

INSPIRATION

Blessed to Be a Blessing

MAY 2019

FAVOR...

*When You
Need It Most*

NEW WORDS,
NEW WAYS

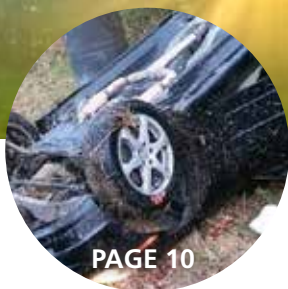
PAGE 16

HARNESSING
THE FORCE OF FAVOR

PAGE 19

THE DAY LOVE
BROKE THROUGH

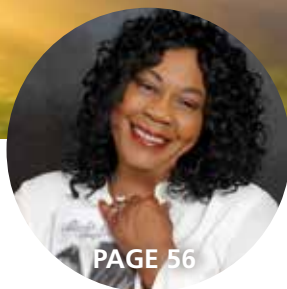
PAGE 60



PAGE 10



PAGE 14



PAGE 56

Our Theme Is



FAVOR...When You Need It Most!

What kind of breakthrough do you need today? On **page 5**, David Cerullo explains why God's favor may be much closer than you think! You also won't want to miss the powerful THANK YOU GIFTS we will send you this month in appreciation for your faithful partnership (**page 32**).



My New Season

If you've ever transitioned from one season of life to another, you'll be inspired by the important update from Barbara Cerullo on **page 12**.

10 From Partying to Purpose

Kesha's life was stuck in a toxic and abusive spin cycle until God's love changed everything.

16 New Words, New Ways *by Joyce Meyer*

Realize that your words can change your life.

19 Harnessing the Force of Favor *by Dave Martin*

When properly activated and harnessed, God's favor can enable you to regain in a day what the enemy has stolen from you for years.

20 The Divine Exchange *by Derek Prince*

These powerful, Bible-based faith declarations can change the entire trajectory of your life.

21 Your May Devotionals

A daily guide to living in the covenant promises of God.

56 Linda's 1,000-Fold Return

When things looked bleak, a \$5 bill triggered the beginning of amazing financial breakthroughs.

60 The Day Love Broke Through *by Ben Cerullo*

If you need some kind of breakthrough, never forget that history's greatest breakthrough has already taken place.

62 Take Care of Yourself *by Jim Buchan*

Here's why you need to make sure you're taking care of your spiritual, mental, and physical edge.



Have YOU Started Any Ripple Effects Lately?

A Sunday school teacher named **Edward Kimball** wasn't sure his life was having much impact. However, in 1858 he was able to lead a 17-year-old shoe clerk to Christ in Boston. The clerk, **Dwight L. Moody**, became an evangelist, and in 1879 Moody awakened an evangelistic zeal in the heart of **F.B. Meyer**, the pastor of a small church in New England.

Meyer, preaching on a college campus, won a student named **J. Wilbur Chapman** to Christ. While Chapman was engaged in a YMCA outreach, he employed a former baseball player named **Billy Sunday** to help with evangelistic meetings. Sunday held a series of services in the Charlotte, North Carolina, area, and some local business leaders were so

enthused by the meetings that they planned another campaign. This time they brought preacher **Mordecai F. Ham** to town.

During one of Ham's meetings, a young man named **Billy Graham** yielded his life to Christ. After that, millions of people heard the Gospel through Graham's ministry.

Edward Kimball started quite a ripple effect!

By becoming a monthly partner of Inspiration Ministries, you too are creating a ripple effect of salvation that touches over 200 nations and territories! Thanks to your partnership, another soul is born again into God's Kingdom *every 15 seconds or less* through the evangelistic outreaches of Inspiration Ministries – totaling over TWO MILLION people last year!

You can indicate your decision to become a MONTHLY Inspiration Ministries Partner on the enclosed response form, by visiting **inspiration.org/souls**, or by calling one of the numbers below:

US / Canada:

+1 877-578-7979

UK / International:

+ 44 (0) 80 0043 8420

Australia:

1800 057 938

Together, we're changing lives for eternity!



FAVOR...

When You Need It Most



STRENGTHEN
your walk
with David Cerullo

She was at the end of her rope, desperate for a miracle. With only a handful of food left, this widow was planning to make one final meal for herself and her son – and then she was planning to die.

Right when all hope seemed lost, God sent this distraught woman a prophet. Perhaps that sounds like a positive development, but I'm not sure the woman thought so at the time. Just like the widow, this prophet of the Lord had no food or money with him when he arrived. What good could he possibly do?

However, this prophet (Elijah the Tishbite) had seen God's miraculous provision in his own life for the past three years. He had followed the Lord's unusual instruction to camp out at the Brook Cherith, where he could drink the water and be fed by ravens that brought him food.

While Elijah and the widow in the town of Zarephath both seemed to have nothing when they first met, there was one important difference: Elijah knew how to hear God's instructions and receive His supernatural favor.

Although she had no way of knowing it, the widow was about to enter into God's miraculous favor as well. Yet the key to her breakthrough required a faith-filled response to Elijah's audacious request:

Please bring me a morsel of bread in your hand
(1 Kings 17:11).

If I were this widow, I would have been outraged. “The nerve of this guy!” I would have said to myself. “Here I am with only enough food for my last meal, and he wants me to feed *him* FIRST!”

But as impudent as Elijah’s demand must have seemed, it was a beautiful foreshadowing of Jesus’ later promise: If we truly put God’s Kingdom FIRST, He will provide us with every material thing we’ll ever need (Mathew 6:33).

THE WIDOW’S REPLY

At this point in the story, there’s some fascinating interaction between the widow and the prophet as she tries to explain to him why his request was unreasonable:

I do not have bread, only a handful of flour in a bin, and a little oil in a jar; and see, I am gathering a couple of sticks that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it, and die (v. 12).

While this woman had a plan for her future, it was a plan to give up and DIE. Surely Elijah would back down when he realized how dire her situation was.

But instead of backing down, Elijah told her that her plan was

a good one! “*Do not fear,*” he encouraged her, “*go and do as you have said, but make me a small cake from it FIRST*” (v. 13).

Do you see how strange this must have sounded? She had told him her plan to eat her last meal and then *die*. Rather than giving her any assurance that her breakthrough was coming, Elijah replied that she should do as she said!

How ironic that right when she was preparing to give up and die, God sent her a prophet to prepare her for her breakthrough.

I don’t know about you, but there have been times when I wanted to give up on my miracle. The circumstances were overwhelming, and I was making plans that didn’t account for the Lord’s supernatural intervention. But as this woman was about to discover, everything changes when we put God first and listen for His instructions.

ONLY A ‘HANDFUL’

This widow had almost nothing left...only a “*handful*” of flour and a little bit of oil. But you see, this “*HANDFUL*” turned out to be the key to her miracle!

As long as the woman held on to her meager supply of food, that’s all she had. Yet when she obeyed Elijah’s instructions and released what was in *her* hand, God

intervened in her circumstances and released the supernatural abundance that was in *HIS* hand!

Although the instructions God gave this poor widow must have seemed totally unreasonable, His purpose was not her demise but her BLESSING! Elijah assured her that if she would obey, *“The bin of flour shall not be used up, nor shall the jar of oil run dry, until the day the LORD sends rain on the earth”* (v. 14).

When she chose to obey the prophet of the Lord, the result was MIRACULOUS provision:

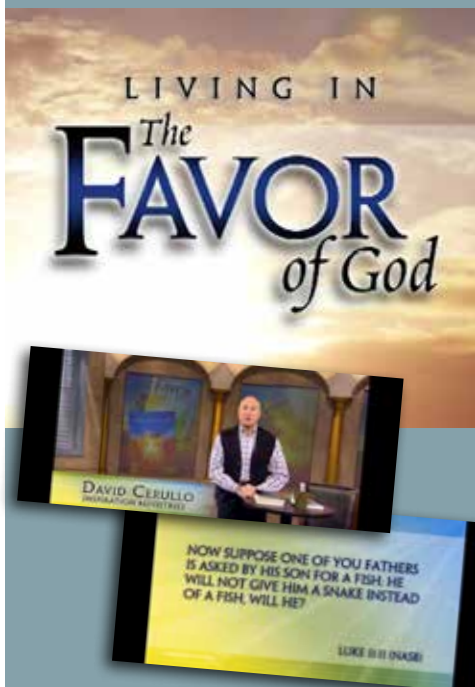
She and he and her household ate for many days. The bin of flour was not used up, nor did the jar of oil run dry, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke by Elijah (vs. 15-16).

What an amazing miracle! In a time of drought and famine, this desperate woman went from having “not enough” to having “more than enough.” From the brink of starvation and death, she experienced a new lease on life and overflowing abundance – all because she chose to obey the Lord’s word to trust Him with her “handful.”

WHAT’S IN YOUR HAND?

Too often, people look for their breakthrough in all the wrong places. They dream of winning millions via a lottery ticket or

Don’t miss my
powerful,
daily video series
starting May 6...



For information on receiving these videos via email or browsing the archives, visit StrengthenYourWalk.com.

a lucky bet at the racetrack. However, the key to your breakthrough is not a matter of luck or happenstance. As we see in the story of the widow in Zarephath, the key is right there *in your hand!*

However, in order for your breakthrough of supernatural favor to come, a step of faith is usually required:

**What you have in *your hand*
must be transferred into
*God's hand!***

This isn't some novel theory, but an established principle found throughout the pages of Scripture. Whenever His people had their backs against a wall, God provided a word of instruction to release an outbreak of His favor.

Consider this...

How much food would it take you to feed more than 5,000 hungry people? Without the Lord's supernatural blessing, you would need several huge truckloads!

However, when just five loaves of bread and two fish were *transferred into Jesus' hands* and *blessed by Him*, the result was an abundant overflow – 12 baskets of leftovers (Matthew 14:14-21). Without Jesus' blessing on these loaves and fish, it's likely that only five or ten people could have eaten a full meal. But everything changed when Jesus provided the needed INCREASE!



Friend, I believe your miracle from God is at hand – in fact, it's literally *in your hand!* Whatever breakthrough you need from Him – whether in your finances, marriage, job, health, or children – the key is surrendering *all* of your resources into the hands of your Almighty Covenant Partner.

Remember: No matter what may be happening in the *world's* economy, there's never any lack in *God's* economy. He says of His people, "*In the days of famine they will have abundance*" (Psalm 37:19 NASB).

I'm praying for you today, that you will learn the secret to unlocking God's favor and "*prosper in all that you do*" (Deuteronomy 29:9).

Your friend and partner,

P.S. Turn to **page 32** to see the great faith-building resources we want to send you this month. They will help you experience more of God's supernatural favor in every area of your life!

You can't take it with you, but you can PAY IT FORWARD

“Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.”

– JESUS, Matthew 6:20

How would you define what a legacy is? In many ways, it means to impact future generations through our example or our financial gifts.

Although we can't take our material possessions with us when we go to Heaven to be with the Lord, through estate planning we're able to give bequests to bless our loved ones and win more souls for Christ. In fact, many people win more souls through their bequests than they did in a lifetime of faithful giving!

So, what did Jesus mean when He said we should lay up for ourselves *“treasures in heaven”*? By winning lost people to Christ during our lifetime and through our estate, we are “paying it forward” – not only blessing future generations, but also preparing *“treasures”* for a rewarding future in our heavenly home.

As an Inspiration Partner, your financial gifts are changing people's eternal destinies every day. And by leaving a gift to Inspiration

Ministries in your will, Trust, or beneficiary designation, you can *continue* winning souls and making an eternal difference in people's lives even after you go to be with the Lord.

In order to continue leaving a great legacy for the Lord, would you consider leaving a portion of your estate to Inspiration Ministries? With a simple phone call, we can explain how you can ensure that your assets will continue working for God's Kingdom after you're in Heaven.

If you've *already* included Inspiration Ministries in your will or Trust, please call or email to let us know. We would be *so* encouraged to know you're standing with us as a Legacy Partner!



To find out how you can touch lives for Christ through your estate plan, contact Rob Dickson on our Legacy Planning Team TODAY:

1-855-702-7042

Planned.Giving@inspiration.org

<http://plannedgiving.inspiration.org/>



From Partying to Purpose

Kesha's early life was messy and unpredictable. It didn't help that her father was a truck driver and constantly on the road. But other circumstances also conspired to give her a very unhappy childhood.

"I always felt like an outsider at home and at school," says Kesha. "I was desperately lonely and often misunderstood."

This emotional pain led her to search for self-worth in all the wrong places. Although her mother had planted a seed of faith in her heart, Kesha opted for parties and promiscuity instead of a life surrendered to Jesus.

By the age of 15, she was pregnant with her first child. At age 17, she had her second. And from the ages of 18 to 23, she continued to ignore the tug in her spirit that was trying to lead her back to Christ.

Soon Kesha fell in love with a man who turned violently abusive.

As he was relentlessly beating her one night, she suddenly remembered there was Someone who could come to her aid and save her from this destructive life.

"That night, I felt every beating as if it was in slow motion," she recalls. "I could clearly see the danger my kids and I were in."

Kesha knew she needed to escape. But how?

Finally, she gathered the courage to leave her boyfriend. "It was one of the hardest decisions I've ever had to make," she says. "Although I knew I needed to get away from him, at first I felt lost without him."

A BRAND-NEW LIFE

Little did Kesha realize at the time, but God was waiting right around the corner with open arms and a brand-new life for her.

One of the first blessings was when her childhood best friend surprisingly stepped into the picture and proposed just six months later. This loving, God-fearing man, who had been there for Kesha during her darkest times, became the protector and provider she and her children longed for. God even used their relationship to heal her heart from the past abuse.

The second change occurred when God took an event that could have been devastating, and turned it into something good. One day she and her family were involved in a horrific car accident. But instead of facing serious injuries, each one of them climbed out of the car – without a scratch!

Kesha realized she had been saved by God for a reason. At that moment, the Lord gave her a new calling and purpose: to become a life coach and help others discover God's best for themselves!

Kesha's testimony has empowered her to encourage the broken hearts and crushed spirits of many

people. "Everything I've done wrong, God is using for good!" she marvels. "It's as if He's put all my mistakes and life lessons into a beautiful treasure chest. Whenever I coach someone now, I'm able to hand them my treasures, so they realize they're not alone."

GETTING REFILLED AND REFRESHED

Recognizing her need to continually be filled to overflowing, Kesha regularly watches Inspiration TV to find strength and inspiration in helping others.

"I can't tell you how many times Inspiration TV has encouraged me," she says gratefully. "I love being able to watch it on my cell phone wherever I am and whenever I need it!"

Watch an uplifting video
of Kesha's story at
inspiration.org/Kesha,
and click the



"share" button to post on
Facebook, Twitter, or send
to a loved one by email.

What is YOUR testimony of God's faithfulness or His miracles? Share it with us and our Inspiration Partners by visiting **inspiration.org/praise** TODAY!



My New Season



Hello, dear friends.

After many wonderful years of ministering to you in the *INSPIRATION* devotional magazine, this article is different from all my previous articles. I am taking a new direction in my life and want to share my news with you.

On May 5 last year, I graduated with my Bachelor of Science degree in Christian Care and Counseling from Oral Roberts University. It only took 45 years, but by God's grace I did it!

It was a wonderful adventure to go back to college at my age, but I loved the challenge and was

able to graduate with honors. My dad, who has been in Heaven since 1996, would have been so proud of me...I hope the Lord shared the good news with him.

Soon after my graduation, many people asked me what my next steps would be. Was I going to continue my education to obtain my master's degree and start a private practice in counseling? Because of time, I decided not to do that. At my age, I would like to jump into something more quickly, something that would not take as long as going for my master's degree. So...after discussing this with others and educating myself on what would be required, I've concluded that I'm going to pursue certification as a life coach instead.

Over my lifetime, I have experienced many opportunities to minister to people. As a result, the natural progression is to extend my heart for helping others through one-on-one or small group coaching sessions. So with great excitement and anticipation, I'm looking forward to continuing classes toward helping to guide, encourage, and strengthen individuals on their life path.

I feel a deep sense of gratitude for the opportunities I've had to share my heart, my stories, and my experiences with so many of you in the magazine for all these

years. While my passion remains steadfast, my focus needs to shift toward certification as a life coach.

As Dave and I have led Inspiration Ministries, we have dedicated our time in part to sharing and teaching the lessons God has taught us over our lifetime. This opportunity has been an absolute pleasure, and I am so grateful to have heard back from many of you as to how these articles have been a strength, blessing, and joy in your life.

Thank you for taking your time to read my articles, respond, and pray for me. I have certainly felt your prayers. Although I am retiring from my writing responsibilities here at the ministry, I continue to be grateful for each one of you. I pray for God's blessings to be upon you...and please pray for me as well. You have been and will remain a source of great blessing to me!

May you experience God's presence, provision, and guidance in the days and years to come.

In Christ's love,



Barbara



The Mum Show

You'll love this fun and practical advice for today's Christian moms!

To help bring hope and practical advice to mothers everywhere, Inspiration TV is excited to introduce the *The Mum Show* – a Christian TV talk show to add God's voice to today's parenting dialogue.

This dynamic program tackles every kind of problem facing modern “mums” (moms). Using a Biblical model of grace-filled parenting, it presents the “mum-identity” God has over every Christian parent.

Marina Magdalena is the show's creator. The mother of two, Marina uses her experience as a facilitator and storyteller to bring out a wealth of wisdom and warmth from her guests. She is joined by Emma

Browne, a play therapist and cognitive analytic therapist, and by Clare Hooper, mother of three and leader of pastoral care at her church.

If you're a parent who feels overwhelmed, who's lost your sense of self, who's in need of a good laugh or cry, or simply is trying to figure out the best way to combine faith AND family, *The Mum Show* is designed to refresh and encourage families just like yours!

Join Marina, Emma, Clare, and their guests every week as they swap stories, challenge each other with Scriptural principles, and discuss how to raise children who will fulfill God's Kingdom purposes.

Don't Miss Out!

Now you can watch *The Mum Show* and other great Inspiration TV programs on ini.tv on demand – whenever it's convenient for you! Our 24/7 Christian programming is also available on Roku, Apple TV, Amazon Fire TV, Chromecast, or on the Inspiration TV mobile app.



Touching Lives through Social Media

Over 600,000 people engage with Inspiration Ministries each week through Facebook, Twitter, and other forms of social media. Every day, we receive great testimonies like these from around the world:

"Last night I asked God to speak to me and intervene in my situation. Today your article popped up on 'Living in the Favor of God.' The Lord used it to speak to me exactly what I needed."

– MAGGY, KENYA

"I said the prayer, and I believe. I was going through a bad time and really needed help restoring my faith. Thank you!"

– SHAMAR, BARBADOS

"You've given me hope in my trials and have helped me understand more about life."

– CRISTINA, THE PHILIPPINES

"I rededicated my life just now. I had given my life before, but I kept falling back and living in sin, lust, and addiction. I want a true relationship with my Creator."

– BARIVULE, NIGERIA

"I had completely lost hope in the future, but now I see God's love and care for my life."

– BENJAMIN, KENYA

Thank you,
**INSPIRATION
PARTNERS!**

Because of your faithful partnership, Inspiration Ministries is able to use powerful new tools to win souls and disciple believers worldwide.



New Words, New Ways

*Did you know your words
can change your life?*

by Joyce Meyer

I started smoking when I was nine years old and smoked for many years after that. I liked it! So when I decided to stop, it was really difficult.

Every time I tried to quit, I'd last a few hours and then be running around, digging cigarette butts out of the trash or looking for cigarettes in my coat pockets – anywhere I could think to look.

I didn't have success in quitting smoking until I got a revelation:

I was burying myself in defeat through the negative things I was saying about myself.

For a long time, I'd been saying, "I just *know* I can never quit smoking. And if I did, I'd probably gain a lot of weight."

But God helped me see that if I didn't change my words, I could never change my life. He put a desire in my heart to start speaking what



JOYCE MEYER is
a *New York Times*
bestselling author and
host of the *Enjoying
Everyday Life* broad-
cast. For information,
visit joycemeyer.org.

I *wanted*, not what I presently *had*.

So I started saying things like, “I can’t stand to smoke! These things stink, and they’re expensive. I don’t smoke anymore!”

At first, I felt silly doing this, because I would make these declarations while I still was smoking. However, within about a week of changing my confession, I realized I now had the grace of God to permanently quit smoking.

The whole ordeal taught me a great lesson: My life could not rise above my words.

LISTEN TO YOURSELF

Proverbs 18:21 says, “*Death and life are in the power of the tongue.*” And Hebrews 4:14 (AMPC) says we should “*hold fast our confession [of faith in Him].*”

“Confession” means “to say the same thing as.” So it’s vital for us to learn how to speak in agreement with the Word of God, not just say things based on our feelings, past experiences, or on what others have said about us.

We’ll have greater success with this if we concentrate on what we *should* be saying, rather than focusing on all the things we *shouldn’t* say. It’s self-defeating to go around saying things like, “I shouldn’t do that” or “I’d better not do this.”

That’s why it’s so important for us to be accountable for the words we speak. And the truth is, the things you *say* come from what’s in your *heart* (Luke 6:45). So you can determine where your heart is by listening to yourself speak – especially if you hear things like bitterness and jealousy...insecurity and unhappiness.

A CHANGE OF HEART

We all need a change of heart from time to time. We all have room to grow in our relationship with God, and an important way to make progress is to increasingly speak His language:

Bless everything you can possibly bless. James 3:8-10 says we have the power to bless or curse with the words of our mouth.

Be thankful, and say so. Don’t just *think* about how much you appreciate someone – *tell them!*

Be an encourager. Every day, find someone to give an encouraging word to.

Speak the Word of God. Memorize and recite verses that deal with the things you want to change or overcome.

Dear friend, ask God to help you say the right things each day, things that agree with His Word. When you do, your life will change!

“God helped me see that if I didn’t change my words, I could never change my life.”

Do You Have a Story to Tell?

God used the testimonies we received from Sylvia and Julie to inspire others through our *INSPIRATION* magazine and worldwide media outreaches.

Kick-starting My Ministry



“Since I shared my story with Inspiration Ministries, my life has not been the same! Ever since then, TV and radio stations have shared my story, and I’ve had opportunities to travel across the country to speak about what God has done in my life. I’m grateful to Inspiration Ministries for opening these doors and kick-starting my ministry.” – **SYLVIA**, MISSISSIPPI

To watch a video of Sylvia’s story,
go to inspiration.org/Sylvia.

The Opportunity to Encourage Others



“Since God spared my life and the life of my son, my prayer has always been that our story will help other people. Yet I felt insecure at first, not feeling ‘qualified’ for the Lord to use me. However, now I’m so glad I disregarded those fears and worked with the Inspiration Ministries team to share our story around the world. Your ministry is a joy to work with, and I’m so grateful for the opportunity you gave us to encourage others who are going through tough times.” – **JULIE**, NORTH CAROLINA

To watch the story of Julie and her son Landon,
visit inspiration.org/JulieLandon.

If God has done some kind of miracle in YOUR life, don’t keep it to yourself...

You can be a blessing to others by sharing your story with Christina, our Testimony Coordinator, today!

Go to inspiration.org/shareyourstory
and submit your testimony, photo, or even a video.

Harnessing the Force of Favor

by Dave Martin

God's favor is an incredible spiritual force. When properly activated and harnessed, it can enable you to regain in a day what the enemy has stolen from you for years.

When you receive God's favor, it can transform your...

• **Health.** You might have cancer today, but it can be gone tomorrow.

• **Finances.** You may be deeply in debt today, but debt free tomorrow.

• **Marriage.** God can put more love in your marriage than you ever thought possible.

• **Children.** After you've prayed for years for your son or daughter to get saved, they can suddenly call and say, "I've given my heart to the Lord, and I'm coming home."

As a child of God, you should *expect* His favor. But remember: This is not a one-time event but a lifelong spiritual force that will impact every area of your life!

God always responds to faith, and one of the surest ways to *demonstrate* faith is to sow financial seeds into His Kingdom. My wife Christine and I have seen the Lord's favor released time and

again when we trusted Him with our finances. This process began when we lived in government-subsidized housing, slept on an air mattress, and didn't even have a dining room table and chairs!

Let me ask you this: What area of *your* life needs a breakthrough of God's favor?

I recently talked to a couple who went through a divorce six years ago. Each of them planted financial seeds for the healing of their family, and they happened to run into each other at a wedding soon after that.

After six years apart, this man and woman began to date again. Before long they were walking down the aisle to reunite their marriage and their precious children.

Just as God's favor brought this family together again, He can meet the needs in *your* life when you take a step of faith and obedience. Trust Him!



DAVE MARTIN is a dynamic speaker, success coach, and author of inspirational books.

The Divine Exchange

These powerful, Bible-based, faith declarations offered by Derek Prince will change your life!

Jesus was punished...that I might be forgiven.

Jesus was wounded...that I might be healed.

Jesus was made sin with my sinfulness...that I might be made righteous with His righteousness.

Jesus died my death...that I might receive His life.

*Jesus endured my poverty...
that I might share His abundance.*

Jesus bore my shame...that I might share His glory.

*Jesus endured rejection...that I might have His
acceptance with the Father.*

*Jesus was made a curse...
that I might enter into God's blessings.*



DEREK PRINCE (1915-2003) was an internationally recognized Bible teacher and author whose works have been translated into more than 100 languages. Derek Prince Ministries continues to touch lives around the world.

Changing Behavior

WEDNESDAY

May

1

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: 1 CORINTHIANS 3

Does the media only reflect the attitudes of a society? Or does it actually *shape* behavior?

Many film studio executives have argued that their content is just entertainment, so they can't be held responsible for the impact of their work.

But if you really want to understand the power of the media, talk to any advertising professional. Although they may think of their work as art or an exercise in creativity, they have no doubt about their objective, which is to influence their audience.

Advertising legend Rosser Reeves stressed that the goal of his advertising was not to be creative but to *sell*: "If a copywriter isn't a *salesman*, then he is a bad copywriter." William Bernbach, creative director and ad agency founder, stated that advertising is "the art of *persuasion*." The motto of one of the oldest agencies in America was, "It's not creative unless it *sells*."

The goal of these men was simple but uncompromising: *Use media to change behavior*.

Many people are seeking to change your thinking and influence your behavior. They're not just advertisers and marketers, but politicians, authors, and celebrities. Their arguments often sound convincing.

What you see and hear *does* impact your mind. When you watch a program or ad, remember that someone wants to *change* your ideas and your behavior.

Don't allow the messages and images around you to shape your thoughts. Make sure your life is founded on faith in Jesus.

No man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 3:11 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, help me be alert for deception. Guide my thoughts. I dedicate my life to You. Use me to help others know the truth! In Jesus' name. Amen.

National Day of Prayer

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: 2 CHRONICLES 6

*He stood before the
altar of the Lord in
the presence of all the
assembly of Israel
and...knelt on his knees
...and spread out his
hands toward heaven.*

2 Chronicles 6:12-13 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I humble myself before You. Forgive the sins of my nation. I seek Your wisdom, blessing, protection, and favor. In Jesus' name. Amen.

The Temple finally was completed. For 20 years, this project had dominated much of life in Israel.

On that glorious day, Solomon gathered the people before the Temple and blessed them. He reminded them of their history and of how God had called him to build a house for His name.

The king then knelt down and lifted his hands in prayer and worship. As he dedicated the Temple, Solomon asked God to be present. *"Let Your eyes be open and Your ears attentive to the prayer offered in this place"* (v. 20).

When the prayer was finished, *"fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the LORD filled the house"* (2 Chronicles 7:1). God was clearly pleased with Solomon's offerings and prayer.

In a psalm titled "A Song of Ascents, of Solomon," we read, *"Unless the LORD builds the house, they labor in vain who build it; unless the LORD guards the city, the watchman keeps awake in vain"* (Psalm 127:1). Solomon knew this was true for the Temple, but it's also true for every person, project, home, and nation.

This is true for *you* as well! On this National Day of Prayer in the United States, commit *everything* in your life to God. Seek His wisdom and favor. Pray for your nation and its leaders. Pray for churches and pastors. Pray for an outpouring of His Spirit.

What is it like to live in a desert? It is a place without comforts and conveniences. A place of intense pressure, and even danger. A place of temptation, for both mind and emotions, a place where we can be deceived by illusions. A place of desolation, where we are forced to face everything about ourselves afresh. Our character is stretched to the limit.

It's no accident that many great leaders spent concentrated time in the desert. Just think of Moses, David, and Elijah. Think of John the Baptist and, of course, Jesus Himself. The desert was a place where they could concentrate on God.

While in the desert, these men were alone with God and freed from the worries, pressures, and burdens of everyday life. There He could teach them, shape them, and prepare them for future service.

John the Baptist was *ready* on “*the day of his public appearance to Israel*” (v. 80). Why? He had spent time in the desert alone with God. He had been honed and purified, trained and prepared.

Each of us needs this kind of desert experience at some point...this season of being alone with God. During this time, we too can be stretched and purified, tested and prepared.

Today, get away from your normal schedule to be alone with God. Give Him access to every part of your life. Seek Him. Listen to Him. Let Him change you.

The child continued to grow and to become strong in spirit, and he lived in the deserts until the day of his public appearance to Israel.

Luke 1:80 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, help me to be separated from the cares of life that I might seek You. Speak to me. Guide me. Purify me. Prepare me. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Boldness

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: LUKE 4

The people in the synagogue were filled with rage...and they got up and drove Him out of the city, and led Him to the brow of the hill... in order to throw Him down the cliff.

Luke 4:28-29 NASB

Yes, Jesus is the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6). But He also could be bold and direct. The Bible records many moments when He fearlessly confronted people with the truth, even from the earliest moment of His ministry, as we see in today's passage.

After reading from Isaiah 61 in the synagogue at Nazareth, Jesus told the people that the *"Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing"* (v. 21). For them, this was incredible, even impossible, because they saw Jesus as a man who had grown up in their town. When He dared to speak the truth, they became so angry that they even tried to *"throw Him down the cliff"* (v. 29).

Many people reacted to Jesus this way. They didn't want Him to challenge their assumptions. But Jesus would not compromise. Although He was filled with love, He still spoke the truth boldly.

Many Christians fail to exhibit this boldness. Afraid of offending or alienating others, they are more concerned about being popular than pleasing God. But the Bible reminds us that boldness is a central part of being a Christian. We need to be committed to His Kingdom, making it our *highest* priority.

We need to be bold in *every* situation. We also must be sensitive to the Holy Spirit, confident that He will give us the words to say.

Today, be ready to take a stand for the Gospel. Don't back down. Be bold!

PRAYER:

Father, give me a spirit of boldness. Give me the words to say in each situation. Keep me from compromising. I seek first Your Kingdom. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Launching into Deep Water

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: LUKE 5

Simon Peter had been fishing in waters where he had considerable experience. He knew what to expect, and he felt safe and comfortable. He fell back on conventional thinking and did what everyone thought was normal.

But Jesus challenged him to think *differently*, to take a *new* approach.

Jesus wanted Peter to experience the kind of bountiful blessings only possible in the Kingdom of God. Not just *adequate* results, but an *overwhelming* harvest. Not just the *ordinary*, but the *extraordinary*. It was meant to be a life filled with *miracles*.

But this required going out into the “*deep water*” (v. 4). Peter had to leave behind his rational thinking, years of experience, and human expectations. By faith he had to enter the realm of faith – where he would be stretched, needing to trust God every step of the way.

Because he trusted Jesus and went into deeper water, Peter received a bountiful catch that was *far beyond* his comprehension and expectation.

Today, ask yourself, “Am I content with the normal, the average, the expected? Or do I want to experience the extraordinary? Am I willing to step out in faith in order to receive the full measure of God’s Kingdom?”

In God’s Kingdom, there are greater blessings and impact, more power, anointing, and miracles. But you will need to be ready to leave the ordinary and normal behind.

How far are you willing to trust God? He beckons you onward...deeper...deeper.

*He said to Simon,
“Put out into the deep
water and let down
your nets for a catch.”*

Luke 5:4 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I want to experience more of the riches of Your Kingdom. Open my mind to see new truths. Give me Your perspective. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Corrupting Influences

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: MATTHEW 16

If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever...loses his life for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?

Matthew 16:24-26 NKJV

PRAYER:

Father, I surrender my life to You. I will take up my cross, follow Jesus, and live for You. In His name I pray. Amen.

Born on this day in 1758, Maximilien Robespierre was a leading figure of the French Revolution. He rose to prominence as a lawyer and judge, developing such a reputation for honesty and integrity that he became known as “The Incorruptible.”

As part of the Committee of Public Safety that gained power in the early 1790s, Robespierre sought to establish his version of an ideal society. However, while implementing changes he felt necessary, his character turned darker. He resorted to a “Reign of Terror” that led to the arrest and execution of thousands.

Increasingly obsessed with power, Robespierre became hated even by many of his allies. In July 1794, he was arrested and sent to the guillotine.

Men like Robespierre serve as a warning of how easily we can become corrupted by motives and goals that seem justified and pure. Possessed by a desire for power, we might seek to gain “*the whole world*” (v. 26), but in the process lose our own soul – even by goals that once seemed reasonable and right. How quickly we also can be choked by “*the deceitfulness of riches*” (Matthew 13:22).

So how can we keep our motives pure? As Jesus taught, we must deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Him. Every day, we must seek His Kingdom first.

Doing Things Jesus' Way

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: LUKE 5

TUESDAY

May

7

Jesus' instruction must have seemed impractical to Peter. He and his colleagues were professional fishermen, after all.

On this occasion, they had fished all night but had caught nothing. They were prepared to accept the results and move on. Yet Jesus *challenged* them and their assumptions. He wanted them to do things a new way. That is why He said, *"Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch"* (v. 4).

How did Peter react? At first he was defensive, stressing that they had *"worked hard"* (v. 5).

Jesus was not questioning the men's effort or their skill, but He wanted to teach them that there was another dimension to life. A *supernatural, spiritual* dimension. There was a realm their natural minds could not comprehend, a realm that only could be entered through faith and obedience.

Peter decided to enter that realm by faith. When he obeyed Jesus' words, they caught so many fish that *"their nets began to break"* (v. 6).

Jesus is calling us to enter this spiritual realm in every part of life. Today, let God help you see your life in a new light. Lay aside your pride and preconceived ideas. Humble yourself. Fill your mind with His Word. Listen and obey Him in faith. Allow Him to reveal His supernatural power in you. Experience the spiritual dimension in the practical things of life.

Simon answered and said, "Master, we worked hard all night and caught nothing, but I will do as You say and let down the nets."

Luke 5:5 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I commit these issues to You: _____. Open my eyes and my mind. Help me do things Your way and grasp Your truth. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Alone with the Father

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: LUKE 5

The news about Him was spreading even farther, and large crowds were gathering to hear Him and to be healed of their sicknesses. But Jesus Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray.

Luke 5:15-16 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I stop what I am doing to seek Your presence. Speak to me. Guide me. Renew me. Change me. Use me. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Jesus' ministry seemed to be taking off. His fame had grown. People were talking about Him and flocking to see Him in person. Yet, in the midst of this busy time, Jesus paused to do something that may have seemed illogical: He slipped away to pray. This was so important that He stopped *whatever* else He was doing.

Where did Jesus go to be alone with the Father? He went to the *wilderness*, where they could fellowship, interact, and listen to each other with no distractions.

This pattern was repeated throughout His life. Jesus consistently sought time alone with the Father after times of intense ministry (Luke 4:40-42), when He had major decisions to make (Luke 6:12-13), and when He was at the height of success (John 6:15).

Jesus was teaching us a habit we all need to develop. Yes, our schedules can be busy and demanding. We have much to do and can find many excuses. But we miss something vital when we don't stop what we're doing and seek God, alone and apart. If this was important to the Son of God, it is *critical* for us.

Today, the Father is ready to fellowship with you. He wants to renew you. Teach you. Refresh you. Guide you. Empower you. In fact, He is available right now! Don't let anything distract you. Sit in His presence and talk to Him. Listen to Him. Spend time alone with Him.

A Fresh Revelation

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: LUKE 7

During His ministry, Jesus encountered many people with their own preconceived opinions about God's Kingdom, and even about what Jesus should do and say. Some of these expectations reflected traditions developed centuries earlier. Many people were confused when Jesus acted in ways they did not expect. Even John the Baptist wondered if He really was the Christ.

Jesus truly was *different*. Just consider the opening chapters of Luke's Gospel.

He offended people in Nazareth by saying that He had fulfilled a passage from Isaiah. He violated tradition by casting a demon from a man in the synagogue. He forgave a man's sins, offending the religious leaders. He called a tax collector to be His disciple, and then attended a banquet where other tax collectors were present. On the Sabbath, He both healed a man and allowed His disciples to pluck corn, declaring that He was greater than the Sabbath.

Through these actions, Jesus was opening people's eyes to the truth, giving them a *fresh* perspective, trying to help them see things from God's point of view.

Jesus still wants to give *us* fresh revelation, too, helping us understand more about His Kingdom and teaching us new truths. Are we willing to hear His message and the full Gospel? Or are we blocked by our preconceived ideas and prejudices?

Right now, surrender everything to Him. Allow Him to be the Lord of every area of your life.

John the Baptist has sent us to You, saying, "Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?"...Jesus said to them, "Blessed is he who is not offended because of Me."

Luke 7:20-23

PRAYER:

Dear Jesus, I declare that You are my Lord. I will go wherever You lead me. Forgive my sins. Help me to serve You in all that I do. In Your name. Amen.

Excuses, Excuses

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: LUKE 14

They all alike began to make excuses.

Luke 14:18 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, search my heart and mind. Give me the right priorities. I seek first Your Kingdom. I dedicate my life to You. In Jesus' name. Amen.

One day, at a dinner hosted by a leading Pharisee, a guest said to Jesus, "*Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!*" (v. 15). In response, Jesus told a parable about a man who gave a big dinner.

This was a grand event, involving much planning and preparation. When everything was ready, the host announced that it was time for the meal. But none of those invited came. They all had *excuses*.

One person needed to examine some land. A second was concerned about oxen. A third had just "*married a wife*" (v. 20). Hearing these excuses, the host was enraged. He sent his servants to invite others.

God's Kingdom is like this dinner. It is filled with amazing abundance He's prepared, and He has invited us to join Him. The question is, how will we respond?

Many don't respond positively because they have the wrong priorities. To them, God's Kingdom is less important than their personal interests and pleasures, so they reject the invitation.

What about us? Will we seek first His Kingdom? Or will we reject His invitation? If we do, we will miss the blessings He offers us in this life and the next. The Bible tells us that on the Day of Judgment, God will call us to account for our choices.

Today, don't make excuses. Commit your life to Him. Nothing is more important than His Kingdom!

The Kingdom in You

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: LUKE 17

Many Jews in Jesus' day were convinced that when the Messiah came, Israel would be freed from Roman rule, becoming a sovereign nation again, as in David's time. This liberation would be the height of God's blessings, they thought.

Filled with this expectation, the Pharisees asked Jesus for His perspective on the coming kingdom. However, He wanted them to realize that their understanding was faulty. God had something *far better* in mind.

If they viewed things from a human perspective, they would *miss* God's Kingdom. Why? Because this Kingdom was "*in their midst*" (v. 21). In fact, it was *within* them.

This was a radical statement. Jesus was trying to teach them that God's Kingdom was not confined to the physical world. It was a *spiritual* kingdom that could exist anywhere. A kingdom open to anyone. A kingdom *limitless* in scope, where *anything* was possible, any time.

Today, that Kingdom still is among us. We dwell in that Kingdom when Jesus is our King. No matter where we live, what we do, and who rules the nations of this world, we dwell in God's Kingdom.

Ask God to help you open your mind and heart to the reality of His Kingdom. Make sure that Jesus is your King. Serve Him in everything you do. Be aware of His Kingdom throughout the day. His Kingdom is *with* you and *within* you right here, right now!

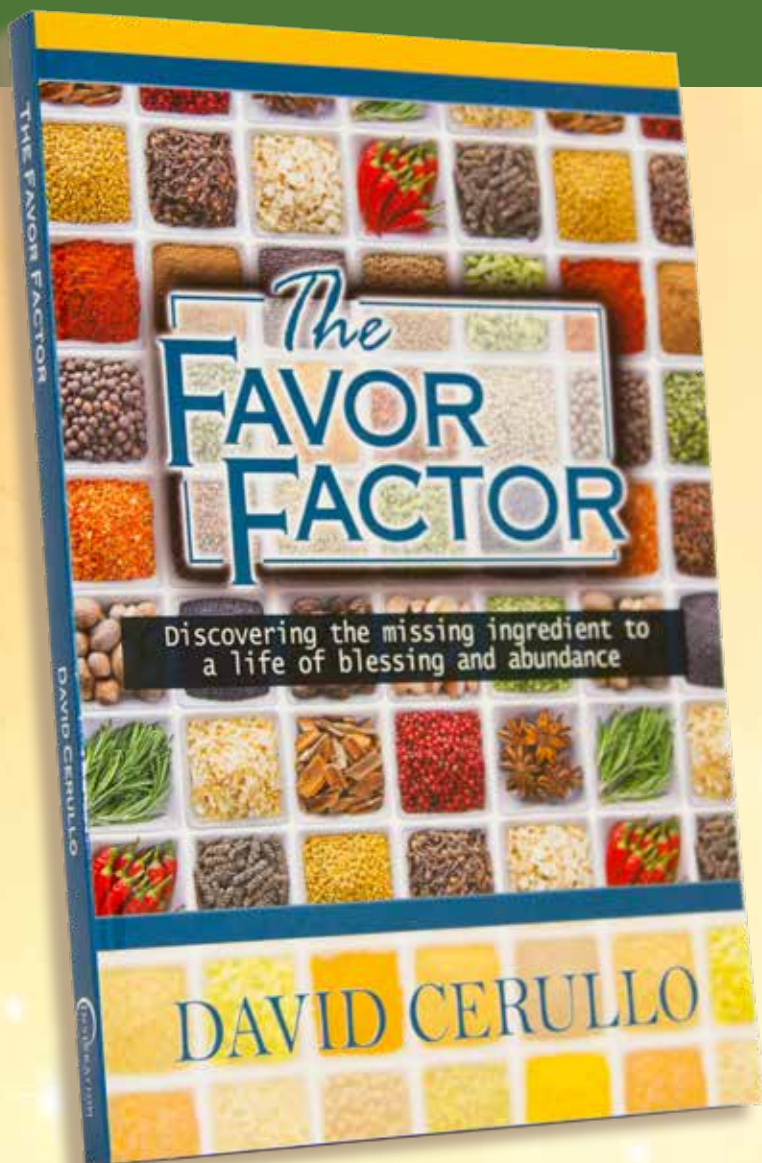
The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say, "Look, here it is!" or, "There it is!" For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst.

Luke 17:20-21 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, open my mind to the reality of Your Kingdom. I submit my life to You. Direct my steps. Help me to serve You. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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Mothers and Daughters

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: RUTH 2

*Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, "Please let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after one in whose sight I may find favor."
And she said to her, "Go, my daughter."*

Ruth 2:2 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, help me to show love and respect for those whom You bring into my life. Use me to be Your witness. In Jesus' name. Amen.

The relationship that developed between Naomi and Ruth seemed highly unlikely. Naomi was from Israel, while Ruth was from Moab. These nations were, in fact, historic enemies.

The women met only because Naomi's husband, Elimelech, had uprooted their family during a famine and moved them to Moab. There, Ruth married one of Naomi's sons.

Before long, disaster struck as Elimelech and their two sons died. After she decided to return to Israel, Naomi assumed that Orpah and Ruth, her widowed daughters-in-law, would remain in Moab and remarry.

Orpah opted to stay behind, but Ruth surprised Naomi by refusing to let her go alone. Ruth expressed her profound love in these unforgettable words: *"Where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God"* (Ruth 1:16).

When they arrived in Bethlehem, Naomi began providing Ruth with sound motherly advice. Ruth, in turn, demonstrated devotion and love for Naomi. Thus they truly became like mother and daughter.

The attitude of these women reminds us that our relationship to our mothers is a cornerstone of our faith. God commanded us to *"honor your father and your mother"* (Exodus 20:12).

Today, remember to honor *your* mother if she is alive. If you have a mother-in-law, give her that same honor. Celebrate every opportunity to show the love of God.

Jesus Reaches Out

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: LUKE 19

MONDAY

May

13

Many who met Jesus that day would surely have loved to spend time alone with Him. But the *only* person who received a personal visit from the Master was Zaccheus.

People were shocked, grumbling that Jesus “*has gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner*” (v. 7). As a chief tax collector, Zaccheus was far from popular.

Zaccheus realized he was a sinner and that others hated him. Yet he was not detracted by the negative comments. He understood that Jesus was reaching out to him, and he didn't hesitate to seize the opportunity. He hurried down from the sycamore tree to meet Jesus and welcome Him into his home.

Others may have rejected the tax collector, but Jesus saw his *potential*. After Zaccheus promised to change and correct his mistakes, Jesus declared, “*Today salvation has come to this house*” (v. 9). The Son of Man had “*come to seek and to save that which was lost*” (v. 10).

Jesus still reaches out to all of us. He offers to accept us, answer our prayers, take away our burdens, forgive our sins, and meet our needs. But we must decide how to respond.

Right now, no matter what is going on, Jesus is reaching out to you. Don't allow disbelief, doubt, or the comments of others to stand in your way. Gladly run into His arms! He is ready to provide what you need.

Zaccheus...was small in stature. So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree in order to see Him...He looked up and said to him, “Zaccheus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house.”

Luke 19:3-5 NASB

PRAYER:

Dear Jesus, thank You for accepting me. Take away my burdens. Forgive my sins. Hear my prayers. Thank You for loving me. In Your name. Amen.

*God will provide rest
for you who are being
persecuted and also for
us when the Lord Jesus
appears from heaven.*

*He will come with
his mighty angels, in
flaming fire, bringing
judgment.*

2 Thessalonians 1:7-8 NLT

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for knowing all I am going through. Help me to be faithful. I trust in You. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Paul wrote as a man with vision. God had given him special revelation about His plans, and Paul's assignment was to communicate this perspective to believers.

The apostle knew the Thessalonians had suffered through "*persecutions and hardships*." They could have been discouraged and given up. But Paul was proud that they demonstrated "*endurance and faithfulness*" (v. 4) and became *examples* to others.

To reassure the believers that God knew what they were going through, Paul reminded them that someday Jesus would appear from Heaven "*with his mighty angels*" (v. 7). More than just punishing the enemies of the Gospel, Jesus will fulfill all of His promises. "*He will receive glory from His holy people – praise from all who believe. And this includes you, for you believed what we told you about him*" (v. 10).

This was the perspective believers were to have in every situation. Not just in the face of persecution, but also in physical and financial problems, and in emotional and relational complications. They were to *persevere*, confident God knew everything about their struggles, and they would be rewarded for their faithfulness.

This is the perspective each of us must have too. We may experience problems. But in light of eternity, these troubles "*are small and won't last very long*." The results will be worth it: "*They produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever!*" (2 Corinthians 4:17).

Deceiving Messages

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: 2 THESSALONIANS 2

Paul knew that there were many ways of looking at current events and prophecy. But there was only one *correct* way among many wrong ways that might *seem* right.

The Thessalonians were facing challenges and fierce opposition. In this vulnerable state, they had heard messages, allegedly on Paul's authority, that "*the day of the Lord has come*" (v. 2). As a result, many were troubled and confused.

If Jesus already had come, what did this mean for those who still were alive? Had they missed out? Was there something wrong with them?

Paul assured them that this day had not come. But he used the opportunity to warn them about the very real presence of deception, and of how believers can become victims.

Satan was the source of much of this deception, spreading ideas, interpretations, rumors, and conclusions that seemed plausible. He backed up these deceptions with "*false miracles, signs, and wonders*" (v. 9).

Paul's warning still applies: "*Don't let anyone deceive you in any way*" (v. 3). As the apostle said, it is possible for anyone to be deceived, and we must understand that deceiving messages can seem convincing.

Realize that there are many ways you can be deceived. To keep from becoming a victim, it is critical that you have a personal relationship with God, that you are sensitive to His Spirit, and that you know His Word, so you can stand strong without compromise.

Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ...We ask you...not to be easily upset or troubled, either by a prophecy or by a message or by a letter supposedly from us, alleging that the day of the Lord has come.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-4 CSB

PRAYER:

Father, give me discernment to recognize any misleading and deceitful message. Help me stand on Your Word. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Lawlessness

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: 2 THESSALONIANS 2

Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction.

2 Thessalonians 2:3 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I surrender my life to You. Forgive me for the sin of pride and for going my own way. Help me to serve and please You. In Jesus' name. Amen.

False teachings regarding the Second Coming of Jesus were causing Paul great concern. To correct these errors, he explained that this day couldn't come unless *"the man of lawlessness is revealed"* (v. 3).

The word *"lawlessness"* reveals a central characteristic of this man, and the conditions that would exist when Jesus returned. This man would demonstrate his attitude by taking the place of God and even *"displaying himself as being God"* (v. 4).

The Bible clearly warns against this spirit of lawlessness. The Greek word was used 18 times in the New Testament! For example, Jesus used it to describe the coming judgment: *"The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness"* (Matthew 13:41). He also used it to describe those who tried to fool others with appearances but who were inwardly *"full of hypocrisy and lawlessness"* (Matthew 23:28).

Lawlessness is a characteristic of people who reject the Gospel, who don't care about what God has said, and who refuse to consider His Word. They reject His plans, His principles, His influence, His standards, and His authority. Despising His rule, they elevate themselves to take His place in their lives.

The Bible reminds us that God always must be first. We must have *"no other gods"* before Him (Exodus 20:3), and His Word must provide our standard. Otherwise, we are guilty of lawlessness.

Traditions are central to our human experience. They infuse important milestones with special meaning. They represent lessons that have been learned, and celebrate people who have made significant contributions to our heritage.

Yet Jesus saw how some people paid more attention to traditions than to God Himself. They had even made traditions the focal point of their religious thought and activity. In Matthew 15:1-6 Jesus urged them to understand that traditions had to be kept in place.

Paul encouraged the Thessalonians to “*stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught*” (v. 15) concerning all that they knew about the Gospel.

Paul knew how easily the believers could go off course. The best way to avoid these traps is to follow the traditions he provided. These teachings represented the core of the Gospel.

Paul reinforced these principles as he warned about people who do not live “*according to the tradition which you received from us*” (2 Thessalonians 3:6).

These are important principles for us to remember. We can easily be like the religious leaders of Jesus’ time and focus on rules that have been handed down to us. It is certainly important to honor special people and events, but we must always remember that there are misleading doctrines aimed at deceiving us.

Stay balanced by focusing on God and His Word. Stand firm and hold “*to the traditions which you were taught.*”

Stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us.

2 Thessalonians 2:15 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I commit my life to You. Give me wisdom. I will stand on Your Word! Help me never to compromise. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

SATURDAY

MAY

18

God's Awesome Deeds

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: ISAIAH 64

*Oh, that you would burst
from the heavens and
come down! How the
mountains would quake
in your presence!...Your
coming would make the
nations tremble.*

Isaiah 64:1-2 NLT

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The eruption of Mount St. Helens, a volcano in the state of Washington, occurred on this day in 1980. The impact of this devastating volcanic eruption, in which 57 people died, was overwhelming and terrifying. No one who saw this spectacle would ever forget it.

A column of gas and ash eruption was formed that was over 12 miles high and traveled hundreds of miles. By the end, the mountain's volcanic cone had been completely blasted away, and its peak had been replaced by a crater almost 2,000 feet deep. An earthquake triggered a gigantic landslide, and a cloud of ash and stone was carried more than 12 miles. Mud flows buried river valleys up to 17 miles away!

Isaiah 64:1 uses the picture of a mountain quaking to describe the power of God's presence. When the Lord *"bursts from the heavens"* and comes down, the mountains will quake and the nations will tremble.

When God acts, His enemies begin to grasp His power, glory, and omnipotence. As the prophet Isaiah knew, *"since the world began, no ear has heard, and no eye has seen a God like you, who works for those who wait for him!"* (v. 4).

Right now you may be facing fearsome enemies or problems that seem insurmountable. But you serve a God who can make the earth shake and the mountains quake! Nothing is impossible for Him! He is all-powerful.

Unruly and Undisciplined

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: 2 THESSALONIANS 3

For many in Jesus' day, the law had become something of a master, even taking the place of God. Some religious leaders were even guilty of a *legalistic* attitude. The Bible makes clear that Jesus came to restore the right perspective, and to bring freedom. Yet it also was possible to abuse these freedoms and become disruptive.

Paul was concerned because some in the Thessalonian church who claimed to be believers were living in a “*disorderly*” way (v. 11). The Greek word, used here for the only time in the Bible, suggests these people were *insubordinate*, much like out-of-line soldiers.

Being an effective soldier requires *training, discipline, and preparation*. It is essential that soldiers *understand* their assignment, that they know their place and follow orders carefully. Ineffective soldiers fail in one or more of these basics, and they cannot be trusted. In fact, the lack of cooperation by a few insubordinate soldiers can sabotage the effectiveness of the entire army.

The same principles apply to the body of Christ. We are like soldiers, serving in His army. To be effective, each of us needs to play our part, and follow the directions Jesus gives. Those who walk “*disorderly*” undermine the effectiveness of the entire body.

Make sure Jesus is your Lord and Master. Be sensitive to His leading. And make sure that you follow His orders carefully and serve Him faithfully.

*We command you...
withdraw from every
brother who walks
disorderly. We hear that
there are some who
walk among you in a
disorderly manner, not
working at all, but are
busybodies.*

2 Thessalonians 3:6, 11
NKJV

PRAYER:

Dear Lord Jesus, I will leave all behind and follow You. Show me my place in Your body. Help me to be a good steward of the resources You have given me. In Your name. Amen.

Sowing After a Harvest

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: PROVERBS 20

The sluggard does not plow after the autumn, so he begs during the harvest and has nothing.

Proverbs 20:4 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, help me to make the most of the time You have given me. I seek Your insights. Show me how I can be more fruitful. In Jesus' name. Amen.

The harvest represents completion and culmination. It is the moment when we reap the fruit of our labors. At such times, many people react by stopping to take a break.

But God's Word teaches that the harvest actually is an ideal time to think about the future. After a harvest, we are acutely aware of what we have done and the impact of our strategies and plans. We realize what we did, what we failed to do, and what we could have done differently.

Similarly, wise sports coaches know that the best time to plan their strategies is immediately after a game. When things are fresh in their minds, they can best examine what happened and consider what they should have done differently. From a spiritual perspective, the harvest is a time when we can be most open to God's correction and insights.

The Bible warns that some people don't take action "*after the autumn*" (v. 4) because they are lazy and don't want to work. They have missed the opportunity to grow and learn, to plant and sow. By the time the next harvest comes, they may have nothing to reap.

Remember that we reap what we sow (Galatians 6:7). Don't let opportunities pass you by! Sow seeds with your time, talents, and treasures. Ask God to give you deeper insights. Be ready to learn from the past and to change where necessary.

After studying the lives of several Christians, Hudson Taylor observed that many knew the promises in the Bible but didn't put them into practice. Deciding to try God at His Word, Taylor determined that Jesus would be Lord of every part of his life. As he said, "Christ is either Lord of all, or He is not Lord at all."

Born on this date in 1832, Taylor was saved when he was just 17. He felt called to be a missionary to China, but first he wanted to be sure he could depend on God and the promise that Jesus would do whatever we ask in His name. Was it possible "to move man, through God, by prayer alone?"

Taylor prayed, and God miraculously provided for his every need. Every bill was paid, and every challenge was met.

Encouraged, the young missionary left England with confidence. During his 51-year ministry in China, Taylor established hundreds of mission stations and brought the Gospel to thousands. He had this effective ministry because he *trusted* God. As a result, countless lives were changed.

God looks for people who, like Hudson Taylor, are willing to take Him at His Word. He is ready to do great things in *your* life.

Declare that His promises are true. Commit yourself to Him. Boldly believe that He will do whatever you ask in His name. Trust Him today!

Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

John 14:13 CSB

PRAYER:

Father, I believe that Your Word is true. I ask for these things: _____ . May You be glorified. In Jesus' name. Amen.

What was from the beginning...concerning the Word of Life...we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us.

1 John 1:1-2 NASB

PRAYER:

Dear Lord Jesus, thank You for coming into this world. Thank You that I have eternal life because of You. Thank You for giving me life. In Your name. Amen.

From the opening of his letter, John made it clear that he was writing about *life*. He began by proclaiming the “*Word of life*” (v. 1). This Word (*logos*) is the presence and revelation of Jesus. John wanted us to know that Jesus brings life. Real life begins with Jesus, and all who believe on Him have eternal life (1 John 5:13)!

We are constantly bombarded by voices eager to tell us how to live and what to believe. Many of these people also tell us why we shouldn't believe the Bible and why it is foolish to trust in God. Such people spread doubt. They encourage us to accept their wisdom and focus on material things.

It can be tempting to believe these voices, and to focus on the things in this world. But John could not make it any clearer: Our life needs to *begin* and *end* with Jesus. He is our life, now and into eternity.

Today, remember how simple and powerful it is to trust in Jesus! Through faith in Him, everything changes. As we focus on Him, He opens up a whole new world to us, and allows us to experience life in fresh ways. He can take away our burdens and give us peace. He can direct our steps and provide our needs.

He can do these things because He *is* the way, the truth, and the life!

Throughout the New Testament, believers were continually exhorted to be good stewards. As Jesus taught, we are to invest the resources we have been given (Matthew 25:14-30).

Building on this theme, Paul reminded the Thessalonians that he had tried to set an example when he was with them. He and his companions *“labored and toiled, working night and day, so that we would not be a burden to any of you”* (v. 8).

Aware that some Thessalonian Christians had been *“idle,”* Paul actually *commanded* them, *“If anyone isn’t willing to work, he should not eat”* (v. 10).

Believers are to be characterized by working hard and being responsible. They have to focus on their God-given assignments and serve Him *energetically* with their resources and *“make the most of every opportunity”* (Ephesians 5:16 NLT).

One of the worst accusations that can be leveled against believers is that they are *“busybodies”* (v. 11). The Greek word, used here for the only time in the Bible, suggests being a *meddler* and focusing on others with a judgmental spirit.

Paul’s message is that we should *“work quietly”* and *“provide for”* ourselves (v. 12). Even when this is draining, we should not *“grow weary in doing good”* (v. 13) but stay persistent.

Ask God to help you be a good steward of the resources you have been given. Be focused on the tasks He has entrusted to you, work hard, and be persistent.

We hear that there are some among you who are idle. They are not busy but busybodies.

2 Thessalonians 3:11 CSB

PRAYER:

Father, help me not to be a meddler but to focus on Your assignments for me. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Persistence

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: 2 THESSALONIANS 3

But as for you, brothers and sisters, do not grow weary in doing good.

2 Thessalonians 3:13 CSB

PRAYER:

Father, help me to be persistent in every situation I face. I trust in You. Help me be an example to others. In Jesus' name. Amen.

These Thessalonians could have felt *overwhelmed* and *discouraged*. Life is complicated, and they could have wanted to give up for a number of reasons.

Some of these believers had been severely attacked and persecuted. They had heard deceptive messages that spread confusion. Some among them had been lazy and meddling, being a burden on others.

Under such conditions, it might have been easy for these believers to “*grow weary*” (v. 13). However, Paul encouraged them to stay *persistent*, never to stop doing the right thing, no matter what the issue.

They may have felt tired and worn out, but needed to continue “*doing good*” (v. 13). The Greek words here convey the sense of being committed to *excel* in every condition, not just to tolerate them. When their flesh might react defensively or negatively, they were to remain positive. Instead of doing the minimum amount of work, they were to do *well*.

Through their response, these believers could be a powerful example to others. They could demonstrate how to live by overcoming discouragement and continually demonstrating a life of faith and confidence in God.

Remember that God knows *your* circumstances and the challenges you face. He promises to reward you for your faithfulness. He knows when you endure amid difficult circumstances, when you show love for others, and when you are a good steward of your resources. Do your best, seek to excel, and serve as His witness.

Forgiveness

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: 1 JOHN 1

In 1985, Coca-Cola abandoned a formula that had made its primary soft drink dominant throughout the world and introduced “New Coke” in its place. When the public reacted with outrage, the company rethought its decision. Seventy-seven days later, it reintroduced “Classic Coke” with the original formula.

The man responsible for this failure was Coca-Cola's chief marketing officer. As *Forbes Magazine* commented, “If ever there were a failure destined to kill a career, New Coke was it.”

Shortly after this debacle, this man left the company. He could have given up. Instead, he *persevered*. He was eventually rehired by Coca-Cola before starting his own company. In the end, he became acclaimed as one of the “greatest pitchmen” of the twentieth-century.

Looking back, the executive described how the New Coke “failure” had “turned out to be a roaring *success*.” Why? Because “we were *willing to learn* from the experience and to change our minds.” They put aside “company pride” and admitted their mistakes.

Many people have not learned this lesson. When they make a mistake, they feel defeated and wallow in failure and guilt. They assume God will reject them.

The Bible reminds us that all of us sin (Romans 3:23). But if we confess our sins, God is ready to forgive us.

Have you made any mistakes? Don't give up! Confess your sins. Receive God's forgiveness. Let Him cleanse you and set you free.

If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves...If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 1:8-9 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, search my heart. Reveal any sin. I commit these mistakes to You: _____. Thank You for forgiveness. In Jesus' name. Amen.

What You Should Know

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: 1 JOHN 2

Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist...Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also.

1 John 2:22-23 NASB

PRAYER:

Lord Jesus, help me to be on guard against attacks. Thank You for dying for me. I declare Your Word to be true. I trust You. In Your name. Amen.

Today, as in the first century, a virus is infecting the church, spreading the teaching of the Gnostic Gospel. As a Bible scholar recently warned, this Gnosticism “threatens the shape of Christian faith.”

Gnosticism is derived from the Greek word for knowledge, and it teaches that we are not saved by faith in Christ but by special knowledge. For Gnostics, the resurrection of Jesus was a symbolic event, and He only *seemed* to have a body. They insisted that we should believe alternative interpretations of His life.

False teachings like this have spread like a virus and undermined the faith of many Christians. These beliefs have been encouraged through books, movies, and TV programs, often in subtle ways.

In light of these attacks, it is important that you know *what* you believe and are prepared. Your faith is being targeted, and you must determine not to become a casualty.

Fill your mind with the Word of God. Make sure that you develop your *personal* relationship with Jesus. Don't be manipulated by clever words or deceived with arguments that sound plausible, even if they are endorsed by a famous celebrity.

Remember, Jesus alone is “*the way, the truth, and the life*” and no one can come to the Father except through Him (John 14:6). He is a real Person. He died for your sins, He rose again, and He is reigning forever. Make Him your Lord. Listen to Him. Serve Him. *Know Him.*

A Day to Remember

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: JOSHUA 4

MONDAY

May

27

When the children of Israel crossed into the Promised Land, Joshua met with representatives from the 12 tribes. Each man was told to take up a symbolic stone to provide a memorial for his tribe. The purpose was simple: to provide unforgettable *reminders* of their past.

Joshua knew that future generations would not know the story of their journey from Egypt to the Promised Land. They would not know the risks their forefathers had taken or the trials they had faced. They would not know the mistakes they had made or the miraculous ways God had directed and blessed them.

For these future generations, it would be easy to take God's blessings for granted. But this memorial would serve as "*a sign among you.*" It would stimulate questions such as, "*What do these stones mean?*" (v. 6). Thus, this memorial would provide opportunities to retell the story in detail, from generation to generation.

This is why we too have memorials, places to encourage reflection. These are moments to pause and think about our past. What sacrifices have been made that we might have life and liberty? Are we taking any blessings for granted? Have we shown appreciation and gratitude?

Today, pause and ask God to help you think about *your* past. Reflect on your heritage and what others have done for you. Look for opportunities to show gratitude. And take the time to thank God for His countless blessings!

These stones shall be for a memorial to the children of Israel forever.

Joshua 4:7

PRAYER:

Father, thank You for all those who have sacrificed that I might have life and liberty. Thank You for all that You have done for me. I am so grateful! In Jesus' name. Amen.

Changing

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: 1 JOHN 3

*We are children of God,
and it has not appeared
as yet what we will be.
We know that when He
appears, we will be like
Him, because we will
see Him just as He is.*

1 John 3:2 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, I commit my life to You. Mold me in Your image. I declare that Jesus is my Lord! Use me for Your Kingdom. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Our perspective on life changes when we realize that we are the “*children of God*” (v. 2). Like children, we *constantly* are developing. Growing. Changing. Like children, we are not in a final state but are constantly learning through a variety of experiences.

In this process, we will sometimes make mistakes and do the wrong thing. Like a good father, God does not give up on us when we make mistakes. He knows our nature, and He wants us to learn from our experiences.

As our Father, God looks at us with love, seeking ways to protect us, to guide us, and to shape our development. We should not be surprised when He disciplines us and helps us recognize areas where we need correction or improvement.

Our ultimate nature will not be clear until we are present with Him. Then “*we will be like Him*” (v. 2). Until then, we will continue to change.

Always remember that “*it has not appeared as yet what we will be.*” You are not in your final form. In fact, you can't even imagine what you *will* be. That is something only God knows.

God is shaping you. He is constantly teaching you and helping you mature and become more like Jesus. He is helping you impact more lives.

Make sure you cooperate. Trust Him and obey His Word. Surrender your life anew to Him, because He is your loving Father.

Insurmountable Mountains

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: MATTHEW 19

Climbing the world's highest peak seemed like an impossible goal. To locals and visitors alike, Mount Everest was an awe-inspiring sight.

Everest presented what every mountaineer considered the ultimate challenge. What would it be like to reach its summit? Could it even be done?

Many attempted the feat but all had failed. Some even lost their lives in the process. Yet the elusive peak towered before them, defiantly magnificent.

Then, on this day in 1953, Edmund Hillary of New Zealand and Sherpa Tenzing Norgay of Nepal became the first explorers to conquer the summit. They overcame countless obstacles on their way to the top, including violent winds, extreme cold, icefalls, and glaciers. Against all odds, the two men had shown the world that it was possible.

In the decades since, Mount Everest has been scaled hundreds of times. But Hillary and Norgay blazed the trail and showed that what seemed insurmountable was in fact not so.

Many people, when they face trying circumstances, simply give up. But the Bible reminds us that God can do anything. As Jesus said, *"With God everything is possible"* (v. 26).

Has God given you a dream that seems overwhelming? Do you have a challenge that seems too difficult or a problem that doesn't seem to have a solution?

Ask God for the wisdom you need. And trust Him. He is looking for people who will step out in faith and do bold things.

Jesus looked at them intently and said, "Humanly speaking, it is impossible. But with God everything is possible."

Matthew 19:26 NLT

PRAYER:

Father, I commit these challenges to You: _____. I believe that with You all things are possible. Thank You for showing me the way. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Confidence and Boldness

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: 1 JOHN 5

We can be confident that he will listen to us whenever we ask him for anything in line with his will. And if we know he is listening when we make our requests, we can be sure that he will give us what we ask for.

1 John 5:14-15 NLT

PRAYER:

Father, I believe You for these things: _____ . Thank You for hearing me. I am confident because I know Your Word and Your promises. In Jesus' name. Amen.

The Bible encourages us to “*pray without ceasing*” (1 Thessalonians 5:17). And we can pray about *anything*! There are no restrictions, for God is interested in everything, no matter how small or great.

Yet many Christians don't seem to believe this. They limit what they will pray about. As a result, they do not receive the answers God *could* provide.

The Bible also tells us that God wants us to be *confident* when we pray. There should be no doubt that “*He will listen to us*” (v. 14). Yet many Christians fail to have this confidence.

There is one condition for this confidence: We are to ask Him “*for anything in line with His will.*” How do we know His will? The surest way is to read His Word. There He reveals His standards and promises.

When your prayers are based on His Word, you can pray with confidence. You can be bold in praying for your health or finances, for your friends or family, for protection or His peace, for guidance and wisdom, and for the salvation of others.

Today bring your requests before God, always being careful to use His Word as the standard for your life and your prayers. Declare His promises to be true. Pray without ceasing, with confidence and boldness. And remember that your prayers are not falling on deaf ears, because the Bible tells us that “*he is listening*” (v. 15).

Correction

TODAY'S BIBLE READING: HEBREWS 4

Bible scholar Alexander Cruden has influenced generations of believers.

Born on this day in 1700 in Aberdeen, Scotland, Cruden received a good education and even considered entering the ministry. After graduating from college, he was accused of insanity and consequently imprisoned. Upon his release, he was employed as a tutor and eventually moved to London, where he worked as a proofreader. He became so successful selling books that he was appointed bookseller to the king.

Serious about his faith, Cruden loved reading the Bible and began looking for ways to organize it to help others study. The first edition of his concordance, published in 1737, was not successful, which led to a fresh onset of insanity and more confinement.

In and out of prison, Cruden continued working on his concordance, eventually producing more expanded editions. Seeing this as God's calling on his life, he began referring to himself as "Alexander the Corrector." He encouraged others to realize how the Bible could "correct" problems in society.

With over 220,000 references, Cruden's concordance remains an invaluable resource. In the preface, he explained how he hoped to encourage believers with "the best rule of interpreting Scripture," which was to focus on the Word itself by comparing "one Scripture with another," instead of interjecting subjective opinions.

As Alexander Cruden learned, God's Word has great power to change our lives when we study it daily and live by its principles.

*The word of God is
living and active...
piercing as far as the
division of soul and
spirit, of both joints and
marrow, and able to
judge the thoughts and
intentions of the heart.*

Hebrews 4:12 NASB

PRAYER:

Father, open my mind and heart that I might understand more of Your Word. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Free, Online Courses to Build Your Faith

**ENROLL NOW**

There's a phrase from the Bible that is often quoted around the world: "*The truth shall set you free.*" But did you know that this is only a part of the full quote from Jesus?

Here's the quote in context:

If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free (John 8:31-32 ESV).

So the key to becoming a true disciple, Jesus declared, is to abide in His Word. This means studying and meditating on the Bible, and putting its truths into practice in your life.

By continuing to learn and apply Jesus' teachings, you will increasingly "*know the truth*" – and find real freedom as a result.

But How?

For many believers, this is just a nice theory. They know it's a great thing to study God's Word, but they don't know where to start!

But here's good news...

Inspiration Ministries is making it possible to easily mine the treasures of the Bible through free online courses in the **Strengthen Your Walk Discipleship Center**. You can start your journey at sywlearn.org.

**Several courses
are already available:**



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Better Life, Parts 1 and 2



Convert to Disciple



30 Keys to Your Spiritual
Growth, Parts 1 through 3



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We’ve already received
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me understand the impor-
tance of making the right
choices. I’m so glad to have
resources like this to pull
me closer to God and help
keep me find the direction
I need to go in.*

– KIMBERLY, USA

*I learned a great deal
to help me develop my
relationship with God.*

– Jegede, Nigeria

*Your content was well
planned, well delivered,
and captivating.*

– CELESTINE, Germany

*I have been a born-again
Christian since 2010,
but I’d like to reaffirm
my spiritual growth by
taking these courses.*

– MELVA, Indonesia

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learn God’s Word and strengthen
your walk with Christ. Visit
sywlearn.org to find out more
or to register for these free,
Bible-based courses.



Linda's 1,000-Fold Return >>>

When things looked bleak,
a \$5 bill triggered the beginning of
amazing financial breakthroughs.

Do you sometimes wonder how your bills will get paid? Do you find yourself struggling to believe that God is truly a good Father, able to meet all of your needs when you trust Him and follow His instructions?

Linda faced the same financial challenges as you do, but a sudden downward spiral occurred when her husband Kevin, became disabled and lost his job. With their income reduced to practically nothing, their faith was severely tested.

You see, Linda ministers on the streets to drug-addicted women in California. She knows God has called her to this ministry and has always tried to trust Him as her provider. However, she never envisioned her husband losing his job. This could change everything.

With things looking desperate, Linda happened to see Inspiration Campmeeting on TV one morning. She was intrigued when one of

the speakers explained how breakthroughs are possible through the principle of Seedtime and Harvest. Although she had financially supported several ministries in the past, none had taught her about expecting a harvest when she sowed into God's Kingdom.

Linda strongly sensed God prompting her to sow a financial seed to Inspiration Ministries. Yet when she reached for her wallet, she was dismayed to find only one \$5 bill remaining. Would anyone accept such a small amount? After some hesitation, Linda decided to call the number on the screen.

"Hello, I'm calling to sow a seed," she told the phone representative. "But I only have \$5 in my wallet. Will you accept such a small gift?" The representative gladly agreed to take this pledge, and Linda sent her \$5 bill in the mail with great anticipation.

A few days after taking that first step, she got a call from her

husband. “Linda, our ship came in!” he exclaimed joyfully. “We’ve received an unexpected check for \$5,000!”

Linda immediately knew without a doubt that God had multiplied her seed – exactly a 1,000 times, in fact!

A GOD-SENT FAMILY

This was only the beginning of new financial favor for Linda and Kevin. Not long after she sowed her \$5 seed, something remarkable happened at church one Sunday morning. Noticing a woman crying in the pews, Linda reached out to her with comforting words and prayer. Even though this didn’t seem like a particularly significant event at the time, it soon resulted in a huge blessing for she and her husband.

The woman and Linda became great friends. And because of Linda’s loving encouragement, the woman’s family felt led to become generous financial benefactors. They provided God-sent resources that met Linda and Kevin’s every financial need.

“I knew God was teaching me to surrender everything I had, starting with that first \$5 bill,” Linda recalls. “So I continued to sow a new seed into Inspiration Ministries each time I received income. And the more I sowed, the more our harvest multiplied!”

Linda faithfully continued her women’s ministry, eventually writing an inspirational book to bless others. Then one day she heard a knock on her front door. “The same God-sent family handed me a check – this time for \$20,000!” she marvels.

“I just started crying,” Linda says. “Every time I received money from this wonderful, God-sent family, I knew in my heart it was because I’d first given a seed to the Lord through Inspiration Ministries.”

Are YOU trusting God as your provider?

If you’re having financial struggles today, perhaps God is asking you to take a step of faith, like Linda took. When you sow a financial seed into God’s Kingdom through Inspiration Ministries with the enclosed response form or at inspiration.org/souls, you’re trusting the Lord to bring you supernatural increase He has promised.

*“Give, and you will receive.
Your gift will return to you in
full – pressed down, shaken
together to make room for
more, running over, and
poured into your lap.”*

– Luke 6:38 NLT

24/7 Christian Programming...

Here are a few of the life-changing, Christ-centered programs from around the world airing this month on Inspiration TV.

Featured Programs:



From the Ukraine: Victory Christian Church
with Pastor Henry Madava

Henry Madava's mission is to help people find salvation through faith in Jesus Christ as well as the calling that God has placed on their lives. You can watch *Voice of Victory* Saturdays at 4 p.m. US Eastern & 16:00 UK on Inspiration TV.



From New Zealand: Running With Fire
with Pastor Tak Bhana

Running with Fire was created to see God's leaders and His church ablaze with a holy fire for Him. Let Tak Bhana minister to your spirit and ignite your faith Saturdays at 8:30 p.m. US Eastern & 20:30 UK on Inspiration TV.



From the UK: Order My Steps
with Bishop John Francis

Bishop John Francis will inspire you to shake off complacency and live a fruitful life! Let Bishop John Francis help order your steps Sundays at 2:30 p.m. US Eastern & 14:30 UK on Inspiration TV.

with YOU in Mind!

Reel Inspiration Movies: A HEART THAT FORGIVES

Real Stories: ILLUMINATIONS

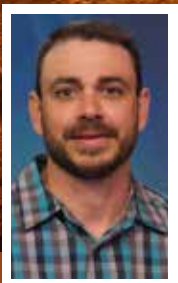


For airtimes or more information on these and other great programs, visit ini.tv/schedule.

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The Day Love Broke Through

by Ben Cerullo

For over 1,000 years, God's presence was mostly experienced just once a year. This was when the high priest entered the Holy of Holies in the wilderness tabernacle and later in the temple in Jerusalem. The Lord's radiant glory was shielded from view by a thick veil blocking access to His dwelling place in the Holy of Holies.

The Bible tells us this massive veil in the temple was 60 feet long, 30 feet wide, and 4 inches thick. It was so heavy that 300 priests were needed to lift it, and it was so strong that even a team of horses would have been unable to pull it apart.

Yet something amazing happened when Jesus died for us on the cross: *"Jesus cried out with a*

loud voice, and breathed His last. Then the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom" (Mark 15:37-38). The thick curtain that no one on earth could have torn was torn by God Himself – *from top to bottom!*

Do you see how significant this was?

When Jesus died and rose for you, God's LOVE broke through!

It was *love* that motivated God to send His only Son to earth (John 3:16), and that same love was on full display when Christ died for us, even while we were still sinners (Romans 5:8).

But I'm particularly struck by the **POWER** on display when God's love ripped the temple veil

in two, just so lost humanity could come to Him unimpeded. What a dramatic statement that His love would no longer remain behind any veils or religious rituals.

OPENING OUR HEART TO HIM

If you need some kind of breakthrough in your life today, never forget that history's greatest breakthrough has already taken place: At Jesus' birth and then again at the cross, God *broke through* to us. And the resurrection three days later proved that Jesus was ALIVE forever as our Savior, Lord, and advocate.

Yet I'm saddened that so many of God's people today have not fully *responded* to His great love. Love sent Jesus from Heaven to earth and then to the agony of the cross. He broke through the temple veil and every barrier our sin had erected. He clearly did HIS part in reconciling us to Him. Now it's *our* turn...

**Shouldn't we *respond*
to His love by passionately
breaking through every
barrier that keeps us in
the outer courts?**

It broke Jesus' heart when the believers in Ephesus drifted away from Him and left their "*first love*" (Revelation 2:1-4). After He had done so much to break through human sinfulness, pride, and apathy, how could they become so distracted by religious activities and the cares of the world that they lost their intimacy with Him?

Later we see Jesus standing outside and knocking on the door of the church at Laodicea (Revelation 3:14-20). No longer would He rip apart a thick curtain or break through closed doors. Instead, He knocks. He waits. He speaks tenderly, inviting us to hear His loving words and open the door to Him.

Through that open door, Jesus will come and change *everything*. Sin and sickness must flee in His presence. Depression will melt away. Relationships will be restored.

Friend, I pray that Jesus' awesome love will break through to you. May you hear His loving invitation and open your heart wide to Him. The King of kings wants to come and dine with you!

"If you need some kind of breakthrough in your life today, never forget that history's greatest breakthrough has already taken place."



Take Care of Yourself

by Jim Buchan

I used to get irritated when my Uncle Bob told me, “Take care of yourself, Jimmy,” whenever he said goodbye. As a new Christian, I had embraced the deny-yourself message Jesus taught in Luke 9:23, and I couldn’t seem to square that with my uncle’s encouragement to take care of myself.

Although I knew my uncle was well-meaning, I concluded that he was simply uninformed about what the Bible teaches.

However, as the years went by, I discovered that Uncle Bob did indeed have a point – and one that I’ve tended to overlook. Many Scripture verses do in fact instruct us to take care of ourselves and guard our spiritual, emotional, and physical reserves (for example Acts 20:28 and 1 Timothy 4:14-16).

Failure to heed this important admonition can result in a variety of negative consequences, from spiritual shipwreck (1 Timothy 1:18-20), to premature aging or even death.

But by far the most common result of not taking care of ourselves is this sad condition King Solomon described: *“If the ax is dull and its edge unsharpened, more strength is needed”* (Ecclesiastes 10:10 NIV). Put simply, if we’ve neglected our spiritual life and allowed our blade to become dull, it’s hard work to cut down a tree.

My friend, never forget that you are God’s holy temple, the dwelling place of His Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). As instructed by my Uncle Bob – and the Scriptures – make sure that you’re taking care of your spiritual, mental, and physical edge. Believe me, things go better when your blade is sharp!



Jim Buchan
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tions at Inspira-
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A Merry Heart...

A merry heart does good, like medicine. – Proverbs 17:22

Funny Things Happen in Church!

Hearing the preacher...

After a worship service, an elderly woman stopped to speak to the new pastor. "I'm nearly deaf, and I can't hear a word you say when you preach."

Hoping to console her, the young pastor said, "Well, maybe you haven't missed much."

To his surprise, the woman replied, "Yes, that's what they all tell me."

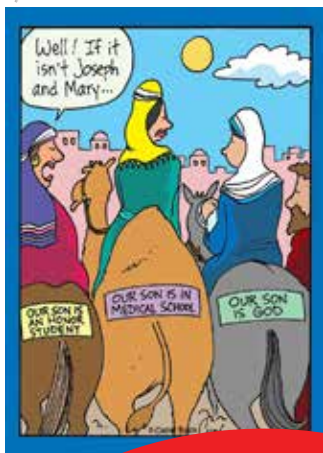
Next generation...

Sunday school teacher: "Johnny, do you know what a lie is?"

Johnny: "Yes, a lie is an abomination to the Lord and a very present help in times of trouble."

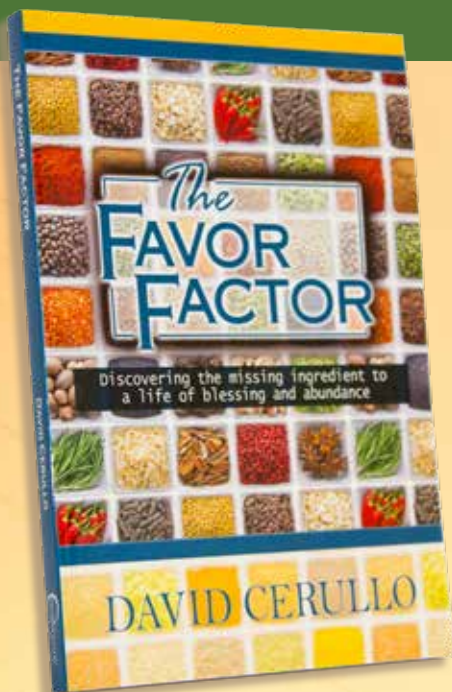
Disbanding the Choir...

Church Bulletin: The Over 60s Choir will be disbanded for the summer, with the thanks of the entire congregation.



The INSPIRATION devotional magazine is looking for examples of humor in the church or the Christian life. If you have humorous stories, jokes, or photos you would like to share, please write to MerryHeart@inspiration.org.

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