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent. For He will command His angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread upon the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. “Because he loves Me,” says the LORD, “I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges My name. He will call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life will I satisfy him and show him My salvation.”

Psalm 116:5–7

The LORD is gracious and righteous; our God is full of compassion. The LORD protects the simple hearted; when I was in great need, He saved me. Be at rest once more, O my soul, for the LORD has been good to you.

Psalm 121:5–8

The LORD watches over you—the LORD is your shade at your right hand; the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night. The LORD will keep you from all harm—He will watch over your life; the LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.

Psalm 125:2

As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the LORD surrounds His people both now and forevermore.

Psalm 144:2

He is my loving God and my fortress, my stronghold and my deliverer, my shield, in whom I take refuge, who subdues peoples under me.

Proverbs 2:7–21

He holds victory in store for the upright, He is a shield to those whose walk is blameless, for He guards the course of the just and protects the way of His faithful ones. Then you will understand what is right and just and fair—every good path. For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul. Discretion will protect you, and understanding will guard you. Wisdom will save you from the ways of wicked men, from men whose words are perverse, who leave the straight paths to walk in dark ways, who delight in doing wrong and rejoice in the perverseness of evil, whose paths are crooked and who are devious in their ways. It will save you also from the adulteress, from the wayward wife with her seductive words, who has left the partner of her youth and ignored the covenant she made before God. For her house leads down to death and her paths to the spirits of the dead. None who go to her return or attain the paths of life. Thus you will walk in the ways of good men and keep to the paths of the righteous. For the upright will live in the land, and the blameless will remain in it.

Proverbs 3:6 (King James Version)

In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy path.

Proverbs 14:26

He who fears the LORD has a secure fortress, and for his children it will be a refuge.

Isaiah 43:1–2

But now, this is what the LORD says—He who created you, O Jacob, He who formed you, O Israel: “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are Mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.

Nahum 1:7

The LORD is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in Him.

2 Thessalonians 3:3

The Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one.

When You Feel Afraid

Psalms 34:4

I sought the LORD, and He answered me; He delivered me from all my fears.

2 Timothy 1:7

For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.

Hebrews 13:5–6

Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.” So we say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?”

When You Feel Anxious

Psalms 46:1–2

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea.

Matthew 6:19–34

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in

heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. “The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness! “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money. “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Philippians 4:6

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

1 Peter 5:6–7

Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you.

When You Feel Defeated

Romans 8:31–39

What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave Him up for us all—how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or

nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

When You Feel Depressed

Psalm 34:17–19

The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears them; He delivers them from all their troubles. The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. A righteous man may have many troubles, but the LORD delivers him from them all.

Psalm 40:1–2

I waited patiently for the Lord; He turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; He set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand.

1 Corinthians 10:13

God is faithful and He will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

When Disaster Threatens

Psalm 91

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, “He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in Whom I trust.” Surely He will save you from the fowler’s snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you will find refuge; His faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you make the Most High your dwelling even the LORD, who is my refuge then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent. For He will command His angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift

you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread upon the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. "Because he loves Me," says the LORD, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges My name. He will call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him, With long life will I satisfy him and show him My salvation."

Psalm 118:6

The LORD is with me; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?

Luke 8:22–25

One day Jesus said to His disciples, "Let's go over to the other side of the lake." So they got into a boat and set out. As they sailed, He fell asleep. A squall came down on the lake, so that the boat was being swamped, and they were in great danger. The disciples went and woke Him, saying, "Master, Master, we're going to drown!" He got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waters; the storm subsided, and all was calm. "Where is your faith?" He asked His disciples. In fear and amazement they asked one another, "Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey Him."

When You Feel Discouraged

Psalm 42:6–11

My God. My soul is downcast within me; therefore I will remember You from the land of the Jordan, the heights of Hermon from Mount Mizar. Deep calls to deep in the roar of Your waterfalls; all Your waves and breakers have swept over me. By day the LORD directs His love, at night His song is with me a prayer to the God of my life. I say to God my Rock, "Why have you forgotten me? Why must I go about mourning, oppressed by the enemy?" My bones suffer mortal agony as my foes taunt me, saying to me all day long, "Where is your God?" Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise Him, my Savior and my God.

Psalm 55:22

Cast your cares on the LORD and He will sustain you; He will never let the righteous fall.

Matthew 5:11–12

Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

2 Corinthians 4:8–18

We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that His life may be revealed in our mortal body. So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you. It is written: "I believed; therefore I have spoken." With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak, because we know that the One who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in His presence. All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God. Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

Philippians 4:4–7

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

When You Doubt

Matthew 8:26

He replied, "You of little faith, why are you so afraid?" Then He got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm.

John 7:17

If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own.

Hebrews 11:1-2

Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for. By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible. By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man, when God spoke well of his offerings.

When You Face Crisis

Psalms 121

I lift my eyes up to the hills—where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord the Maker of Heaven and Earth. He will not let your foot slip—He who watches over you will not slumber. Indeed, He who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.

Isaiah 43:1-2

But now, this is what the LORD says—He who created you, O Jacob, He who formed you, O Israel: Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.

Matthew 6:25-34

Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But

seek first his kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

When Your Faith Fails

Psalm 42:5

Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise Him, my Savior.

When You Feel Lonely

Isaiah 49:14–16

But Zion said, “The LORD has forsaken me, the Lord has forgotten me.” Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are ever before me.

Isaiah 54:10

“Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet My unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor My covenant of peace be removed,” says the LORD, Who has compassion on you.

Matthew 28:20

and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

John 14:18

I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.

Romans 8:35–39

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Hebrews 13:1

Keep on loving each other as brothers. Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it. Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.

When You Grieve

Matthew 5:4

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

2 Corinthians 1:3–4

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, Who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.

1 Thessalonians 4:13

Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope.

When You Need God's Protection

Psalms 27:1–3

The LORD is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life of whom shall I be afraid? When evil men advance against me to devour my flesh, when my enemies and my foes attack me, they will stumble and fall. Though an army besiege my heart will not fear; though war break out against me, even then will I be confident.

Psalms 91

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in Whom I trust." Surely He will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you will find refuge; His faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you.

You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you make the Most High your dwelling even the LORD, who is my refuge then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent. For He will command His angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread upon the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent. “Because he loves Me,” says the LORD, “I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges My name. He will call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him, With long life will I satisfy him and show him My salvation.”

Isaiah 43:1–2

But now, this is what the LORD says He Who created you, O Jacob, He Who formed you, O Israel: Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are Mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.

Philippians 4:19

And my God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

When You Need Peace

John 14:1–4

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with Me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going.”

John 16:33

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

Romans 5:1–5

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through Whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of

God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, Whom He has given us.

Philippians 4:6–7

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

When You Feel Overcome

Psalm 6

O LORD, do not rebuke me in your anger or discipline me in your wrath. Be merciful to me, LORD, for I am faint; O LORD, heal me, for my bones are in agony. My soul is in anguish. How long, O LORD, how long? Turn, O LORD, and deliver me; save me because of Your unfailing love. No one remembers you when he is dead. Who praises you from the grave? I am worn out from groaning; all night long I flood my bed with weeping and drench my couch with tears. My eyes grow weak with sorrow; they fail because of all my foes. Away from me, all you who do evil, for the LORD has heard my weeping. The LORD has heard my cry for mercy; the LORD accepts my prayer. All my enemies will be ashamed and dismayed; they will turn back in sudden disgrace.

Romans 8:31–39

What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all—how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

1 John 1:4–9

This is the message we have heard from Him and declare to you: God is light; in Him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with Him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all sin. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

When You Feel the Call to Be More Prayerful

Psalm 42:1–11

As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God? My tears have been my food day and night, while men say to me all day long, “Where is your God?” These things I remember as I pour out my soul: how I used to go with the multitude, leading the procession to the house of God, with shouts of joy and thanksgiving among the festive throng. Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise Him, my Savior and my God. My soul is downcast within me; therefore I will remember You from the land of the Jordan, the heights of Hermon from Mount Mizar. Deep calls to deep in the roar of Your waterfalls; all Your waves and breakers have swept over me. By day the LORD directs His love, at night His song is with me a prayer to the God of my life. I say to God my Rock, “Why have you forgotten me? Why must I go about mourning, oppressed by the enemy?” My bones suffer mortal agony as my foes taunt me, saying to me all day long, “Where is your God?” Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise Him, my Savior and my God.

Luke 11:1–13

One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When He finished, one of His disciples said to Him, “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.” He said to them, “When you pray, say: ‘Father, hallowed be Your name, Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation.’” Then He said to them, “Suppose one of you has a friend, and he goes to him at midnight and says, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.’ Then the one inside answers, ‘Don’t bother me. The door is already locked, and my

children are with me in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.' I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man's boldness he will get up and give him as much as he needs. "So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"

1 John 5:14–15

This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us whatever we ask we know that we have what we asked of Him.

When You Need to Feel Protected

Psalm 18:1–3

I love you, O LORD, my strength. The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. I call to the LORD, Who is worthy of praise, and I am saved from my enemies.

Psalm 34:7

The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear Him, and He delivers them.

When You are Sick or in Pain

Psalms 6:1–10

O LORD, do not rebuke me in Your anger or discipline me in Your wrath. Be merciful to me, LORD, for I am faint; O LORD, heal me, for my bones are in agony. My soul is in anguish. How long, O LORD, how long? Turn, O LORD, and deliver me; save me because of Your unfailing love. No one remembers you when he is dead. Who praises you from the grave? I am worn out from groaning; all night long I flood my bed with weeping and drench my couch with tears. My eyes grow weak with sorrow; they fail because of all my foes. Away from me, all you who do evil, for the LORD has heard my weeping. The LORD has heard my

cry for mercy; the LORD accepts my prayer. All my enemies will be ashamed and dismayed; they will turn back in sudden disgrace.

Psalms 37:39–40

The salvation of the righteous comes from the LORD; He is their stronghold in time of trouble. The LORD helps them and delivers them; He delivers them from the wicked and saves them, because they take refuge in Him.

Romans 5:3–5

Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, Whom He has given us.

2 Corinthians 12:9–10

But He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

1 Peter 4:12–13, 19

Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when His glory is revealed So then, those who suffer according to God’s will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.

When You Feel Far From God

Psalms 31:22–24

In my alarm I said, “I am cut off from Your sight!” Yet You heard my cry for mercy when I called to You for help. Love the LORD, all His saints! The LORD preserves the faithful, but the proud He pays back in full. Be strong and take heart, all you who hope in the LORD.

Psalms 51:1–19

Have mercy on me, O God, according to Your unfailing love; according to Your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and

cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned and done what is evil in Your sight, so that You are proved right when You speak and justified when You judge. Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. Surely You desire truth in the inner parts You teach me wisdom in the inmost place. Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones You have crushed rejoice. Hide Your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity. Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from Your presence or take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me. Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners will turn back to You. Save me from bloodguilt, O God, the God Who saves me, and my tongue will sing of Your righteousness. O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare Your praise. You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; You do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, You will not despise. In Your good pleasure make Zion prosper; build up the walls of Jerusalem. Then there will be righteous sacrifices, whole burnt offerings to delight You; then bulls will be offered on Your altar.

Proverbs 28:13

He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy.

Isaiah 53:5–8

But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so He did not open His mouth. By oppression and judgment He was taken away. And who can speak of His descendants? For He was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of My people He was stricken.

1 John 1:4–9

This is the message we have heard from Him and declare to you: God is light; in Him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with Him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as

He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all sin. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

When You Can't Sleep

Psalm 4:8

I will lie down and sleep in peace, for You alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.

Psalm 127:2b

. . . for He grants sleep to those He loves.

Proverbs 3:24

When you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet.

Matthew 11:25–30

Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.

When You are Tempted

Psalm 1:1–6

Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on His law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers. Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

Psalm 139:23–24

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

Matthew 26:41

Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak.

1 Corinthians 10:12–14

So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

Philippians 4:8

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable if anything is excellent or praiseworthy think about such things.

James 4:7

Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

2 Peter 3:17

Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position.

When You are in Trouble

Psalm 16

Keep me safe, O God, for in You I take refuge. I said to the LORD, "You are my Lord; apart from You I have no good thing." As for the saints who are in the land, they are the glorious ones in whom is all my delight. The sorrows of those will increase who run after other gods. I will not pour out their libations of blood or take up their names on my lips. LORD, You have assigned me my portion and my cup; You have made my lot secure. The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance. I will praise the LORD, Who counsels me; even at night my heart instructs me. I have set the LORD always before me. Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because You will not abandon me to the grave, nor will You let Your Holy One

see decay. You have made known to me the path of life; You will fill me with joy in Your presence, with eternal pleasures at Your right hand.

Psalm 31:1-5

In you, O LORD, I have taken refuge; let me never be put to shame; deliver me in Your righteousness. Turn Your ear to me; come quickly to my rescue; be my rock of refuge, a strong fortress to save me. Since You are my rock and my fortress, for the sake of Your name lead and guide me. Free me from the trap that is set for me, for You are my refuge. Into Your hands I commit my spirit; redeem me, O LORD, the God of truth.

John 14:1-4

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with Me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going.”

Hebrews 7:25

Therefore He is able to save completely those who come to God through Him, because He always lives to intercede for them.

When You are Weary

Matthew 11:28-30

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

1 Corinthians 15:58

Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

Galatians 6:9-10

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

When You are Worried

Matthew 6:19–34

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness! “No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.” Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”

1 Peter 5:6–7

Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you.

CHAPTER 4

Devotions

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PROTESTANT

Your Lord Precedes You

"But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee."

—Mark 14:28

God never sends you into a situation alone. He always goes before His children, as He did with the children of Israel when He led them with a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. You do not serve as His advance troops in a foreign and hostile situation. He always precedes you in any situation you encounter. God is never caught by surprise by your experience; He has already been there. He is prepared to meet every need because He has gone before you and knows exactly what you will need for your pilgrimage. [Deuteronomy 31:8]

Not only does God go before you, but He also stands beside you and behind you, to provide protection and comfort. [Psalm 139:7–12] Jesus knew His disciples would be totally bewildered by His crucifixion, so He assured them in advance that no matter what happened, no matter where they went, they could go in confidence that He had already gone before them. Paul, too, experienced this assurance. [Acts 18:9, 23:11] In the most bewildering circumstances, his Lord was there!

If you are going through a difficult or confusing time, know that your Lord has gone before you and He is present with you. He is fully aware of what you are facing, and He is actively responding to your need. There is nowhere you can go that you will not find Christ waiting for you to join Him. Even when you face death, you can be assured that He has gone before you in triumph. As a child of God, rest in the knowledge that your Savior preceded you, and He will walk with you through each experience of your life.

Resolutions

So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?"

—John 21:15

Jesus has a wonderful way of restoring us when we fail Him! He does not humiliate us. He does not criticize us. He does not ask us to make a resolution to try harder. Rather, He takes us aside and asks us to reaffirm our love for Him.

Peter miserably failed his Lord when he fled with the other disciples from the Garden of Gethsemane. Later, he publicly denied that he even knew Jesus. Peter must have wondered if he had been capable of being Jesus' disciple when he was unfaithful to Jesus in His most crucial hour.

As you begin a new year, you may be painfully aware that you failed your Lord in so many ways. Perhaps you were not faithful. Perhaps you disobeyed His word to you. Perhaps you denied Him by the way you lived. Jesus will take you aside, as He did Peter. He will not berate you. He will not humiliate you. He *will* ask you to examine your love for Him. He asked Peter, "Do you love me?" If your answer, like Peter's is "Yes, Lord," He will reaffirm His will for you. If you truly love Him, you will obey Him. [John 14:15] Jesus does not need your resolutions, your recommendations, or your promises to try harder this year. If your resolve to obey God last year did not help you to be faithful, it will not make you successful this year. Jesus asks for your love. If you truly love Him, your service for Him in the new year will be of the quality that He desires.

Woe is Me!

So I said: "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts."

—Isaiah 6:5

An exalted view of God brings a clear view of sin and a realistic view of self. A diminished view of God brings a reduced concern for sin and an inflated view of self. Isaiah may have been satisfied with his personal holiness until he saw the Lord in His unspeakable glory. Isaiah's encounter with the holy God made him immediately and keenly aware of his own unholiness and the sinfulness of those around him. It is impossible to worship God and remain unchanged. The best indication that we have truly worshipped is a changed heart.

Have we so convinced ourselves to a sinful world that we are satisfied with unholy living? Have we sunk so far below God's standard that when someone

does live as God intended, we consider that person “super spiritual”? If we only compare our personal holiness to those around us, we may be deceived into believing that we are living a consecrated life. Yet when we encounter holy God, our response can be “woe is me!”

You will not see those around you trusting Jesus until they recognize a clear difference between you and the rest of the world. God wants to sanctify you as He is holy. When God deals with you, there will be a radical degree of purity about your life that is absolutely different from what the world can produce. The world, including those closest to you, will be convinced you serve a holy God by your consecrated life.

Making a Difference

But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies.
—Daniel 1:8

Would you dare to believe that God, who called you to Himself and equipped you with the Holy Spirit, could work mightily through you? Have you made the connection between the time and place in which you live and God’s call upon you? World events never catch God by surprise. He placed you precisely where you are for a purpose.

Daniel did not let the temptation of his day interfere with his relationship to the Lord. He knew that to make his life useful to God he must be obedient in all things. Regardless of what the most powerful king in the world commanded, Daniel refused to compromise what he knew God required of him.

History is replete with examples of Christian men and women who believe that God would work through them to make a significant difference for His kingdom. God places Esther strategically in the king’s court at a crucial time when she could save the lives of God’s people. [Esther 4:14] God placed Joseph strategically to become the most powerful adviser to the pharaoh in Egypt and to save Jacob and his family from a devastating drought. [Genesis 41: 39–41]

Are you allowing your surroundings to determine how you invest your life? Or are you letting God use you to make a difference in your generation? Ask God to reveal His purpose for you and His will for your life today.

Trembling at God's Word

But on this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word.

—Isaiah 66:2

Do you tremble when God speaks? When was the last time you were physically affected by the reality that almighty God just spoke directly to you? John lost all physical strength when God spoke to him [Revelation 1:17]; Paul fell to the ground when Christ met him on the road to Damascus [Acts 9:4]; Moses trembled when God spoke to him [Acts 7:32]; and Peter, when he realized who Jesus was, “fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!” [Luke 5:8]

Have you lost your sense of awe that the Creator still chooses to speak to you, His creation? Do you approach the reading of your Bible with a holy expectation, listening for the life-changing words that God has for you that day? Scripture says that, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” [Proverbs 9:10] There are things you will see and hear out of your fear and reverence for God that you will not experience in any other way.

As you study your Bible, you may sense that God has something to say directly to you through the verse you are reading. Take a moment to consider the awesome reality that the God who spoke and created a universe is now speaking to you. If Jesus could speak and raise the dead, calm storms, cast out demons, and heal the incurable, then what effect might a word from Him have upon your life? The possibilities should cause you to tremble! The next time you open God’s Word; do so with a sense of holy expectation.

Ritual or Relationship?

Neither did they say, “Where is the Lord, who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, who led us through the wilderness?”

—Jeremiah 2:6

Christianity is an intimate, growing relationship with the persons of Jesus Christ. It is not a set of doctrines to believe, habits to practice, or sins to avoid. Every activity God commands is intended to enhance His love relationship with His people.

God designed worship for us to see Him in His glory and to respond appropriately; for many it has degenerated into “religion,” one more meeting to attend out of habit. God established the sacrificial system so that we, His people, could express our love to Him; but we too often diminish our gifts to our Lord

into futile attempts to appease Him and to pacify our guilty conscience. God gave us prayer so we could have conversation with Him, but we often distort this by “saying prayers” and hurrying off without ever listening to what is on our Father’s heart. God instituted His commandments as a protection for those He loves, but the commandments can be a pathway to legalism rather than an avenue for a relationship with our Father in which He protects us from harm.

Religious activity apart from fellowship with God is empty ritual. The people of Jeremiah’s day were satisfied to have the ritual without the manifest presence of God. They became so comfortable with their “religion” that they didn’t even notice God’s absence. Is it possible to pray, to attend a worship service, or to give an offering yet not to experience the presence of God? It certainly is possible! And that has been the sad commentary on many a Christian experience. Don’t settle for a religious life that lacks vital relationship to Jesus Christ. When God is present, the difference will be obvious.

God Looks for Clay

“O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter?” says the Lord. “Look, as the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel!”

—Jeremiah 18:6

God knows how to bring salvation to your family, your friends, your community, and your world. Accordingly, He looks for those that will allow Him to shape them into the instruments He requires to do His divine work. Clay has no plans of its own, no aspirations for service, nor reluctance to perform its given task. It is just clay. Moldable, pliable, totally submissive to the will of its master.

At times we excitedly announce to God: “I’ve discovered my strengths and gifts, and now I know how I can best serve You!” At other times we inform Him, “I am aware of what my weaknesses are, so I know which tasks I’m not capable of doing for You.” Yet this is not characteristic of clay. God is not limited to working with our strengths. [2 Corinthians 12:9–10] He can mold us into whatever kind of instrument He requires. When God’s assignments demands humility, He finds a servant willing to be humbled. When His work requires zeal, He looks for someone He can fill with His Spirit. God uses holy vessels, so He finds those who will allow Him to remove their impurities. It is not a noble task, being clay. There is no glamour to it, nothing boast-worthy, except that it is exactly what almighty God is looking for. Compliant, moldable, yielded clay. If your tendency is to tell the Father what you can and cannot do for Him, submit to *His* agenda and allow Him to shape you into the person He wants you to be. Like clay.

We Live by Revelation

Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint; But happy is he who keeps the law.

—Proverbs 29:18

The world operates on *vision*. God's people live by *revelation*. The world seeks grand and noble purposes and goals to achieve. People dream up the greatest and most satisfying things in which they can invest their lives. Institutions establish goals and objectives and then organized themselves to achieve them. God's people function in a radically different way. Christians arrange their lives based on the revelation of God, regardless of whether it makes sense to them. God does not ask for our opinion about what is best for our future, our family, our church, or our country. He already knows! What God wants is to get the attention of His people and reveal to us what is on His heart and what is *His* will, for God's ways are not our ways! [Isaiah 55:8–9]

Whenever people do not base their lives on God's revelation, they “cast off restraint.” That is, they do what is right in their own eyes. They set their own goals, arrange their own agendas, and then pray for God's blessings. Some Christians are living far outside the will of God, yet they have the audacity to pray and ask God to bless their efforts!

The only way for you to know God's will is for Him to reveal it to you. You will never discover it on your own. When you hear from the Father, you have an immediate agenda for your life: obedience. As the writer of Proverbs observed: “*Happy is he who keeps the law.*”

Prayer Discovers God's Agenda

Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and then He prayed.

—Mark 1:35

It was common knowledge among the disciples that they would find Jesus praying during the early morning hours. When they needed Him, they knew to go to the place of prayer. When Judas betrayed Jesus, he led his cohorts to Jesus' place of prayer.

Every time the Lord Jesus faced an important decision, he prayed. When He was being tempted to do things by the world's methods instead of the Father's, He prayed. [Matthew 4] When it was time to choose His disciples, He prayed the entire night. [Luke 6:12] If the Son of God required a night of prayer in order to

determine the Father's mind, how long might it take us in prayer to clearly determine our Father's will?

Because Jesus was often surrounded by crowds, He knows He must find a quiet place so He could clearly hear His father's voice. Jesus had many people seeking to influence the direction of His life. His disciples wanted Him to go where the crowds were. [Mark 1:37] The crowds wanted to crown Him king. [John 6:15] Satan tempted Him to make compromises in order to draw a following. [Matthew 4:3, 6, 9] Jesus knew that His mission was not to attract a crowd, but to remain obedient to His Father. It was prayer that set the agenda for Jesus' ministry. [Luke 6:12] Prayer preceded the miracles [John 11:42–43]; prayer brought Him encouragement at critical moments [Luke 9:28–31]; prayer enabled Him to go to the cross [Luke 22:41–42]; and prayer kept Him there despite excruciating pain. [Luke 23:46] Follow the Savior's example, and let your time alone with God, in prayer, set the agenda for your life.

The God of Second Chances

But go, tell His disciples—and Peter—that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you.

—Mark 16:7

Does God give second chances to those who have failed Him? He certainly did so for Peter. Peter proudly announced that he was Jesus' most reliable disciple. [Matthew 26:33] Yet Peter not only fled with the other disciples in the moment of crisis, but also blatantly denied he even knew Jesus. [Matthew 26:69–75] Peter failed so miserably that he went out into the night and wept bitterly. [Luke 22:62]

How compassionate was the risen Christ was to Peter! The angel gave the women at the tomb special instructions to let Peter know that He was risen. Jesus took Peter aside to allow him the opportunity to reaffirm his love and commitment. [John 21:15–17] The risen Lord also chose Peter as His primary spokesman on the day of Pentecost, when three thousand people were added to the church.

God's desire is to take you from where you are and bring you to where He wants you to be. When He found His defeated followers hiding together in an upper room, Jesus' first word was "peace." [John 20:19] Jesus' first words to you after you fail may also be "peace." Jesus will find you in despair and bring you peace. Then, He will reorient you to Himself so that you can believe Him and follow Him. Don't give up if you have failed your Lord. Remember what happened to Peter. God has not yet finished developing you as a disciple.

The Joy of Christ

But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that the may have joy fulfilled in themselves.”
—John 17:13

If there is anything that ought to characterize the life of a Christian, it is Joy! Jesus spoke many times to His disciples about His joy being complete and full in them. His disciples were filled with joy as they realized who they were: children of God joint heirs with Christ. [Romans 8:16–17] They had been dead in their sins but were now made alive in Christ. [Romans 6:40] They had once been helpless victims of death, but now death had no hold over them. [1 Corinthians 15:55–58] With such a marvelous salvation experience with Christ, how could the disciples be anything less than joyful?

Don't deny yourself that which is your birthright as a child of God. Don't be satisfied with a joyless life. There ought to be in every Christian a deep, settled fullness of the joy of Christ that no circumstance of life can dispel. This comes as you allow the Holy Spirit to express Himself in your life. One of the fruits of the Spirit is joy. [Galatians 5:22] This joy is unlike any happiness that is produced by the world. It fills you and permeates everything you do.

Jesus did not pray that you would merely be happy or even that you would escape grief. He prayed that you would have the same joy that the Father had given Him, a divine joy, a joy that comes from a deep and unwavering relationship with God that no change in circumstances could ever shake it. This is the kind of joy that Christ is praying will be in you.

God Brings You to Himself

You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself.
—Exodus 19:4

God did not deliver the children of Israel out of Egypt so that they could enjoy the Promise Land. He freed them from their bondage so they could come to know and worship Him. Three months after they left Egypt, God reminded His people why He had delivered them “on eagles' wings.” It was to bring the people to *Himself*. That is, God saved them so that they could enjoy intimate fellowship with Him. The Israelites had been slaves with no freedom to worship God. Now, with their own land, they could come to know and serve God freely. God's call was not to destroy the idolatrous nations in Canaan, not to settle the lands they conquered, and not to establish a new nation, although all of these would be accomplished. Rather, God called them primarily to be people who loved and

worshipped Him. Through God's act of deliverance they came to know Him as an almighty and compassionate God, and they were free to respond to Him.

We are so activity oriented that we assume we were saved for a task we are to perform rather than for a relationship to enjoy. God uses our activities and circumstances to bring us to Himself. When He gives us a God-sized assignment, its sheer impossibility brings us back to Him for His enabling. When God allows us to go through crisis, it brings us closer to Him.

If we are not careful, we can inadvertently bypass the relationship in order to get on with the activity. When you are busy in your activity for God, remember that God leads you to the experiences in order to bring you to Himself.

For the Lord, Not Men

And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men.

—Colossians 3:23

There is an important difference between doing something for people and doing something for God. God always deserves our best effort. People will disappoint us, betray us, neglect us, and mistreat us. Some will constantly ask for what we can give while offering nothing in return. From our human perspective, these people deserve our minimal effort at best. What then should motivate us to serve people, except our love for God? God deserves our love, and He demands we love others in the same way He does. We are to love our spouses, not as they deserve, but as God commands. [Ephesians 5:22–33] We are to treat our friends, not as they treat us, but as Christ loves us. [John 13:14] We are to labor at our jobs, not in proportion to the way our employer treats us, but according to the way God treats us. God is the One we serve. [Ephesians 6:5]

Mediocrity and laziness have no place in the Christian's life. Christians must maintain integrity at home and in the workplace. Working for God, as opposed to working for other people, changes our perspective as we view our endeavors in light of what He has done for us. Our toil then becomes an offering of worship and thanksgiving to the One who has given us everything we have. When people do not measure up to our expectations and we feel our efforts are being wasted, we must keep in mind that we are toiling for holy God. He is worthy of our best effort.

God's Complete Protection

"While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled."

—John 17:12

Nothing that Satan can do to you should cause you to fear. [2 Timothy 1:7] Jesus chose the twelve disciples the Father had given Him and then jealously guarded them from the evil one. Jesus sent His disciples into the world to experience difficult and dangerous circumstances, but He interceded on their behalf with His Father that they would have His strong protection from the evil one. [John 17:15]

In the same way, Jesus said that we, as His sheep, are held securely in the Father's strong hand. [John 10:28] There is no better place to be than safely in the hand of Almighty God. Do you believe this, or are you fearful of what Satan or people can do to you? The Apostle John encourages us that we do not need to fear: "He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world." [1 John 4:4] This is not merely a theological concept but a profound reality in which you can have absolute confidence. It is a promise you can cling to in the midst of a hostile and menacing world.

What you do reveals what you believe. If you are living a fearful, anxiety-filled life, you are proving your lack of confidence in God's protection, regardless of what you may say. Live your life with confidence that Jesus is continually interceding with the Father on your behalf. If you trust Him completely, you will have nothing to fear.

Iron Sharpens Iron

As iron sharpens iron, So a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.

—Proverbs 27:17

The Christian life is a pilgrimage. At times the road is difficult and we get lonely. Sometimes we may become discouraged and consider abandoning the journey. It is at such times that God will place a friend alongside us. One of God's most precious gifts to us is friends who encourage us and lovingly challenge us to "keep going."

According to Scripture, a friend is one who challenges you to become all that God intends. Jonathan could have succeeded his father to become the next king of Israel. But he loved his friend David, and he encouraged him to follow God's will, even though it meant Jonathan would forfeit his own claim to the throne. [1 Samuel 19:1–7]

The mark of biblical friends is that their friendship draws you closer to Christ. They “sharpen” you and motivate you to do what is right. True friends tell you the truth and even risk hurting your feelings because they love you and have your best interests at heart. [Proverbs 27:6]

Be careful in your choice of friends! Jesus chose His closest friends wisely. He did not look for perfect friends, but friends whose hearts were set to follow God. It is equally important to examine the kind of friend you are to others. As a friend, it is your duty to put the needs of others first. [Proverbs 17:17] Strive to find Godly friends who will challenge you to become the person God desires. When you have found them, be receptive to the way God uses them to help you become spiritually mature. Strive also to *be* the kind of friend that helps others become more like Christ.

Faithful with the Impossible

Then the Lord turned to him and said, “Go in this might of yours, and you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have I not sent you?”

— Judges 6:14

In Gideon’s mind, victory over the Midianites was an impossibility, and he was absolutely right! The Midianites, along with their allies, overwhelmed the feeble Hebrews. Yet the moment God told Gideon to fight them, victory was no longer an impossibility!

When Jesus commanded His small group of followers to make disciples of all nations, was that possible? [Matthew 18:19] Certainly, if Jesus said it was! When Jesus told His disciples to love their enemies, was He being realistic? Of course, because He was the One who would achieve reconciliation through them. [2 Corinthians 5:19–20]

Do you treat commands like these as implausible? Do you modify God’s Word to find an interpretation that seems reasonable to you? Don’t discount what is possible with God. [Philippians 4:13] When God gives an assignment, it is no longer an impossibility, but rather it is an absolute certainty. When God gives you a seemingly impossible task, the only thing preventing it from coming to pass is your obedience. When God speaks, it can scare you to death! He will lead you to do things that are absolutely impossible in your own strength. But God will grant you victory, step by step, as you obey Him. How do you respond to assignments that seem impossible? Do you write them off as unattainable? Or do you immediately adjust your life to God’s revelation, watching with anticipation to

see how He will accomplish His purposes through your obedience? God wants to do the impossible through your life. All He requires is your obedience.

Making Necessary Adjustments

Oh that my head were waters, And my eyes a fountain of tears, That I might weep day and night For the slain of the daughter of my people!

—Jeremiah 9:1

Jeremiah was invited by God to be a weeping prophet. His call came during turbulent, agonizing times as his society suffered from pervasive moral and spiritual decay. The nation of Judah had turned so far from God that it was soon to face His fierce judgment. This was not a time for merrymaking but for weeping. God looked for someone He could mold into the kind of prophet needed for such a bleak time. He found Jeremiah. The cost to Jeremiah was intense; he sacrificed much of his freedom of his youth in order to be God's messenger. He forfeited family and reputation. He endured misunderstanding, ridicule, and persecution. He was imprisoned and mocked by those to whom he had come to warn of God's impending judgment.

Satan will try to convince you that obedience carries much too high a price, but he will never tell you the cost of not obeying God. If you are to be used in God's service, you must expect to make adjustments in your life. Can you measure the distance between the throne room of heaven and a cattle shed in Bethlehem? How far is it from the Lordship of the universe to the cross? Don't be deceived into thinking there is no cost involved in obedience.

What adjustments is God asking you to make? Will you face the hardships and opposition that will come when you align your life with God's will? Jeremiah had the deep satisfaction of knowing he was a faithful and beloved servant of God. Your reward will be the same when you choose to fully obey Christ, regardless of the cost.

Obedience Step by Step

Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." Then He said, "Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you."

—Genesis 22:1-2

Our difficulty is not that we don't know God's will. Our discomfort comes from the fact that we do know His will, but we do not want to do it!

When God spoke to Abraham, His commands were straightforward. “Go to a land I will show you.” [Genesis 12:1] Then God lead Abraham over a number of tests over the years. Abraham learned patience as he waited on God’s promise of a son, which took twenty-five years to be fulfilled. Abraham learned to trust God through the battles with kings and through the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. The pinnacle of Abraham’s walk of faith was when God asked him to sacrifice the one thing that meant more to him than anything else. Abraham’s previous obedience indicated that he would have quickly and decisively sacrificed anything else God asked of him, but was he prepared for this? God did not ask Abraham to make such a significant sacrifice at the beginning of their relationship. This came more than thirty years after Abraham began walking with God.

As the Father progressively reveals His ways to you in your Christian pilgrimage, you, like Abraham, will develop a deeper level of trust in Him. When you first became a Christian, your Master’s instructions were probably fundamental, such as being baptized or changing your lifestyle. But as you learn to trust Him more deeply, He will develop your character to match bigger tests, and with the greater test will come a greater love for God and knowledge of His ways. Are you ready for God’s next revelation?

The Cost to Others

Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.

—John 19:25

There is no Christianity without a cross, for you cannot be a disciple of Jesus without taking up your cross. Crosses are painful; they forever change your life. But sometimes the greatest cost will not be to you but to those you love. You may be prepared to obey the Lord’s commands, whatever they are, because you’ve walked with Him and know that His way is best. Yet there will be those close to you who have not related to Jesus in the same way and have not heard His voice as clearly.

Jesus understood that His Father’s will for Him led to a cross. The cross would mean a painful death for Jesus, and it would also bring suffering to those closest to Him. Because of the cross, Jesus’ mother would watch in agony as her son was

publicly humiliated, tortured, and murdered. Jesus' aunt and close friends would witness His excruciating death. His disciples would be scattered in terror and confusion in what would be the longest, darkest night of their lives. Because of Jesus' obedience, there would also be a cross for each of His disciples.

Obedience to your Lord's commands will affect others. [Luke 14:26] Don't refuse to obey what you know God is asking because you fear the cost to your family will be too great. Beware lest you seek to prevent those you love from taking up the cross God has for them. Don't ever try to protect those you love by disobeying God. The cost of disobedience is always far greater. Rather, look to Jesus, your model, and see what it cost those around Him for Him to be obedient to His Father.

Tempted as We Are

For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.

—Hebrews 2:18

You will never face a temptation so strong that God has not made complete provision for you to overcome it. God, out of His love, has done everything necessary for you to be victorious whenever you face temptation. He has clearly revealed His will to you in Scripture so that you will not be confused about the right thing to do. He has placed the Holy Spirit within you to guide you in your decisions and to convict you when you make harmful choices. With every temptation God also provides a way of escape so that you never have to yield to it. [1 Corinthians 10:13] Everything is in place for you to experience victory over every temptation.

God in His infinite love, however, has done even more to safeguard you from temptation. He has allowed Himself to suffer the full brunt of temptation. The very Son of God humbled Himself, taking on all the limitations of frail human flesh, and was tempted in every way that we are. Jesus knew what it was like to grow tired, to be hungry, to experience the same limitations we have, yet He was without sin. It is to this One that we turn when we are facing temptation. Ours is not an unsympathetic God who is unconcerned with our struggle to live righteously, but we follow a God who knows how difficult it is to resist sin and withstand temptation. We can approach Christ with confidence, knowing that He understands our plight. He knows how to aid us when we are tempted.

Victory Over Sin

For there is no difference: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness . . . that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

—Romans 3:22b–26

Because of sin, Adam and Eve feel short of the perfection God intended for them. Because of sin, the Israelites relinquished the glory they could have experienced as God's holy nation. Because of sin, Judas fell short of the opportunity to be an apostle of Jesus Christ. Sin will corrupt every area of your life that it touches. Sin will cause you to fall short as a parent, church member, a worshipper, or a friend. Every area in your life is susceptible to sin's destruction.

The wonder of salvation is that God completely dealt with sin. He did what we could not do. Through Christ's sacrifice, God, by His grace, offered His salvation and cancelled the penalty of our sin. By His grace, He takes a life that has fallen short of God's best and gives it meaning. He provides the opportunity to immediately confess our sin and to be cleansed from all unrighteousness. [1 John 1:9] He mends a broken heart. His grace erases anger and bitterness. He restores severed relationships. He takes a life devastated by sin and makes it whole. He takes our failures and produces something good.

Only God can heal sin's devastation. Only He can bridge the gap between His glory and your sin. [Romans 3:23] You must trust Him to do so. If you will ask Him, He will free you from the bondage of your sin, reestablish your relationship with Him, and restore you to wholeness.

Hallowed be Your Name

"Hallowed be Your name."

—Mathew 6:9b

Our calling as Christians is to bring glory to the name of God. God's name represents His character. Taking the name of God in vain misrepresents God's character to others. [Exodus 20:7] As Christians, we carry the name of our Savior. The way we live and relate to others is a direct reflection on the name of Christ.

Doing something "in Jesus' name" is to do something that is in accordance with His character. [John 15:16] It means that Jesus would be pleased to join us in what we are doing. If however, our actions detract from God's reputation, He will

jealously guard His name. Sometimes we are too concerned with protecting the reputation of people but too little concerned with protecting the holy name of God. When the Israelites profaned God's name before the nations by the way they lived, God "hallowed" His name: He made His name holy by punishing them. [Ezekiel 36:22] When David sinned before His nation, God publicly disciplined him in order to protect the holiness of His name.

We can so tarnish the name *father* before our children that it hinders them from loving God as their heavenly Father. We can be such unforgiving Christians that our sinfulness discourages people from seeking forgiveness from our God. We can show such disrespect for God as we worship Him that those observing lose their reverence of Him as well.

Our supreme desire should be to glorify the name of God by the way we live. We ought to pray daily, as Jesus taught us to, that God's name be treated as holy.

Crouching at the Door

If you do well, you will not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.

—Genesis 4:7

When temptation enters our hearts and minds, we either deal with it and gain mastery over it, or it eventually leads us into sinful actions. The time between the initial temptation and the chosen response is critical. Much hangs in the balance.

Cain knew that God was displeased with him but pleased with Abel. Feelings of jealous anger crept into Cain's heart, and thoughts of murder prevailed his mind. As Cain considered what to do, God's Word came to him. God warned him that sin was waiting at the door of his life, looking for an opportunity to enter. Now was not the time to treat temptation lightly, not the time to assume sin would never cause any harm. Now was the time to master the sin and renounce it before it overcame him. Tragically Cain did not master sin; instead, sin overtook him and destroyed his life.

Temptations come at unexpected moments. Sinful thoughts may cross your mind. Selfish feelings may begin to invade your heart. The promptings of the Holy Spirit will warn you that God is not pleased with the direction your thoughts and feelings are taking you. At that moment of conviction, you must master the sin that crouches at the door of your life. Sin destroys. Sin brings death. Sin is not something to toy with or take lightly. God's Word to you is the same warning He gave to Cain: Master the sin at the door of your life before it brings its inevitable

and disastrous consequences. Heed His caution, and you will avoid unnecessary hardships for yourself and others.

God is with You

Thus says the Lord of hosts: "In those days ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man, saying, "Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you."

—Zechariah 8:23

God's desire is to fill His people with His Spirit so that others recognize His powerful presence in them. The presence of the Lord in a believer's life ought to be obvious. When the Spirit of the almighty God fills a believer, the believer cannot go on living as before. Others will see God.

God told His people through the prophet Zechariah that His presence ought to make a difference in their lives. If God's people walked closely with Him, people from every language and every part of the world would hear that they were a people who knew God. People would come from every nation on earth to find the true God among His people. If the people saw a child of God, they would long to be with him or her because in so doing they would be with God. God gave the vivid picture of ten people clinging to one believer, hoping to find God.

Christ's presence ought to be so evident in your life that the people around you are drawn to you. They should want their children to be with your children because your children are being raised with a godly influence. Employers ought to want you in their workplace; people should seek you for their leader because they know you as someone of integrity before God. Your life and your home ought to be a magnet for people as they sense God's presence with you and your family. The more you allow Christ to make His presence evident in your life, the more people will draw near you and find Him.

Seeing with Your Eyes

I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, But now my eyes sees You.

—Job 42:5

In His time, Job was the most righteous person on earth. He was so godly that the Lord took pleasure in pointing him out to Satan. [Job 1:8] Yet, despite his love for God and his diligent obedience to His commands, even Job had not fully come to know God. The blessings God had given to Job had not revealed everything about God's character. There were characteristics that Job would

come to realize only through adversity. So the Lord allowed Satan to test Job through suffering.

Although Job lost everything he had, even his seven children, Job discovered that God was still with him. Though he faced the most difficult and bewildering tribulations imaginable, Job came to understand that God was infinitely wiser than he. [Job 42:1–4] As Job endured the insensitivity of his friends, he learned that God is the only One who is absolutely trustworthy. Job learned much about God through his anguish. Finally, he confessed that at first he had only heard about God, but now, through his suffering, he had come to see God. [Job 42:5]

When you are in the midst of your trials, your Lord will reveal His character to you in ways you never knew. You will experience His strong and comforting presence. Like Job, you will learn that your Lord will remain, even when everyone else abandons you. You will see God more clearly as He takes you through the dark times. Then you will experience God in ways you had previously only heard about from others.

It is Your Life!

For it is not a futile thing for you, because it is your life, and by this word you shall prolong your days in the land which you cross over the Jordan to possess.

—Deuteronomy 32:47

It's puzzling that so many Christians try to live the Christian life without reading their Bible, except for sporadic perusals of God's Word, seeking a pithy thought for the day. The Word of God is not merely a source of helpful suggestions, preventive warnings, or inspirational thoughts: It is life itself!

God gathered the children of Israel at the edge of the Promised Land to review their pilgrimage with Him. They had spent forty years in a desert because their parents had not trusted God's Word. Their parents died without seeing the Promised Land because they had not believed God's Word. Even the revered Moses was soon to leave them because he had not shown proper reverence for God's Word. Many of them knew those who had been put to death as a consequence of their disobedience to God's word. Over the years God's Word had become the most important thing in the life of the Israelites.

God commanded His people to bind His words on their hearts, to teach them diligently to their children, and to regularly discuss them in their homes. [Deuteronomy. 6:4–9] So essential was His Word that it was to hold a prominent place in the daily lives of His people.

Our reverence for God's Word is revealed not only by what we say but also what we do. Spending more time reading and studying the words of people rather than the Word of God reveals our hearts' condition. To blatantly disregard God's Word is to reject life itself. To obey God's Word is the surest way to experience all that God has in store for us.

No Secrets

One of Satan's subtle deceptions is that you can do things in secret that will never be revealed. This is simply not so. The Bible stresses that everything done in darkness will one day be brought to light. So before you commit yourself to do anything questionable, seriously ask yourself, "Am I willing for those around me to know what I am about to do? Am I willing for God to watch me participate in this activity?"

The knowledge that God sees what we do, the certainty that we are accountable for every word and action, ought to dissuade us from sin. [2 Corinthians. 5:10] But we can become so alienated from God that even this knowledge does not deter us. God promises that He will publicly expose our sin so that we must give an account to others for our actions. Ultimately, everything we do will be exposed on judgment day.

Still, some people believe they can sin against God, their families, their employers, or their friends and never be discovered. God has provided a safeguard against sin: the certainty of disclosure. Scripture commands us to expose the deeds of darkness as we become aware of them. [Ephesians 5:11] As Christians we are to be the light that dispels darkness in our world. Sin cannot continue in the Christian's experience, for light cannot dwell with darkness. The only insurance against having your sins exposed is living a blameless life.

Godliness and Persecution

Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

—2 Timothy 3:12

Living a godly life will not insulate you from hardship. Paul said that the more blameless your life, the more likely you will be persecuted. According to Paul, "evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse." [2 Timothy 3:13] As the world increasingly embraces sin, worldly people are becoming increasingly intolerant of godliness. Darkness cannot tolerate light; the more your life illuminates the presence of Christ, the more you should expect opposition from

the forces of darkness. Your Christlike nature will be offensive to those in rebellion against the Christ's lordship.

You may have recently repented of your sin and taken a new step of obedience to God. Perhaps you expected to experience God's blessings immediately as He demonstrated His approval of your obedience. Instead, you were met with opposition. The persecution may have come even from other Christians who misunderstood your motives. Perhaps you obeyed God, and still your actions were met with criticism instead of praise.

If you are sincerely following the Lord's direction, don't be discouraged. Paul warned that those who seek to live godly lives will suffer persecution. Do not be surprised when this happens to you. If the world crucified the Son of God, surely the world will be hostile to anyone who lives by the power of the Holy Spirit. Persecution may be the best evidence that your life is like that of Christ. Jesus warned that the world hated Him, the Savior, and so it would certainly misunderstand and mistreat His disciples. [John 15:18]

Birth Pangs

But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs.

—Matthew 24:8 (New American Standard Bible)

When will Christ return? This question has been pondered much through the generations. The imminence of His coming provides the backdrop for everything the Christian does. Christ has not revealed exactly when He will come, but He has told us signs to watch for. The time of His coming is unclear; the fact of His coming is certain.

Jesus said that certain events would signal the nearness of His coming: There will be wars and rumors of wars; there will be famines and earthquakes; Christians will suffer persecution for the sake of Christ; false prophets will come and teach heresy, leading many astray; lawlessness will abound as people do what is right in their own eyes; the authorities will be unable to control crime. Because of lawlessness, people will become cynical and fearful, and their love for others will grow cold. [Matthew 24:6–12]

Jesus said that the signs of the end times will be like birth pangs. The pain of childbirth increases in frequency, and it increases in intensity. Jesus said that the presence of war or famine or false teachers does not mean that His coming is upon us. These things, He said, are merely, the beginning. He said that the

frequency of wars, earthquakes, and crime will increase until finally Christ's return brings everything to a finish. The *intensity* of wars and famines and other human crises will also escalate.

Our day has seen everything Jesus spoke of reach unprecedented proportions. If there were ever a time Christians should be alert to Jesus' coming, it is today.

Weariness

"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."

—Matthew 11:28-29

If you find that Christianity exhausts you, draining you of your energy, then you are practicing religion rather than enjoying a relationship. Jesus said that a relationship with Him would bring rest to your soul. Your walk with the Lord will not make you weary; it will invigorate you, restore your strength, and energize your life.

Hard work or lack of sleep can make you tired. This fatigue can usually be remedied by a good rest. But there is a deeper fatigue that goes beyond physical tiredness. There is an emotional exhaustion that comes from experiencing heavy burdens and draining crisis. There is a tiredness deep within your soul that comes from carrying the weight of the needs of others. You can go on a vacation, but your soul will not be restored. This condition can only be rectified by finding rest in Christ.

Some zealous Christians want to do all they can to serve Christ, and they exhaust themselves in the process. It was to these that Jesus extended His invitation to go to Him and learn from Him. Jesus spent most of His earthly ministry surrounded by needy multitudes. He faced relentless opposition, He often prayed throughout the night, and He rarely had any privacy; yet He always received the rest and strength that came from His Father. It was not that Jesus did not work hard but that He knew the path to spiritual rest. Are you weary? Go to Jesus and let Him give you His rest. His rest will restore your soul as nothing else can.

Not By Might

This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit," says the Lord of hosts.

—Zechariah 4:6

God's word came to His people at a critical time. They were a despondent, disillusioned people who faced a daunting task. They had been exiled in Babylon

for seventy years. During this time they had witnessed the strength of the most dominant military power in their world. They had watched the Babylonian army marching off to conquer other nations. They had seen the wealth and splendor of the Babylonian king. When Babylon was in turn conquered by the Persians, the Israelites saw an even greater superpower emerging on the world stage. They lost heart when they compared their own weakness and captivity with the enormous strength and wealth of the superpowers of their day.

As the Israelites returned to Jerusalem after seventy years in captivity, they found their city in ruins. Their magnificent temple had been destroyed. The city walls had been torn down. They had no resources to rebuild their splendid city. As these former refugees looked at the mammoth task before them, they realized their poverty and weakness, and they became greatly dismayed. Then came God's Word! He promised that they would, indeed, rebuild their city. But, He told them, the rebuilding would not be accomplished by their own power and resources but by His Spirit. As long as they had God's Spirit, they had everything they needed.

There will be times when obeying God will lead you to impossible situations. If you look at your own skills, knowledge, and resources, you will become discouraged. However, when you became a Christian, God placed His Spirit within you. You now have the resource of heaven at your disposal. The success of your endeavors will not depend on the way you use your own resources but on how you obey the Spirit of God.

God's Revelation is His Invitation

Surely the Lord God does nothing, Unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.

—Amos 3:7

Christians spend much time talking about “seeking God's will,” as though it were hidden and difficult to find. God does not hide His will. His will is not difficult to discover. We do not have to plead with God to reveal His will to us. He is more eager to reveal His will than we are willing to receive it. We sometimes ask God to do things He has already done!

The people in Amos's day became disoriented to God and to His desires. God had revealed His will; the problem was that they had not recognized it or obeyed it. Amos declared that God does *nothing* in the affairs of humanity without seeking one of His servants to whom He will reveal His activity. Tragically, there are times when no one is walking closely enough with Him to be receptive to His word. [Isaiah 59:16, 63:5 and Ezekiel 22:30–31]

Jesus walked so intimately with His Father that He was always aware of what the Father was doing around Him. [John 5:19–20] Jesus said that if our eyes are pure, they will see God and recognize His activity. [Matthew 6:22] If we are not seeing God's activity, the problem is not a lack of revelation. The problem is that our sin prevents us from noticing it.

When God is working in your child's life or when He is convincing your coworker, He may reveal His activity to you. His revelation is His invitation for you to join Him in His redemptive work. Be alert to God's activity around you. He will reveal His activity to His servants. If your spiritual eyes are pure, you will be overwhelmed by all that you see God doing around you!

The Race

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

—2 Timothy 4:7

There is much satisfaction in finishing something you have begun! The success of a race is determined not only by how well you begin but also by how well you end. Many athletes can begin a race impressively, but if they stumble or are injured or lack the stamina to finish, their good start is useless. Paul rejoiced that he had not only begun the race; but he had also finished it. His prize was a robust faith in God and a life filled with God's powerful presence.

The Christian life is not easy. Some mistakenly assume that once they become children of God, their struggles are over. Many Christians begin their walk with Christ enthusiastically; but as the pressures mount, they lose heart and abandon their pilgrimage.

Paul described his Christian life as a battle. There were times when he struggled, and only through perseverance could he continue. It may surprise us to know that the great apostle had to struggle at times to be faithful to God. Paul faced persecution, misunderstanding, betrayal, and death threats. His Christian life was anything but easy, yet he persevered.

Your faith in God is not proven by beginning the race but by enduring to the finish. Publicly announcing your commitment to Christ in your church does not compare with a lifetime of devotion to His cause. Use Paul as your model. Live your life in such a way that you can one day conclude, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith!"

Imparting Gifts

For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established.

—Romans 1:11

Your life affects those you have contact with, whether you intend it or not. It may be a positive experience for them or a negative one, but your life *will* affect others.

Paul wanted to leave a spiritual blessing with other believers. He had heard of the Christians in Rome, and he longed to go to them to build them up in their faith. Paul always mentioned the Roman believers in his prayers, even though he had never met them. [Romans 1:10] While he waited for an opportunity to visit Rome, Paul wrote a letter to the church. His letter to the Romans is one of the most cherished and challenging books in the New Testament.

We should share Paul's goal of leaving a spiritual blessing with everyone around us. We have opportunities to strengthen our parents, our children, our friends, our coworkers, and our fellow Christians. Spiritual blessings are not given haphazardly, but by choice. Our self-centeredness may cause us only to seek blessings from others rather than to impart them. Only when we are determined to focus on *giving* a blessing rather than *receiving* blessing will we have the quality of ministry to others that God gave to Paul.

You may not realize it, but your life has the potential to bless everyone you encounter. Are others strengthened and encouraged in their faith because of their relationship with you? Do you usually look at others in terms of what they can do for you or in terms of how you can encourage them? As you go about your day, strive to be a positive influence on everyone you encounter!

Who are You

And the evil spirit answered and said, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are you?"

—Acts 19:15

There is no secondhand spirituality. No one else can develop Christian maturity on your behalf. A strong Christian heritage is an asset, but it cannot take the place of your own vibrant, growing relationship with Christ.

Paul had a powerful walk with God. God used him so mightily that extraordinary miracles occurred through his life. Cloths that touched Paul were taken to the

sick, and the sick were healed. [Acts 19:10–12] Evil spirits were cast out. Paul’s preaching and teaching were instrumental in building a strong church in Ephesus. Paul’s ministry was so impressive, in fact, that others tried to duplicate it.

Seven sons of the chief priest, Sceva, attempted to cast out demons the way Paul did. They confronted an evil spirit and attempted to exorcise it “by the Jesus whom Paul preaches.” These men were trying to use a spiritual power that Paul had acquired after years of walking closely with his Lord. They could imitate Paul’s words, but they could not duplicate the power that was his through his personal relationship with God. The evil spirit retorted. “Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are you?” The demon then viciously attacked them and humiliated them. The evil spirits were fearfully aware of Jesus [James 2:19]; they were familiar with Paul’s influence over the powers of darkness. But the demons had no knowledge of the seven sons of Sceva.

You can duplicate the words and deeds of a spiritually mature Christian, but you cannot inherit his or her walk with God. Christian maturity takes effort; it comes over time. If you ignore the place of prayer and if you neglect your relationship with Christ, you will not grow in your faith. Imitating the faith of others will not give you victory. Only as you nurture your own relationship with Jesus will your life be filled with spiritual maturity and power.

Faithfulness in Prayer

Now there was one, Anna, . . . a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fasting and prayers night and day.

—Luke 2:36–37

Your faithfulness allows God to reveal greater insight to you than to the less faithful. Faithfulness brings opportunities to you that are not given to the unfaithful. God takes pleasure in answering prayers that come from a faithful heart.

Anna had been a widow for many years. In her day, a widow had little status in society and was virtually helpless on her own. Anna spent her time, day and night, in prayer and fasting in the temple. As she prayed, she yearned to see the Messiah. God chose few people to encounter the Savior when He was born, revealing His Son only to those whose hearts were faithful and pure. Anna was one of those few. Jesus would later say to His followers, “Blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear . . . it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.” [Matthew 13:11, 16]

Anna continued faithfully in prayer until her prayer was answered. The answer to her prayers did not come immediately. In fact, it came near the end of her life. But God honored her faithfulness. God's redemptive plan to send the Messiah included answering the prayers of a humble widow.

Faithful praying may mean a lifetime of waiting to receive an answer. God is looking for intercessors who are willing to continue to pray and to believe until they see God's answer.

Where Your Treasure Is

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

—Luke 12:34

What you value most is your treasure. Where you spend your time and your money is your treasure. Whatever dominates your conversation is what you treasure. What others know you for is a good indication of what your treasure is.

Most Christians are quick to claim that God is their first priority. Yet often their actions reveal that their treasure is not God but things of this world. Some Christians find it difficult to discuss their relationship with God. But they can chatter easily about their family, friends, or hobbies. Some find it impossible to rise early in order to spend time with God, but they willingly get up at dawn to pursue a hobby. Some find it difficult to give an offering to God but readily spend lavishly on recreation. Some boldly approach strangers to sell a product, yet they are painfully timid in telling others about their Savior. Some give hundreds of hours to serve in volunteer organizations but feel they have no time available to serve God.

If you are unsure of where your treasure is, examine where you spend your available time and money. Reflect on what it is you most enjoy thinking about and discussing. Ask your friends to tell you what they think is most important to you. Ask your children to list things most valuable to you. It may surprise you to know what others consider to be your treasure.

A Way That Seems Right

There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.

—Proverbs 16:25

Things are not always what they seem. Proverbs warns that we can be deceived into believing we are going down the right path and yet be heading toward death,

the opposite direction from God's will. People do not naturally seek God or pursue righteousness. [Romans 3:10–18] Only as the Spirit awakens our hearts to the Person of Christ are we able to desire God's will. If we make decisions apart from the guidance of the Spirit of God, we will be like a ship trying to sail without a compass. We will do what makes the most sense, based on our own wisdom. But what looks attractive may actually lead to sin, ultimately destroying what is precious to us, for our most profound human thinking is mere foolishness to God. [1 Corinthians 1:18–20] Only God knows the way that leads to life, and He wants to lead us to walk in it. [Matthew 7:13–14] Don't assume every opportunity that arises is from God. Satan will disguise himself as an "angel of light," and his invitations will seem to be in your best interest. [2 Corinthians 11:14] Yet his way leads only to death. [John 8:44] The Word of God will be like a light to your path, guiding you in the ways of righteousness. [Psalm 119:105]

It can be perilous to follow a path that seems right without first consulting the Holy Spirit for guidance. [John 16:13] Take time to seek the Holy Spirit's direction when you face decisions. He knows the full ramifications of your choices. The Holy Spirit will assist you to understand truth and to experience abundant life. Trust Him as He leads you.

What Comes Out of Your Mouth

"But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man."

—Matthew 15:18

The Bible stresses that what you say is an accurate indicator of what is in your heart. If your words bless and encourage others, they give evidence of a compassionate heart. If you often share the good news about Christ, you demonstrate a heart that is grateful for your own salvation. When others are in a crisis, do they know they will find peace and comfort in your words? Do you frequently and spontaneously offer prayers for others? Do your words and the manner in which you say them reveal patient heart? All of these behaviors indicate a heart that is like the heart of the Father.

Or do you often regret your words? Are there people even now who are hurt or angry because of something you have said? Do you enjoy gossip? Do you tend to criticize others? Do you feel that you are not responsible for what comes out of

your mouth when you are angry? Does your mouth spew grumbling and complaints? These behaviors come from a heart that is unlike God's heart.

You may say, "Oh, but that's just the way I am! I'm always saying the wrong thing!" Yet Scripture clearly states that an abusive tongue is not under the control of the Spirit. [James 3:3–10] A sanctified mouth is a wonderful instrument for the Lord. A heart like the Father's heart will produce only pure and loving words. Without making any excuses for your words, ask the Holy Spirit to forgive you for any words that have brought harm. Then ask Him to discipline your mouth so that every word you speak is used by God to encourage and edify others.

Now

Then another of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father."

—Matthew 8:21

Often our struggle as Christians is not in deciding whether we should obey Christ but in obeying *immediately*. We may acknowledge our need to follow Christ and commit ourselves to do what He has told us. Yet when God reveals His will to us, that is the time to obey! God's revelation of His will is His invitation to respond immediately.

Some would-be disciples pledged their willingness to follow Jesus, but they told Him they were not ready yet. In Jesus' day, a Jewish man was expected to care for his elderly parents until they died. One man wanted to wait until his father died before going with Jesus. This would be an honorable delay. The man had to choose between this important responsibility and heeding a call from the Lord. Yet God knew this man, and He knew the man's father. God would have taken care of the man's father, if he only would have followed Jesus. This was an opportunity to walk with the Son of God, yet the concerns of this life were competing for priority with obedience to God.

Timing our obedience is crucial. Invitations from God come with a limited opportunity to respond. Some opportunities to serve Him, if not accepted immediately, will be lost. Occasions to minister to others may pass us by. When God invites us to intercede for someone, it may be critical that we stop what we are doing and immediately adjust our lives to what God is doing. Missing opportunities to serve the Lord can be tragic. When an invitation comes from God, the time to respond is *now*.

Put Away Evil

So you shall put away the evil from among you.

—Deuteronomy 22:21b

It is a dangerous and costly mistake not to take temptation seriously. The sad testimony of many who have succumbed to sin's enticements is that they thought they were strong enough to remain in the midst of temptation and resist it. God requires that His people remove evil from their midst. [Deuteronomy 21:21] One way to do this is to remove anything in your environment that may tempt you to sin. When wickedness surrounds you, you are in danger of becoming anesthetized to its destructive potential. Never assume that you are immune to temptation. Do not underestimate the craftiness of the evil one.

God does not tolerate evil, for evil cost the death of His Son. Sin causes untold pain and destruction to everyone it touches. Treating evil lightly shows foolish disregard for God's redemptive work. An honest evaluation of your life will reveal temptation that you should remove, such as some forms of entertainment or ungodly relationships. When God convicts you of evil in your midst, remove it immediately!

There are times, however, when you are powerless to remove ungodly influences, so you must remove yourself from the temptation. Paul urges us to avoid every kind of evil. [1 Thessalonians 5:22] When Joseph was enticed to commit adultery by his master's wife, he fled immediately! [Genesis 39:12]

Do not lose your abhorrence of sin. Be diligent to keep any form of temptation out of your home, out of your relationships, out of your mind. You can do this only by maintaining your love relationship with God, recognizing that you are powerless to resist temptation in your own strength. You will not be able to walk closely with God unless you see sin as He sees it. Darkness and light cannot coexist. Run from the darkness to the light!

The Testimony of Others

"Here I am. Witness against me before the Lord and before His anointed: Whose ox have I taken, or whose donkey have I taken, or whom have I cheated? Whom have I oppressed, or from whose hand have I received any bribe with which to blind my eyes? I will restore it to you." And they said, "You have not cheated us or oppressed us, nor have you taken anything from any man's hand."

—1 Samuel 12:3-4

There is a freedom that comes in having nothing to hide. Living a life of integrity allows you this freedom. Your integrity is measured not by what you say about

yourself but by what God and people say about you. Samuel had lived all his life among the people of God. Leaders who preceded him were dishonest and corrupt; it would have been easy for Samuel to compromise in his dealings as well. Near the end of his life, however, Samuel could boldly stand before his nation and ask them to reveal any offense he had committed against any of them. They could not think of one.

In his position of leadership, Samuel could have taken advantage of people. Yet because he carefully guarded his motives and kept his relationships blameless, Samuel could fearlessly ask the people to report if he had mistreated them in any way. It takes courage to open your life up to scrutiny of others, but Samuel did not fear what others would say about him. He did not have to avoid anyone whom he had offended. He had a confidence that comes from living a blameless life.

If you have mistreated others, you cannot change the past, but you can choose to live with absolute integrity from this day forward. Living righteously frees you to face any person unashamedly, knowing you have behaved in a Christ like manner. If your reputation is stained, seek forgiveness from those you have offended. Ask God to guide you daily in your relationships so that you have no regrets about your treatment of others.

Pleasing God, Pleasing Others

For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.

—Galatians 1:10

At times you will have to make a choice between pleasing God and pleasing those around you, for God's ways are not man's ways. [Isaiah 55:8–9] As important as it is to strive for good relations with others, it is even more important to maintain a steadfast and obedient relationship with Christ. Disobeying God to keep peace with other people is never wise. Peace with God is always paramount.

Jesus warned that obeying Him might cause division in your relationships. [Matthew 10:35–36] If Paul's primary goal had been to please others, he would never have become an apostle of Jesus Christ. Paul went completely against the wishes of his colleagues in order to obey Christ. At times, obedience to God sets family members at odds with each other. [Matthew 10:35–36] When you follow Jesus' lordship, your family may misunderstand, or even oppose you, yet your obedience to God reflects your identity as His child. Jesus said that those who

obey His will are His brothers and sisters. [Luke 8:21] God does not intend to divide the home, but He places obedience before domestic harmony.

It is important to get alone in quietness with God so that you understand what pleases Him. The world's thinking will mislead you more easily when you are not clear about what God desires. It broke Peter's heart to know that the opinion of a servant girl had mattered more to him than the approval of his Lord! If the desire to appease others tempts you to compromise what you know God wants you to do, learn from Peter's mistake. Determine that you will please your Lord regardless of the opinion of others.

The Fragrance of His Knowledge

Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing.

—2 Corinthians 2:14–15

Whenever the Romans won a major military victory they would celebrate with a spectacular parade. The commanding general would lead the procession in a magnificent chariot, followed by his soldiers, musicians, and other officials. Then, soldiers would lead the defeated enemies through the city in bondage. As a part of the celebration, the Romans would burn fragrances on altars, filling the entire city with a pleasant aroma. Even those who could not witness the triumphal procession could hear the victory music and smell the pleasing incense. Everyone would know that their army had been victorious. The special fragrance came to symbolize victory to anyone who smelled it.

Paul used this vivid imagery to describe the effect that Christians should have in the world. According to Paul, God permeates our lives with the fragrance of the knowledge of Christ. Everywhere we go our lives should demonstrate to others that Christ is victorious. As unbelievers observe our lives, they should become aware of the victorious power of Christ. As other Christians witness the victory Christ gives us over our sin, they can rejoice in the triumph of their Lord and gain confidence that Christ will bring victory in their lives as well.

The most compelling evidence that Christ is alive and triumphant is His activity in the lives of His people. It is a privilege to be the fragrance of Christ by which others learn of God's life-changing power over sin. Your life ought to be convincing proof that God continues to work powerfully in the lives of His people.

May God Rule in Our Midst

"Your kingdom come, Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven."

—Matthew 6:10

In heaven, God's will is the only priority. A word from God brings angels to do His bidding, immediately and without question. Jesus instructed us to pray that God would accomplish His will in our world in the same way. This means that God's purposes would be preeminent in our homes, our businesses, our schools, our churches, and our governments.

Jesus taught His disciples to pray that God's purposes be carried out in the world around them. In modeling how they should pray, Jesus was teaching His disciples how to share God's heart. He demonstrated this again at Gethsemane when He prayed, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will." [Matthew 26:39] It is as we seek God's kingdom on earth, and not our own purposes, that we gain the same mind as our heavenly Father. We become co-laborers with God by praying faithfully in agreement with His desires.

As you seek the Lord's will, He will guide your praying. He will invite you not only to pray, but also to become involved in His activity as He answers your prayer. If He places a burden upon you to pray for an individual's salvation, that burden is also His invitation to join His activity in that person's life. Prayer will prepare you to be a servant through whom God can bring about His will on earth. Pray that the Lord's absolute rule on earth will begin in your life. Then watch to see how God uses you to extend His lordship to others.

Daily Bread

"Give us this day our daily bread."

—Matthew 6:11

Jesus often reminded His followers not to worry. He told them not to be anxious about tomorrow's needs or potential problems. [Matthew 6:25] Rather, Jesus stressed a daily reliance on the Father, who provides for His children day by day.

As the Israelites wandered in the desert, they had no way to get food. Miraculously, God provided manna that appeared on the ground each morning. God's provision was sufficient for one day at a time. Each day the children of Israel received fresh manna as a tangible reminder of God's love for them. If they attempted to store it for the days to come, they found that it had spoiled by the

next day. It was impossible to stockpile God's provision because God wanted them to trust in Him, not in their pantry. God's grace was sufficient for each day.

God wants us to trust Him daily with our needs. This trust does not make us poor planners or careless with our futures, unprepared to face what may come. Rather, it keeps our relationship with the Lord in its proper perspective as He reminds us daily of our dependence upon Him. God is aware of what tomorrow will bring and how we should prepare for it. He knows the problems we will face, and He has already made provision for us to overcome them. He asks us to trust in Him daily. Our faith in Him today cannot substitute for our trust in Him tomorrow. If we walk with Him closely today, we will be in the center of His will tomorrow.

Hunger and Thirst

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled."

—Matthew 5:6

Hunger and thirst are the body's way of telling us that we are "empty." Our natural response to physical hunger and thirst is to seek food and water to satisfy our need. Each Christian has an inner longing that only Christ's righteousness can satisfy. But we cannot be filled with righteousness if we are filled with self. Throughout the Scriptures God emphasizes that the one who longs for Him with all his heart will find him. [Jeremiah 29:13] As we crave righteousness, we will repent of our sin, and God will remove it from us. Our selfishness will be replaced by the fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. [Galatians 5:22–23] The Spirit will make us to be like Christ.

Righteousness is not to be taken lightly, nor is it easily attained. Holy God does not give His righteousness to people indiscriminately. He gives it to those who know they cannot live without it. Our desire for personal righteousness must be powerful, all consuming, dominating everything we do. Pursuing righteousness means that we value the opinion of God far more than we treasure the opinions of people.

Righteousness is not merely an absence of sin. It is allowing God to fill us with His holiness. [Romans 6:11] It is being like Christ. Jesus is our model of one who sought God's righteousness first, and then the Father glorified Him. We are not only to seek the kingdom of God, but we are also to pursue His righteousness. [Matthew 6:33] If we will hunger and thirst for righteousness, we will be satisfied!

The Meek

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”

—Matthew 5:5

In popular thinking, the term *meek* implies weakness. The word Jesus used had a different meaning. His picture of meekness is that of a stallion that has been brought into subjection to its master. Whereas it once fought against any attempt to bring it under control, resisting direction with all its strength, now it yields its will to its master, the stallion has lost none of its strength or endurance; it has simply turned these over to the control of the master.

For the Christian, meekness requires submitting our will to the Master. Meekness is not submitting to everyone around us; it is taking our direction from God. Meekness means that we do not have to defend our rights, but we allow the Lord to defend us. Meekness means a life that is submissive to the Holy Spirit, giving Him the freedom to make any changes He knows are necessary. Meekness involves a self-control that comes from trusting God. Meekness demonstrates an attitude of long-suffering that allows God to deal with the injustices we face.

Jesus’ life was the paragon of meekness. He could have called upon legions of angels to remove Him from the cross, yet He allowed sinners to torture and kill Him. Although Jesus was by no means powerless to defend Himself, He chose to yield His life to the Father’s will. He did this because He trusted the Father completely. When we doubt the Father, we tend to act in our own strength, rather than relying on His power. Jesus said that in relinquishing control over our lives to God, we will gain life in abundance.

The Spirit of Wisdom

The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, The Spirit of counsel and might, The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.

—Isaiah 11:2

Throughout His ministry, Jesus relied upon the Holy Spirit to direct Him as He made crucial decisions and faced relentless opposition. [Mark 1:12] Centuries earlier, Isaiah had described what the Spirit’s presence would mean for the Savior. The Spirit would give Jesus the knowledge of the will and ways of the Father. As a young boy, Jesus already possessed unusual knowledge of God’s Word. [Luke 2:47] The Spirit granted Him the wisdom to use this knowledge. The Spirit enabled Jesus to take the Word of God and apply it effectively to the specific needs of those He encountered.

If you are a Christian, the same Spirit abides in you. At times, you may pray and ask God to send His Spirit “in power.” That is the only way the Spirit ever comes! More importantly, the Spirit will come in wisdom, bringing the understanding of God’s ways.

You need God’s wisdom for the decisions you face. [Romans 11:33] Perhaps God has placed you in a position of great responsibility, and you feel overwhelmed by the decisions you must make. It may be in your role as parent, or friend, or leader that you long for the wisdom of God. The same Spirit who enabled Jesus to see through the deceptions of Satan will also guide you through the temptations that confront you. Pray that God will fill you with His Spirit of wisdom so that through the decisions you make you can live your life effectively.

Trusting God’s Wisdom

Go and tell Hezekiah, “Thus says the Lord. The God of David your father: ‘I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears surely I will add to your days fifteen years.’”

—Isaiah 38:5

The fundamental premise of Christianity is that God knows what is best better than we do. When we are experiencing God’s blessing, it is easy to believe that God knows what is best. But when God allows sickness and sorrow in our lives, we may be tempted to question His wisdom.

The Lord told King Hezekiah that his life was coming to an end. God advised him to prepare himself for death and to make arrangements to turn over the kingdom. Instead, Hezekiah pled for his life, begging God to spare him from death. [Isaiah 38:3] God loved the righteous Hezekiah and, in His grace, granted him an additional fifteen years to live. Those fifteen years would prove that God’s wisdom far exceeds human wisdom. During those added years, Manasseh was born, and he eventually succeeded Hezekiah as king of Judah. Manasseh, who reigned for fifty-five years, was the most evil king ever to rule over Judah. [2 Kings 21:1] Manasseh encouraged the worship of idolatry throughout the nation. He passed his own son through fire according to the abominable practices of idolatry. He shed much innocent blood during his reign; every part of the nation suffered from his cruelty. Manasseh’s wickedness provoked God to anger, but Manasseh ignored God’s warning. [2 Kings 21:16 and 2 Chronicles 33:10] All these hardships were caused by Manasseh, a king who would never have

been born if Hezekiah had accepted God's will for his life! Furthermore, Hezekiah's extended reign led to Judah's eventual defeat by the Babylonians. [2 Kings 20:12–20]

So much suffering resulted from Hezekiah's unwillingness to accept God's will for him. God knows what is best. Whether your circumstances are easy or difficult, you can completely trust His guidance.

Leaders and Managers

And the Lord said to Samuel, "Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them."

—1 Samuel 8:7

The Israelites were to be a nation unlike any other. Every other nation had a king or ruler, but Israel's king was to be God Himself! Still, the Israelites complained that they wanted to be like to other nations and have an earthly ruler! As we read about the Israelites, we marvel at their foolishness. Yet we are prone to make the same mistake, choosing our human wisdom over God's leadership.

There is much discussion these days about leaders and managers. According to popular teaching, leaders have the vision and set goals for people or organizations to follow. Managers handle the day-to-day marshalling of resources under their charge. In the Christian life, God is the leader of our lives, our families, and our churches. God sets the direction; He establishes the priorities; He provides the resources. We are the managers. We take what He gives us and do with it as He directs.

The biblical term for leader is *Lord*. As our Lord, Christ has the authority to reveal the direction for our lives. As Lord, He chooses our careers, leads us to our marriage partners, and helps us set our daily priorities. We are to be good managers of the mind, body, and spiritual life He gives. He is the Lord of our families. He knows what is best for our children. He knows how to make marriages strong. Our responsibility is to obey Him as He leads our families to Christlikeness. Christ is the Lord of our church. He takes responsibility for expanding it. [Matthew 16:18 and 1 Corinthians 12:18] Only He knows what is best for our church. Our task is to faithfully perform the role He assigns us.

Do not foolishly trust in human wisdom and leadership as the Israelites did. Follow your Lord and trust Him alone.

Not Quarrelsome

And the servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient.

—2 Timothy 2:24

There should be no quarrelsome Christians. The truth of God is within us; we need never be intimidated or frustrated by those who do not accept God's truth. At times people may disagree with you regarding God's Word. Perhaps they question the way you say He is leading you, or they may challenge your faith in God. At times like these it is never helpful to argue. You will never debate anyone into the kingdom of God. You will never persuade someone that God has spoken to you by out arguing them! Only God can convince others of the veracity of His word to you. If you will allow God to vindicate you in His time, and in His way, a time will come when the wisdom of your choice will be evident. [Luke 7:35] If you find yourself often quarreling with others, you need to ask God to clearly reveal your motives and to forgive you for your disobedience to His clear command.

If your motivation for arguing comes from your desire to be right, or to be exonerated, or to gain the esteem of those listening to you, you are acting selfishly, and God will not honor you. God is not interested in how right you are. He is interested in how obedient you are. God's command is not that you win arguments, but that you are kind and forgiving when others mistreat you. You bring God no honor by winning a dispute in His name, but you reflect a Christlike character when you demonstrate patience to those who mistreat you or misunderstand your motives. Arguing may never win people to your view, but loving them as Christ does will win you many friends over!

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS

The Holy Spirit

The Feast of Pentecost is the day in which the Holy Spirit descended upon the Holy Apostles, a gift that was manifested in their speaking in strange tongues, tongues that were understood by all present. It was the fulfillment of the promise of the Lord Jesus Christ, “. . . the Helper (*Parakletos*), the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring your remembrance all things that I said to you” (John 14:25).

The Lord's promise here and elsewhere is quite direct. It is the Holy Spirit who will be God's continuing presence with His people. He is called “Parakletos,” a

word that is translated into English with many words—Comforter, Counselor, Advocate, or Helper—because no one word conveys the fullness of the meaning of the Greek word Parakletos. The Holy Spirit is the third person (hypostasis) of the Holy Trinity and is all these things for us. He is our comfort, our wise counsel, our advocate, and our help in every need. Once again, our God gives His people a covenant relationship, like a contract. He gives us the promise of all the Divine blessings: comfort, counsel, advocacy, help, and more! Ours is to stay in communion with God.

St. Symeon the New Theologian stated, “. . . the goal and purpose of all of Christ’s work of salvation for us was that believers should receive the Holy Spirit.”

St. Seraphim of Sarov said it best, “Prayer, fasting, works of mercy—all this is very good, but it represents only the means, not the end of the Christian life. The true end is the acquisition of the Holy Spirit.”

Jesus Christ promises that God will dwell with those who love Him and keep His Word. He does this through the Holy Spirit. This is the point of the entire passages of the Gospel of John, chapters 14 and 16. Jesus sends another Comforter to be with His people for all time. The Church from her earliest days has recognized both the power and the divinity of the Holy Spirit. It is affirmed in the Creed, but it is quite clearly stated throughout scripture. In our Divine Liturgy, quoting 2 Corinthians 13:14, the priest blesses the faithful with these words, “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.”

Grace is a divine gift that comes from our walking in communion with our Lord, Jesus Christ. Love is also divine—God is love (1 John 4:8)—a gift that comes to us from God the Father. And communion with Him, which we have when we abide in His Word, partake of the divine sacraments of the Church, and love one another, is the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Light of the World

In the Gospel passage, Matthew 5:14–19, Jesus tells His disciples that they are the light of the world. Our Lord, Jesus Christ, affirms the evangelical nature of His Church. More precisely, He teaches that each and every one of us has a unique and special calling to shine our light, the light of course, that comes from within, from the Light of Christ emanating from our faith. As Christians, we are thus the light of the world in so far as we are in fact Disciples of Christ. This is a tremendous blessing and responsibility.

Sometimes, though, we don't feel like we have that much to offer. Young people in particular often think that they cannot do much for the Church until they get older. For whatever reason, at whatever age, it is more typical that we feel more like a match as opposed to a floodlight. Yet, both the match and the floodlight dispel darkness. Light is light.

Having been at sea, I know that if one falls overboard, it takes just the small salt water activated "chem light" from his float coat to make him visible from the distant ship and thus be rescued. A small light can save a life.

Light gives hope and encouragement. There is a story of a small boy who was in an alley with a broken piece of glass reflecting sunlight into a third story window. A man came up to the boy, reprimanding him gruffly, "What mischief are you up to now?" The little boy replied, "Nothing, sir. But I have a crippled brother living up there on that floor. No sunlight ever gets into his room. The only sunlight he ever sees is what I reflect from this little piece of glass."

As Christians, we are the light of the world. So says our Lord, Jesus Christ. Yes, we know He is the Light of the World, so what He is saying is that whosoever reflects my light, no matter to what degree, reflects me. Even though the light we put out may not be great in comparison to the great luminaries of the ages, it can save people's lives. We can offer encouragement, give hope, and share a blessing. You never know what a small bit of kindness, mercy, compassion, care and love can bring others.

The light of God, the Son of God that we reflect may be the only light that some people see. Even though others may give huge amounts of money to the Church, even though some have traveled to distant lands as missionaries, even though there are those who set a worthy example feeding and clothing the poor, that does not negate the fact that we can make sure our light shines before our brothers and sisters, to our peers and friends, to our coworkers and acquaintances.

May His light illumine us all that we may share His love and glory to others.

The Transfiguration of the Lord

The Transfiguration of the Lord is celebrated on August 6th. It was on this day that Jesus Christ took the three Apostles—Peter, James and John—closest to Him to Mount Tabor for some time in prayer. This was not uncommon in the life of Jesus that he would retreat to a quiet place for prayer. On this particular day, though, the Disciples witnessed a great miracle, revealing the glory of His divinity that would be fully manifested at His resurrection from the dead. On this day, He was transfigured before their eyes. The glory of His divinity shone

through his being, emanating from within, through His very body and His clothing. His face was altered bright and illuminating; His garments became white and dazzling (Luke 9:30).

This glory of God was always with Jesus; He did not suddenly assume it. It is who He was, God Himself. However, in this time and place of prayer, He chose to reveal it to just those three who were closest to Him. Perhaps the other nine Apostles were not ready to see the great glory of God. Perhaps they and others only understood him to be a great teacher and were not ready to understand and accept that He was the Son of God, God Himself. Perhaps they would have been blinded by the dazzling light. Maybe they would have been spiritually blind and unable to see who He is.

We should ask ourselves very similar questions: Are we too spiritually blind to see the glory of God? Do we understand that this event in the life of Christ is not just a mark in time?

The Transfiguration of our Lord is not something that just happened in the past. One of the hymns from the Great Vespers service reads: “Today Christ has changed the darkened nature of Adam, and filling it with brightness, He has made it godlike.” What happened to the “humanity” of Christ—that the Divine Light shone through—can also happen to us, to the followers of Christ, then, today and always. It can happen to us if we dedicate ourselves to a spiritual life in Christ. This holy illumination we call Theosis.

This is the aim of our life on this earth, to become changed—to allow God to enter into our heart and soul and fill it with glory and brightness that is Him. However, we work with God in this. We do not remain passive and believe that by being born again the Holy Spirit will just change us. No, we cooperate synergistically with God by following Jesus, keeping the commandments of the Law, receiving the Holy Sacraments of the Church, fasting and praying with vigilance.

St. Athanasios the Great (quoting St. Irenaeus) stated, “God became man that man might become god.” What he was speaking about is Theosis: a holy illumination, a divine sanctification, an oneness with God and the goal of our existence. No matter where we find ourselves, regardless of our path or our career, we are called as Christians, to seek this goal of Theosis.

Wearing Masks

St. John Chrysostom had much to say on the subject of wealth and poverty. He was a vigilant protagonist of the poor and constant provocateur of the wealthy.

He wrote no less than three lengthy sermons on the parable of Lazarus and the Poor Man.

One such passage is from his sixth sermon, an excerpt of which follows:

In the theater, actors enter playing parts, wearing masks on their faces, retelling some old story, narrating the events. One becomes a philosopher, though he is not a philosopher. Another becomes a king, though he is not a king but has the appearance of a king for the play. Another becomes a physician without knowing how to even handle a piece of wood, but wearing the clothes of a physician. Another becomes a slave, though he is free; another, a teacher, though he does not know his letters. They appear something other than what they are. One appears to be a physician, another appears to be a philosopher by wearing a bearded mask, and another appears to be a soldier by wearing the uniform of a soldier.

The appearance of the masks deceive us, but do not falsify their nature Come evening, the play ends and the truth appears. He who is a free man inside the theater is found to be a slave outside; for, the deceit is inside but the truth is outside.

So it is in life at its end. The present world is a theater, the conditions of men are roles: wealth and poverty, ruler and ruled, and so forth. When this day is cast aside and that terrible night comes—or rather day; night indeed for sinners but day for the righteous—when the play is ended, when the masks are removed, when each person is judged with his works, not each person with his wealth, his office, his authority, his power, but each with his own works”

St. John Chrysostom goes on, but you get the point. As Shakespeare said many years later in his play, “As You Like It” “All the world’s a stage, and all the men and women merely players.” However, St. John Chrysostom included the significant point of our accountability before God, as was the point of our Lord in the parable about Lazarus.

Lenten Prayer of St. Ephraim

Bishop Kallistos Ware states, “Before we enter the Lenten fast, we are reminded that there can be no true fast, no genuine repentance, no reconciliation with God, unless we are at the same time reconciled with one another. A fast without mutual love is the fast of demons We do not travel the road of Lent as isolated individuals but as members of a family.”

One of the most beautiful prayers written is the Lenten Prayer of St. Ephraim. It conveys what Bishop Kallistos Ware says, that what is crucial in our Lenten journey—in our entire spiritual life—above everything else is our relationship with others. The prayer captures every aspect of our life that needs attention so that we can look at ourselves and our weaknesses, and present our spiritual needs before our God asking His help in life’s journey. We pray this during many of our Lenten weekday services and we as individuals should incorporate this prayer into our daily prayers during Great Lent.

As you pray, stop between each verse and meditate on what you have just prayed and are asking of God. Reflect on how your day went vis-à-vis the words you just spoke. Then bow down before the Lord (i.e., complete a “metanoia” or prostration) and move to the next verse. With this daily discipline, your mind will be brought to that which is most important in our Lenten journey. We will realize that what is critical to our spiritual well-being is not the fasting, but the way we treat one another. The prayer is as follows:

O Lord and Master of my life!
Take from me the spirit of sloth,
faint-heartedness, lust of power, and idle talk.
But give rather the spirit of chastity,
humility, patience, and love to Thy servant.

Yea, Lord and King! Grant me to see my own errors
and not to judge my brother,
for Thou art blessed unto ages of ages. Amen.

The Sixth Commandment: You Shall Not Murder

In order to know when we fall into sin, we need to understand the meaning and intent of each of the Ten Commandments. The Sixth Commandment, “You Shall Not Murder,” can raise questions for those who serve in the military, specifically ethical questions about the taking of life.

No war is a “just war.” Just war is not a concept in Orthodox teaching. Nevertheless some wars are unavoidable, even though most deaths are innocent people in those wars. When attacked we have the responsibility of defending ourselves and our loved ones.

Before addressing directly the meaning of the words of the Sixth Commandment, it is important to note the following: Jesus Himself marveled at the faith of the centurion and told Him, “Go your way; and as you have believed, so let it be done for you.’ And his servant was healed that same hour” (Matthew 8:13). Note

that Jesus did not condemn the “profession” of the centurion, a soldier, but on the contrary, sent him on his way as he had been, an officer of Roman troops.

Elsewhere, Jesus gave specific guidance to soldiers who had asked Him what they should do. He responded, “Do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely, and be content with your wages” (Luke 3:14). Again, He does not condemn the profession, but gives counsel on how a soldier is to behave as a follower of Christ. He understood the need for defense and the obligation of military service.

How is it that Jesus could bless the centurion and offer such guidance to soldiers in light of the Sixth Commandment, “You shall not murder”? To answer this question it is important to understand the intent of the commandment.

Some Bible translations have used the word kill rather than the word murder in the text. However, this is not the best translation and most modern translations now do not use the word kill.

In Hebrew Scriptures, the word used, “ratsach,” more accurately refers to murder. It also would include suicide, which is self-murder. However, not all killing is murder. Most scholars and Orthodox theologians would agree that the Sixth Commandment does not refer to the typical type of killing that takes place in war. Obviously, to intentionally kill a fellow soldier or innocents, or to harbor deep feelings of hatred and vengeance in the context of war would be considered sinful acts and a violation of the Sixth Commandment. But, the prohibition of the killing of the enemy in a battle is not the intent of the Commandment.

Ending any life is not desired by the Church. However, the Orthodox Church recognizes that there is evil in world. In war, when a person defends one’s homeland, protects and defends innocent lives, and seeks justice when other means have failed, the person is fulfilling a duty. This is not irreparably in conflict with the teaching of the Orthodox Church.

Upon return to civilian society, Service members who have experienced combat should seek spiritual guidance in order to assess their spiritual condition and address any issues thus discovered. Through the Mysteries of the Church, especially Confession and Holy Communion, God’s grace is restored to the individual.

On Prayer and Fasting

During the season of Great Lent, our attention turns to the topics of prayer and fasting. There is much written in our Orthodox Tradition about prayer and fasting, and I would encourage that one of the spiritual disciplines we engage in

during our Lenten journey also be reading. There are so many titles available it is mind boggling. They are written for your edification.

Prayer is both personal and corporate. In other words, we should develop a habit of personal prayer daily. This takes effort. We must discipline ourselves to wake up a few minutes earlier for our morning prayer time, and break away from the television or whatever other distractions we might be engaged in, to pray our evening prayers. And, we should attend not only every Sunday Divine Liturgy, but as many of the other services of the Church that we are able.

In his book, *Encountering the Mystery*, His Eminence Patriarch Bartholomew has a marvelous way of speaking of prayer and fasting. He speaks of them in terms of relationship: as tools of relationship; relationship with both God and others. Ultimately, he says, it is all about love; love for God and love for our fellow man.

On prayer, he says: “Prayer is the touchstone of a person’s spiritual life. It discloses the true stature and authentic condition of one’s life. Prayer is what ultimately reveals who we are in relation to God and other people. If we can pray, then we can talk to others; if we know how to pray, then we also know how to relate to others. Prayer is a mirror of the inner life” (75).

On fasting, he related the following insights: “Together with prayer, fasting is a critical form of ascetic discipline in the spiritual life. Physical practices of abstinence assist in breaking forceful habits that accrue within and harden the heart over years and even over generations. The aim of fasting . . . is to refine the whole person, to render the faculties more subtle and sensitive to the outside world as well as to the ‘inner kingdom’ Fasting means walking the way of the humble, assuming the power of prayer, and regaining a sense of wonder. It is recognizing God in all people and in all things; and it is valuing all people and all things in the light of God” (81, 3).

May our great God bless and guide our Lenten journey to the foot of the cross.

Holy Theophany

The Church calendar enables us to begin our new year right because, on January 6th, we celebrate Great Feast of Epiphany, or more correctly called, Theophany. A central ritual of the day is blessing of the Holy Water. Of course, the Church new year actually falls on Sept. 1st, but our current, common celebration of the New Year gives us the opportunity to receive God’s blessing in our Church, our homes, and every aspect of our life to start the year right.

The Feast of Theophany is actually a two-fold celebration of the birth and of the baptism of Jesus Christ. It is older than Christmas, and in the Apostolic or Early

Church, it was THE celebration of the Incarnation, of God becoming man. In the fourth century, the Feast of the Nativity was added to the Church calendar and the consequent twelve-day festival ensued, the so-called twelve days of Christmas. On the latter, we celebrate His birth as an infant; in the former, the manifestation of God in the world.

The Greek word Epiphany means something revealed, or manifestation; Theophany means the manifestation of God. In His baptism by John the Forerunner in the Jordan River, the Holy Trinity was revealed. God the Father spoke from on High; He called Jesus His “beloved son;” and the Holy Spirit descended over Him in the form of a dove. The Feast Day is also called the Feast of Lights (ta Fota) because on this day is revealed the Light of the World.

The feast renders us the opportunity for a special New Year’s blessing as well. The Great Blessing of the Waters takes place on the Feast Day. In the service at the Church, or in some places on a body of water, the priest offers prayers, lengthy ones that convey the full meaning of the festival, censes and blesses the water, and sprinkles it throughout the Church. The Holy Water is then taken to the homes as well.

In our Faith, we believe that as the Son of God took our human nature, appeared in the world, and was baptized in the Jordan River. Through this, all flesh and all material things are sanctified and made pure through His divinity. The water for us is a visible, tangible sign of God’s sanctification of this world and of our very being. That is why we believe in holy water. Glory to Him!

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

The Family:

A Proclamation to the World, The First Presidency and Council of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

We, the first Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, solemnly proclaim that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator’s plan for the eternal destiny of His children.

All human beings—male and female—are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny. Gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose.

In the premortal realm, spirit sons and daughters knew and worshipped God as their Eternal Father and accepted His plan by which His children could obtain a physical body and gain earthly experience to progress toward perfection and ultimately realize their divine destiny as heirs of eternal life. The divine plan of happiness enables family relationships to be perpetuated beyond the grave. Sacred ordinances and covenants available in holy temples make it possible for individuals to return to the presence of God and for families to be united eternally.

The First Commandment that God gave to Adam and Eve pertained to their potential for parenthood as husband and wife. We declare that God's commandment for His children to multiply and replenish the earth remains in force. We further declare that God has commanded that the sacred powers of procreation are to be employed only between man and woman, lawfully wedded as husband and wife.

We declare the means by which mortal life is created to be divinely appointed. We affirm the sanctity of life and of its importance in God's eternal plan.

Husband and wife have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children. "Children are a heritage of the Lord" (Psalm 127:3). Parents have a sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness, to provide for their physical and spiritual needs, and to teach them to love and serve one another, observe the commandments of God, and be law-abiding citizens wherever they live. Husbands and wives—mothers and fathers—will be held accountable before God for the discharge of these obligations.

The family is ordained of God. Marriage between man and woman is essential to His eternal plan. Children are entitled to birth within the bonds of matrimony, and to be reared by a father and a mother who honor marital vows with complete fidelity. Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. Successful marriages and families are established and maintained on principles of faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities. By divine design, fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness and are responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for their families. Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children. In these sacred responsibilities, fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners. Disability, death, or other circumstances may necessitate individual adaptation. Extended families should lend support when needed.

We warn that individuals who violate covenants of chastity, who abuse a spouse or offspring, or who fail to fulfill family responsibilities will one day, stand accountable before God. Further, we warn that the disintegration of the family will bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets.

We call upon responsible citizens and officers of government everywhere to promote those measures designed to maintain and strengthen the family as the fundamental unit of society.

—This proclamation was read by President Gordon B. Hinckley as part of his message at the General Relief Society Meeting held September 23, 1995, in Salt Lake City, Utah.

The Living Christ the Testimony of the Apostles The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

As we commemorate the birth of Jesus Christ two millennia ago, we offer our testimony of the reality of His matchless life and the infinite virtue of His great atoning sacrifice. None other has had so profound an influence upon all who have lived and will yet live upon the earth. He was the Great Jehovah of the Old Testament, the Messiah of the New. Under the direction of His Father, He was the creator of the earth. “All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made” (John 1:3). Though sinless, He was baptized to fulfill all righteousness. He “went about doing good” (Acts 10:38), yet was despised for it. His gospel was a message of peace and goodwill. He entreated all to follow His example. He walked the roads of Palestine, healing the sick, causing the blind to see, and raising the dead. He taught the truths of eternity, the reality of our premortal existence, the purpose of our life on earth, and the potential for the sons and daughters of God in the life to come. He instituted the sacrament as a reminder of His great atoning sacrifice. He was arrested and condemned on spurious charges, convicted to satisfy a mob, and sentenced to die on Calvary’s cross. He gave His life to atone for the sins of all mankind. His was a great vicarious gift in behalf of all who would ever live upon the earth. We solemnly testify that His life, which is central to all human history, neither began in Bethlehem nor concluded on Calvary. He was the Firstborn of the Father, the Only Begotten Son in the flesh, the Redeemer of the world.

He rose from the grave to “become the first fruits of them that slept” (1 Corinthians 15:20). As Risen Lord, He visited among those He had loved in life. He also ministered among His “other sheep” (John 10:16) in ancient America. In the modern world, He and His Father appeared to the boy Joseph Smith, ushering in the long-promised “dispensation of the fullness of times” (Ephesians 1:10). Of the Living Christ, the Prophet Joseph wrote: “His

eyes were as a flame of fire; the hair of His head was white like the pure snow; His countenance shone above the brightness of the sun; and his voice was as the sound of the rushing of great waters, even the voice of Jehovah, saying: “I am the first and the last; I am He who liveth, I am He who was slain; I am your advocate with the Father” (Doctrine and Covenants 110:3–4). Of Him the Prophet also declared: “And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That He lives! “For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that He is the Only Begotten of the Father—“That by Him, and through him, and of him, the worlds are and were created, and the inhabitants thereof are begotten sons and daughters unto God” (Doctrine and Covenants 76:22–24).

We declare in words of solemnity that His priesthood and His Church have been restored upon the earth—“built upon the foundation of . . . apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone” (Ephesians 2:20). We testify that He will someday return to earth. “And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together” (Isaiah 40:5). He will rule as King of Kings and reign as Lord of Lords, and every knee shall bend and every tongue shall speak in worship before Him. Each of us will stand to be judged of Him according to our works and the desires of our hearts. We bear testimony, as His duly ordained Apostles—that Jesus is the Living Christ, the immortal Son of God. He is the great King Immanuel, who stands today on the right hand of His Father. He is the light, the life, and the hope of the world. His way is the path that leads to happiness in this life and eternal life in the world to come.

God be thanked for the matchless gift of His divine Son.

ROMAN CATHOLIC

Note: The Roman Catholic Devotions were used with the permission of THE WORD Among Us, www.wau.org.

Matthew 18:21–19:1

So will my heavenly Father do to you, unless each of you forgives his brother from his heart.

—Matthew 18:35

There is a story about a world-weary elderly man after the time of the French revolution who was reduced to begging. He wandered from town to town, seeking alms to keep himself alive. Upon entering one small town, he made his way to the church, hoping for a handout. He wasn't a churchgoing man himself, but he stayed there because of the steady stream of passersby. One day, after

watching the beggar on the church steps, a young priest of the parish approached him. He gave the beggar a clock and invited him to his own house for a meal. The beggar hesitated, saying he was not a religious man, but the priest insisted. For several days afterward, the priest invited him to find shelter in the rectory. Finally, the beggar agreed and spent many days receiving the care and hospitality of his new friend. Eventually, through this priest's witness, the man decided to come back to the church.

He tearfully confessed to the priest that he felt alienated from God because of the guilt he felt for betraying the family he had worked for as a young man. His employer had entrusted his wife and children to his care during the Revolution, but the man betrayed them. He handed them over to the authorities, and all but the youngest child were sent to the guillotine.

After telling the priest his story, the man lifted his eyes and saw on the wall a portrait of the very family he had betrayed. He asked where the painting came from, and the young priest, with tears in his eyes, said that was his family. He was the youngest child. Everyone else had been executed during the Revolution. Uttering the words of absolution, the priest added, "and I forgive you as well. Be at peace."

We may not have to forgive such a grievous wrong, but we are all called to forgive—especially those closest to us, who often hurt us most deeply. Forgiveness like this opens the gates of heaven and allows God's grace to be poured out on us and on the person we forgive. So let this story inspire you. And let it move you to be merciful as well!

"Lord, help me to become a channel of your mercy in my home!"

Jeremiah 31:1–7

With age-old love, I have loved you; I have kept my mercy toward you.

—Jeremiah 31:3

Jeremiah lived through tumultuous times. He saw empires rise and fall. He saw good and bad kings reign. He saw times when he was deeply revered and times when he was hated and scorned. And through all of it, he labored to bring God's word to the people. Sadly, very few listened to him.

Imagine how devastating it must have been for Jeremiah to see his beloved Jerusalem overrun by the Babylonian army, the Temple desecrated and burnt to the ground, and so many of his countrymen—friends and enemies alike—taken into exile as captives.

But curiously enough, Jeremiah did not respond with words of despair. He didn't even affirm God's judgment on Jerusalem's sin. Instead, Jeremiah began delivering prophecies of hope and consolation, messages filled with God's love and compassion for his people's sufferings. Just at their lowest point, when the people thought God had abandoned them, God proved that his mercy and love are stronger than any darkness—even the darkness of the human heart.

This is the wonder of our God. He never abandons us. His mercy is everlasting, and his compassion is deeper than the ocean. Even when we have brought something upon ourselves through selfness or irresponsibility, our Father stands by us, offering us not only His wise correction but His healing, His love, and His affirmation. Unfortunately, sometimes we lose sight of this truth and let our sins and failings convince us not to try to turn to God for His help and guidance.

Don't let that happen! Today's first reading offers us an excellent opportunity to reach out to the Lord and get a taste of His mercy. So take the time today to immerse yourself in these words of compassion. Let the Lord use them to speak to you right here and right now. Even if you are not facing anything particularly challenging, know that he is with you, ready to fill you with all the love and grace you need for the day ahead.

“Father, your love and mercy reach back into my past and extend forward into my future. Help me to cling to you at all times.”

Luke 6:43–49

That one is like a person building a house, who dug deeply and laid the foundation on rock.

—Luke 6:48

The planners of the world Trade Centers in New York knew something about building on rock. When construction began in 1966, they took great pains to set the whole complex on a solid foundation. Workers dug down seventy feet to the bedrock to build a seven-story high foundation wall of reinforced steel and concrete. Anchored on this base, the Twin Towers were about as firmly rooted as buildings can get.

But nine years ago, those solid towers came down in a cataclysm of dust and debris. In just a few horrific hours, more than three thousand people met an unexpected violent death—some in New York, others in Washington D.C. and others in a Pennsylvania field. Today, we remember these victims—each one infinitely precious. We pray for their families and friends, who bear the wounds of this tremendous loss. As we remember, the Holy Spirit gently invites us to consider a deeply challenging, often avoided reality: the world as we know it

is passing away. None of it—no matter how solidly based—can sustain our lives forever.

This is the truth Jesus addresses in today’s reading, using images from the construction trade he learned from Joseph. The house that collapses can stand for everything in life, and in us, that is built on earthly things: It will not endure.

But Jesus doesn’t leave us woefully contemplating the ruins. He came to open up the way to eternal life, and he tells us how to build for it. Come to me, listen to my words, and act on them (Luke 6:47).

This invitation comes at the very end of what is often called Jesus’ “sermon on the plain.” Reading this short sermon attentively would be an especially appropriate way to mark the sober anniversary of September 11th.

Jesus assured us that “heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away” (Luke 21:33). If we build on Him, we can be sure that our lives—fragile, frail and fleeting as they are—will endure forever.

“Lord Jesus, to whom shall we go in our sorrows and our joys? You alone have the words of eternal life. Help us this day to hear, to believe, and to obey.”

Isaiah 7:1–9

Unless your faith is firm, you shall not be firm!

—Isaiah 7:9

Judah’s King Ahaz had reason to be afraid. Assyria was threatening every country in the Middle East. The northern kingdoms of Israel and Syria invited Judah to join them in a military alliance, but Ahaz refused. He preferred to become a vassal of Assyria. So Israel and Syria besieged Jerusalem, intending to replace Ahaz with a non-Davidic ruler willing to join them. In the face of this threat, Ahaz and his people found their hearts trembling like the leaves in the wind. So God sent Isaiah to reassure King Ahaz: “Remain tranquil and do not fear” (Isaiah 7:4). Trust in the Lord to deliver you. If you have trouble trusting him, ask for a sign. But Ahaz chose to rely on Assyria rather than on the Lord. And in that choice, he showed that he preferred the security of a power he could see and feel over faith in an invisible God. Unable to follow Isaiah’s urging to stand firm, he gave in to his fears and asked a pagan king to protect him instead.

What makes me “tremble” today? Perhaps I am perplexed about how to resolve a complicated situation. Perhaps I’m aware of my own inadequacies in the face of a challenge. Perhaps I feel I’ve messed up so badly that it can’t be fixed.

These are good starting points actually. It's good to tremble every now and then. It's one way to be reminded of your limitations and your need for God. But for heaven's sake, don't stay there! Move forward! When you find yourself lacking in wisdom, lean into God's wisdom, and you'll find strength you never knew you had. When you know you can't do something, take a calming breath, and rejoice in the God who can do everything. When you are faced with your failures, thank the Lord that he is faithful to forgive and swift to cleanse your conscience.

Don't be like Ahaz! Stand firm in your faith that only God's plan will win out. And it's a good plan, too, far better than anything you can devise. So "remain tranquil and do not fear" (Isaiah 7:4).

"Father, I surrender every situation to you today. I believe that you have a good plan for me and I know you will help me to stand firm in you."

Luke 6:12–19

He called his disciples to himself.

—Luke 6:13

Imagine Jesus coming down from a night of prayer in the mountains. It is early morning, and His disciples have waited patiently for His return. He gathers them around Him and then one by one He calls out the names of the twelve men who will be His disciples.

Imagine how these twelve men must have felt as they heard their names being called. Were they surprised? Excited? Intimidated? Overwhelmed? At this point in time, they didn't know what this calling would entail, but they did know it involved a mission of some sort—the word "apostle" means "one who is sent." At the very least, it would mean being willing to journey with this itinerant rabbi as He traveled around Palestine.

Have you ever been selected for a task that you felt intimidated by and unequipped to fulfill? Perhaps you were surprised that you were called or felt that surely someone else was more qualified than you. Maybe you were asked to lead a Bible study group or a ministry at your parish. Or perhaps it was something that came to you with special needs or an elderly parent who required constant care.

But when God chooses us, he also equips us. He never fails to give us all the grace we need to carry out His call. Do you believe this? Unfortunately, it's easy to doubt God's power and call in our lives. Even the apostles had their moments of doubt and confusion. But at Pentecost, when they received the outpouring of

the Holy Spirit, they were filled with the power they needed to preach the good news. And look what they accomplished!

If you are feelings overwhelmed by your vocation today, step back and take a deep breath. Think about the apostles and the day of Pentecost. Think, too, about Mary and the way she surrender to God's calling for her. And most importantly, ask the Holy Spirit to give you greater confidence in his presence. He likes helping you! He loves it when you turn to Him, and He is more than happy to give you all you need to carry out your call.

“Lord, you have called me, and I answer: ‘Here I am!’ I trust that you will make up in me all that I lack.”

1 Corinthians 1:1–9

You are not lacking in any spiritual gift.

—1 Corinthians 1:7

It's tempting to feel beaten down during the day, buried under hundreds of details that cry for our attention, harried by looming deadlines, mystified by our children's (or our own) moods, fears, or choices. But the truth is, we are heirs of an amazing life! We don't have to feel burdened or confused. No, like the Christians in Corinth, we too can be “enriched in every way” (1 Corinthians 1:5).

God wants us to become confident in the vast resources we have inherited in Christ! Jesus is more than eager to provide us with every spiritual gift we need. Imagine: wisdom, knowledge, understanding, counsel, faith, and fortitude are ours in abundance. And on top of that, mercy, forgiveness, comfort, compassion, and love are constantly flowing from the throne of our heavenly Father. And they're all offered to help “enrich” our lives and the lives of everyone around us.

So how do we receive these gifts? Well, when we pray, we need to be specific—and honest—about the needs we have. Being clear with ourselves and with God about what we're seeking and then taking time to rest quietly in God's presence, will help open our eyes to the miracles God is pouring into us. In time, His answers will come in some unfolding event in our lives; or perhaps it will be a still, small voice in the quiet of our hearts or minds. Sometimes the understanding or fortitude or love we need will simply materialize at the right time.

However these gifts come, one thing is sure: God, who calls us to be holy, is faithful. Life doesn't have to be too hard. Peace and hope are not beyond our

grasp. They are not meant only for a chosen few. They are for every one of us, regardless of our age, natural talents, or station in life. It's not a matter of our own efforts. Jesus is always with us to help us stay constant in this life, and to make us ready to greet Him when He comes again.

“Jesus, I want to receive all the gifts you have for me today. I trust in your goodness. Come, Lord, and help me to follow confidently in the way you lead me.”

Ecclesiastes 1:2–11

Vanity of vanities!

—Ecclesiastes 1:2

Busy lives and hectic schedules can make us feel trapped on the treadmill of life. We all know what it feels like to put our time and efforts into daily tasks but still feel as if we're never really moving forward. This is why it is vital that we stop from time to time to try to regain the “big picture” of our lives, asking the Lord to give us a sense of awe and wonder over the beauty of life in this world.

When the daily grind shortens your horizon, you lose sight not only of the wonders of life in this world but of Jesus as well. He wants to pour out new blessings every day, if only we have the eyes to see them and the heart to receive them!

When we feel tempted to consider, like Qoheleth, that all our work and striving is useless vanity, we should remember that we now live the light of the resurrection. The endless cycle of the seasons, days, and years has given way to the promises of eternity. It has yielded to the promise of a time when everything will be made new. Now because Jesus has marked us for heaven, every year, every day, and every hour of our life is filled with divine potential. Quoting from the Book of Revelation, Pope Benedict XVI once said: “He who sits upon the throne says: ‘Behold, I make all things new’” (Revelation 21:5). The first absolutely new thing realized by God was Jesus' resurrection, His heavenly glorification. It is the beginning of a whole series of “new things” in which we also have a share.

Even the most mundane, routine tasks can take on new meaning when we do them in union with Jesus and in service to His people. No act of love or generosity is too small to escape the eyes of the Lord. No simple prayer whispered from the heart is too quiet or insignificant. That's because there is no “ordinary” in Christ. God always has something new waiting for us. So let's discover what it is! And as we do, we'll become more effective instruments in his

world and help other people to see the wonder and beauty that are all around them as well.

“Come, Holy Spirit, enkindle in me the fire of your love, and you will renew the face of the earth!”

Matthew 10:1–7

... and Judas Iscariot who betrayed him.

—Matthew 10:4

Whenever scripture gives a list of the apostles, Judas Iscariot is placed at the end, along with the note about his act of treachery. Imagine being known for all time as the one traitorous apostle! What could have possibly gone wrong? After all, Judas was among those who went out and performed mighty works at Jesus’ command. He had seen and heard everything that the other disciples saw and heard. Plus, he was not the only apostle who sinned. They all fled in the garden, and we all know about Peter’s infamous threefold denial.

So why did Peter go on to lead the entire church while Judas hanged himself? Part of the answer comes in the way Peter responded to his sin compared to the way Judas did. When Peter saw what he had done, he broke down and wept tears of repentance. And as he prayed for mercy, he sensed God’s mercy. He saw that there still was hope for him. In contrast, when Judas realized that he had betrayed an innocent man, he couldn’t get past the guilt. He couldn’t believe that God would ever forgive him. He fell prey to the lies that the devil whispered to him and so fell into despair.

The lesson for us couldn’t be clearer. We are all sinners. We have all betrayed the Lord at various times in our lives. But the secret is to be able to admit our sin when the Holy Spirit shines His light on it and to seek God’s forgiveness in repentance. Once we confess, we are forgiven, no matter how great the sin we have committed. In fact, there is nothing in all of creation that is so big or so horrible that it can separate us from God’s unconditional love and his outlandish mercy. There is no need for lingering guilt or shame—and certainly no need to despair. God knows our weakness, and He loves us anyway. That’s just how awesome He is!

“Father, I am amazed at Your love. Though I am weak and sinful, You are merciful and kind. Holy Spirit, shine Your light into any areas where I need Your mercy today. Let Godly sorrow bring me life today, so that I may get on with being Your disciple.”

Job 3:1–3, 11–17, 20–23*Perish the day on which I was born!*

—Job 3:3

With these words, Job begins his journey of discovery. Having lost everything his culture would view as a sign of God’s blessing—his wealth, his family, even his health—Job now must ask who God really is. On one level, you can read his story and be filled with pity for the poor man. But a closer reading shows us that as he travels this difficult road, Job becomes someone we all can identify with.

At first, Job’s understanding of God is limited. Job, a humble and righteous man, sees God as one who blesses him for his goodness. His friends come to comfort him in his illness and loss, but theirs is a cold comfort indeed. “You must have done something to deserve this,” says one. Another suggests that Job has some secret sins hidden away for which God is punishing him. But all the while, Job protests that he is innocent and that God should not be treating him this way.

And where is God? For much of the book, he remains silent giving Job and his friends plenty of time to think and argue and debate about how just—or rather, how unjust—God appears to be. Most of us can identify with Job at this stage of his journey. We have all had to deal with sickness, death, wounded relationships, or family strife. Challenges like these can shake the foundations of our faith. But his kind of shaking can be a good thing. After all, it’s the hard times that test and strengthen our faith. There’s no real challenge when life is good. Knowing this truth may not make the situation go away, but it can give us comfort. God is always at work in us, calling us to a deeper surrender to Him.

God has set each one of us on our own journey of faith and that journey will not always be an easy or happy one. But when we hold onto the Lord no matter what the situation, the journey will make us more alive, more hopeful, and even more human. God knows how to make something beautiful out of something broken.

“Dear Jesus, I know you walk with me every step of the way. Shine a light in every corner of my being so that I can trust you in every situation.”

Luke 6:6–11*Stretch out your hand.*

—Luke 6:10

Critics play an important role in the music world. They help the public to evaluate what is good and by doing so, they set standards for music. But critics

can also be unreceptive to anything new and different. For example, one of Bach's students called his music "turgid and confused." A contemporary of Mozart said his music was "overloaded and overstuffed." One critic said of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony: "It was hard to figure out what all the noise was about."

You could say that many Pharisees of Jesus' day had become like those critics. In their zeal to preserve the Law, they had attached their own limited expectations to it. One of those was that curing the sick was forbidden on the Sabbath—unless the sick person was in danger of death. The man Jesus healed in the synagogue had only a withered hand, so that clearly didn't qualify. These Pharisees weren't willing to admit that God could go beyond their assumptions of what the Law was all about.

The attitude can affect us as well. We can take our own personal experiences of fatherhood and apply them to God—and end up limiting him as a result. Our heavenly Father wants to go beyond our expectations, both our experiences of who He is and our expectations of who we can become. He is not interested in healing you just enough so that you can squeak your way into heaven. He wants to fill you with so much grace that you dance through those gates joyfully, bringing countless people behind you whose lives you have touched!

Don't you think it's possible that you can know the Lord even more deeply than you do right now? Don't you think it's possible that you might be able to pray with someone and see them healed? Don't be like those music critics with their limited expectations and their reliance on the status quo! God has great plans for you. So go ahead and stretch out your hand in faith and see how God fills you with his life, his love and his power.

"Lord, open my eyes to your wonderful works. Help me to see how much you've blessed me in the past so that I can be open to receive the grace you have prepared for me in the future."

Ezekiel 16:1–15, 60, 63

The word of the Lord came to me . . .

—Ezekiel 16:1

What confidence Ezekiel must have had! In chapter after chapter, he introduces his prophecies with this bold statement. But how could Ezekiel be certain that God was really speaking to him? How could he tell it was a true prophecy and not just the result of a fertile imagination? How could he discern between his

thoughts and God's thoughts? In truth, how can any of us know for sure that God is speaking to us?

There is a long answer and a short answer to this question. The long answer is that we may never know for sure what comes from us and what comes from God. Sometimes it is just too hard to tell the difference. But we can always be confident that if the words we are hearing and sharing bring comfort, hope, and the challenge of deeper faith, then God must be behind them somehow. All we need to do is keep pursuing them and know that God's word is getting out—no matter what its form or shape!

As for the short answer: Practice! It takes time to hear God's voice. It takes experimenting with the words you think you are receiving in prayer—testing them against the truth of the gospel and the teachings of the church. And it takes courage to step out in faith and share these words with others to see what kind of fruit they bear. Surely Ezekiel did all of that as he tried to make sense of his spiritual experiences! “My strength and courage is the Lord. (Isaiah 12:2)

Whether we feel confident or shaky in our ability to hear God's voice, it is vital that we slow down and take time to listen in prayer, to ponder on Scripture, and to meditate on the church's teachings. That's the only way we'll get to know God's word and learn the best way to share it with the people in our lives. We should never doubt that God has called us to proclaim His word, whether it be through words spoken, kindness offered, or a life lived in humility, faith, and love.

“Lord, open my ears so that I may truly hear you. Help me to be still and listen; so that I can become a bearer of your word to the people you put in my path.”

Luke 6:39–42

How can you say to your brother, “Brother, let me remove that splinter in your eye,” when you do not even notice the wooden beam in your own eye?

—Luke 6:42

Why do we find it so much easier to point out the faults in others instead of dealing with our own weaknesses? On the road to work, other drivers are careless and inconsiderate. Children acting up in public must have bad parents. People who never volunteer must be selfish. And what kind of mother sends her child off to school without a lunch? We can easily pass our days issuing a stream of faultfinding and pretty criticism. Why is this?

Perhaps the answer lies in our inability to recognize the beam in our own eyes. But rather than go on a beam-hunting expedition, the best thing we can do is let God show us how He looks at us. After all, His eyes are perfectly clear of any specks and beams! That means He can teach us a lot when it comes to the way we look at ourselves—and at each other.

So how does God look at us? Well, to start with, He loves us intimately, unconditionally, and unfailing (Jeremiah 1:5). He has engraved us on the palm of His hand (Isaiah 49:16). He sweeps away our transgressions “like a cloud” (Isaiah 44:22). He looks at us with compassion and concern, not with a cold calculation of all of our faults and misdeeds. He rejoices with us in our successes and mourns over our failures. And best of all, He never abandons us (Hosea 11:9). Do you believe it? Then trust Him. Go ahead and let Him show you the beam in your eye. He won’t condemn you. He won’t love you any less. He won’t change His plans for you. Of course, what you see may sting a bit, but that’s okay. A skilled surgeon, God knows how to remove that beam with as little discomfort a possible. All He wants to do is help you so that you can see the people around you more clearly—in the light of His love and mercy.

“Holy Spirit, help me lower my defense today so that you can search me and know my heart. I trust in your love for me. Come and teach me how to love everyone around me.”

JEWISH

Spiritual Basic Training

The question I most often get when I tell people that I had served with Marines is some variation of “why are they so tough on them?” To understand the mentality, one must delve past the superficial screaming and physical demands. The training really has very little to do with the physical aspects, as hard as that might be to understand. The instructors push the candidates not to the breaking point, but so they (the candidates) can see how much more they are able to achieve, so much more than they ever thought possible. By overcoming the physical challenges, the candidates are left with only their character, their mental makeup, and their soul carrying them. Once all the irrelevant materials are removed, the essence of the human is left to be built up.

I had the opportunity, good fortune, and humbling experience of having gone through a similar process 5 years ago when I went through Basic Chaplain Training. My first moments were accompanied by a rude awakening by the

Gunnery Sergeant followed by hours and then days of orientating to an entirely new set of standards and expectations. Over the course of the next few weeks—through long runs and work out sessions, lectures, and polishing, ironing and drilling—I came to realize that the dread that I had when I first started was no longer present. I had, without fully comprehending or being aware, changed. By transcending that mental block that put physical limits on my potential, I was able to reach farther back, to tap into that reserve that I did not know I possessed.

In many ways, the time now that we are now in the midst of is our spiritual basic training. We are being asked to prepare ourselves spiritually for an entire month for the period of reckoning in a few short weeks. We have added prayers, the daily blasts of the shofar, and in general have changed the tenor and urgency of our prayers. We are building up to a great moment and it would be impossible to expect that our spirits, our souls, would be ready to undertake that level of focus without some training to accustom it. But more importantly, without that challenge of the training, it would be impossible to reach those soaring heights that we all strive for within the Jewish Faith. It is during those difficult times, when we are perhaps at our lowest mentally and physically that we need to push our self over the finish line in order to lift our soul towards the heavens. During those moments, we need to reach back for that last reserve and push our self to that point which we did not think was possible.

High Holiday Reflections

Eternal God, give us understanding hearts to know that life is a quest, that You are the goal, and that prayer is a path that leads to You. May our words and thoughts bring us closer to You and each other, and may they lift us ever higher through love and devotion. We offer our prayers to You in thanks for all the blessings which You have bestowed upon us: for family and friends; for strength and hope; for health, prosperity and peace. Let it be Your will to accept our prayers and those of all Your children uttered in honesty and humility.

Bayha ibn Paquda

A man planted some trees, trimmed their roots, cleared their soil of thorns and weeds, watered the trees when necessary, and applied fertilizers to them. Then he prayed to God that the trees might yield fruit. But, had he neglected tending them and looking after them, he would not have deserved God's blessing. So too, with one who is devoted to the service of God. If he strives diligently to do what is in his power, God will aid him to achieve what is beyond his power, but, if one neglects what is within his capacity to do, God's aid and encouragement will be withdrawn.

Talmud, Berakhot 10a

As God fills the whole world, so does the soul fill the whole body. As God sees, but cannot be seen, so also the soul sees, but cannot be seen. As God nourishes the world, so also the soul nourishes the body. As God is pure, so also the soul is pure. As God dwells in the innermost part of the universe, so too does the soul dwell in the innermost part of the body.

Why Go to Synagogue?

I come to the synagogue to probe my weakness and my strength, and to fill the gap between my profession and my practice. I come to lift myself by my bootstraps, I come to quiet the turbulence of my heart, restrain its mad impulsiveness and check the itching eagerness of every muscle to outsmart and outdistance my neighbor. I come for self-renewal and regeneration. I come into the sadness and compassion permeating the synagogue to contemplate and be instructed by the heaving panorama of Jewish martyrdom and human misery. I come to be strengthened in my determination to be free, never to compromise with idolatry or bow to dictatorship, cringe before autocracy or succumb to force. I come to orient myself to the whole of Reality, to the thrust of power beyond the comprehension of my compounded dust. I come to behold the beauty of the Lord, to find Him who put an upward reach in the heart of man.

—Rabbi Solomon Goldman

We Need Moments of Celebration

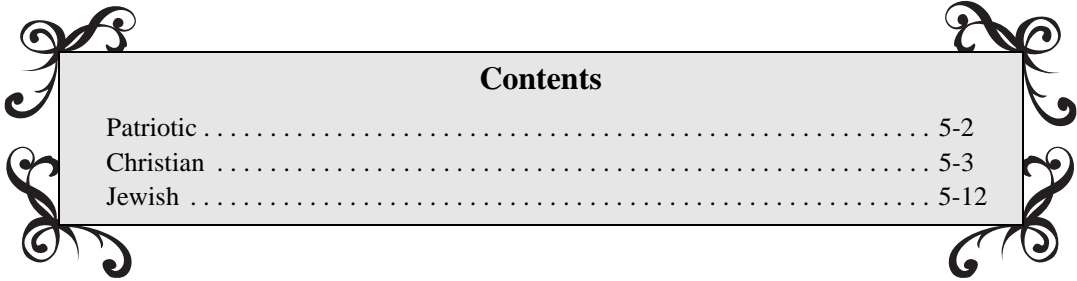
I would say to young people a number of things. And we only have one minute. I would say let them remember that there is meaning beyond absurdity. Let them be sure that every little deed counts, that every word has power, and that we can, everyone, do our share to redeem the world in spite of all absurdities and all the frustrations and disappointments. And above all remember that the meaning of life is to build a life as if it were a work of art.

You are not a machine. And you are young. Start working on this great work of art called your own existence. And one of the ways of doing it—two ways of doing it—is one, remember the importance of self-discipline; second, study great sources of wisdom. Don't read only the best-sellers. And third, remember that life is a celebration or can be a celebration. There's much entertainment in our life. And entertainment is destroying much of our initiative and weakens our imagination. What's really important is life as a celebration.

—Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel

CHAPTER 5

Lyrics to Hymns



Contents	
Patriotic	5-2
Christian	5-3
Jewish	5-12

PATRIOTIC*Oh Beautiful for Spacious Skies*

O beautiful for spacious skies,
For amber waves of grain;
For purple mountain majesties
Above the fruited plain!
America! America!
God shed his grace on thee,
And crown thy good with brotherhood,
From sea to shining sea.
O beautiful for heroes proved
In liberating strife,
Who more than self their country loved,
And mercy more than life!
America! America!
May God thy gold refine,
Till all success be nobleness,
And every gain divine.
O beautiful for patriot dream
That sees beyond the years
Thine alabaster cities gleam,
Undimmed by human tears!
America! America!
God mend thine every flaw,
Confirm thy soul in self control,
Thy liberty in law.

Eternal Father, Strong to Save

Eternal Father, strong to save,
Whose arm hath bound the restless wave,
Who biddest the mighty ocean deep
Its own appointed limits keep;
Oh, hear us when we cry to thee,
For those in peril on the sea!
O Christ! Whose voice the waters heard
And hushed their raging at thy Word,
Who walked on the foaming deep,
And calm amidst its rage didst sleep;

Oh, hear us when we cry to thee,
For those in peril on the sea!

Most Holy Spirit! Who didst brood
Upon the chaos dark and rude,
And bid its angry tumult cease,
And give, for wild confusion, peace;
Oh, hear us when we cry to Thee,
For those in peril on the sea!
O Trinity of love and power!
Our family shield in danger's hour;
From rock and tempest, fire and foe,
Protect us wheresoever we go;
Thus evermore shall rise to thee
Glad hymns of praise from land and sea.

(Alternate verse)

Lord, guard and guide the men who fly
Though the great spaces in the sky.
Be with them always in the air,
In darkening storms or sunlight fair;
Oh, hear us when we lift our prayer,
For those in peril in the air!

Marine Corps' Verse

Eternal Father, grant, we pray, to all Marines, both night and day, the courage,
honor, strength, and skill, their land to serve, thy law fulfill; be thou the shield
forevermore, from every peril to the Corps.

—J. E. Seim

CHRISTIAN

Lord I Lift Your Name on High

Lord I lift your name on high, Lord I love to sing your praises I'm so glad you
are in my life, I'm so glad you came to save us.
You came from heaven to earth to show the way from the earth to the cross my
debt to pay from the cross to the grave from the grave to the sky Lord I lift your
name on high
Lord I lift your name on high Lord I love to sing your praises.

I'm so glad you are in my life, I'm so glad you came to save us
You came from heaven to earth to show the way from the earth to the cross my
debt to pay. From the cross to the grave, from the grave to the sky, Lord I lift your
name on high

Father I Adore You

Father, I adore you, lay my life before you, How I love you.
Jesus, I adore you, lay my life before you, How I love you.
Spirit, I adore you, lay my life before you, How I love you.

He Has Made Me Glad

I will enter His gates with thanksgiving in my heart.
I will enter His courts with praise.
I will say "This is the day that the Lord has made!"
I will rejoice for He has made me glad.
He has made me glad. He has made me glad.
I will rejoice for He has made me glad.
He has made me glad. He has made me glad.
I will rejoice for He has made me glad.

As the Deer

As the deer panteth for the water, so my soul longeth after thee
You alone are my heart's desire, and I long to worship thee.
You alone are my strength, my shield, to you alone may my spirit yield,
You alone are my heart's desire and I long to worship thee.
You're my friend and you are my brother even though you are a King
I love you more than any other so much more than anything.
You alone are my strength, my shield, to you alone may my spirit yield.
You alone are my heart's desire and I long to worship thee.
I want you more than gold or silver, only you can satisfy.
You alone are the real joy giver and the apple of my eye.
You alone are my strength, my shield to you alone may my spirit yield.
You alone are my heart's desire, and I long to worship thee.

I Have Decided to Follow Jesus

I have decided to follow Jesus,
I have decided to follow Jesus,
I have decided to follow Jesus,
No turning back. No turning back.

The world behind me, the cross before me,
The world behind me, the cross before me,
The world behind me, the cross before me.
No turning back. No turning back.
Tho' none go with me, still I will follow,
Tho' none go with me, still I will follow,
Tho' none go with me, still I will follow.
No turning back. No turning back.
Will you decide now to follow Jesus?
Will you decide now to follow Jesus?
Will you decide now to follow Jesus?
No turning back. No turning back.

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation! O my soul, praise him, for
He is thy health and salvation! All ye who hear, now to His temple draw near;
Praise Him in glad adoration. Praise to the Lord, Who over all things so
wondrously reigneth, shelters thee under His wings, yea, so gently sustaineth!
Hast thou not seen how thy desires ever have been Granted in what He ordaineth?
Praise to the Lord, O let all that is in me adore Him! All that hath life and breath,
come now with praises before Him. Let the Amen sound from His people again,
Gladly for aye we adore Him.

Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty!

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty! Early in the morning our song shall rise to
thee; Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty!
God in three persons, blessed Trinity!
Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore thee, Casting down their golden crowns
around the glassy sea; Cherubim and seraphim falling down before thee, Who
was, and is, and evermore shall be.
Holy, holy, holy! Though the darkness hide thee, Though the eye of sinful man
thy glory may not see; Only thou art holy; there is none beside thee, Perfect in
power, in love, and purity.
Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty! All thy works shall praise thy name, in
earth, and sky, and sea;
Holy, holy, holy; merciful and mighty!
God in three persons, blessed Trinity! Amen.

Silent Night! Holy Night!

Silent night, holy night, all is calm, all is bright. Round yon virgin mother and Child. Holy Infant, so tender and mild, Sleep in heavenly peace, Sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night, holy night, Shepherds quake at the sight; Glories stream from heaven afar, Heavenly hosts sing Alleluia! Christ the Savior is born, Christ the Savior is born!

Silent night, holy night, Son of God, love's pure light; Radiant beams from thy holy face With the dawn of redeeming grace, Jesus, Lord, at thy birth, Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.

Silent night, holy night Wondrous star, lend thy light;
With the angels let us sing, Alleluia to our King;
Christ the Savior is born, Christ the Savior is born!

Hark, the Herald Angels Sing

Hark! The herald angels sing "Glory to the newborn King;
Peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!"
Joyful, all ye nations rise, Join the triumph of the skies;
With th'angelic host proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"
Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"
Christ, by highest heav'n adored; Christ the everlasting Lord; Late in time,
behold Him come,
Offspring of a virgin's womb. Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;
Hail th'incarnate Deity, pleased with us in flesh to dwell,
Jesus our Emmanuel. Hail the heav'nly prince of peace!
Hail the Son of Righteousness! Light and life to all He brings,
Ris'n with healing in His wings. Mild He lays His glory by,
Born that man no more may die. Born to raise the sons of earth,
Born to give them second birth.

Go, Tell It on the Mountain

Go, tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and everywhere
Go, tell it on the mountain, That Jesus Christ is born.
While shepherds kept their watching Over silent flocks by night
Behold throughout the heavens There shone a holy light.
The shepherds feared and trembled, when lo! above the earth,
Rang out the angels chorus that hailed the Savior's birth.
Down in a lowly manger the humble Christ was born and God sent us salvation
that blessed Christmas morn.

When I Survey the Wondrous Cross

When I survey the wondrous cross On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss, and pour contempt on all my pride.
Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast, save in the death of Christ my God!
All the vain things that charm me most, I sacrifice them to His blood.
See from His head, His hands, His feet, sorrow and love flow mingled down!
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet, or thorns compose so rich a crown?
His dying crimson, like a robe, spreads o'er His body on the tree; then I am dead
to all the globe, and all the globe is dead to me.
Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.

The Old Rugged Cross

On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross, the emblem of suffering and
shame; and I love that old cross where the dearest and best for a world of
lost sinners was slain.
So I'll cherish the old rugged cross, till my trophies at last I lay down;
I will cling to the old rugged cross, and exchange it some day for a crown.
Oh that old rugged cross, so despised by the world, has a wondrous attraction
for me; for the dear Lamb of God left his glory above to bear it to dark Calvary.
In that old rugged cross, stained with blood so divine, a wondrous beauty I see,
for 'twas on that old cross Jesus suffered and died, To pardon and sanctify me.
To the old rugged cross I will ever be true; Its shame and reproach gladly bear;
then He'll call me some day to my home far away, Where his glory forever
I'll share.

Christ the Lord is Risen Today

Christ, the Lord, is risen today, Alleluia!
Sons of men and angels say, Alleluia!
Raise your joys and triumphs high, Alleluia!
Sing, you heavens, and earth, reply, Alleluia!
Lives again our glorious King, Alleluia!
Where, O death, is now your sting? Alleluia!
Once He died our souls to save, Alleluia!
Where your victory, O grave? Alleluia!
Love's redeeming work is done, Alleluia!
Fought the fight, the battle won, Alleluia!
Death in vain forbids Him rise, Alleluia!
Christ has opened paradise, Alleluia!
Soar we now where Christ has led, Alleluia!

Following our exalted Head, Alleluia!
Made like Him, like Him we rise, Alleluia!
Ours the cross, the grave, the skies, Alleluia! Amen.

Hail, Holy Queen, Enthroned Above

Hail holy queen enthroned above, O Maria.
Hail mother of mercy and of love, O Maria.

Triumph all ye cherubim, Sing with us ye seraphim,
Heaven and earth resound the hymn:
Salve, salve, salve Regina!

Our life, our sweetness, here below, O Maria!
Our hope in sorrow and in woe, O Maria!

Triumph all ye cherubim, Sing with us ye, seraphim
Heaven and earth resound the hymn:
Salve, salve, salve Regina!

Immaculate Mary

Immaculate Mary, your praises we sing;
You reign now in splendor with Jesus our King.
Ave, ave, ave, Maria! Ave, ave, Maria!

In heaven, the blessed your glory proclaim;
On earth we, your children, invoke your sweet name.
Ave, ave, ave, Maria! Ave, ave, Maria!

We pray you, O Mother, may God's Will be done;
We pray for His glory; may His kingdom come
Ave, ave, ave, Maria! Ave, ave, Maria!

We pray for the Church, our true Mother on earth
And beg you to watch o'er the land of our birth
Ave, ave, ave, Maria! Ave, ave, Maria!

Let Us Break Bread Together

Let us break bread together on our knees,
Let us break bread together on our knees.
When I fall on my knees with my face to the rising sun,
O Lord, have mercy on me.
Let us drink wine together on our knees,

Let us drink wine together on our knees.
When I fall on my knees with my face to the rising sun,
O Lord, have mercy on me.
Let us praise God together on our knees,
Let us praise God together on our knees.
When I fall on my knees with my face to the rising sun,
O Lord, have mercy on me.

Amazing Grace! How Sweet the Sound

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found; was blind, but now I see.
'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear the hour I first believed.
Through many dangers, toils and snares, I have already come;
'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home.
The Lord has promised good to me, His Word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be, as long as life endures.

What a Friend We Have in Jesus

What a Friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer.
Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged; take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a friend so faithful, who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness; take it to the Lord in prayer.
Are we weak and heavy laden, cumbered with a load of care?
Precious Savior, still our refuge, take it to the Lord in prayer.
Do your friends despise, forsake you? Take it to the Lord in prayer!
In His arms He'll take and shield you; you will find a solace there.

What a Fellowship, What a Joy Divine

What a fellowship, what a joy divine, leaning on the everlasting arms;
What a blessedness, what a peace is mine, leaning on the everlasting arms.
Leaning, leaning, safe and secure from all alarms; leaning, leaning, leaning
on the everlasting arms.
Oh, how sweet to walk in this pilgrim way, leaning on the everlasting arms;
oh, how bright the path grows from day to day, leaning on the everlasting arms.

What have I to dread, what have I to fear, leaning on the everlasting arms?
I have blessed peace with my Lord so near, leaning on the everlasting arms.

Swing Low, Sweet Chariot

Swing low, sweet chariot, comin' for to carry me home!
I looked over Jordan and what did I see, comin' for to carry me home!
A band of angels comin' after me, comin' for to carry me home!
If you get there before I do, comin' for to carry me home,
Just tell my friends that I'm a comin' too, comin' for to carry me home.
I'm sometimes up and sometimes down, comin' for to carry me home,
But still my soul feels heavenly bound comin' for to carry me home!

Alleluia

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia
He's my Savior, He's my Savior. He's my Savior, He's my Savior.
He's my Savior, He's my Savior. He's my Savior, He's my Savior.
He is worthy; He is worthy. He is worthy; He is worthy.
He is worthy; He is worthy. He is worthy; He is worthy.
I will praise Him; I will praise Him. I will praise Him; I will praise Him.
I will praise Him; I will praise Him. I will praise Him. I will praise Him.

Song: Alleluia

Writer(s): Jerry Sinclair

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Through It All

I've had many tears and sorrows,
I've had questions for tomorrow,
there's been times I didn't know right from wrong.
But in every situation,
God gave me blessed consultation,
that my trials come to only make me strong.

Through it all, through it all,
I've learned to trust in Jesus,
I've learned to trust in God.
Through it all, through it all,
I've learned to depend upon His Word.

I've been to lots of places,
I've seen a lot of faces,
there's been times I felt so all alone.
But in my lonely hours,
yes, those precious lonely hours,
Jesus lets me know that I was His own

Through it all, through it all,
I've learned to trust in Jesus,
I've learned to trust in God.
Through it all, through it all,
I've learned to depend upon His Word.

I thank God for the mountains,
and I thank Him for the valleys,
I thank Him for the storms He brought me through.
For if I'd never had a problem,

I wouldn't know God could solve them,
I'd never know what faith in God could do.

Song: Through It All

Writer(s): Andrae E. Crouch

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Yes Lord Yes

Yes, Lord, yes, to Your will and to Your way
Yes, Lord, yes, I will trust You and obey
When Your Spirit speaks to me, with my whole heart I'll agree.

And my answer will be yes, my answer will be yes
My answer will be yes, Lord, yes!

Song: Yes Lord Yes

Writer(s): Lynn Edward Keesecker

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JEWISH

Adon Olam

He is the eternal Lord, who reigned before any being had yet been created;
 when all was done according to his will, already then his name was King.
 A-don o-lam, a-sher ma-lach be-te-rem kol ye-tsir niv-ra, le-eit na-a-sa ve-chef-
 tso kol, a-zai me-lech she-mo nik-ra.
 Ve-a-cha-rei ki-che-lot ha-kol, le-va-do yim-loch no-ra, ve-hu ha-ya, ve-hu ho-
 veh, ve-hu yi-he-yeh be-tif-a-ra.
 Ve-hu e-chad, ve-ein shei-ni le-ham-shil lo, le-hach-bi-ra, be-li rei-sheet, be-li
 tach-lit, ve-lo ha-oz ve-ha-mis-ra.
 Ve-hu Ei-li, ve-chai go-a-li, ve-tsur chev-li be-eit tsa-ra, ve-hu ni-si u-ma-nos li,
 me-nat ko-si be-yom ek-ra.
 Be-ya-do af-kid ru-chi be-eit i-shan ve-a-i-ra, ve-im ru-chi ge-vi-ya-ti: A-do-nai
 li, ve-lo i-ra.

Ein Keiloheinu

There is none like our God; there is none like our Lord; there is none like our
 King; there is none like our Deliverer.
 Ein kei-lo-hei-nu, ein ka-do-nei-nu, ein ke-mal-kei- nu, ein ke-mo-shi-ei nu.
 Mi chei-lo-hei-nu? Mi cha-do-nei-nu?
 Mi che-mal-kei-nu? Mi che-mo-shi-ei-nu?
 No-deh lei-lo-hei-nu, no-deh la-do-nei-nu, no-deh le-mal-kei-nu, no-deh
 le-mo-shi-ei-nu.
 Ba-ruch E-lo-hei-nu, ba-ruch A-do-nei-nu, ba-ruch Mal-kei-nu, ba-ruch
 Mo-shi-ei-nu.
 A-ta hu E-lo-hei-nu, a-ta hu A-do-nei-nu, A-ta hu Mal-kei-nu, a-ta hu
 Mo-shi-ei-nu.

Lecha Dodi

Beloved, come to meet the bride; beloved, come to greet Shabbat.
 Enter in peace, O crown of your husband; enter in gladness, enter in joy. Come
 to the people that keeps its faith. Enter, O Bride! Enter, O Bride!
 Refrain: L'kha dodi likrat kallah, p'nei Shabbat n'kab'la.
 Shamor v'za-khor b'di-bur ekhad, Hish-mi-anu eil ham-yu-khad, Adonai e-khad
 u-sh'mo e-khad, L'sheim ul'tif-eret v'lit-hi-la.
 Refrain: L'kha. . .
 Likrat Shabbat l'khu v'neil-kha, Ki hi m'kor hab-ra- kha,
 Mei-rosh mi-ke-dem n'su-kha, Sof ma-a-seh b'makh-sha-va, te-khi-la.
 Refrain: L'kha . . .

Ya-min us-mol tif-rotzi, v'et Adonai ta-aritzi.

Al yad ish ben par-tzi, v'nis-m'kha v'na-gila.

Refrain: L'kha . . .

(We rise and face the door to welcome the Shabbat bride.)

Bo'i v'shalom a-teret ba-la, Gam b'simkha uv-tza- ha-la

Tokh emu-nei am s'gu-la, (bow twice to the Shabbat bride)

Bo'i kallah, Bo'i kallah.

Refrain: L'kha . . .

Shalom Aleichem

Peace be unto you, O ministering angels, messengers of the Most High, the
supreme King of kings, the Holy One, blessed is He.

Sha-lom a-lei-chem, mal-a-chei ha-sha-reit, mal-a-chei El-yon, mi-me-lech ma-
le-chei ha-me-la-chim, ha-ka-dosh ba-ruch Hu.

Bo-a-chem le-sha-lom . . .

Ba-re-chu-ni le-sha-lom . . .

Tsei-te-chem le-sha-lom . . .

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APPENIDIX A

United States Marine Corps Weekly Pattern of Prayer



United States Marine Corps



Weekly Pattern of Prayer

- M**otive—God weigh our motives. (*Proverbs 16:2*) Monday
“All a man’s ways seem innocent to him.
but motives are weighed by the Lord.”
- C**onfidence—God, restore our confidence. (*Isaiah 43:1-3*) Tuesday
“Fear not for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by
name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be
with you; and when you pass through the rivers they will not
sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be
burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the Lord
your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.”
- C**ourage—God, make us courageous. (*Deuteronomy 31:6*) Wednesday
“Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified
because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; He will
never leave you nor forsake you.”
- H**oliness—God, draw us toward holiness. (*Colossians 3:12*) Thursday
“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly
loved, clothe yourselves with compasison, kindness,
humility, gentleness and patience.”
- A**lert—God, keep us alert. (*1 Peter 5:8-9*) Friday
“Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like
a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing
firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throught the
world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.”
- P**ease—God, fill us with peace. (*2 Timothy 21:7*) Saturday
“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power
and of love and of a sound mind.”
- S**erve—God, give us a servant’s heart. (*Romans 12:11-13*) Sunday
“Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the
Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.
Share with God’s people who are in need.”

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Chapter 1. Statements of Faith

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS

Creed of Faith

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THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

The Articles of Faith of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

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JUDIASM

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BUDDHISM

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Chapter 2. Prayers

WELL-KNOWN PRAYERS

Self-Dedication

For Those in Our Country's Service in Time of War

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PERSONAL PRAYERS IN TIMES OF NEED

Chaplain Scott Morton, CDR, CHC, USN

PRAYERS FOR HEALING AND RENEWAL

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ROMAN CATHOLIC**Christopher Prayer**

As adapted by Father James Keller, M.M., founder of The Christophers

ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN**Trisagon Prayer; Morning Prayer; Evening Prayer; Prayer Before Reading Scripture; Prayer for Forgiveness; and Lenten Prayer**

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JEWISH**Shema; Prayer on Starting a Journey; Confession for Critically Ill; When the End is Approaching; and Mourner's Kaddish (an English Translation) and Barechu;**

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ISLAMIC**Call to Prayer (an English Translation)**

Chaplain Abuhena Saifulislam, LCDR, CHC, USN

HINDU

The Gita, The Song of Eternal Wisdom. 505.35 (2009). Mumbai, India: Amar Chitra Katha Pvt Ltd, 1977.

BUDDHIST MEDITATIONS**Invocation; Metta Sutra**

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Chapter 3. Scriptures**KEY SCRIPTURE VERSES IN TIMES OF NEED**

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THE HOLY QUR'AN

English translations by Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Chapter 4. Devotions**PROTESTANT**

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Patriarch Bartholomew. *Encountering the Mystery Understanding Orthodox Christianity Today*. New York: DoubleDay, 2008.

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

The Family: A Proclamation to the World, The First Presidency and Council of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; and The Living Christ The Testimony of the Apostles The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

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Chapter 5. Lyrics to Hymns**PATRIOTIC**

Book of Worship for United States Forces. Washington D.C.: U.S. Printing Office, 1974.

CHRISTIAN**Lord I Lift Your Name on High**

Composition/Song Title: LORD I LIFT YOUR NAME ON HIGH

Writer Credits: Rick Founds

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Father I Adore You

Composition/Song Title: FATHER I ADORE YOU

Writer Credits: Terrye Coelho Strom

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He Has Made Me Glad

Composition/Song Title: HE HAS MADE ME GLAD

Writer Credits: Leona Von Brethorst

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As the Deer

Composition/Song Title: AS THE DEER

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Alleluia

Writer(s): Jerry Sinclair

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Through It All

Writer(s): Andrae E. Crouch

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Yes Lord Yes

Writer(s): Lynn Edward Keesecker

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JEWISH

Adon Olam; Ein Keiloheinu; Lecha Dodi; and Shalom Aleichem

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