

**My People Which
Are Called
By My Name**

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Introduction

Before I came to the Lord I was lonely. I was empty inside. I felt like I had no purpose and there was no meaning for life and all the heartache that I was going through. I had a void in my life. I tried to fill that, and when I did, I did a lot of stupid things. Those really did nothing but make all that worse. When I got saved, gave my heart and life to Jesus and started living for Him, that void was one of the first things that left. My heart was no longer empty. My life was no longer empty. I knew that I belonged. I still had a time with my self-esteem. Because I had been on such a destructive course before I came to the Lord, I had messed up my life with sin, I had a hard time with knowing that I was special. The devil would fight me to try to keep me from knowing who I was in God. He knew that if I ever got hold of that knowledge, nothing would stop me from serving the Lord full time.

I started traveling with New Life Ministries over 30 years ago. When I first met Bishop Goad, I hadn't been saved long, and I was still a mess. I was a work in progress, but still had a lot of weak areas in my life. One of the first lengthy conversations that he had with me changed my life. He talked to me about who I was in God. He didn't talk to me about what a mess I was, but he talked to me about who I was in Christ according to God's Word. That changed my life. All these years later, I can still

remember that conversation, it made that great of an impression on me. That is why I am writing this book.

If you are newly saved, or if you have been a Christian for years, you may not realize who you are in Christ. You belong. You belong to one of the greatest families there are—the family of God. You belong to God who created the heavens and the earth. When you realize who you are in Him, this knowledge will change your life like it did mine. It will give you victory that the devil can't steal from you. I Peter 2:9-10 tells us, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood; and holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light: which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy." II Corinthians 6:16, "...As God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them: and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." How special are you? Very special indeed. If you don't believe it, keep reading. You'll see.

Chapter 1

What It Means to Be God's People

One of the greatest feelings is to know that we belong. One of the worst feelings we can have is loneliness. When we know we belong to someone, we feel fulfilled. We get our purpose from belonging. We are a part. When we don't feel like we belong, we feel empty and without a purpose. Loneliness is a terrible feeling. It is one of the leading causes of suicide. It is strange and sad that people, who may always have a crowd around them, people with families surrounding them, suffer from loneliness. Why is loneliness such a problem?

We were created to be a part of the greatest Someone in the world. We were created to be loved by a supernatural love. You see you aren't here just by chance. You were created. (Genesis 1:27-28a, "So in the image of God created He him, male and female created He them, and God blessed them...") You were created in the image of God Himself with an eternal soul and spirit that will never die. When God created us, He looked at all He had made and was pleased with His creation, including people. (Genesis 1:31, "And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good...") When God originally made man, He was pleased with His creation.

Why did God create us? To love us. To have fellowship with Him. (I John 1:3, "And truly

our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.”) Until we find our fellowship with God and realize that we’re created to become a part of Him and His family, we will feel alone. When we realize how much He loves us, we will begin to become all that we can be. Until we know that we belong to God and commit ourselves to Him, we will feel inside like something is missing from our lives. He is the missing piece. Until we find that, nothing else can satisfy.

When we accept salvation and commit and submit to God, we become His people. (Romans 9:25, “...I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved.”) When we get saved and ask Jesus to come into our heart, we become a part of His people. We may have felt like the biggest nobody and the biggest nothing up until that time, but when we take our place in the family of God we become somebody. We belong. We are royalty. (I Peter 2:9-10, “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood; and holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light: which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.”) The next verse starts with these words, “dearly beloved”. You are special, even beloved. Through God’s great love for you, you are one of the greatest assets this world will

ever have. If you could only see what potential you have in God, and what potential He has in you, you could turn the world upside down. You have the knowledge of the Word of God. You have Jesus Christ inside of you through the power of God's Spirit. You are one of God's people. Can you belong to anything greater?

As God's people, we have certain blessings promised for our life. One of the greatest of these is peace. (Psalm 29:11, "The Lord will give strength unto His people; the Lord will bless His people with peace.") We live in a time when there is no peace. The Bible tells us in Luke 21:26 that in the last days, "men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things, which are coming on earth." Today men's hearts are fearful. But we know that, as God's people, He will keep us in peace. We know that if bad things do happen, they will work out for our good. (Romans 8:28, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.") God will keep His people who put their trust in Him and who obey Him. (Proverbs 29:25, "The fear of man bringeth a snare; but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe." Isaiah 26:3, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee.") If we spend all our time thinking about all the bad things that can happen and worrying about what is going on around us, our hearts will literally fail us with fear. Stress is the leading cause for

heart problems and many other health problems. But if we keep our mind on God, His ways, His love for His people, and we trust Him, we will have the peace that He promises to His people.

When you are lonely, when you feel you don't belong, or when you are afraid, read God's Word. Read the verses in this chapter. If you have accepted His salvation, you are His people!!! What a wonderful thing to be!!! This is for forever. (Revelations 21:3, "And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God.")

Chapter 2.
***How Can I Be a Part of
God's People?***

We become God's people by accepting His salvation and His love. John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only 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." We are saved because we believe in God and His gift to us, His Son, Jesus, Who gave His life for us to be forgiven of our sins. You can be saved when you repent of your sins, confess them and turn from them. Then ask Jesus to come into your hearts and know and believe He will. And He does. (Romans 10:9-10, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.") Romans 10:13 says, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.") To become God's people we believe in our hearts, repent and accept His forgiveness that Jesus died to give us. We ask Him into our hearts, and commit our lives to Him. From there we yield to His Spirit working in us. We yield to His Spirit guiding us.

If you haven't accepted Jesus as your Savior let me invite you to. It's the greatest thing you will ever do. It will change your life more than anything else you can ever do. When you ask Jesus to come in your heart, by the power of the Holy Ghost, He does so. If you want to accept his salvation, pray with me. "God, I am a sinner and I need you. I believe that Jesus is your Son. I believe that He died to forgive me of my sins and I accept His forgiveness. I ask You to come into my heart and I give my life over to You. Let my life be Your way now instead of my own way. God I want to be one of Your people." When you pray this prayer, you become one of God's children. There may be no big whistles and fireworks. You are saved anyway. You will feel a difference. You will start to change. Things you do that didn't bother you may start to bother you. You will stop liking some things that may be wrong. You will feel different about certain situations. People around you will start to notice a change in you. Jesus Himself is in you and He will make a difference. You are now one of God's people.

After you accept salvation, one of the first things you need to do, if you have not done so already, is find other believers. Get yourself into a crowd of God's people. There is strength in finding a good church. By a good church, I mean one that God leads you to go to. Be sure and don't make the mistake that a lot of people do. Instead of waiting for God to lead them to a

church that they can be rooted in and grow in, they hop around from church to church, and find some fault with every church they try to attend. God's plan is for you to be a part of a family. That's why He created the church. Let Him lead you to the one that you need to belong to, and be a part.

Chapter 3. ***Getting To Know Him***

The next step is to get a real relationship with God. God is real. He gave His Son so that you could be forgiven of your sins. He loves you that much. He wants to be Your Father. He wants to be one with you. Jesus said this in John 17:22 and 23, “And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be One, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.” He has that much love for us. He wants you to be one with Him like He is one with God.

My grandparents had been married for over 50 years. For most of their life they worked together. They had a special love for one another and a special unity. I loved to see them work together. They were like one. They could work together, move as one, and never talk about what they were doing. They could communicate without saying a word. That’s how God wants us to be in Him. He wants us to be one with Him even as He is one with Jesus. Sad to say, most Christians really don’t know what a wonderful thing salvation is. They never find the depth of God’s love for them. They ask Jesus in their heart and then forget that they even have Him there. They keep on doing their own thing. They pray and talk to God, but never listen to Him and never get a real

relationship with Him. They tell God what they want Him to do, but never listen for Him to lead them. They are far from God in their hearts. He longs to fellowship with them, but they are too full of themselves to pay attention. They don't hear His voice. They are too far away from Him to hear. They have so many things that take up all their time that He is the last thing on their mind. They are religious. They do all the right things. They may even take time out to read their Bible. They do what seems right in their own eyes.

Matthew 7:21-23 tells us about some people that were busy doing what they thought God wanted. They had a problem though. They didn't know God. They didn't walk with Him, hear His voice, and obey Him. Everything they did was not important. He said to them in verse 23, "And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you, depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Iniquity means sin. Instead of having a relationship with God these people were doing their own thing. That was sin. Even though they were doing good things in their own eyes, they had neglected to do the one thing that mattered. They neglected to get to know the One Who died for them-the One who loved them and longed to be one with Him.

I am reminded of a guy named Paul in the Bible. Before he became Paul, back when he was called Saul, before he met Jesus on the road to Damascus, he was not a happy man. He was

a Christian killer. When he met the Lord on the road to Damascus, he was on his way to deliver up Christians to be killed. Sad to say, he was convinced that he was doing what God wanted him to do. He was far from it. We can be just as deceived in our own mind. If we aren't submitting our will to God and yielding to His Spirit in us, then we are walking in the flesh. The Bible says that the flesh is enmity or an enemy of God. When we walk in the flesh instead of being led by God, we can do things that do more damage than good. We can even become Christian killers, like Saul. We may not kill others in the flesh, but in the spirit, and that really is worse.

The Bible tells us that people will have a form of godliness. They would look like they are God's people. But they would only be playing a part on the outside. Inside they wouldn't know God. This is so sad because they have no idea what a wonderful thing they are missing and they honestly think they have all that there is to have in a Christian life. Then when the battles of life come, or the devil tempts them and tries to destroy them, they have nothing to hold on to but an idea of what God is. They fall and go back into sin. They may really want to find God, but just don't know how. Then they are destroyed before they get a chance. Get a real relationship with God.

How can you do this? Let Him know that you don't want it your way. Let Him know that you

are willing to let Him be Who He is in your life, no matter what you have to do to line up to that. You see if you really start to get to know God, things in your life will change. You have to be willing to let that happen. Believe me, after serving God most of my life, I can tell you for sure, it's worth it. Everyday He is there for me. He guides me every minute. I wake up and say "good morning God" and I know that He will keep me through my day. I go to sleep at night in peace knowing that He will keep me through the night. I have learned to hear His voice (and that takes practice but He will help you). When He talks, I listen. I have learned the hard way down through the years that you'd better do that. He knows what's best. Some people have been so full of themselves that they drown out the voice of God. Then when they are in trouble and need His guidance, it is hard to hear Him. Daily I submit to Him and that is the number one agenda for the day. That way I don't get into near as much trouble, and when I do need to hear Him, it's easy because that has been my way of life everyday. I know that He is there, just like He was yesterday, and the day before.

So many Christians miss out on knowing God and walking with Him every day. In the scripture passage that I quoted before, Jesus plainly stated that if someone doesn't know Him for real they would at judgement have to "depart from Him". Get a real relationship with God. Be real with Him and He will be real with

you. Then when you enter into His presence on that very special day when you will see Him for the first time face to face, you will already know Him. You will hear him say, welcome, my good and faithful servant. Enter in.

Chapter 4.
Commit and Submit

Two key words in finding a right and real relationship with God are the same two that you would use in finding a relationship with anyone. These words are *commit* and *submit*. We live in a world where few people want to commit. They just want to do their own thing. Seems like marriage anymore is a thing of the past. People just live together without bothering to commit anything, almost like roommates. Everywhere I go I hear how hard it is for those with businesses to find someone who will commit enough to do a good job. People are caught up in a rat race life and too busy to even commit to their families. They run here and there, so busy, and have no time left for God. The devil has succeeded in sidetracking God's people. He flashes this or that in front of them to draw them away from doing what God wants them to do, and they never accomplish anything. At days end they are too worn out to even think about God or pray. They have no time or energy to study His Word. Forget having time to have a daily walk with God. Forget submitting to His will and letting Him have His way in their lives. This is so wrong.

We are in the last days. The events unfolding in the Middle East prove this more and more every day. Soon the eastern sky will split and Jesus will return for His people. I want to ask you a question. If Jesus had come back today, would

you even have noticed Him? I am convinced that the Lord is coming back for a people who are letting Him be number one in their lives. A people who are committed to Him. A people who let Him be the Lord of their lives. (Luke 6:46, “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things I say.”) To do what He says we have to be tuned in to Him, listening to His written Word, and to His voice as He speaks in our heart. If we are so busy that we constantly tune Him out, will we hear Him when He comes??

It is also true that if out of the fear of missing Him we get so obsessed with reading His Word and praying, we will still miss Him. I know some people that are so caught up in looking for the Lord that they don't get anything done for Him except for being afraid that they will miss Him. In that, they are failing God. They still haven't found a real relationship with Him. God doesn't want us to be afraid but to trust in Him.

When we commit ourselves to God and give our life to Him, and when we submit our will to Him and let Him have His way in our life instead of our own, we will find the depth of His love for us. We will want to draw even closer to Him. The more we know Him the more we want to commit and submit to Him because He is just that wonderful. Before we get to know God it is hard to commit and submit to Him. Just like when we first meet

anybody, or before we really get to know them. If you don't know somebody really well, it is hard to totally commit in a relationship with them. It is hard to trust them. It is definitely hard to commit your will to them. That's the same way with God. That's why so many people can't do those things, because they haven't gotten to know Him for real. Get to know Him and committing and submitting both will be easy.

Love makes those things a lot easier. And love is what God is all about. The more we fall in love with Him and let Him love us, the more we want to change. His love strips us of our pride and self will. We want to get rid of all the things that don't please Him. We want Him to change our attitudes so that we can love Him more and so that we can spread His love around. We want to obey Him and that becomes our focus. We want Him to be the center of our life, because He is so wonderful. When I hear people talk about how you have to be careful because you can get to be fanatical with religion, I worry about whether or not they have found a relationship with God that is real. I for one am not ashamed to say that I love Him and I am sold out to His cause. Why? Because of what He has been to me. In over 30 years of serving Him, He has never failed me. He has been the friend I could always count on. He has led me and protected me. He has been my strength and comfort when I had none of my own. The more I get to know Him, the closer to

Him I want to be. The best part about all that? The Bible tells us that God is no respecter of persons. What He does for one, He will do for all. Try it and see if He won't be the same for you.

Chapter 5. ***Why Obedience?***

We sing a song with the children at our Christian school. It goes like this. “Obedience is the very best way to show that you believe. Doing exactly what the Lord commands, doing it happily. Action is the key. Do it obediently. Joy you will receive. Obedience is the very best way to show that you believe.” That little song has a lot of truth.

There are some churches that teach that the way to get to heaven is to do good. The Bible tells us that our very best is not good enough, that there is no way that we can be good enough to deserve heaven. (Isaiah 64:6, “But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousness is as filthy rags....”) The only way we get to heaven is because Jesus died to forgive us of our sins and we accept His salvation. When we ask Jesus to come into our hearts, He does. And that is the beginning of our good works.

Face it, how many times have you thought for sure that you were doing just the right thing to help somebody and it blew up in your face doing more damage to them than good. We are human. We don’t know what to do most times. We are in a world full of hurting and lost people, and we don’t know how to help them. For us to really reach out to people, we have to learn one of the greatest truths. We have to learn that we can’t. That’s right. But it doesn’t

stop there. We have to learn that Jesus inside of us can and we have to learn how to let His Spirit inside us reach out. We have to submit our will to Him and say what He leads us to say and go and do what He wants. There have been so many times when somebody needed help and I had no idea how to help. In working with troubled teens for many years, I have even had suicidal young people come to me for help, and I knew that if I didn't have the right words to say, that they would leave and take their life. Only Jesus could reach them. I let Him and He did.

Obedience starts with submission. We have to submit to obey. Serving God can only come about by submitting to His will and letting His Spirit have His way in us and through us. Obedience is not every once in a while doing something good. Obedience is a way of life, daily submitting and letting God have His way. The Bible teaches us that if we don't obey Him we can't be His children. (Romans 8:14, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." John 14:23, "Jesus answered and said unto him. If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.")

Obedience has two parts. One is reading the Bible and obeying it. And that is obeying it without dissecting it to make it say what you want it to say. The other part is obeying God's

voice in our heart. Many scriptures in the Bible say, "Hearken unto the voice of the Lord." Hearken means to listen. I can't even count the times that because I listened to God's voice and obeyed, my life was saved. I can remember on a trip to Russia, we were supposed to travel across Romania into the Ukraine. Others with me wanted to travel by van. God showed me that we shouldn't do that. We went instead by train. Later we found out that terrorists were shooting people on the highway that we were supposed to travel. When we got home from our trip, my grandmother told me that she had been really praying for me on one certain day, because the Lord had shown her that my life had been in danger. She showed me the date. It was the day we had traveled across country. I have no doubt that if we would not have obeyed God that day we would all have been killed.

If we listen to Him, He can shield and protect us. If we don't, how can He. A lot of times God gets blamed for a lot of stuff that disobedience brings on us. If we would have disobeyed God and went anyway and would have been killed, I am sure there would have been some poor souls crying why did God let that happen to them. God is smart. He knows what is going on today more than we do, and even what will happen the next day and the next. He knows what is best for us. When He says don't do something, there is a reason. He doesn't just make up rules to ruin our lives. In His wisdom, He sets guidelines for His children. For one example, a

few years ago sex outside of marriage got to be the favorite sport of young people. Everybody did it. Those who didn't were weird. Who cared what God had to say about it? Now it's a different story. Aids sweeps the country. Venereal disease and others worse have spread to a lot of those young people who said it couldn't happen to them. Teen pregnancy is at an all time high. Now people listen to God's Word when it says that sex was made for marriage. Listen when God says don't. Believe it or not He knows what He's talking about.

To be obedient we have to let God break us. We can't do it on our own. We have to let Him break our will so that He can do it for us. I see so many Christians trying to prove how good they can be. They are trying so hard and so full of themselves that God can't get a word in edgewise. It is human nature for us to do our own thing. We need to let God break us so that we can do His thing. I used to break horses and train them. A wild horse was of no use. When that horse's will was broken so that he would do what his master wanted, then he could be trained. When he was submitted and obedient to his master, he was useful. We are a lot like that. Our old self wills, human nature, doesn't want anybody to control us. If we ask Him to, God can break our will so that we can submit. When we do, He can use us to do great and mighty things for Him.

Obedience is how God's kingdom spreads. In my own life, I can see how God used people. He had people to witness to me when I was a sinner. People obeyed God and prayed for me when I desperately needed prayer. People have obeyed God and told me things to encourage me and strengthen me. And they have let me have it when I needed it too. I would probably have not made it if it hadn't been for the obedience of God's people. You are His workmanship. He is doing and has done a great work in you if you let Him. He is doing this so that you can reach out to others. (Romans 2:10, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.") There are people around you that you may be the only one who can reach them. You may stand between them and eternity. I remember God telling me to visit a man next door. He was a hard man and showed no interest in God. I let that intimidate me and I didn't go. He had a serious heart attack and was in a coma for days. That was an awful scary time. I thought that he might die and go to hell and I could have stopped it. Well talk about praying. He came out of his coma and someone in the hospital led him to the Lord. Obey God. You don't want to know that you failed to, and a soul was lost that you might have helped find God.

There is nothing more exciting and fulfilling than a life filled with obeying God. It is never boring or without purpose. You never run in

circles and at the end of the day wonder what you've done. You know who you are and what you're about. Obey God and it is guaranteed not only to change your life but the lives of those around you. God can and will use you if make yourself available to Him. Obedience makes doing things easier. You don't have to be extra outgoing, extra smart, or perfect, to do something for God. You just have to obey Him, go where He tells you to, do what He says, and say what He leads you to say. The more you do it the easier it gets, and the better you will feel. I used to think I had to be perfect for God to use me. I found these verses in the Bible that outline the kind of people that God can use. If you have some of these traits, God can use you too. See if you do. They're found in I Corinthians 1:26 and 27, "For ye see your calling brethren how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty, and base things of the world, and things which are despised hath God chosen..." So if you feel like you are foolish, weak, base, and despised, then you are a sure candidate to be used by God. You see, then it won't be you who will be doing it; you will be letting Him. Make yourself available. Let Him break your will. Submit and commit to Him. Who knows what He could use you to do. Jesus only had a handful and they turned the world upside down.

Here is a prayer that can change your life. If you dare, pray it with me. *God I ask you to break my will. Let me do your will. Let me be obedient to your Word and to Your still small voice speaking in my heart. Help me to make you to be number one in my life and obeying you a number one priority. Let me go where you say and do what you tell me to do and speak what you tell me to. Help me to forget about my weaknesses and see Your strength in me. Let me work for you.*

If you want to read more about obedience, read my book, ***But God...A Guide to Obedience***. I believe it will bless you.

Chapter 6.
Come Out From Among Them

I have been privileged to know several people who have changed my life just through a friendship. Needless to say they were not ordinary, but pretty radical people. When my life changed, my interests changed. There were other friends I had that I stopped being as close with because I had changed. We weren't interested in the same things any more. We just weren't as close as we had been. Have you ever had this happen? One of those most radical friends has been Jesus. The more I get to know Him, the more He changes me just through His friendship. When I first met Him for real nearly 30 years ago I was a party person. I drank a lot and did drugs. You name it. I tried it. My friends were all like I was because those were the things I was caught up in. Eventually my friends and my life style nearly destroyed me. That's when I met Jesus. I asked Him in my heart and life. He became my best friend. He helped me overcome my life style. He changed my want to's.

I have had so many young people tell me that they were afraid to commit to a relationship with Jesus because they were afraid they couldn't change or give up their friends. They didn't realize that when Jesus comes in our hearts to live, He is there to help change us. We can't change on our own. He helps us from the inside. When He became my best friend, he

changed me. I didn't have things in common with my old friends any more. I wasn't interested in the same things that they were. I had been one that had wanted to give my heart to Jesus a long time before I did because I was afraid of what my friends would think. I watched some of them die and knew they weren't saved. I knew I had compromised on the truth that might have led them out of hell. I knew it was partly my fault that they burned forever in hell. I never had the chance to know if I might have changed their eternal destination if I had lived the truth that I knew. I decided to stop playing games and get real with God. When I finally gave my heart to the Lord there was such a change in me that many of the people I knew, knew that this thing was real, and they gave their heart to the Lord, too. My best friend became theirs too.

One thing you have to understand is this, not everybody who says they are friends really are your friends. If you are trying to change and be a better person, your true friends will be there to help you to do so in every way that they can. Those that put you down because you are trying to live a decent life are not your friends at all. They don't care about you. Beware of these. They can really drag you down.

When we get to know Jesus, our interests will change. It is sad but many Christians get caught up in everything but Jesus. The world has a way of wrapping us up in things to keep

us from serving God and being victorious in our relationship with Him. I can tell what is the main thing in someone's life just by listening to a little of their conversation. The "rad" things, or the "cool" things, or whatever, that everybody thinks you should wrap your life around are things like: what are the coolest movies, what clothes and shoes, what style, who won the latest games or races, the latest greatest CD that such and such group has put out, whose dating who and doing what with them, and gossiping about the latest news on everybody, no matter whether it's true or not. I guess you could say that all these things are trends, popular things. I think that the devil loves trends. He can use these to make people feel down if they aren't up on all this cool stuff. He can get people so caught up in them that they don't have time, or money, for anything else. He can get people caught up in them to the place that they destroy other people by putting them down, because they aren't in on all this junk. We can get so wrapped up in it all, and going in a direction that you can count on to be the opposite direction from the one God wants you to go in. You have to admit, most of these trends are set by people that are in drugs, alcohol, witchcraft, and all kinds of junk. We get caught up in the trends they have set and let them rule our lives. What is with that??? Isn't that one of those "duh" moments when you realize this?

The thing we spend the most time thinking about and being wrapped up in is our best friend. Isn't that true? The One Who died for us winds up waiting for weeks on end for us to spend time with Him. The Bible talks about an untoward generation—a backwards generation that turns toward everything else but their back toward God. A generation that calls bad things good and good things bad. Paul said in Acts 2:40, "...save yourself from this untoward generation." Ephesians 5:8-11 says, "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light. (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth) proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." James 4:4 tells us, "...know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." There is an old saying, "You can't date God and dance with the devil." As Christians we have to be sold out. We can't be one minute on God's side and the next doing everything that we know in our heart is bad. You can't fill your time and your mind with the world's junk and expect God's ways or His Word to make sense. You have to choose. A best friend like Jesus deserves to have the best from you. Any friend deserves better than your being a hypocrite.

Dare to let Jesus be your best friend. He will change your likes and dislikes and your direction. He will change what you do, where you go, and how you act when you get there, and you will be glad that He did. Why should you? Read on.

Chapter 7.
The Price That Was Paid

John 3:17 tells us, “For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world thru Him might be saved. What was the price that was paid for your salvation? In pictures we see Jesus hanging on the cross. We don’t see much blood and gore. We don’t even see much pain, let alone any agony. We forget that the cross was a tool of torture that was so cruel that the Romans passed a law that a Roman citizen couldn’t be hung. We forget that besides the physical pain of the cross, Jesus also had the spiritual pain of carrying the world’s sins. He carried the weight of your sins, the ones you have committed and the ones that you will commit, and the weight of all our sins on the cross. He took the punishment for those sins so that you could be forgiven. (Romans 5:8, “But God commendeth His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.” Jeremiah 31:3, “The Lord hath appeared of old unto me saying, yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee.”) You are loved that much that Jesus died for you.

Even while you were a sinner He died, so that you could be forgiven. No one else will love you more. One of my favorite passages is Paul’s prayer for God’s people in Ephesians 3:17-19, “That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, that ye, being rooted and grounded in

love may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with the fullness of God.” God’s love is so great for you that you can’t even understand it. It is past your knowledge. When I see people who claim to be Christians but they continue to sin because they say they can get by with it because God loves them and He won’t do anything, I know that they don’t know God at all. If they knew Him and His love for them, they wouldn’t even think that way.

When we love and we are loved we want to do our best, not our worst for the One we love. I know that they have no idea for real about the price that was paid for them to be forgiven. Sometimes I have people tell me, “I would like to get saved but I am afraid that I can’t be perfect”. I know that they don’t understand the price that was paid and the love that was behind it. God takes us like we are. That’s why Jesus died to forgive us. He knew we wouldn’t be perfect. He knew that we would need forgiveness.

There is no greater feeling than knowing you are forgiven and no worse feeling than guilt and condemnation. Have you ever done anything to anyone and it caused you not to be close to them any more. You wanted to get back into their life, but there was this split between you because of this thing you’d done. Remember

how great it was when they forgave you and your friendship was mended. It's the same way with you and God. God loves you still, but guilt separates you. The first thing you have to do is to recognize what you did wrong. You have to face your sin and admit it. Whatever you do, don't make excuses. People who make excuses are never forgiven because they never face what they did, confess it, and ask for forgiveness. They have to live with their guilt.

The Bible is the rulebook for deciding what is sin. The Holy Ghost, God's Spirit, will convict us when we do wrong. This is called conviction. Sometimes it will feel like a weight that you have to get off. When we feel conviction, we need to always deal with it and never hide from it. Some people go ahead and do it anyway, even when they feel God's conviction. When they do they run the risk of being like the people in Romans Chapter 1. It would be good to read the whole chapter, but I am only writing down the last verse, verse 32, which talks about those that kept on doing what they knew was wrong. "Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same but have pleasure in them." They kept on doing wrong, overriding God's conviction until they actually were doing things that were worthy of death. Why? Because they wanted to do their own thing. They excused their sin and overrode God's conviction until they came to the

place that they couldn't feel it any more and didn't know right from wrong.

When we are convicted of our sin we need to repent. Repent means to be so sorry that we make up our minds not to do that again. Repent means that we love God and we don't want to fail Him. We know the price that was paid and we don't mock it. We respect God enough not to take His love for granted. It hurts us to hurt Him. When we repent, we ask for His forgiveness and we know that He will forgive us. Because we know that is why He died. (I John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.")

David knew about sin and the price we have to pay when we sin. You'll find his story in first and second Samuel. One of my favorite passages about forgiveness is Psalms 51. David wrote this. Here is only part of it, verses 7 and 8. "Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice." Sin will bring pain and suffering into our lives and into the lives of those we love. We don't mess up our own life without wrecking the lives of those around us whether we want to see it or not. When we make bad choices, others have to pay whether we mean for it to be that way or not. David found that out. He paid for his sin for most of his life, so did his family and

eventually his country. Sin has a price. God can mend those broken bones, purge away that sin and make you clean and white as snow. He can make you new. He can even, like David declared in Psalm 51:10, “Create in me a clean heart, O God and renew a right spirit within me.”

I praise God that He convicts us. If He didn't, we would never know when we did wrong, and we would bust hell wide open. Never ignore that wonderful conviction. Repent and accept God's forgiveness when you do wrong. Always remember the price that was paid.

Chapter 8.
How To Miss Heaven by 14 Inches

Imagine this. Picture a couple. She never talks to her husband. She has no idea of what he's really like. Her life is centered around herself and everything else but him. She does try to do things she thinks he would like, but because she doesn't know him for real, its always the wrong thing. She stays busy doing what she thinks he wants her to do, but deep in her heart she knows it's not really the thing he wants. She doesn't get close enough to him to really find out. One day, she tells herself, she will work on that. She tries for a while to make this marriage work, but since she never tried to get close to him and never really fell in love in the first place, its not too hard when finally she gives up and goes her own way. It has all been a thing of the mind and not a thing of the heart.

Now I can just hear you asking, what in the world does this have to do with how to miss heaven by 14 inches, and what is that all about any way. There are a lot of people who will be in hell simply because of a distance of 14 inches. You see, that is the distance between their head and their heart. A lot of people serve God just like this woman did her husband. She thought she loved him. She married him. She just never really got to know him. Her relationship with him was all a thing of the mind and not a thing of the heart. She never fell in love. If we let our relationship with God

become this way, we will never be able to make it to heaven. God's love will keep us. If we never get to know Him enough to walk with Him, we won't have that love to hold us through life's storms and battles.

Romans 8:35-39 tells us, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For Thy sake we are killed all the day long, we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Paul wrote those in the middle of what was probably the greatest persecution time the world has ever seen, and he was the focus of it. Christians were turning their world upside down, and the devil was determined to stamp it all out.

To find out more about Paul's world read Hebrews 11:33-40. Paul lived at a time when the Romans actually poured oil on Christians and burned them alive to light up the coliseum where they watched the lions tear up women and children for sport. He knew what it was like to serve God when all odds were against him. Read the book of Acts to find more about

his life. But he had something that not a lot of Christians today have, and that is the ability to say that nothing could separate him from the love of God. Why? Because he knew the love of God. That love itself convinced him. If he would have had a “head relationship” instead of a “heart relationship” with God, he would never have survived. If you want to make it as a Christian, and you really want to change your life, be sure that you get a relationship with God that is real. Get to know Him and His love, and that love will hold you through time.

Sometimes, just as in any relationship, we can allow things to come between God and us that hinder our relationship. Here are some of them: sin that we don't confess and repent of, other people that manipulate us away from God, things that the devil sends to our lives to cause them to be so cluttered that we don't have time for God, feelings of being isolated or condemned that make us think that God has forsaken us. We can let everything in the world come between us. We lose our love—our first love. Remember that puppy love, first love. When you were heartsick. When nothing else mattered but that one love. When we lose that first love, we need to find out why and fix the things in our life that are separating us from God. In Revelations 2:4, God told a church, “Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.” We need to remember that we are the bride of Christ. We need to become again a bride, in love with

her bridegroom as much as He is in love with us. Who is Jesus coming back for? His bride.

Chapter 9.
The Devil's Lies

We have an enemy, one that hates us because God loves us. He hates us enough to devote his time to destroy us. Who is he? You need to know him and his tactics and learn how to fight against him. So many people loose to the devil because they never learn how to fight him. It is possible for you to fight him and win. It's not only possible, but it is your God-given right.

Satan was once an angel. He got too cocky and tried to set himself up as God. There was a battle and he and those angels that followed him were thrown out of heaven. He lost what he had with God at one time. It's good to know this because you now know that's why he hates us, because he hates God. It also helps to know that God wins, and will win every time. The devil will do anything in his power to stop you from finding a real relationship with God and keep it. The devil will cause situations to come against us, thoughts to come in our mind. He'll use people against us, anybody that isn't really submitted to God. He'll use our own bodies against us by bringing sickness on us. But God gives you what you need to fight him.

Ephesians 6:10-17 gives us some devil kicking scripture. "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we

wrestle not against flesh, and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God.”

We need to first realize that the devil is not flesh and blood and he can't be fought without God's help. We also need to realize that the only way he can get us is if we listen to him, we fear him, and we let him get to us. God, in these verses we just read, outlines the protection that we have. We have to shield our heart with a breastplate of righteousness. To wear that breastplate we have to know that we are serving God with all our heart and that our heart is clean before God, our sin confessed, repented, and forgiven. Then we have to have our Gospel shoes on. In other words we have to be busy obeying God and getting His Word out. Then we have to have our shield of faith. We have to know that we know that we know we are God's children and we stand in His love. We have to know that we trust Him. Then we have to cover

our head with the helmet of salvation. The knowledge of our salvation is a wonderful thing. When you know you are saved and God's child, the devil can't put his accusing and condemning thoughts in your mind. You'll just tell him to scat because you know better. He can't put tempting thoughts into your mind, because you will just tell him that you are saved now and that isn't what you think or what you do any more.

The only weapon that God gives us is the sword, the Word of God. The Bible is the only weapon you need to fight satan. In It's pages you can find the answers to the doubt that the devil tries to put in your mind. You can find reminders of God's love for you. You can find stories of those that overcome, and remember that you can too. You can find verses about God's shelter for you, the rock that you're founded on, and so much more. Get lost in the pages of God's Word and you'll look up to find that old lying devil has skulked off somewhere else, and your battle is over.

One of the things that the devil specializes in is painting pictures that aren't real, but he makes us think that they are. One picture he paints is one of making you feel that you are not saved and that God is a million miles away, doesn't hear you and doesn't care. Talk to other Christians. He's tried that one a lot. He uses a picture of discouragement. He will blow up every time you fail and rub in your face a

picture that you are nothing and will never be anybody. Use God's Word on him. Remind Him of some of the scriptures that I've filled this book up with about God's love for you. (Here's some more of them: John 13:1, John 3:16, John 15:9, John 15:13, Romans 15:13, Romans 8:35, Galatians 2:20, I John 3:16, Ephesians 2:4, Ephesians 3:17-19, Jeremiah 31:3) He'll cause your mind to constantly be filled with thoughts of what could happen and paint a picture that could scare the life out of you. Refuse to let him and fill your mind instead with some of the promises of God's Word. Find verses of hope and peace and tack them up in your room where you can read them. When he tries to make me fear a situation, I run to God and find out if its real. If it is, I hide in Him. If its not, I go after the devil and let him know. Don't be afraid. We live in a world where men's hearts are failing them with fear. We all know that fear is a tactic of a terrorist. The devil is a number one terrorist. When you don't fear him, he can't hurt you. He can mess with you, but he can't win.

There are some more pictures that the devil paints to trap God's people. He makes the world and sin look so good. He can make that boy or girl that is not saved look so good. And you can count on this. After you get saved, if you are trying to get out of an old crowd, everybody you shouldn't hang around with will make a beeline right for you. The sexiest girl or guy in the crowd will fall madly in love with

you. Remember that the devil wants to use anybody he can to keep you away from walking with God. Count your cost. Are they worth it?

Another picture he paints is what other people will do if you stand up for what is right. When I first got saved, I was so afraid to stand up for what was right because of what the devil put in my mind other people would do. When I tried it, it wasn't near as bad, and the people that were really decent liked that I had stood up. Isn't it time you make God proud of you and quit worrying about what others think?

Another picture he paints is one of condemnation. Every time you fail he will keep that in your face. He will constantly remind you of every time you have failed for the past 40 years. When we feel condemned, we are our own worst enemy. We become separated from God's love. Just make sure you keep repenting, and getting and accepting God's forgiveness. Make sure you aren't hanging around in sin, but you are walking with God. Then remind the devil when he comes to accuse you of Romans 8:1 that says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit." If you are walking with God, obeying Him and hearing His voice, you may still mess up. If you do, repent, and tell the devil to take his accusing elsewhere.

Another picture that the devil paints is one of us having to be down all the time because we are God's children and the devil doesn't like us, and because of that we have to fight such a battle. When I face a battle the devil has put in my face, he is the last person that I let know it is getting to me. The Bible says that we can be happy even when we are in a battle. We need to rejoice. Even when we don't feel like it. Rejoice and praise God, and before long, the battle will be over.

Third John verse 2 tells us, "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health even as thy soul prosper." God wants our hearts to prosper, our finances to prosper, even as our health prospers. He wants us to be happy. The devil will come to steal even our health. God can and does heal. We can be healed. Isaiah 53:5 closes with these words, "By His stripes ye are healed." Luke 4:18 tells us Jesus came to even heal the brokenhearted. Sometimes we need healing as much in our hearts as we do in our bodies. God has both for us.

The devil doesn't want for you to have what is rightfully yours. He wants to steal it away. But God has given you the right to tell him to leave you alone in the name of Jesus. You can win. Why? Because it is your God given right. So put on that armor of God, you are a child of God, and the devil has to flee. (James 4:7,

“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.)

Chapter 10.

Excuses Not Accepted

Romans 2:2, "Therefore thou art unexcusable, O man."

One of the worst traits of human nature is our tendency to make excuses. We can think of an excuse for everything. Excuses are easy. They keep us from taking responsibility for things. We put off getting saved because we are afraid we can't live right. We get saved and put off living right because we are afraid we won't like a cleaned up life. We excuse our sin and become condemned instead of facing it, repenting and getting forgiveness. We excuse not going to church and we won't discipline our life so that we can. We get weaker and weaker, and excuse why. We know we need to pray and read our Bible more and we make excuses of being tired and not having enough time, instead of making it a number one priority and letting God put order in our life. What does God say about our excuses? "Thou art inexcusable, oh man." When we stand before God because we have not kept a right relationship with him, we will be without excuse.

Excuses are dangerous. The better we are at coming up with excuses the worse off our life will be and the weaker we will be as Christians. I've been a teacher most of my life. I have had students who prided themselves in making excuses. They could come up with the wildest reasons as to why they didn't do their assignments, why they didn't attend, why they

were late, and on and on. Some of the first children I taught are in the 30's. It never fails. When I see those guys that were first-rate excuse makers, guess what? They are still making excuses, they are still not accepting responsibility for their wrong, and still not changing or growing. They sort of drift thru life right on the edge of failure. They don't have a speck of character.

If you find yourself making excuses, ask God to forgive you and give you the strength to fix the things in you and about your life that you want to change. Remember, He's inside you and He can. If you do that you will always be growing, always be changing and getting better. Remember, judgment will definitely be a place where no excuses will be allowed.

Chapter 11.
He Is Coming!
Who's Going?

We know the Lord is coming back in the rapture to get His people. We know that could soon happen. We know that the signs of the times that the Bible foretold are being fulfilled. Some people who heard that the rapture was going to come when it turned the year 2000 were disappointed. I talked to some that even gave up in believing that it was coming at all. I think that it's dangerous to concentrate on when Jesus is coming. The Bible says no man knows exactly when. The important things to concentrate on are: ARE YOU READY, how do you get ready, and how to stay ready.

We were at a service not long ago. A lady we didn't know came up for prayer. Our pastor was led by the Lord to pray that she know for sure that she had salvation. God that day gave her that assurance. I didn't know her story until a couple of months later. This lady's daughter had felt impressed to make sure that her mother was saved. Every time her daughter asked her, she wouldn't give an answer. That day in the service, both the woman and her daughter knew. This woman died a month later. Not only did she know where she would be spending eternity in her dying moments, but her daughter knew too. Assurance of where we will spend eternity is important. Without it we can't have peace. If we are afraid of where we will

go when we die, or of what will happen to us when the rapture comes, then we need to find the same assurance that lady had with God.

How do we know we are going?

1. We accept salvation. (Romans 10:9, “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. If you haven’t accepted Jesus as your personal Savior, pray with me now. There is no better time. Ask Jesus to forgive you of your sins and come into your heart. Ask Him to be Lord of your life.
2. You must get a personal relationship with Jesus and get to know Him for real.
3. Let God continuously convict you of your sin, repent, (which means turn away from it), and be forgiven. (I John 1:19, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”)
4. Obey God daily. Remember that obedience is an attitude of listening to God and doing what He says. (Revelations 22:14, “Blessed are they that do His commandments that they may have right to the tree of life and may enter in through the gates unto the city.”)

5. Keep committed and fired up in your relationship with God. Don't let the devil steal it away. Don't become half way in serving Him. (Revelations 3:15-16, "I know thy works that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.") God doesn't want us to be halfway, half committed.

6. Don't put off serving God. I have heard so many tell me, one day I will serve God. That is one guaranteed way to miss the rapture. By not making up our mind we are telling God, "NO".

So are you ready? Are you going? That's one trip you won't want to miss.

Chapter 12.

Fear Not

If you read this book and it causes you to see better than ever what you need to do to serve God and be a victorious, on-top-of-it Christian, that is good. If you read this book and it has made you worry about some things in your life that you need to fix up, that is good, as long as you take the steps to fix them. If you read this book, especially the last chapter about the Rapture and it leaves you afraid that you can't live right and do right, then that is not good, and that is not God's way. The Bible tells us many times to "fear not". One of my favorite verses is Luke 12:32, Jesus says, "Fear not little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." It is your heavenly Father's desire that you inherit His kingdom and the blessings that He has prepared for you, not only in heaven, but here. Fear comes when we don't trust something.

When we get to know God better, we know that He will keep us, and we don't have to be afraid. I John 4:18-19 says, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love Him, because He first loved us." What is the key to not being afraid? Find God's love. Keep your mind on His good things instead of all the things there are to be afraid of. (Isaiah 26:3, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee,

because he trusteth in thee.”) If things like sin come between you, don’t run away from God, run to Him and get His forgiveness and His strength to keep on trucking. You don’t even have to be afraid of the devil. He can’t steal you away unless you let him. You don’t have to be afraid of your own weaknesses. Just trust the Lord to give you strength to overcome them. The Lord is coming for a bride that is spotless. (Ephesians 5:27, “That he might present it (the bride of Christ, which is us) to Himself as a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish.”) That means get real, come clean, and get close to Jesus. Get fired up. Don’t be afraid. God wants to use you to help get others ready for Him. There are too few young people and old out there serving God for real. Get excited. Put your trust in the One that is able to keep you. Jude 24, “Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. To the only wise God, our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. AMEN.

Closing

Now when the devil comes and tells you that you aren't worthy of God's love, you know what to tell Him. You won't listen to that lie because you know that you are loved, and that Jesus made you worthy. When the devil comes and tries to tell you that you don't belong, you know that is a lie because you know that you are a part of God's People, that He has made you so. Now you know God's Word, and you can, like Jesus, answer the devil's accusations using the Word of God. Go back through this book and write down the scripture that ministers to your heart. Keep these on flash cards posted in your house so that you can see these. Better yet, memorize them, and keep them in your mind, ready to use when the devil tries his lies against you. You know that you belong. You know that Christ in you is your hope of glory. Now go turn your world upside down for Him.

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