

# OASIS

## *Your Personal Rest*

A 90-Day Devotional

"Learn to delight in God's presence."

JASON F. MOORE

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## Psalms 23 – Amplified Bible

The Lord is **my** Shepherd [to feed, guide, and shield me], I shall not lack.  
**He** makes me lie down in [fresh, tender] green pastures; **He** leads me beside the  
still and restful waters.

**He** refreshes and restores my life (my self);

**He** leads me in the paths of righteousness [uprightness and right standing with  
Him—not for my earning it, but] for **His** name's sake.

Yes, though I walk through the [deep, sunless] valley of the shadow of death, I  
will fear or dread no evil, for **You** are with me;

**Your** rod [to protect] and **Your** staff [to guide], they comfort me.

**You** prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.

**You** anoint my head with oil; my [brimming] cup runs over.

Surely or only goodness, mercy, and unfailing love shall follow me all the days of  
my life, and through the length of my days the house of the Lord [and His presence] shall  
be my dwelling place.

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## Introduction

An oasis represents a lush, healthy place of rest and growth. Our noisy souls often trudge along without rest in our daily routines. We can forget what true rest really is. Anxious, tired, overburdened, and losing hope, describe just a few outcomes of the modern, driven soul. God promises rest and refreshment. His truth grounds the lies that fatigue our minds. Resting *IN* the work, not at the completion, is the essence of the fulfilled life that is promised. Rest produces vitality and creativity. Christ promises personal, prepared, and permanent rest for His people - will you enter in?

What can happen in 90 days reading this devotional? Our lives could be totally changed by decisions made positive to the will of God. Just like natural food gives energy, what we take in and think on either, refreshes us, or steals from us. Our soul can be refreshed in the reality of the greatness of God. The promises of Psalm 23 are real. The Holy Spirit leads us into a mystery. Perfect rest is not manufactured by our will power or our ability to totally suppress the negativity in our life. We enter God's habitation and hiding place as we discover the refuge of "*SELAH*". "Selah" in the Hebrew language means to pause and meditate, to muse till you enter into the meaning and reality of God's thoughts.

Christ is always initiating His rest and peace to us, How do we enter in? We respond to Him in agreement of what He has said and done regardless of what we see or feel. He leads us by "still waters" as we fellowship with His promises. He refreshes our soul and comforts us. Rest doesn't have to be the completion of something, or some long awaited achievement, but rest comes as a heart attitude of peace in the work that we do. He renews our minds and strength, and He anoints our head with fresh oil and pursues us with His goodness. This is a description of a fulfilled life - we enter into Christ's dynamic life, and His life dominates our own. Just like a runner would get a "second wind" in the race, so we are invigorated from the inside out.

Rest is personally discovered in God's presence, and is multiplied as we celebrate Christ; our motivations are derived by His perfect life, rather than duty. There are no short-cuts or quick fixes; our lives are made up of moments when we choose life, fruitfulness, and peace, or we choose ourselves. Personal breakthroughs can happen at any moment as the Holy Spirit has free course. As we learn to abide in green pastures, and are led by still waters, our cup overflows. Sounds too good to be true? This is our destiny.

## Chapter 1 - TRUE REST

*"Thou hast created us for Thyself, and our heart is not quiet until it rests in Thee."  
Aurelius Augustinus 354-430 C.E.*

What does rest look like to you? Lying on a sandy beach, camping under a starry night, peacefully quiet in your hammock, or encompassed by your favorite song? We all look so forward to our weekends and vacations to be rescued from the daily grind. We count the moments and look with anticipation to escape into our personal lagoons. Rest looks different to all of us. Inactivity is not the only form of rest but how do we calm ourselves on the inside?

True rest is found in the presence of God. His all-encompassing presence brings ultimate peace to our noisy world. As in the eye of the storm there is peace, so it is in our stormy lives. God is near. It may not appear that way, but He dwells in our difficulty, in Psalms 46:1 (KJV). To fellowship with the Master in the midst of our busy life- this is a secret we must discover. Just as a child would collapse in the arms of his father after running around and playing with all of his strength, so God has ordained us to do the same.

In worship and praise we remind ourselves of His faithfulness This releases rest. We enter His presence by recognizing that Christ is with us and that HE is greater than anything in our life. "Practicing" His presence is to be aware and submitted to the kingdom within, this resource is beyond ourselves, so we can learn to rest while we are working. Our ability is a gift, but to maintain and grow, we must rest. To come away and to quiet ourselves is to hear the still small voice say, "I love you," "I accept you," "You are mine," these personal initiations revive us. God will be faithful beyond what you can ask or think - this is who He is!

Loosen your grip on your life, your dream, and what you want. Seek and trust God for the outcome, resist the temptation to *help* God; grace doesn't help us; it does it all or nothing at all! Enjoy God's presence today, it is your oasis.

*"So then, there is still awaiting a full and complete Sabbath-rest reserved  
for the [true] people of God."  
Hebrews 4:9 (AMP)*

***Action point: Stand in awe of HIS beauty and see yourself in it. Journal.***

## TRUE REST His Presence

*"Rest in this - it is His business to lead, command, impel, send, call or whatever you want to call it. It is your business to obey, follow, move, respond, or what have you."*  
Jim Elliot

The world often defines a man by what he does. He can re-invent himself to achieve his dreams. Often we may try to "equip ourselves" with technique before our heart is in the right place, surrendered to God. In surrender we find rest. In the kingdom of God we are called first "unto" Christ before called "out" in ministry. Often we can focus on the production and image of execution of the program rather than the hearing from the voice of God. In this place of communion Christ's life is what produces real life and transformation and faith is born.

We are "wired" to analyze and weigh our options, but ultimately His provisions will define our priorities. The rushing of life's demands make us feel as though the world is passing us by, but the Lord is working. Or maybe we feel we are in some rut or holding pattern, but God is calling us away unto Himself. We speak to ourselves rest and know that we are the Lord's, the work is the Lord's, and the consequences are the Lord's!

In Habakkuk 2:3 (KJV), "For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay." God's delays don't mean His denials. Delays are an effective arena for trust and faith to be cultivated. Joseph was a "dreamer." Joseph heard from God and was walking in the reality of the promise before they actually happened. He spoke and made decisions based on that promise. His focus was Christ, not the answer to his need. Joseph knew time only hid what Christ had purposed. What a way to think! Moses discovered in Exodus 33:15-18 (KJV), that God was answering his prayer and going before him, and He was pleased with him even before he did anything!

As a butler stands ready to serve his master and his guests, so are we, poised and focused waiting for the command from our heavenly Father. God's plan for us first is not to "do" but to enjoy a love relationship with Him, and the overflow of that relationship will feed our call to action.

*"But the Comforter (Counselor, Helper, Intercessor, Advocate, Strengtheners, Standby), the Holy Spirit, Whom the Father will send in My name [in My place, to represent Me and act on My behalf], He will teach you all things. And He will cause you to recall (will remind you of, bring to your remembrance) everything I have told you."*  
John 14:26 (AMP)

## TRUE REST His Altar

*“This lonely abode was where I lay my burdens down. My foolish heart finds sanctuary. Stillness and calm greet and capture my heart as I lay myself on the Altar a resurrected life begins. Heavenly Fire falls down and consumes me, burns fervently the cold wastelands of my heart. The waxing cold and the dross, ignite with your fire and create an inner fire that shows me all of Thee. More of Thee and less of me, burn oh glorious flame from heaven’s Altar.”*

*J.F. Moore*

Elijah knew the importance of the altar. In 1 Kings 18 (KJV), he “repaired” the altar after the prophets of Baal had destroyed it. The Altar is a place of sacrifice, worship and a memorial, a designated place of death and new life. Positioned with care, the sacrifice is put to death while the guilty goes free. Blood flows, cleans the dirty ugly stain of sin of guilt and shame, and fire comes from above and consumes the offering in satisfaction. Then, standing in worship, discovery begins in the fear of the Lord, and the fire from above then burns within.

This illustration of the Old Testament practice of sacrifice speaks to us today. Today we don't have a physical altar where we are sacrificing lambs, because Jesus was the ultimate sacrifice to wash us clean and to be the substitution in our place. These altars stood as a reminder of God’s faithfulness for those that followed. Today, we must have a personal altar, a place to meet God and to lay all things before Him, so nothing is in competition with Him. There are no short cuts or gimmicks in this personal journey with Christ to experience His power. At the altar, Christ’s preeminence is established and in worship we offer all of ourselves and He gives us all of Himself.

Only as Abraham offered his most precious gift, his son, to the Lord, did he discover all of who God is, takes care of all of who He was. Let go of those precious things that detract from the fervent flame, and put them into the hands of Jesus, He will be the divine caretaker and protector of your soul. We give Him our ashes and He gives us His beauty. Hold nothing back, lay it all down at the altar. True rest is waiting, the struggle is over.

*“ Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy.... ”*  
*Psalms 43:3-4 (KJV)*



## TRUE REST Stand in Awe of Him

*"He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."*

*Jim Elliot*

You know that feeling when you have been shocked? Wowed? The captivation of amazement can be intoxicating. The work of God is awesome, it commands our respect. Our heart attitude stands amazed at God's continued faithfulness and our mouth is silenced. In Revelation 4 (KJV) we see a tangible picture of the throne room in heaven. We see a glimpse of God's majesty. Amazed, we see His beauty of grace. The psalmist said in Psalms 4:4 (KJV) and in Psalms 119:161 (KJV) we are in a state of awe because of who HE is. We are quieted and sobered in His presence. His beauty and holiness captivate our hearts. Our heart bows in adoration and worship before His majesty. His perfection and fullness inspire our worship. The world grows dim in the light of His presence. How do we bridge the gap from this throne room experience to our everyday life?

It is as if we were standing on a mountain summit and looking out from the grandeur, and feeling so small in the light of greatness. The labor paid off with such a great view. God wants us not to be familiar with His greatness. His measureless life takes us beyond ourselves and all other measurements. We are in awe of His mercy, that it doesn't calculate our shortcomings, but that it perpetually gives. His righteousness is manifested in unconditional love. We limit His greatness in our hearts when we measure God as one of us. We do this with natural thinking and when we forget his many benefits.

What a privilege to stand in awe as we come to Him. Don't be mesmerized by the world; it is fleeing away. Satan battles for our attention so that we consider our greatness and lose sight of the greatness of God. We are image-bearers of this greatness; we are reflectors revealing the source of light and life. We say, as is said in Revelation 19 (KJV) the "4 Hallelujahs, praise to the Lamb, HE alone is worthy!" Your eyes will behold many things today, gaze at the Master and you will have wisdom and understanding for all that you behold.

*"He is the sole expression of the glory of God [the Light-being, the out-raying or radiance of the divine], and He is the perfect imprint and very image of [God's] nature, upholding and maintaining and guiding and propelling the universe by His mighty word of power."*

*Hebrews 1:3 (AMP)*

## TRUE REST

### The Beauty of Silence

*"God speaks in silence of the heart. Listening is the beginning of prayer."  
Mother Teresa*

Can you hear it? What? The beauty and sweet melody of silence. The noise of life overwhelms blessed quietness. Often it takes a while for us to unwind and to reconcile our hearts to God. As we sit in silence we hear the faintness of our heart, the rhythm of our breathing, faint noises hushed. Quietness is the key in preparation to hear God. It is easy to speak and say all that is on our heart, but true silence happens when there is a death. Recently at a funeral this thought came to me. This person has nothing to say, do, or defend; they are in the eternal resting place of God. In one regard what I have to say doesn't matter unless it is from God's heart? What is He saying?

Do we dare break away from the madness of the schedule? The fear of missing the next "great thing" is an illusion. Commune in silence, break bread with Him today, and you will be strengthened. Fellowship with His life; it is our ultimate source of strength. In silence we are aware of His visitation. 2 Corinthians 13:14 (KJV), "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all Amen".

In our journey and struggles God understands us better than we can understand ourselves. The question is, will we meet Him in those times? Will He truly get ahold of us? Will we let Him dominate, conquer, and silence us? Control often is our motivation for selfish gain. Don't fight Him, or doubt His goodness. Trust in Him; He will be faithful to reduce us only to Himself. This is a holy place where we will discover He is more than enough, and what Christ gives is far greater than what we can manufacture.

*"You will guard him and keep him in perfect and constant peace whose mind [both its inclination and its character] is stayed on You, because he commits himself to You, leans on You, and hopes confidently in You."  
Isaiah 26:3 (AMP)*

## TRUE REST Perfect Inner Stillness

*"Being still does not mean don't move. It means, move in peace."  
E'yen A Gardener*

Consider a humming bird, wings moving so quickly almost unseen to our eye. Suspended with its beak buried in a flower. Looking at the bird, it looks as if it is in slow motion. Moving yet poised, at peace yet pursuing what is needed. This is a coveted state that we all desire to have, a place of rest and contentment. Stillness could be characterised as domination of the Holy Spirit. This doesn't mean inactivity, but an inner rest of the heart is exhibited, knowing Who is in charge. As we allow the Spirit to take control of every room in our soul we learn to love and honor silence. Our concentration is enhanced and we focus on His grace and mercy which ultimately quiets the soul.

Quietness as harmony in the Holy Spirit, in this unity there are no inner disruptions. An orchestra with so many parts is led by one man, the conductor. Each person has his instrument and part to play. With the wave of the wand, the orchestra comes alive with musical symmetry that ignites the soul. There are many playing facets acting as one entity. Stillness is not the absence of activity, but a place where we operate with inner tranquility.

Quietness unlocks a powerful ability from God within us. It creates an organizing of knowledge in our hearts from that which we have received. Our minds can be like a filing cabinet that is in disarray, no clear way to access what you have received. We are all no stranger to forgetfulness. We forget because not enough time has been spent in entering into the personal revelation that God has in store for us? Saturate yourself in God's mercy, and it will flow out to others. When we move quickly and come to conclusions of what we think we know - we miss it all.

Come away from your business and reconnect with your life-source, Jesus Christ. Don't try to manage your life; put it into His hands and enter into His rest. In Isaiah 30:15 (NLT), "Only in returning to me and resting in me will you be saved. In quietness and confidence is your strength." Psalms 46:10 (NLT), "Be still, and know that I am God! I will be honored by every nation. I will be honored throughout the world."

*"For He is [Himself] our peace (our bond of unity and harmony). He has made us both [Jew and Gentile] one [body], and has broken down (destroyed, abolished) the hostile dividing wall between us."  
Ephesians 2:14 (AMP)*

## TRUE REST

### Personal Touch from Christ

*“Let this be thy whole endeavor, this thy prayer, this thy desire,--that thou mayest be stripped of all selfishness, and with entire simplicity follow Jesus only.”*

*Thomas à Kempis*

There is life-transforming power in a touch. Many have outstretched hands reaching for a touch, having a knowledge of what they want, but not understanding their true need. The touch of a celebrity or someone who we admire may make us feel good, but it doesn't change our lives.

Jesus in a great crowd said, “Virtue has gone out of me, who touched me?” The healed woman comes timidly out of the crowd; “daughter you are made whole “, this was one touch with expectation. The work of God is beyond anything natural and it is not limited to our faith; His loving touch changes our world. In Mark 8:23-25 (KJV), “And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw ought. And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking. After that he put [his] hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly”.

The blind man when he was first touched, didn't see clearly but the second time he saw with understanding. We can be the same. In prayer the blindfold comes off, the scales fall from our eyes. We begin to realize the power of a touch from God. Our hard heart can be made soft and receptive again. Life doesn't make sense, unless the Lord touches us again and again in prayer and meditation. Prayer draws us into the limitless resource of the Eternal. Prayer is the breath of the believer, our weakness leaning on His omnipotence. Let's discover His beauty and be renewed with personal power. Bow before God and let Him put His hands on your eyes so you can see Him in action today.

*“Reach out your finger here, and see My hands; and put out your hand and place [it] in My side. Do not be faithless and incredulous, but [stop your unbelief and] believe.”*

*John 10:27 (AMP)*

## TRUE REST

### Treasures from Inner Fire

*"Those who know God the best are the richest and most powerful in prayer. Little acquaintance with God, and strangeness and coldness to Him, make prayer a rare and feeble thing."*  
*E. M. Bounds*

What drives you? Need? Fear? Ambition? These can drive us all, but at the end, even if we get what we want, we will be left wanting. Passion and urgency is born from a prayer life that touches God's throne! The inner devotion and revelation of God ignites our hearts. Fire needs oxygen and a combustible substance to survive. Without wood the fire goes out, without proper oxygen, smoke billows. In the spiritual realm, Satan is constantly trying to squelch our fire, to smother it, and to stamp it out, distracting us with lesser things and getting our eyes off of Jesus. As we feed the fire and remove any hindrances, the fire grows. Cultivating our hearts in this reality, as the object of His favor, keeps our hearts burning.

In Luke 24:32 (KJV), "They asked each other, Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?" Isaiah experienced the "spirit of burning" in Isaiah 4:4 (KJV). This personal revelation of who Jesus is, was released and nothing was obstructing the Holy Spirit's free course in his life. No other gods were before him. He had first place in his heart. Psalms 104:4 (KJV) says, that God's ministers are flames of fire! In His light we see the true flame of His holiness! The truth makes us come alive to our true purpose and mission.

The psalmist said in Psalms 39:3 (KJV) that what he mused on ignited his heart! As we are captivated with the beauty and holiness of God, we burn like God's flame. You are God's light bearer, He is the light of the world, and you are His vessel. Burn brightly, totally surrendered to the Lord, nothing competing with the King of Kings.

*"If I say, I will not make mention of [the Lord] or speak any more in His name, in my mind and heart it is as if there were a burning fire shut up in my bones. And I am weary of enduring and holding it in; I cannot [contain it any longer]."*  
*Jeremiah 20:9 (AMP)*

## TRUE REST Secrets of the Deep

*“Do not pray for easy lives. Pray to be stronger men. Do not pray for tasks equal to your powers, pray for powers equal to your task.”*

*Phillips Brooks*

Shallowness is easily achieved when we bypass the waiting process. We sometimes survive on the “crumbs,” when God has a full provision. In Luke 5.4 (KJV), “Launch into the deep...” God has something supernatural prepared for you! Our walk with God is one discovery, one after another. In the depths we are discovering another side of who God is, or we are discovering our own depravity. In stillness we learn to have a deep trust, and a radical confession is born. In Job 13.15 (KJV), “If He slays me, I will trust Him.” Job was not even concerned about results anymore. All of who he was, was wanting to know all of who God is.

God's desire is to bring us closer to Himself and to have us learn mining... to dig into His riches of Romans 11:33 (KJV). I am remembering one cancer patient who I visited in the hospital. I half expected to see this person scared and depressed in her bed; but to my delight she was supernaturally rejoicing and glowing. She was not a prisoner to her illness but she had gone deeper with God. Her cancer was an opportunity to know God in a personal way. I will never forget that visit, she ministered so much to us. She had discovered Job 12:22 (KJV) - “He discovereth deep things out of darkness, and bringeth out to light the shadow of death”.

As God causes us to wait on Him, and go deeper, we discover His faithfulness in the face of potential defeat. Time only hides what God has completed. Our walk with God goes beyond knowledge and ritual and becomes a living, rich relationship in a deep peace, hope, and wisdom. Isaiah 37:31 (KJV) states, “And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward.” We must go down, before going up in promotion and fruit bearing. As we look back, may we look up, for we are in a deeper place with God than we were before.

*“[That you may really come] to know [practically, through experience for yourselves] the love of Christ, which far surpasses mere knowledge [without experience]; that you may be filled [through all your being] unto all the fullness of God [may have the richest measure of the divine Presence, and become a body wholly filled and flooded with God Himself!”*

*Ephesians 3:19 (AMP)*

## TRUE REST

### Responding to God

*"Prayer is weakness leaning on omnipotence."  
W. S. Bowd*

Doing what we love to do brings refreshment to our spirit. We can't always do what we love to do, but the result of rest can be the same. Rest is tranquility of spirit, regardless of preference or inaction. God has called you to His rest at a place where the heart is led by still waters. regardless of troubles going on. When we receive and respond to God's love, we truly enter into His rest. Rest can be described as complete satisfaction where God is shepherding our soul; we are not in want.

Even as things seem to be falling apart rest gives the perspective of God putting things into place. True peace that passes understanding protects and rules our hearts! Hebrews 4:1-3,9 (KJV), shares with us not to miss the personal rest that God has for us. Responding to love ushers in rest, and responding to anything else ushers in distractions. Rest in the heart personalized knowledge, and we express worship. Job 34:29 (KJV) says, "When God gives quietness, who can make trouble?"

Reaching for the right things releases rest. A noisy soul leads to a wagging tongue and a restless heart. When we are quiet before God we are in a place of immunity. Inner quietness is strength in Isaiah 30:15, 32:17 (KJV). Words, actions, and people can't move us from this place of rest. We recognize rest is entering our lives when we enjoy what we know; we are hungry for more of God and we are moved by the Spirit rather than driven by need. A quiet spirit reveals the devil's defeat; focus on Jesus, He will lead us by still waters. Purpose to respond in faith to His initiations, and with practice, He will bring personal rest to every part of your soul.

*"So she called the name of the Lord Who spoke to her, You are a God of seeing, for she said, Have I [not] even here [in the wilderness] looked upon Him Who sees me [and lived]? Or have I here also seen [the future purposes or designs of] Him Who sees me?"  
Genesis 16:13 (AMP)*

## Chapter 2 - RELAX

*“Be assured, if you walk with Him and look to Him, and expect help from Him, He will never fail you.”*  
*George Mueller*

Loosing the grip on life can be revolutionary. Breathe. Inhale, exhale. This unconscious practice brings oxygen to our brains and refreshes us. On purpose, slowing down and seeking the Lord with each opportunity helps us go beyond the opportunist stage. Having goals and an ultimate plan is good, but when we rest in Christ we learn to ask, “God what is your will and desire?” His burden becomes our focus of interest; we move from self consciousness to God consciousness.

Life can be on cruise control, and we can go through the motions without experiencing His power. Anxiety creeps in because we believe we are in control. God never loosens His grip on us. We are in His mighty hands and His eyes see all things and is acutely aware of our plight. Relax and take a deep breath and look around you, and in doing so, you can enjoy the journey of faith. You may not be able to figure out what is happening or what God is doing, but put your hope that the outcome will reveal more of Christ to you. Let go and let God work.

*“Rejoice (relax) in the Lord always [delight, gladden yourselves in Him]; again I say, Rejoice!*

*The Lord is near [He is [a]coming soon]. Do not fret or have any anxiety about anything, but in every circumstance and in everything, by prayer and petition (definite requests), with thanksgiving, continue to make your wants known to God. And God’s peace [shall be yours, that tranquil state of a soul assured of its salvation through Christ, and so fearing nothing from God and being content with its earthly lot of whatever sort that is, that peace] which transcends all understanding shall garrison and mount guard over your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. For the rest, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is worthy of reverence and is honorable and seemly, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely and lovable, whatever is kind and winsome and gracious, if there is any virtue and excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think on and weigh and take account of these things [fix your minds on them].*

*Practice what you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and model your way of living on it, and the God of peace (of untroubled, undisturbed well-being) will be with you.”*

*Philippians 4:4,6-9 (AMP)*

***Action Point: Take time away and ponder the thought of fully entering where you are and what you do. Journal.***



## RELAX God Is Not Like You

*“Don't trust to hold God's hand; let Him hold yours. Let Him do the holding, and you the trusting.”*

*Hammer William Webb-Peploe*

Pain says, “you can only trust yourself”. Bad experiences have a voice. This flawed mindset isolates us like an island, causing us to live in self-defense mechanisms. When misunderstandings happen, and when actions don’t “line up” with words, wounds, and hurts are inflicted, trust is lost. We mismanage our expectation and we do the tragic thing; we put our hope in people.

Trust is such a powerful word. It often takes a long time to gain it and we are quick to lose it. This knitting of the heart, this dependency, closeness, and commitment is critical in relationships. Consistency is the heart of trust; this is where we discover someone's heart.

We can trust God because He is not like us, He will never abandon or reject us. We don’t have to fight God in worry or anxiety; we can trust and have our hope in Him, knowing He is for the righteous, in Romans 8:31 (KJV). His ways are not our ways; ultimately he has His best in mind for us.

David said in Psalm 56:3, 4, and 11 (KJV), that his only trust and hope was in the Lord and he didn’t care what man could do or say to him. He was confident and relaxed in the Lord. He was secure in who he was in Christ. David enjoyed the effect of security in the then current revelation of God to Israel, secure in Adonai Elohim, the personal God. In God’s economy, our disappointments can be God’s appointments. We learn to put off the old ways of thinking and let go of the hurt and run into Jesus's open arms. He is waiting to strengthen and heal through love. Collapse in His arms, He will never fail you, He is trustworthy.

*“[Resting] in the hope of eternal life, [life] which the ever truthful God Who cannot deceive promised before the world or the ages of time began.”*

*Titus 1:2 (AMP)*

## RELAX Christ's Love is Perfect

*"If you feel stuck, bring your whole self to Christ, not just the problem, but you. Ask God to change your heart. Commit yourself to pray to that end. It's God's heart to give good gifts to His children."*

*Sheila Walsh*

The skeptic may say, "There is nothing perfect." He says this because he is looking at himself or others in the eyes of imperfection. Our world is fallen, but there is a "crimson thread" through it all that is perfect, totally complete, and without flaw.

We all want to be loved perfectly, but if man is incapable of this, where do we find it? The cross is the greatest demonstration of perfect love. The crucifixion of our Saviour reveals a love that we all desperately need. The Father's love drove nails of the cross into Jesus's hands to judge our actions and reconcile them to holiness. The barbaric nails went into Jesus's feet to judge our way, and to give us a new and living way. The crown of thorns went into our Jesus's head to ultimately judge our thoughts and give us His mind. The spear went into His heart to judge our heart so that we could live in the new heart. This preemptive love which endured such agony was a unilateral decision which did not ask for opinion, or suggestion, but was compelled generously because of love.

In this redemption, He bought us back from the slave market of sin and declared us righteous and now Christ is free to love us the way we are. He has removed all the inward "death" in our lives that separated us from Him. We are renewed and made new based on His perfect love. We were ransomed; value was seen when none was obvious, and Christ pursued an opportunity to redeem us and restore us back to our original value and design.

Often the "past" can hijack the present, and bring doubt to the future. The redemptive cross removes the effects of sin from the past, present and future. Isaiah 43:19 (KJV), 2 Corinthians 5:17 (KJV), and Revelation 21:5 (KJV) declares our newness in Christ. Our sins are forgiven, forgotten and GONE forever in Jeremiah 50:20 (KJV), Jeremiah 50:34 (KJV), and Hebrews 8:12 (KJV).

The devil's authority is only what we give him. He is defeated! Focusing on the past, or things we can't change initiates satanic hypnosis. Keep yourself in the Love of God today by receiving all that Jesus has said and done for us. Fellowship with His newness and just let God love you; no one loves us like Jesus does - perfectly.

*"The Lord appeared from of old to me [Israel], saying, Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn you and continued My faithfulness to you."*

*Jeremiah 31:3 (AMP)*

## RELAX Christ Is Our Hope

*“The most glorious promises of God are generally fulfilled in such a wondrous manner that He steps forth to save us at a time when there is the least appearance of it.”*

*C. H. von Bogatzy*

When you hear the word HOPE what comes to your mind? Daybreak, light at the end of a tunnel, expectations realized, positive change on a diagnosis, a new direction, or love reborn? Hope is an assurance that God is with you and that He sees, knows, and understands all things. This assurance comes under great duress if we walk and evaluate things by human reason.

Hope is like oxygen to our body; it is critical. When hope is lost, people struggle with detachments like depression and disappointment, and life becomes unbearable and suffocating. The lie that shouts “things will never change” or that “it will always be like this” cuts off our oxygen supply figuratively.

Looking unto Jesus gives us a living hope. He is our peace. HIM alone. He is our anchor, firm and secure in Hebrews 6:19. The promises of God give an assurance for our future. Expectation or trust in anyone or anything else steals our hope.

In Romans 15:13 (KJV), “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.” Hope comes from the perspective that God’s ultimate plan will be fulfilled, and HE has His best in mind for us. The eternal reasoning behind ALL things, is that we would be reconciled to Him to know Him deeper. The good, the bad, and the ugly in our lives have an eternal weight of glory attached and as we go positive to Christ, nothing is wasted in Colossians 1:19-20 (KJV).

People, places and things will fail you, but Christ will be found faithful. Don’t lose hope; whatever you are going through, will pass. We may not know what will happen in our future but we know WHO holds our future. We become older, wiser and learn to put our trust in the right place. Don’t forget we are the winners; look at the back of the Book!

*“Praised (honored, blessed) be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (the Messiah)! By His boundless mercy we have been born again to an ever-living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”*

*1 Peter 1:3 (AMP)*

## RELAX

### God Know's Where He is Going

*"Nothing takes God by surprise. He knows the future and can therefore guide us through its trackless ways."*

*W. T. Purkiser*

Often there are so many options in front of us, so much so that we can enter into "decision paralysis" or "compassion fatigue". Then there are times when it is unclear where to step because it can be so dark. Being led by God beyond feelings or validations into the faith realm is quite an adventure. Rationalizations and logic don't show the whole story and can cause doubts, and we begin to second-guess our direction. As we look to Jesus, and concentrate on His still small voice of Isaiah 30: 21 (KJV), "This is the way; walk in it." As we listen and fellowship in the person of Christ, He will commission us.

All of us have tasks and things to do! Task orientation often drives us. But in God's economy the first thing is not to seek to do, but quiet ourselves and discover who HE is in you. In this fellowship, God's ministry and direction will then be made clearer in the fullness of time.

Often the Lord seems silent, and it can be a guessing game on what is next. As we are faithful to what He has shared with us already, He will give you the next piece of the puzzle. Our gifts are often developed when we step into a place where they can be used. As God has given you a place to serve, be faithful there, and He will lead you to the next step.

The Christian life is a marathon, not a sprint. The endurance training and mental gymnastics that a runner has done ultimately determines his outcome in a race. Most of the labor is learning Christ, for oneself. Results are not always quantifiable; ultimately the work is being done in us before it can happen through us. As we are being loved by Christ, His love overflows to others and becomes a light unto our path. Be faithful where you are, in God's season HE will move you. Rest and enjoy HIM now, and don't be anxious about the next step. He is preparing you for it now.

*"O Lord [pleads Jeremiah in the name of the people], I know that [the determination of] the way of a man is not in himself; it is not in man [even in a strong man or in a man at his best] to direct his [own] steps."*

*Jeremiah 10:23 (AMP)*

## RELAX God Doesn't Need Your Help

*"God Himself works in our souls, in their deepest depths, taking increasing control as we are progressively willing to be prepared for His wonder."*

*Thomas Kelly*

In every age, strength has been the quest and measuring line for leadership, strength to achieve and conqueror, the ability to be self-sufficient and capable without any assistance needed. The modern man struts his "stuff" to be admired and followed by those who envy and want the same power. God's way is different totally. He glories not in the strength of man, but in his weakness. He works when we see our need for Him, and when we realize we can do nothing of ourselves in Psalms 102:23 (KJV), "He weakens our strength in the way." Sickness, pain and trouble cause us to enter a powerful realm called "weakness", where HIS strength is made perfect, in 2 Corinthians 12:9 (KJV). Divine strength comes through human need, and dependency.

If we are too powerful, God waits, for He is no longer needed. We want to "make it happen" in our ability, but God wants to "create" something new in us as we wait for His Spirit's leading. We learn in weakness to function from the right motivation; that is real power. We act from a place of divine power and advantage. Patience has its perfect work in us so that we will lack nothing. Psalms 147:10 (KJV) says, "His pleasure is not in the strength of the horse, nor his delight in the legs of the warrior." Why? Our strength is nothing to His ability. He holds the universe, as we boast in our own plans; what a paradox! God is faithful to slow us down so that we discover His ability. He refreshes us when our strength fails. We can rejoice in our weakness, for it is a "springboard" to true power, in Jude 1:24 (KJV), His keeping power is our true might, in Zechariah 4:6 (KJV).

Recently I read about a parent rescuing their child trapped under a car. The parent lifted the backend of the car to release their child! Adrenaline, you may say, or could it be the power of love? God has supernatural strength for all that you have before you, let Jesus empower you with His strength. RELAX and yield to God's mighty hand and let Him give you something beyond your ability. Stand in the power of His might – let Him uphold you.

*"But He said to me, My grace (My favor and loving-kindness and mercy) is enough for you [sufficient against any danger and enables you to bear the trouble manfully]; for My strength and power are made perfect (fulfilled and completed) and show themselves most effective in [your] weakness.*

*Therefore, I will all the more gladly glory in my weaknesses and infirmities, that the strength and power of Christ (the Messiah) may rest (yes, may pitch a tent over and dwell) upon me!"*

*2 Corinthians 12:9 (AMP)*

## RELAX God Sees It All

*“God created the world out of nothing; so as long as we are nothing, he can make something out of us.”*

*Anonymous*

An “a ha”moment, is an epiphany, which are exceptionally meaningful. These are glimpses of thriving and seeing the big picture. These growth spurts of understanding create breakthroughs that takes us to a new level. A personal revelation of the grace of God is life-transforming. Often we tolerate the deadness of mechanics and routine and we live in just an appreciation of things, rather than experiencing all that God has. Without expectations, we are limited to just management. What if we came to church or to a conversation ready to hear from God? The next verse, or song could change our lives forever! Are you ready?

Stresses and doubts creep in as we just "manage" our life. Grace causes us to live in the mystery of love. This mystery interprets the things we see and feel and brings objectivity and eternal perspective. Mere words cannot articulate, or demonstrate the magnificent, inspired life of Christ. Grace cannot be contained in a definition. The center of grace is Christ, and there are countless eternal expressions of God's kindness. Grace magnifies the work of Christ in our lives and as we look to the Lord, we are in a constant discovery of how our lives in time are woven into eternity. What a mystery!

The very response and capability of grace is astounding. Christ moves exponentially, and abounds over any anxiety, fear, or earthly limitation. Grace reaches to every corner of our heart, and love and grace teach us the fear of the Lord. In Romans 5:20 (KJV), "Moreover the law entered, that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Grace is greater than all. True repentance makes failure a growth opportunity. What is grace teaching you today? Mediate on the height, depth, length and width of Christ's unconditional expression of grace; catch a glimpse and be amazed again.

*“And if the Spirit of Him Who raised up Jesus from the dead dwells in you, [then] He Who raised up Christ Jesus from the dead will also restore to life your mortal (short-lived, perishable) bodies through His Spirit Who dwells in you.”*

*Romans 8:11 (AMP)*

## RELAX Let God Carry It All

*"Love feels no burden, thinks nothing of trouble, attempts what is above its strength, pleads no excuse of impossibility; for it thinks all things lawful for itself, and all things possible."*

*Thomas a Kempis*

Consider this illustration: a heavy-laden, knee-buckling donkey that is being yelled at by his master because he is moving too slowly. The continuous barrage of words will not move the donkey faster. To beat the donkey will maybe stir him, but not for long. He will eventually falter if the weight is not removed. This can be us if we carry "our life" on our shoulders. We were not made to be burden-bearers, but to cast all our cares on Jesus! He is the ultimate burden - bearer, in Matthew 11:28-29 (KJV).

We may try to manage and compartmentalize our lives; but we soon realize everything is connected. We must be 100% vested where we are right now. We just don't turn off and then on fatherhood, being a husband or mother or a spirit- filled person - this is who we are! Each role is sacred, and bleeds into the other. There is a danger to multi-tasking, in doing so we run the risk of surface interaction and distraction.

We see the perfect provision in Hebrew 12:1-2 (KJV), "lay aside every weight that easily besets us and let us run!" We cast away those issues that cause strife, and bring full attention in worship Christ. He is our refuge. As we give authority and priority to the right things, things that add to our lives, we begin to accept God's thoughts by faith, even in the face of opposition. God gives practical wisdom and assurance that He is with us, and ultimately in control. These confirmations can come through His peace, power and provision.

Our mind can play tricks on us, thinking that we must deserve or we have to work for God's provision; but God freely gives to those that see their need for Him. In Isaiah 25:1 (KJV), "O LORD, thou art my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name; for thou hast done wonderful things, plans formed of old, faithful and sure." Focusing on God's thoughts about us produces divine perspective; our weights will eventually become light. God's heart is to give more grace to the humble, and to strengthen the weak, in Psalms 145. Christ loves to give His abundant life and strength to the most undeserving. This is what brings Him the most glory.

*"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy-laden and overburdened, and I will cause you to rest. I will ease and relieve and refresh your souls."*

*Matthew 11:28 (AMP)*

## RELAX Let God Love You

*"If I give everything I own to the poor and even go to the stake to be burned as a martyr, but I don't love, I've gotten nowhere. So, no matter what I say, what I believe, and what I do, I'm bankrupt without love."*

*Apostle Paul*

Have you lost something? Has it captivated your attention? Are you thinking of ways to get it back? In God's economy, ALL is redeemable. Even the seemingly impossible things; even people and relationships that seem so distant. Nothing is out of God's reach. Psalms 145:14 (KJV), "The LORD upholds all who fall and lifts up all who are bowed down." Jesus knows the pain of loss. His passion is to reconcile and restore.

The economy of Heaven is perfect redeeming love; He is always gathering and rescuing lost things. Jesus was always gathering and pointing people to His Father, He lived the same way that He died - with His arms wide open. God's love doesn't demand a change in us; it produces one. God knows that we can't change ourselves or others, so His provision is to flood us with His love to bring our focus back on Him. This confrontation with love's ability brings change in us from the "inside out" rather than behavioral improvements, in Romans 2:4 (KJV).

We are not able to re-live the past, or regain lost opportunities, but we can receive redeeming love today. God is building something NOW; don't miss His present visitation by focusing on the past, or by worrying about the future. David was faithful as a shepherd boy. In David's absence, the prophet Samuel was considering Jesse's sons as king. God made sure that Samuel anointed David as king in 1 Samuel 16. Nothing can thwart God's plan - "He will perfect that which concerns you," in Psalms 138:8 (KJV). He will do it in His perfect time, His way, for His glory, in Galatians 4:4 (KJV).

We may have relationships in our lives for a season, sometimes things are removed or ended so that God can add His perfect provision; then, the next step in His plan can be realized in a new way. Redeeming love teaches us a life-long lesson - that more than the healing, He teaches us to seek the Healer. More than the gift, the Giver. More than the answer, we need His life manifested personally to us. More than people, we need Him alone. He has "brought us" from the slave market of sin to have fellowship with Him, to know Him, and to be trophies of His grace. Nothing is lost in the Kingdom of God. Now is the beginning of a new beginning!

*"It is because of the Lord's mercy and loving-kindness that we are not consumed, because His [tender] compassion fail not. They are new every morning; great and abundant is Your stability and faithfulness."*

*Lamentations 3:22-23 (AMP)*



## RELAX It Is Impossible

*"That is the mystery of grace: it never comes too late.  
François Mauriac*

What moves you? Inspiration is the best motivation. Money, fame or recognition are fleeting. The raise, recognition, or power won't last; the human heart will always want more. When we consider the mystery of grace it is shocking. God's response is not based on my response or my behavior, it is based on His love. His unilateral, absolute decision is based on His heart toward us, because that is what we need. He gives us what we need, not what we deserve. His grace heals and moves us to love and to give mercy, because we have first received it for ourselves. We are receivers of this perfect life of Christ and it empowers us to be a vessel that is poured out for others. We cannot give unless we have first received.

We are given inner strength as we are engaged in spiritual warfare. This strength upholds our heart and mind in our activity, determining and engaging internally in heart preparation. "Busy-ness" often hides a deeper disconnect; we are driven by deficit motivation, such as guilt, shame, or fear. As we receive grace, and God loves us beyond that which we cannot control, we then are inspired. A young boy may learn of a hero in the past that changed his world, and he emulates them, for he begins to see and learn his example and his secret to prevailing.

His life is our source of motivation and strength. Ask for God's breath to fill you, live from His breath and you won't be "out of breath;" be a testimony for the Master. We see in Psalms 73:26 (NLT) "My health may fail, and my spirit may grow weak, but God remains the strength of my heart; He is mine forever." Who is your hero?

*"So that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel after Him and find Him, although He is not far from each one of us. For in Him we live and move and have our being."*

*Acts 17:27-28 (AMP)*

## Chapter 3 - REFRESHED

*"God brings men into deep waters, not to drown them, but to cleanse them."  
John Aughey*

Life can make us feel parched and hollow. How can rejuvenation happen? The quenching of thirst, or jumping into a lake on a hot summer day is natural refreshment. Just like the body, the spirit also needs that refreshment. So often we concentrate on the body's refreshment when the the spirit needs it just as much. God promises "times of refreshing from the presence of God," in Acts 3:19 (KJV). Renewal begins as we are rightly related to God, agreeing and making decisions with God as if His words are the most important words in our lives. If, we are rightly relating to ourselves only, we enter into the small world of discouragement and short-sightedness, fear steals our joy and hope. Fear is a lie that portrays false evidence appearing real. When disconnected from an eternal perspective, we are left to aimlessness.

What we live in is the measure of what we receive. As we receive God's life, we are refreshed. There are times when sadness or fear may dominate our thoughts; in those times we must "shift" to receive grace, and focus on what God has said and what He has done. David "encouraged Himself in the Lord," in 1 Samuel 30:6 (KJV). All was lost and he had no one or nothing to turn to. David decided to remember the words of the Lord and "speak to himself" words of life and not to "listen to himself." As we reinforce the promises, our strength is renewed and the Spirit recalls to our heart our eternal purpose.

Worship ushers us into His presence and we are refreshed and equipped with His faith. We are refreshed for the routine, and God shows us the harvest field where we are, and we bear fruit where "we are planted." Discouragement can come when we are living from our own strength. God has so much prepared for us to live in and from. We must have our hands and heart open to receive all that God has for us today, His joy strengthens the inner man. Fellowshiping with the riches of Christ perfects our nature and character - His inheritance is ours, now! Romans 11:33 (KJV).

*"So repent (change your mind and purpose); turn around and return [to God], that your sins may be erased (blotted out, wiped clean), that times of refreshing (of recovering from the effects of heat, of reviving with fresh air) may come from the presence of The Lord."  
Acts 3:19 (AMP)*

***Action Point: Think and move as if the King of Kings heard you and the answer is coming.***

## REFRESHED Embrace Simplicity

“Faith isn't believing without proof, it's trusting without reservation.”  
William Sloane Coffin

The innocence and trust of a child is beautiful. Their seeming unawareness of danger, and vitality in the simplest of things brings such joy. They smile and laugh, and we see the glory of God. As children, they totally trust; but as they get older, the world teaches them to distrust. Our hearts can remain soft and ready to respond as we live in childlike faith. Childlike faith sees only God and He is bigger than any obstacle. This simple faith dispels sophisticated darkness.

Just as the parent will give his life for his child, so has Christ already done this for us. His love is limitless. Our father's unconditional acceptance and pleasure captivates us. In Matthew 8:3-4 (KJV), He said “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” How can we enter into childlike faith? Here are a few meditations: Don't over think. You're in your Heavenly Father's hands. Enjoy the journey. Ask Daddy to show you His plan of goodness in all things. Believe that Daddy has brought you to wherever you are, so that HE will build you and instruct you. He has His best in mind for you. Purpose to delight in the Lord and not take yourself so seriously. Each moment is a gift.

In Zephaniah 3:17 (KJV), “The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.” Enjoy the embrace of your Heavenly Father today, feel His strength all around you. Hear His voice of love and His joyous laughter over you. Christ is walking with you, enjoying you, carrying you into His perfect plan. It is all going to be OK.

*“Now to Him Who, by (in consequence of) the [action of His] power that is at work within us, is able to [carry out His purpose and] do superabundantly, far over and above all that we [dare] ask or think [infinitely beyond our highest prayers, desires, thoughts, hopes, or dreams].”*

*Ephesians 3:20 (AMP)*

## REFRESHED

### Let Go

*"Faith is to believe what we do not see, and the reward of this faith is to see what we believe."*

*Augustine*

Think about being blindfolded and someone who loves you is leading you by the hand. You trust that person to lead you; you don't know where you're going, but you know your friend. Jesus is a true friend that loveth at all times. In 2 Thessalonians 3:5 (KJV), "May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's perseverance." The plan of God is revealed here, that we would be led to a place where there is a personal revelation of the unconditional love of God. In this communion of love we are commissioned in the right motivation. We become God-conscious, not just task-oriented. God may change our direction and tasks for His purpose but if we let Him lead us we will know and trust Him in a new way. If any earthly thing takes our heart we will be led to a very different destination.

Lamentations 3:24-26 (KJV), "I say to myself, The Lord is my portion; therefore I will wait for him. The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him; it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord." The progression is insightful. We are first speaking to ourselves about who the Lord is, and then we learn to wait with an expectation to hear. Thirdly, hope is born, knowing that God will be faithful to His will. As we commune with the living God in thanksgiving, our eyes and ears will be opened to His burden and His way.

What we desire and what we need can often be polar opposites. As we learn where the visitation of God is, we become more sensitive to His leading. Hindsight is 20/20; there is no guess work. As we are active listeners and receivers, His will becomes more obvious. Jeremiah 10:23 (KJV) says, "O Lord [pleads Jeremiah in the name of the people], I know that [the determination of] the way of a man is not in himself; it is not in man [even in a strong man or in a man at his best] to direct his [own] steps." Don't trust your own human reason to lead you, don't take the blindfold off - take the hand of Jesus and be led by Him. Our prayer is, *"God teach us what it means to be a partaker of your heart and ask in your eternal will."*

*"For this reason we also, from the day we heard of it, have not ceased to pray and [make special] request for you, [asking] that you may be filled with the full (deep and clear) knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom in comprehensive insight into the ways and purposes of God] and in understanding and discernment of spiritual things."*

*Colossians 1:9 (AMP)*

## REFRESHED

### Strengthened from the Inside Out

*"Following the path of least resistance is what makes rivers and men crooked."*

*Unknown*

Courage is developed as we lead with a listening ear. We are like sponges that collect an amazing amount of data daily. What we believe strengthens us or weakens us. We can illustrate this as an assembly line; the conveyer is always moving and there is something being added and assembled or recalled.

Courage is "the strength of living for something beyond our self," It is not the absence of fear, but the fact that something greater has empowered us. William Borden was touched by God for African missions. He forsook all the comforts of home and his family business to reach out to these poor destitute people. His family and friends tried to persuade him otherwise, but Borden's mind was set and his heart was on fire. As he travelled with only a promise from God, he wrote in his journal these famous words "no regrets, no retreats, no reserves." Shortly thereafter, disease took his fragile life. But those words he penned in his journal heralded around the world and summoned one hundred men to take his place. Courage to go, not knowing, but being obedient.

In the Hebrew language, the word "strength" means the putting of courage in the heart. This happens when we are saturated in the love of God which leaves no room for fear, doubt or anything else. Christ increases strength and courage in Isaiah 40:28-31(KJV). Courage sees the unseen and acts as though it is reality. It embraces truth, when falsehood, which intimidates, seems more powerful. Do you lack courage today? Ask for it and Christ will give it liberally. Leonard Ravenhill says, "Many of us are hunting mice while lions devour the land." Let's not run from the mice when we have been called to chase lions!

*"Be strong, courageous, and firm; fear not nor be in terror before them, for it is the Lord your God Who goes with you; He will not fail you or forsake you."*

*Deuteronomy 31:6 (AMP)*

## REFRESHED

### It Is Not About You

*“When the mask of self-righteousness has been torn from us and we stand stripped of all our accustomed defenses, we are candidates for God's generous grace.”*  
Erwin W. Lutzer

Christ shines through these jars of clay and heaven touches earth. We must renounce any vainglory; in doing so, we avoid usurping the authority and power of God. We begin to see the impact of grace as we fellowship with it personally. We receive it first for ourselves, then we learn to be generous to all.

Grace teaches us to love ourselves, forgive ourselves, and rightly relate to ourselves in Christ. Without this first communion, it will all be manufactured. Feelings can be a powerful measuring line, but they often exalt the wrong things. Our emotions just respond without a full understanding, but grace proclaims that failure is not final and that the most unworthy sinner is precious in His sight! Grace is not human, and is incapable of exalting any earthly thing. Grace exalts the perfect work of Christ in us.

Consider new parents as they behold their baby. In their awe they see the blended masterpiece that God has created through them. Through the years, the parents remember that this child reveals their undeniable nature, and no matter what this child does, it is still their child. We struggle with the fact of what grace declares – He declares our completeness. We may sometimes waffle, knowing that our experience may not add up to this truth of permanent grace. But it is true! God sees only Christ and He is pleased with His Son. His Word declares it!

*“And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace [Who imparts all blessing and favor], Who has called you to His [own] eternal glory in Christ Jesus, will Himself complete and make you what you ought to be, establish and ground you securely, and strengthen, and settle you.”*  
1 Peter 5:10 (AMP)

## REFRESHED His Secret Place

*"Prayer does not fit us for the greater work; prayer is the greater work."  
Oswald Chambers.*

The old rugged cross was not a gentle place. It was place where our Savior was massacred for our sake. His cross is the ultimate symbol of victory for all the ages. He finished the work and all the demands for all ages; past, present and future. His blood paid the ransom and rescued us. Hallelujah!

God has called us to bear our cross in agreement to what He has done. We lift up the completed work of God! Romans 6:4-8 (KJV), is the refuge of the cross. We are figuratively crucified, slain and demolished, then buried so Christ's life is revealed. As we abide in what Christ has done for us, we cease from our own self-centered labor, and we enter into the the secret place. Our self-preference must be put "out of the way," in order for God to be visible.

In Number 35 there were six cities where the guilty were safe. They were hidden from judgement and were in a place of immunity. This secret place was a place of safety. If you watch a chameleon, they have the extraordinary stealth-ability to hide in plain sight. They blend with their surroundings. Where do you find refuge today? In your plans, your strength, your hopes? Do you feel vulnerable? Run to God and discover His love, His provision, and His wisdom. He will cause you to be hidden and victorious wherever you are. There are no demands or standards on you. Rest and abide at the cross and walk in Christ's newness. The wicked one won't touch you!

*"Let be and be still, and know (recognize and understand) that I am God. I  
will be exalted among the nations! I will be exalted in the earth!"  
Psalms 46:10 (AMP)*

## REFRESHED Eyes Wide Open

*“Wonder is retained by wise pondering.”  
Ravi Zacharias*

Eyes play a critical role in our lives. Imagine being blind. Close your eyes for a moment, total darkness. Imagine being blind, and the first moment that you are able to see...unimaginable joy! Not only is physical eyesight valuable, so are our spiritual eyes.

In Exodus 33:18 (KJV), Moses cried out "Show me your glory!" What a prayer from the heart! This is illumination - seeing the unseen and, going beyond the natural. The Holy Spirit's ministry to the believer is that of pointing and penetrating the truth in our heart. This consuming fire burns the veil of unbelief and preference. We behold Him as He is!

Naturally speaking, where we are looking will be our direction, and who we are listening to will determine our future. The eyes are the window to the soul and feed our minds and heart. Just as contaminated water needs a carbon filter, so we must have a divine filter to see clearly. There are many filters or lenses that we can have things "pass through." The perspective from which we come to conclusions is directly affected by the context of how we look at things. Our filters can be damaged, and that can distort how we process things in our heart. Failure can cause hesitation, insecurity, or suspicion in others. Fear can also be a real game-changer. In John 15:3 (KJV), "You are clean through the word that I have spoken." This is a beautiful filter, and our eyes are opened to the reality of forgiveness which cleanses our heart. The cataracts of guilt and shame are removed and we begin to live in the reality of God.

In Luke 5:38 (KJV), "But new wine must be put into new bottles; and both are preserved." As we operate in God's thoughts to us, we will see ourselves and others in the same lens. We throw away the old filters and we see the newness of life. We unlearn the old, and we relearn the new; we stand in awe and we are overwhelmed with His goodness. 2 Corinthians 3:12-18 (KJV), shows us that we are changed as the eyes of our understanding are opened. "Lord let us behold your beauty!"

*“By having the eyes of your heart flooded with light, so that you can know and understand the hope to which He has called you, and how rich is His glorious inheritance in the saints (His set-apart ones).”  
Ephesians 1:18 (AMP)*



## REFRESHED

### Encounter With a Living, Personal God

*"If your Gospel isn't touching others, it hasn't touched you!"*  
*Curry R. Blake*

Immediate action or resolve is often our expectation when things are beyond our control. Our present reality may be beyond our control, but nothing is outside of the reach of God. Prayer shows us how God is acting. "Prayer is our weakness, leaning on His omnipotence," Our prayers do go beyond the ceiling into the Throne Room of Heaven where there are many receiving ears. We have access to God! Think of that - we can come directly, and speak to our heavenly Father.

How He loves to hear from His people! When we come to God, He shares His heart with us, we receive His burden in soberness and wisdom for the day in which we live in. We can be so consumed with our "stuff" that we could miss the purpose of why things are happening the way they are. There is a hidden reality behind everything we see - an eternal reality. The hidden work of prayer reveals itself in providential timing. Prayer gives us forbearance to see God's hand at work and to lean on Him.

"Prayer is the breath of the believer," Martin Luther said. We inhale newness, and exhale Divine life and joy. We must touch the Master before the work; otherwise, the work will have no life. Without prayer, we are spiritually blind and our words will be self-centered. We can come as we are in a spirit of bankruptcy, and God will revive our soul. Come boldly and worship Him and hear His heartbeat, and we will learn to ask according to His will.

Ephesians 3:20 (KJV) says, that God's answer is far beyond and greater than we think. God's delays are not His denials. When we bow our knees, angels are commissioned. A man that has intimacy with God is not intimidated by man. You have the Kingdom of Heaven inside you - release it through prayer! Don't give Him the silent treatment today. Pour out your heart; He is waiting to hear you.

*"Let my prayer be set forth as incense before You, the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice."*  
*Psalms 141:2 (AMP)*

## REFRESHED

### The Journey of Faith

*"Faith goes up the stairs that love has built and looks out the window which hope has opened."*

*Charles Spurgeon*

Those first steps of a child can be wobbly, as he learns how to walk with his "new feet", learning new places and things. Often there are many falls, but the child gets back up because he wants to find another adventure to play in. In the spiritual realm, we also wobble around and learn that real steps of faith will move us along in love, discovering God's faithfulness.

Jesus was moved with compassion, and not only need, as He ministered to others, in Matthew 14:14 (KJV). Often He stopped and waited for His Father's leading. He would move slowly, so that He wouldn't miss the smallest of opportunities. He could also launch out with speed, to be one step ahead of the devil. Jesus's movements were motivated by His eternal love and plan. He would sow the precious seed, water the precious seed, and reap the harvest of the precious seed. We may be stopped in a holding pattern today - but know that God is always working.

Maybe we are moving slowly and it feels as though the world is passing us by - the Lord is working. Or maybe we are moving "Mach 2" with our hair on fire. Be aware of God, and not just what needs to be done. It is God Who is working, not just you. He does the work first IN us, then through us, for His glory. If we just look for results that we understand, we will not enjoy the journey. Relax! It is impossible in our own strength, but faith says, we are the Lord's, the work is the Lord's, and the results are the Lord's!

*"The steps of a [good] man are directed and established by the Lord when He delights in his way [and He busies Himself with his every step]. Though he falls, he shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord grasps his hand in support and upholds him."*

*Psalms 37:23-24 (AMP)*

## REFRESHED

### Beyond the Boredom of the Normal Life

*"Don't tell God how Big your storm is, tell the Storm how Big your God is."*  
*Unknown*

Remember the show Star Trek, when captain Kirk would say, "to explore strange new worlds, to seek out new life and new civilizations, to boldly go where no one has gone before?" Each adventure the Enterprise went on was fantastic. I think this is what drew us because it was something outside the "normal" box. Is life boring and predictable to you? We are ultimately designed to break through and enter new heights.

God is faithful to lead us beyond ourselves, if we let Him - beyond our comfort zone, beyond our reasoning, and way beyond what we can ask or think. He has called us beyond normalcy to faith. He is beckoning us to Himself, where we lose our control and find rest for our soul. Christ's unconditional gifts take us to regions beyond sight, and natural expectation, as in 2 Corinthians 10:16 (KJV). In agreeing with God and not submitting to the influence of feelings or fear, we can go beyond. Faith is our companion that takes us beyond. Faith sees only God and declares how big HE is and that nothing is impossible with Him. Rest is a place where true contentment is experienced and reveals the devil's defeat. Personal rest has taken us beyond the natural realm and we experience His supernatural provision, regardless of circumstances..

Valuing things that will last for all eternity leads us beyond running after the mighty dollar, the image of fame, or the perception of reputation. These earthly endeavors still leave the soul thirsting for more. True significance, meaning, and purpose are found when we come to God on purpose and we quiet down and consider HIM. In John 4:14 (KJV), and John 6:35 (KJV), Jesus promises to quench the thirst and fill the void. Jesus says in Matthew 11:29 (KJV), "learn of me" - let Me shepherd your soul, and lead you beyond yourself and your own wantonness. You are loved and have been designed to go beyond this world and enjoy the eternal. Embrace His grace today and walk in a new dimension of His supernatural life - His newness will bring a new world to you!

*"I assure you, most solemnly I tell you, when you were young you girded yourself [put on your own belt or girdle] and you walked about wherever you pleased to go. But when you grow old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will put a girdle around you and carry you where you do not wish to go."*  
*John 21:18 (AMP)*

## Chapter 4 - RENEWED

*"When you feel like giving up, remember why you held on for so long in the first place."  
Unknown*

There is something about a new car, the smell, that has never been used, or driven. The thought that you are going to "break it in" and experience untouched power is compelling. But what if you can't buy new? Could a Honda of 200k miles be new? Yes. As our thinking changes, so does our perspective. Renewal is like a "second wind," we are energized, as if we have rested and not exerted ourselves. The adrenaline is new, energy supplied. But what about the heart, can that be made new? Yes. No matter what life has thrown at us or what we have experienced, God can make "all things new."

Christ promises "new mercies" to take away what we deserve and to heal us, in Lamentations 3:23 (KJV). The constant intake and agreement of spiritual truth heals and empowers us. Christ doesn't just fix things in our life; He makes all things new. We may look at ourselves and be discouraged, areas where we have not seen change or believed that it is impossible. The Holy Spirit does the impossible thing. He blows new life and renews our minds and begins to restore. He gives us a new normal and a new ability. Everything is redeemable. In relationships where wounds have prevailed, unconditional love does the impossible work. Continue believing what Jesus says about us by faith, watch His life transform our most hopeless areas. Nothing is impossible with God.

*"And He said to me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, You know! Again He said to me, Prophecy to these bones and say to them, O you dry bones, hear the word of the Lord."  
Ezekiel 37:3-4 (AMP)*

***Action Point: Meditate on how a perfect Christ sees you. Make decisions without fear. Journal.***

## RENEWED Amazing Grace

*“Grace is but glory begun, and glory is but grace perfected.”  
Jonathan Edwards*

Divine Grace has many facets and sides. If we were to look at a diamond, holding it up under the light, we would see the beauty and color of this precious stone. Let's look at God's grace and see the spectrum of beauty that reveals His holiness. Spectrum can be understood as *“a band of colors, as seen in a rainbow, produced by separation of the components of light by their different degrees of refraction according to a progressive series of a wavelength , arranged according to such characteristics as frequency, charge, and energy”* (Oxford Dictionary). If we were to pull this definition apart we would see a mystery unfold. Seeing light from the sun break through the dark clouds and touch droplets in the atmosphere, we see color. This color is not abstract but is precisely patterned and is revealed in precise form. As light is absorbed, the true color is revealed. Just like after a storm, the rainbow pierces the darkness our lives, and manifests the glory of God.

This progression is arranged to amaze. So when the life of Christ is absorbed as a revelation, His true beauty is revealed. Revelation is more than mere knowledge. It is the glimpse of a mystery, where God shows us the deeper meaning. Awe is a powerful form of worship; our God is awesome and awe-inspiring. The beauty of His holiness is the progression we discover. It is amazing - it commands our attention.

As we enter into His rest, through amazement, He will speak to the one who is listening. The Christian life is discovering God wherever you are, seeing His beauty in and around us in majestic color!

*“Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unfathomable (inscrutable, unsearchable) are His judgments (His decisions)! And how untraceable (mysterious, undiscoverable) are His ways (His methods, His paths)!”  
Romans 11:33 (AMP)*

## RENEWED Life's Puzzles

*"The world is round and the place which may seem like the end  
may also be only the beginning."*

*Ivy Baker Priest*

The plan of God can look like a maze at times. Where to turn? Which end is up? Even in the forest it may be hard to find the trees. God is not trying to "bait and switch" us; God is walking alongside, as a faithful guide. Walking in faith reveals that divine direction starts with a faith dream. Joseph's brothers mocked by calling him a "dreamer." Joseph heard from God and was walking in the reality of the promise, before it actually happened. He spoke and made decisions based on that promise. Joseph's brothers were jealous because they were comparing themselves with their brother, rather than seeking God for their own heart vision.

Moses sought the Lord and recognized where God's presence was, and that is where he decided, he was going to be. Exodus 33:15-18 (KJV), Then Moses said to him, "If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?" And the Lord said to Moses, "I will do the very thing you have asked, because I am pleased with you and I know you by name." Then Moses said, "Now show me your glory."

What are some characteristics of God's presence? Peace is, rest is, and a manifestation of life is, to name a few. Look for God's presence, and abide there, and He will lead you through the seeming obstacle course of life. He will lead you faithfully as you steadfastly seek Him. Don't be occupied with trying to figure it all out. Precious energy is lost with all these mental gymnastics. Let our prayer be as Moses, "Show me your glory," His glory will make more sense of the mystery.

*"Look on the right hand [the point of attack] and see; for there is no man who knows me [to appear for me]. Refuge has failed me and I have no way to flee; no man cares for my life or my welfare. "I cried to You, O Lord; I said, You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living."*

*Psalms 142:4-5 (AMP)*

## RENEWED The Mystery of the Ages

*"We cannot "psychologize" the grace of God. God's actions are outside and above our human sciences."*

*John Powell*

We are in such an age of knowledge. Information is often hitting us from all sides with suggestions and conclusions. With all this advancement, we have to ask ourselves, what are we learning? What is being applied, and experienced in our lives? Often we hear the words and don't realize their full meaning. Often, secularism has redefined the words to a cultural norm.

Consider the word "grace;" so easily, we could give a superficial definition that analyzes the surface of the word, according to human understanding. Often the emphasis can be on the action of grace, before the revelation of what it is. The revelation gives the full meaning and the ability to experience it. The action comes as we fellowship with the meaning. When it comes to giving grace, often people are found in the balance undeserving of any grace. This is true, because it is on our terms, our righteousness, our interpretation. This is not grace at all.

The beauty of what we will discover is that grace is the manifestation of the Person of Jesus Christ. His demonstration of love is totally dependent on Him. The beauty of His holiness is revealed through His perfect wholeness, offered unconditionally. So how can we give this life? We can't! It must come from Jesus Himself; we are simply a conduit of His life. Anything that originates with us is corrupted and fragmented. Grace flows from above, and empowers the believer and sets him free in liberty. True grace recklessly flows out to all, regardless of their condition!

*"Making known to us the mystery (secret) of His will (of His plan, of His purpose). [And it is this:] In accordance with His good pleasure (His merciful intention) which He had previously purposed and set forth in Him."*

*Ephesians 1:9 (AMP)*

## RENEWED

### Why God Uses Darkness

*"I am not moved by what I see. I am not moved by what I feel. I am moved only by what I believe."*

*Smith Wigglesworth*

Our faith can be challenged, and doubts can create darkness. The obscurity of questions, and trying to understand what is going on, can create an internal struggle. Darkness can blind the minds of the ignorant, and overwhelm the empty-hearted. Negativity and fear want to disrupt our emotions and divide our heart from the light of God's promises. A "noisy soul" with unresolved things from the past, and anxieties about the future, can hijack our present reality. We need Jesus to calm and muzzle our storm; He dispels our restlessness, with His peace.

The work in darkness has a eternal purpose. God uses darkness so that we can't rely on anything that we see, or know, but we learn to reach out to take a-hold of Him. As a blind person relies on his other senses for navigating, so we lean on the Holy Spirit to be our everything. In these seasons, we are being promoted in the spiritual world first, and then the natural world. We are being transformed from the inside out. In these times we need to keep our eyes on the "fourth man" in the furnace.

God is the light that shines in our darkness. As we embrace His promises, they bring more light to our way in Psalms 36:9 (KJV). We begin to learn deep things from God, in Job 12:22 (KJV), and He adds supernatural treasures to our life, in Isaiah 45:3 (KJV). Christ may seem hidden in our darkness, but He is near, speaking, adding more depth in you. This darkness will pass, and the dark night of the soul will break with the dawning of a new day. Collapse in the arms of Christ and have Him personally expand you, and multiply your faith.

*"Let us then fearlessly and confidently and boldly draw near to the throne of grace (the throne of God's unmerited favor to us sinners), that we may receive mercy [for our failures] and find grace to help in good time for every need [appropriate help and well-timed help, coming just when we need it]."*

*Hebrews 4:16 (AMP)*



## RENEWED

### A Place of Immunity

*"It's a good thing to have all the props pulled out from under us occasionally. It gives us some sense of what is rock under our feet, and what is sand."*

*Madeleine L'Engle*

Submission can be an ugly world in most circles. But submission to the right source is power. In a marriage, the wife submits to the Christ in the man. Children come under the healthy initiations of their parents. Jesus was so submitted to his Father that He was untouchable. Sure, people challenged Him and tried to touch Him in their flesh, but Jesus had a wall of fire around Him; He was submitted. He was in perfect agreement with His Father's plan of redemption. He vocalized His suffering, and He was available to have "this cup pass" from Him, but Christ never moved from being surrendered to His Father's power. He was a humble conduit to touch people right where they were at.

In Matthew 28:18 (KJV), we see this picture of "all authority." As a servant-leader, He didn't have to be in control of all things, but allowed free will to be expressed. He spoke to the heart of people, pointing to His Father, and strengthened them in the arena of faith. Submission releases true authority, and releases true power. We embrace the work of the cross as the only provision and authority. Relating and responding to God releases a ministry to others; otherwise we live in reaction. This is true power and influence, giving what is needed, not what is deserved.

Defending and lifting up true righteousness is the example we see in Christ's authority. The authority of forgiveness heals, the authority of mercy renews, the authority of grace redeems. Live in true authority today. Agree with the Father, and you will have personal power released and the devil will flee - for he knows supernatural authority.

*"Jesus approached and, breaking the silence, said to them, All authority (all power of rule) in heaven and on earth has been given to Me."*

*Matthew 28:18 (AMP)*

## RENEWED In Awe of His Beauty

*"The grace of God is infinite and eternal. As it had no beginning, so it can have no end, and being an attribute of God, it is as boundless as infinitude."*

*A.W. Tozer*

When the heart is captivated, we are in full concentration. As we seek His face we are in humble amazement. His magnificence subdues our imaginations within. All is in a holy silence before Him, in Psalms 145:18 (KJV). Perfect love, wisdom, and forgiveness is our unchanging God. No flesh can glory in His presence; all glory is due to Him.

Isaiah 6:5 (KJV), reveals that after Isaiah had a personal glimpse of Christ, he saw himself undone in God's presence. Isaiah's depravity silenced him! This is the beginning point in knowing God; to see oneself in the light of His glory. Our helplessness leads us to worship, and hope is realized because we are perfectly accepted. A bankrupt spirit He will not despise, in Psalms 34:18 (KJV).

Hudson Taylor's "spiritual secret" of 42 years in China was being "undone;" he had no confidence in the flesh, and was prostrate before the Lord in his heart. When we are undone, nothing is unresolved in our hearts because everything is truly surrendered to Him. The Holy Spirit is free to move, and we lose personal baggage. We are forever grateful for the robe of righteousness He clothes us with. Our crippled nature is covered under His precious blood.

Let Christ's beauty consume you today, and take your identity from this perfect place. "As He is, so are we, in this present world. I John 4:4 (KJV). *Oh Lord We bow in adoration and we pray in Your Name, the name above all others; Jesus, the Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, the Mighty God - your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven! Display your magnificence in us and through us - we are captivated by you.*

*"And put on the new nature (the regenerate self) created in God's image, [Godlike] in true righteousness and holiness."*

*Ephesians 4:24 (AMP)*

## RENEWED Don't Forget Who You Are

*"Only he who believes is obedient. Only he who is obedient, believes."  
Dietrich Bonhoeffer*

As life is on information overload, it is easy to over-crowd and push out healthy thoughts. A racing mind can bring such fragility to our life. We hop from one thing to another, not grasping or entering a healthy mindset. God wants to settle things in our heart, where we don't have to rethink things. As we learn His absolute thought on a matter, it transfers to rest in our hearts. As we learn to function in God's thoughts, we begin to realize the power of the Kingdom of God within us.

In Micah 4:9 (KJV), the author gives three perspective questions, "Why do you cry aloud? Is there not a King within thee? Has your counselor perished?" The Holy Spirit would ask these questions of us. In loss, we don't cry as those who have no hope. We have the King of Kings within us! When we take our eyes off of God, our Counselor, we begin to lose our rest, and forget who we are. We tragically begin to take on a false identity. Trouble and problems become a cloak that can overshadow us, stealing our joy and peace. The simplicity of prayer reconnect us to the realities of God. Connecting with God, heart to heart, is the catalyst for everything in our life. Prayer releases the King with-in and He begins to speak a life-transforming word, reviving our dry bones. When we know who we are in Christ, it is less likely that we will believe the lie.

Turtles are an interesting example - in danger they hide away in their shell till everything calms down. We weren't designed to act like a turtle, defensive and hiding away. But when we forget who we are, we withdraw into our shells. As believers, we can't shut down when the pressure comes, we were designed to fly like the eagle, soaring above. Self-consciousness hijacks our thinking, The King is squeezed out of view when we are self-oriented. Don't forget who Christ says that you are. The grace identity declares what Christ has made us to be. He exalts his work in us - it is BIG! Fellowship with His unconditional love, and discover who you are in the eternal view point.

*"Let my sentence come forth from Thy presence. May Your eyes behold the things that are just and upright.  
You have proved my heart; You have visited me in the night; You have tried me and find nothing [no evil purpose in me];"  
Psalms 17:2-3 (KJV)*

## RENEWED The Spirit of Your Mind

*"The point of having an open mind, like having an open mouth, is to close it on something solid."*

*G.K. Chesterton*

It is easy for our mind to play tricks on us. Through self-analysis we can emphasize the wrong things. S. Scibelli gives an illustrated answer to this, *"Put away the microscope and take out the telescope"* - so much truth in this statement! We can magnify the flesh so easily by lifting up what we should do, rather than what God has done, and our relationship to it. We must look away from self and be inspired by the "nearness" of the New Covenant of God. In Romans 3:3-4 (KJV) *"For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged."*

Christ's personal ministry is to love us into what He has already made us to be; time only hides what Christ has completely done. Our mind is refreshed as we receive Christ's mindset. In Philippians 4:8 (KJV), *"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things [are] honest, whatsoever things [are] just, whatsoever things [are] pure, whatsoever things [are] lovely, whatsoever things [are] of good report; if [there be] any virtue, and if [there be] any praise, think on these things"*. Put away the microscope that causes us to fixate on what can't be changed. Allow the telescope of God's to work, teaching us to respond in faith with eternal thinking!

*"O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together. I sought (inquired of) the Lord and required Him [of necessity and on the authority of His Word], and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. They looked to Him and were radiant; their faces shall never blush for shame or be confused."*

*Psalms 34:3-5 (AMP)*

## RENEWED Authentic, Unconditional Love

*"Love makes everything that is heavy light."  
Thomas Kempis*

Loving oneself may sound like a conceited idea, but it is a spiritual secret. Jeremiah 31:3 (KJV), shows us that God's love was not motivated because of a need, but a desire for fellowship. If you were the only one on the earth, Christ would have still chosen to come and rescue us in His extravagant love. The price on our life cannot be measured by anything earthly; it took the resolve of Christ's precious blood to ransom all who believe.

Unconditional love heals the disconnect of insecurity. Confidence is the fruit of love's perfection. Ephesians 5:19 (KJV), says that we must *talk to ourselves* in love! Our "self talk" brings in a personal revelation that we are accepted and valued in Him, in Ephesians 1:6 (KJV). Satan has no strategy that can penetrate someone who fellowships in God's matchless love. When love is rejected, anger takes its place and our expectations become misguided. We begin to look to people and things to satisfy this insatiable desire. The world will flirt for your love, your attention, and amazement. Guard your heart! The world's love is superficial and there is always a catch, but God adds no sorrow to those who live in His Heavenly, organic love, in Proverbs 10:22 (KJV).

Love thinks no evil of you! I Corinthians 13:5,7 (KJV), It believes the best about you in Christ. It bears and hopes ALL things because it is rooted and grounded in the Truth of God's nature. His love doesn't demand a change in you but it produces one! This love is God's provision to escape the world and past wounds, hurts. Condemnation flees from this ever-present, unfailing love.

No one can love you like Jesus can! Be still and let him love you right where you are at. He will restore your soul. The overflow of this authentic love for yourself will flow to those around you who desperately need it.

*"[And the Lord answered] Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet I will not forget you. Behold, I have indelibly imprinted (tattooed a picture of) you on the palm of each of My hands; [O Zion] your walls are continually before Me."  
Isaiah 49:15-15 (AMP)*

## Chapter 5 - RESPOND

*“Oh, how great peace and quietness would he possess who should cut off all vain anxiety and place all his confidence in God.”*

*Thomas A. Kempis*

No one likes the silent treatment; we are all designed to receive and express love. We can only give love to the measure that we have received and responded to God. Our personal expression shows a unique response. What we have internalized becomes visible in our words and actions.

We all have a “boiling point” where the cover to “our pot” comes off. This rage comes from holding on to things that were meant to be cast onto the Lord. Our response must be directed first to God, and then to people. If it is the other way around, people can be hurt, and we will regret our response. Pressures and frustrations can be a toxic environment where we act like a “ping pong” ball. Learning to say yes to God, we see that every situation is an opportunity. We may not be able to control what happens to us, but we can control how we respond.

Looking unto Jesus and pouring out our complaints to Him, is an effective response. He will help us navigate, and discover His purpose. Jesus's words in the Garden show us His divine response, “nevertheless not my will but thine” - this was a response of faith. This response transferred power to endure suffering, and empowered Christ to voluntarily give up His life at the cross. No one or any torture took that from Him. He focussed on finishing well, and not being broken by the devil.

The world wants to “shut us down” and to muffle our responses. Our joy and hope is lost as we respond to the wrong things. Remember, what we reward, will grow. God wants to add to our lives as we respond to Him. Guard what is sacred and let go of that which has no eternal value.

*“He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, he who rules his [own] spirit than he who takes a city.”*

*Proverbs 16:32 (AMP)*

***Action Point: Exercise your authority as you make decisions about things that will add to your life.***

## RESPOND

### Surrender

*"Faith is deliberate confidence in the character of God whose ways you may not understand at the time."*

*Oswald Chambers*

We all have heard the cliché - "let go and let God." This can be a revolutionary action if we obey it. The word "let" is the hinge to this mighty door. Trials are one of the platforms that God uses to tenderize us for us to be brought to the end of ourselves. We were not made just to maintain our life, but to thrive. We are where we are by God's appointment, in His keeping, under His training for His time. There are no accidents or haphazard plans. God's plan is perfect. This perspective keeps us objective so we can love Christ in our difficulties and function being Spirit-filled.

The strength of temptation is in an area that has not been surrendered to HIM, and to HIS purpose. The devil says, "You will never change, you were born with this, you owe it to yourself." As entitlement barks at us and we believe this satanic negotiation, our heart is divided into fragments and depression and fear become powerful adversaries in our lives.

We are called to surrender to God and to submit, to voluntarily come under the authority of His mighty hand, in James 4:7 (KJV). We are no match for the devil by ourselves, but God has defeated him already! In surrender to God, we experience personal victory. We experience His present victory. We don't let the world, the devil or anything, fragment our soul.

In the devil's bidding we cry out - "Lord I am yours," in 1 Corinthians 6:19 (KJV) and "In You there are true pleasures" in Psalms 16:11 (KJV). The devil's authority is only in the areas that are not surrendered to God. Give God the keys to those places in your heart where no one else goes; let go and let God invade with His light. He knows all things, and we are not hiding anything from His eyes. We see in Hebrews 4:13 (KJV), *"And not a creature exists that is concealed from His sight, but all things are open and exposed, naked and defenseless to the eyes of Him with Whom we have to do."* You have been called to triumph!

*"But thanks be to God, Who in Christ always leads us in triumph [as trophies of Christ's victory] and through us spreads and makes evident the fragrance of the knowledge of God everywhere."*

*2 Corinthians 2:14 (AMP)*

## RESPOND

### Hear the Right Voice

*"First you leap, then you grow wings."  
William Sloane Coffin*

The ability to hear is so critical. It is often the last physical faculty that will stop working. God gave us two ears and one mouth for obvious reasons. Christ wants to create in us a larger capacity to receive more of Him. Grace is shouting out who God is constantly. Satan hates grace because grace is always creating something supernatural. Satan doesn't have that ability, he can only imitate and duplicate. Grace is limitless in its definition. God's benevolence to the undeserving can be displayed in the following: Forgiveness shouts grace, love shouts grace, mercy shouts over shouts of judgment in James 2:13 (KJV), and integrity shouts grace.

As we get a revelation of grace and internalize this shout we will then give it away to others and healing in all forms begin. The bad-self image crumbles, insecurity is replaced with confidence, grace is the ultimate foundation. We hear God and His voice is like the "healing balm of Gilead." We are strengthened, and hope grows, regardless of whatever evidence we see or hear. This shout within us propels us forward.

The belief and understanding that there are more with us than there are against us, in 2 King 6:16-17 (KJV), is what the shout reveals. The shout catches our attention and quickens our spiritual numbness and we become attentive to the eternal things. This breaks our boxes of comparison and self-pity, and we are no longer living in a small little world. The shout of grace elevates us to new plains with God - a place where we hear the shout "you are more than a conqueror!" in Roman 8:37 (KJV).

Feelings, experience, and sight will try to muffle this shout. It is so important to hear the shout of the King. His charge empowers us in an ability far beyond our natural ability.

*"For who are you, O great mountain [of human obstacles]? Before Zerubbabel [who with Joshua had led the return of the exiles from Babylon and was undertaking the rebuilding of the temple, before him] you shall become a plain [a mere molehill]! And he shall bring forth the finishing gable stone [of the new temple] with loud shouting of the people, crying, Grace, grace to it!"  
Zechariah 4:7 (AMP)*



## RESPOND

### Recognize the Lie

*"Anxiety does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow... but only empties today of its strength."  
C. H. Spurgeon*

Goliath could be something in our life that looks so powerful, uncontrollable, or even be remnants of our past. Goliath was a formidable foe, and intimidated all but one; David. The armies of Israel stammered in fear because they were hypnotized by danger and loss, for over 40 days! Goliath was keenly aware of his own strength and size and with great pride he boasted. His shouts cut the strength and hope of all who feared.

In our day we can relate to this, maybe it is a doctor's appointment when we hear bad news; "You have cancer." This shout rattles us to the bone. This could also be a family problem where expectations and dreams are squelched in self-centeredness, or in a marriage where the shout of rejection crumbles hope. Even shouts from our past may cause hesitation, because of the identity of failure and fear. This noise can unsettle our peace and disquiet the soul. Shouting in anger can be a destructive shout. This powerful release can close someone's soul where they retreat back into themselves, and trust no one because of the damaging effects of this expressed destructive thought-pattern.

David had a secret. He heard and lived in the "Shout of the King." He knew Who was with him, and he came in that Name. He ran at Goliath with concentrated faith, knowing that the armies of heaven were with him. He slew Goliath that day because he lived in the power of the "shout," totally reliant on the King of Kings. He recognized the lie and was not fooled.

Our journey and battle may be days, weeks, months or even years! Goliath may seem to have the upper hand, and all hope is lost. The mindset of David must be ruling our hearts; we have the shout of the king among us, a stamp of approval, the privilege of power and position and being in God's sovereign timing. God will shake what can be shaken, so the truth remains. If I put God in a box or put Him in my timetable, there will be disappointment. Everything we are facing is to conform us to the image of Jesus Christ, and to reveal Him so that our life shouts out God and God alone.

*"And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saves not with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's, and He will give you into our hands."  
1 Samuel 17:47 (AMP)*

## RESPOND

### The King of Kings

*“One man with courage makes a majority.”*  
*Andrew Jackson*

There is such a powerful energy as everyone cheers on their favorite team. The intensity rises as the player moves and performs. In Hebrews 11:1 (KJV), we see this same arena – the Kingdom of Heaven is cheering us on, affirming our obedience to Christ and steps of faith, speaking strength, coaching us not to quit. Learning to hear these shout's are the key to encouragement. Just as a coach would “talk straight” and remind us of who we are; what the objective is, with lots of encouragement. The Lord speaks the same, defining our true identity and giving hope. How and what we hear determines how we will think and act.

In Number 23:21 (KJV), *“The Lord their God is with them; the shout of the King is among them.”* When thinking of a king, he reveals position, power, and privilege. Imagine Christ as the King of Kings, what He decrees over you! Zephaniah 3:17 (KJV) says, *“that he sings over you as He is quietly resting in His love.”* The King looks at you with favor and He gives you His own authority; as objects of His love He enjoys us! He shouts over us in favor.

Mephibosheth in 1 Samuel 9 is a young man that was dropped as a baby, leaving him lame on both feet. Mephibosheth was summoned by the king and expected the worst; he did not know the heart of King David. Mephibosheth's shout was that of worthlessness and insignificance. He was not hearing the shout of the King but was blinded by himself. To his surprise, King David promotes him and “shouts over” him, declaring him a son with all the rights and privileges, to sit at his table forever. He learns grace, and becomes David's loyal friend for years to come.

Hearing this shout creates a new identity and a new life. He is our King, declaring those things which are not yet seen, as evidence now. In time we grow into what He sees already! What a way to relate to yourself, as the King sees you. Hear the “shout of the King” over you today. He is shouting wisdom, life, truth, peace, love and so much more in Philippians 4:8 (KJV). Tune in to the right shout; God is for you !

*“[God] has not beheld iniquity in Jacob [for he is forgiven], neither has He seen mischief or perverseness in Israel [for the same reason]. The Lord their God is with Israel, and the shout of praise to their King is among the people.”*  
*Numbers 23:21 (AMP)*

## RESPOND

### Ask the Right Questions

*"For those with faith, no explanation is necessary. For those without, no explanation is possible."*

*Thomas Aquinas*

Our culture today tells us to question authority, to be suspicious, and skeptical. But God is secure, and He loves questions from a receptive heart. Questions help us process information and help reassess our internal compass. Psalms 137:1-6 (KJV), gives 3 questions that provoke our heart: What do you dream about? Dreams that you have, as if you had no fear of failure. What do you cry about? Your personal burdens that drive your passions and hurts that keeps you close to the Lord. What do you sing about? What causes you to rejoice. Consider these answers and to what direction do they take you? Are you walking that way? What inspires you? What makes the fire burn within you? True motivation is fed by what inspired us; we do what we believe and value.

We tend to question ourselves when trouble happens. In Luke 22:31 (KJV), Jesus told Peter that Satan desired to sift him, to beat him down as wheat, but Jesus said, *"I have prayed for you"*... imagine, Jesus is interceding for you! Nothing happens without Christ's permission. So as troubles come, we can be comforted, God is working and breaking up our unfruitful ground, preparing it for His seed.

God has questions for us as well. In John 21 (KJV), He asked Peter *"do you love me."* To the disciples He asked *"Will you follow me or leave also?"* Or to John He asked, *"who do men say that I am?"* These questions checked their hearts to see how they were thinking. In the book of Proverbs we see multiple questions on walking in wisdom. Make sure your questions and God's questions come to the same answers. Questions are part of learning as we are humble ourselves to listen and hear the answer. On our knees let's be real with God and He will settle unresolved issues within. Time is short, our days are numbered - let's not be spectators, but step into the arena!

*"O satisfy us with Your mercy and loving-kindness in the morning [now, before we are older], that we may rejoice and be glad all our days."*

*Psalms 90:14 (AMP)*

## RESPOND

### The Still, Small Voice

*“Gather up the stones flung at you with malice and build from them an altar of love to your Father in Heaven; fit them together with forgiveness and intercession for those who seek to hurt you.”*

*Rick Cruz Torres*

There is so much that comes at us on any given day. It is very possible to wake up and have a list of details and demands that collide with us even before our feet hit the floor. Running into our day without quieting our soul often happens, so we will have a driving-spirit and no delight. It is easy to hear a whisper if we are close to the person speaking. It is nearly impossible if we are far away.

To "practice the presence of God" is to recognize that the King of Kings is within, and to pay attention and give Him honor. Right when we arise, or throughout the day, to sit and be still and bow down before the Lord in our heart, to hear what He has to say. I love this picture of bowing down, to fully kneel and have the forehead touch the ground before the Lord in total reverence. We do not bow before any other god, but focus on Christ, and exalt His promises. We confess them, and live as though they are more real than what we see. Christ's promises become the gateway to deliverance.

We must learn to give authority to the still small voice. *Take your thoughts hostage that cause noise, doubt and disruption in our soul.. In Isaiah 26:3 (KJV), “Thou wilt keep [him] in perfect peace, [whose] mind [is] stayed [on thee]: because he trusteth in thee.” Psalms 46.10 (KJV), “Be still, and know that I [am] God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.”* Muzzle the devil through the promises; that still small voice is the Almighty God speaking; give ear.

*“When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble? and when he hideth his face, who then can behold him? Whether it be done against a nation, or against a man only.”*

*Job 34:29 (AMP)*

## RESPOND

### The Unpopular Way

*“All God's plans have the mark of the cross on them, and all His plans have death to self in them.”*

*E. M Bounds*

People are always looking for new ways to succeed and to improve the popular trends of the day, reinventing themselves and risking all to inch ahead. The “unpopular” way is found by the few, and the humble. As we approach the Cross, it doesn’t appear to be much. It is not polished or painted a beautiful color, it is a vertical post with a horizontal post connected to it. These beams made of wood don’t appear to have much value, until you get close and see the blood stains saturated into the wood grain. The vertical beam represents God reaching down to man and His grace paying the debt for our sin, something we could never pay. One drop of Christ's blood took care of our sin, our neighbor’s sin, our neighborhood's sin, our city's sin, our nation’s sin and the world's sin! The power of His blood on His Cross washes away every trace and barrier that sin makes.

The cross can be a mere symbol that we wear around our neck and sing songs about, or it can be the center of our life. Galatians 6:14 (KJV), encourages us to "glory in the cross" to exalt and “make a big deal” of His redemptive, finished, sacrificial work. Our work today is to believe and trust that all demands for sin have been met, and we can draw nigh because of the blood; we are totally unconditionally accepted. The Cross of Christ is where we lay all our burdens down and take on His light yoke and learn from Him. He carries our pressures and our pain and His resurrected life is now our life.

Draw near to His unpopular Cross and see its beauty! Guilt, shame, and fear have been erased by His precious blood. Christ became the worst, so that we could enjoy His best. *“We exalt you King of Kings and Lord of Lords, our precious suffering servant who came as a lamb but will return as a lion!”*

*“In Him we have redemption (deliverance and salvation) through His blood, the remission (forgiveness) of our offenses (shortcomings and trespasses), in accordance with the riches and the generosity of His gracious favor.”*

*Ephesians 1:7 (AMP)*

## RESPOND

### Look Into His Glorious Face

*"The conscience feels guilty, the soul unfed, the lamp not trimmed. Then when in secret prayer the soul is often out of tune, I feel it is far better to begin with God -- to see his face first, to get my soul near him before it is near another."*

*Robert Murray McCheyne*

In our world of technology we may miss the opportunity for meaningful communication. Looking into someone's face, we can see countless expressions. Each feature speaks something about that person. When we look unto Jesus, into His face, much can be learned. What will God say the next time we are on our knees? What will He show us? What promise will He release? Amazing things happen when we are face to face with God. Genesis 17:3-5 (KJV); 32:20 (KJV) and Exodus 33:11 (KJV), speak of men that had a "face to face" encounter with God, and their lives were changed forever. The apostle John in the book of Revelation says *"His very countenance shines as the full strength of the sun."* As John sought God's face he beheld His glory and was changed into his likeness. He saw eyes of fire, and the bright white hair flowing from a golden girdle. He fell down as dead in His presence.

Often busyness causes us to run past the Saviour, to not have time to sit and behold Him. Go before Christ today, and worship Him in the beauty of His holiness and see His many faces. He is the suffering servant, He weeps with those that weep. He is the mighty God, His strength is made perfect in weakness. He is our healer, making us whole again. So many attributes reveal His caring personal nature. Each face reveals a mystery, in Colossians 1:27 (KJV), *"To whom God would make known what [is] the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."*

When we breathe our last, our eyes will open, and we will behold Him face to face. This will be our greatest reward, to embrace our precious Savior that we have followed by faith all these years. We will see Him as He is.

*"For I know that my Redeemer and Vindicator lives, and at last He [the Last One] will stand upon the earth. And after my skin, even this body, has been destroyed, then from my flesh or without it I shall see God, Whom I, even I, shall see for myself and on my side! And my eyes shall behold Him, and not as a stranger! My heart pines away and is consumed within me."*

*Job 19:25-27 (AMP)*

## RESPOND

### Living in Fullness

*“Those persons who know the deep peace of God, the unfathomable peace that passeth all understanding, are always men and women of much prayer.”*

*R. A. Torrey*

We are in the information age. We can “Google” and find the answer to almost everything. We can absorb fragments of information, but what are we really learning and living in? We can so easily live on the crumbs from the Masters table, rather than enjoying His fullness. The crumbs don't give the full nourishment and we may find ourselves tired and overwhelmed. Fullness comes as we sit at the masters table and enjoy His provision.

I remember seeing a movie that showed holocaust survivors. We could see their bones because they were so malnourished. I remember walking through Dachau and Auschwitz and feeling the solemnness in the air; this was a horrible tragedy! If we just survive and maintain by eating the crumbs, we too will be spiritually malnourished. The crumbs could be half truths that we don't meditate on to possess and live from. We have a place at the Master's table and there is a continual feast, in Proverbs 15:15 (KJV).

What we have received has a place; through meditation it is categorized, for future use. With no purposed place, “clutter” causes fatigue and confusion and the stunting of knowledge takes place. Just as a farmer carefully sows his seed, rather than throwing the precious seed recklessly, we must learn the same. We look unto Jesus. He will give specific, personal wisdom for our circumstance. In Christ's fullness, we begin to learn what adds to our faith and what ultimately steals our joy and peace. We discover His fullness as we are thankful and agree with His truth.

*“You will guard him and keep him in perfect and constant peace whose mind [both its inclination and its character] is stayed on You, because he commits himself to You, leans on You, and hopes confidently in You.”*

*Isaiah 26:3 (AMP)*

## Chapter 6 - REINFORCE

*"The weakness in our Christian life is that we do not take time to believe that this Divine Love really does delight in us. Love will awaken your faith and strengthen it. Occupy yourself with that love; worship it; wait for it. You may be sure it will reach out to you, and by its power take you up into itself as your home."*

*Andrew Murray*

The potential of weakness is inevitable as time passes. Science shows us that, as things continue, they weaken. The survival of the fittest ideology has a real flaw, thinking that man can sustain his own strength permanently. The strongest and the wisest will falter. We need something greater than ourselves to uphold us.

When pouring concrete for a foundation, re-barb is added to give the foundation added strength and durability. As temperatures change, and the concrete expands and contracts, it is less likely to buckle because of the inner steel that fortifies it. We need this for our heart, our "up-look" is what reinforces us in the eternal purpose.

Ecclesiastes 11:6 (KJV), shows us the value of sowing the love of Christ at all times. We invest Christ, "the precious seed," and His ministry never returns unfruitful. There may not be an immediate response, but the seed has been planted. "Harvest thinking" is a mindset that can change our "outlook." Jesus's example and occupation was reaching people, at all cost.

Repetition tests the credibility of our "up-look." As we come to Jesus, in any condition, again and again, we discover in a personal way that He is our ultimate strength. As we live for Him, a cause greater than ourselves, we are strengthened.

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

*Colossians 3:15-16 (AMP)*

***Action Point: That which you think on, and reward, will grow. Journal.***



## REINFORCE

### Divine Perspective

*"To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover the prisoner was you."*  
*Unknown*

Escape is so much a part of the thinking in our culture - evading the moment through welcomed distraction or stimulation. The natural man is often unprepared for life. He is seeking relief because he has lost his footing. The "rose colored glasses" just obscure our true need for Jesus. We can run, but we take ourselves with us! There is no where to hide but in Jesus. The vexation of the flesh can only be removed through surrender to Calvary's love.

Our eyes are opened as we enter illumination, we stand in awe and see that each moment is precious. We begin to see God's hand moving, and hear His voice speaking. The reality is, no matter how bad, or good things are, we are needed right where we are. Sometimes when we want to jump out of our skin and try to change everyone in our world, God reminds us that we are life-givers and can give spiritual health to any cursed areas. God may not do things our way, but His purpose will be realized. We begin to see God's mission when we have His divine perspective. Divine perspective reveals God's heart for the people and situations we are facing. This viewpoint is something we receive from above as a gift; it doesn't come naturally.

No matter what is happening, the promises of God can create hope and perspective. His truth is relevant, credible, and absolute. Speak to yourself today in truth, rather than trying to escape. True rest comes at the foot of the cross where we lay down our life and walk in the newness of His life. *"Today Lord we hide ourselves in thee,"*  
*Colossians 3:2-3 (KJV).*

*"I have been crucified with Christ [in Him I have shared His crucifixion]; it is no longer I who live, but Christ (the Messiah) lives in me; and the life I now live in the body I live by faith in (by adherence to and reliance on and complete trust in) the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself up for me."*

*Galatians 2:20 (AMP)*

## REINFORCE

### Loosen Your Grip

*“The depths of our spirituality does not depend upon changing the things we do, but in doing for God what we ordinarily do for ourselves.”*

*Brother Lawrence*

Life can be like a roller coaster. The thrill of speed can translate to panic where we “white knuckle” the handle bars. Our “death grip” keeps us in place so we are not thrown. When the ride stops, we have to pry our hands off the bar and give time for the muscles to relax so the blood flow can return to the extremities. In daily pressures and circumstances, many things can try to move us in many directions. How do we know what to hold on to and what to let go of?

When we grip the sand it slides through our fingers, but as we grip that which has a foundation greater than ourselves, our personal world gets bigger and we enter into true security. This world is fleeting, but God's grip on us will never weaken. What we don't commit to God, and hold onto with our own strength, will lead us from Him, in 2 Timothy 1:12 (KJV). That which is given to Jesus, He will care for. When our needs, wants, and desires are given over to Christ, He can act according to His will.

Loosen your grip on your life, your dream, what you want. Can you do it? Can you trust God for the outcome, or must we “help” God. His grip of grace doesn't just hold on to us and help, it does it all or nothing at all!

Hold onto the “crimson thread” and see the Holy Spirit lead and hide you in His presence, in Psalms 31:20 (KJV). Look away from those things that demand your attention and set your face like a flint unto Jesus. Hold on to Him, and watch Him take tremendous care of your stuff.

*“The Lord will perfect that which concerns me; Your mercy and loving-kindness, O Lord, endure forever — forsake not the works of Your own hands.”*

*Psalms 138:8 (AMP)*

## REINFORCE Shift Your Gaze.

*"We the willing, led by the unknowing, are doing the impossible for the ungrateful. We have done so much, with so little, for so long, we are now qualified to do anything, with nothing."*

*Mother Theresa*

Expectations can be very powerful. We may look at something, or someone, to see how we may personally profit from them. Our "mismanaged expectation" can lead us astray. Healthy expectations can release faith as Jesus is our point of reference. If our hope is in people, we will stumble, because they are bound to stumble. Jesus didn't put His trust in man, because he knew what was "in man," Jesus was governed by his Father, and not peoples demands.

Healthy expectations come from God, they are a result of reflection, in Ephesians 3:20 (KJV). Just as the moon reflects the sun, the brightness that is absorbed is the light based on the sun's path. Similar to a reflector, which will only be as bright as the light invested, this solar energy creates tremendous power.

We can also reflect "shekinah" glory as we shift our gaze. When our expectations come from the Lord and we wait silently for Christ, we have healthy expectations. The energy of healthy expectation puts us in a place where we believe God for the impossible. *"Difficult, impossible, consider it done,"* said Adoniram Judson. He clearly was looking at Jesus, rather than the impossibility. Disappointment comes when we expect from anyone else but God. When our trust is in temporal things, we have misguided expectations. But we must shift and look unto Jesus, and search for Him; as our heart turns to the light, we become light bearers.

We can have as much of God as we want. "Only He who can see the invisible can do the impossible" said Frank Gaines. Enjoy a new outlook. Behold Him, and shine brightly. *The darker the night the brighter the light shines.*

*"My soul, wait only upon God and silently submit to Him; for my hope and expectation are from Him."*

*Psalms 62:5 (AMP)*

## REINFORCE

### The Silent Assassin.

*"We will not walk in fear, one of another. We will not be driven by fear into an age of unreason, if we dig deep in our history and our doctrine, and remember that we are not descended from fearful men not from men who feared to write, to speak, to associate, and to defend causes that were, for the moment, unpopular."*

*Edward R. Murrow*

We have all heard "the only thing to fear, is fear itself !" It is so easy to be aware of our reality without God; most fear is based in self preservation. The danger of loss or "worst case scenario" often may never happen. Fear can be defined as False Evidence Appearing Real. With human reasoning, illusions distort, and discredit God. Leonard Ravenhill weighs in on this and challenges the believer, *"We were not made to run from mice, but to chase lions!"*

Sight can be very intimidating, but it is not the only reality. Quoting Phillip Brooks, *"No matter how strong falsehood looks it is still false, and no matter how weak truth looks, it is still truth."* Fear is a lie. 366 times in the Bible we are commanded not to fear, this is for every day, even leap year! As we have a prepared heart before the Lord, we don't fear; faith extinguishes fear.

Spiritual warfare as part of our worldview gives insight to the immaterial world. Satan is a roaring lion "seeking" whom he may devour in fear, in 1 Peter 5:8 (KJV). His lies are very effective to steal, rob, and destroy as the silent assassin.

Fear is exposed as we fellowship with truth. Fear gives spiritual amnesia. Don't forget who you are; your life mocks the devil! Do the opposite of what the atmosphere says. Satan is truly defeated, and confessing truth will smash all the smoke and mirrors.

*"And I am convinced and sure of this very thing, that He Who began a good work in you will continue until the day of Jesus Christ [right up to the time of His return], developing [that good work] and perfecting and bringing it to full completion in you."*

*Philippians 1:6 (AMP)*

## REINFORCE

### Do All to Stand

*"We seldom realize fully that we are sent to fulfill God-given tasks. We act as if we were simply dropped down in creation and have to decide to entertain ourselves until we die. But we were sent into the world by God, just as Jesus was. Once we start living our lives with that conviction, we will soon know what we were sent to do."*

*Henri J. M. Nouwen*

Boxing is such a brutal sport - two men beating the daylights out of each other. It seems so barbaric. As each opponents dances around each other, avoiding and enduring the blows, the last man standing wins!

In Esther 3:3-5 (KJV), we see the courage of Mordecai to stand, and not bow down to Haman, which is a type of the world and the flesh. Mordecai infuriated the world around him because he was not controlled or manipulated by the compromises of the day. Mordecai was more interested in pleasing God than man. His focus was not on the consequences to his own life, but more in honoring his Lord. He stood on his knees. His convictions guarded his heart and mind from getting ahead of God.

Often we are ready to fight, when God has called us to stand. To stand firm in the reality that God is going before us is a liberating action, He will do the fighting. As the blows of life come, we are moving in the Spirit, covered and protected. The Lord may allow a few blows to buffet us, and we may see stars, and wobble a bit. As we go to our corner to be refreshed, remember we stand in the power of Christ's might. He upholds us with His mighty hand, in Zechariah 4:6 (KJV).

Consider your actions today; ask yourself, "What would be the consequence of standing idle in compromise? What would faith obedience release in my situation?" Mordecai stood firm when it was unpopular; his obedience was honored by God, and this action became part of saving a whole nation from destruction! The Lord moved Mordecai because he was standing and waiting for God to speak. Don't underestimate your faith obedience today, you are God's pivotal Christian.

*"In conclusion, be strong in the Lord [be empowered through your union with Him]; draw your strength from Him [that strength which His boundless might provides].*

*Therefore put on God's complete armor, that you may be able to resist and stand your ground on the evil day [of danger], and, having done all [the crisis demands], to stand [firmly in your place]."*

*Ephesians 6:10, 13 (AMP)*

## REINFORCE

### Our Greatest Gift

*"That is why He warned people to "count the cost" before becoming Christians. "Make no mistake," He says, "if you let me, I will make you perfect. The moment you put yourself in my hands, that is what you are in for. Nothing less, or other than that."*

*C.S. Lewis*

Our free will is the most powerful tool we have. God often seems to "call out" to our free will to be submitted to His will. There is a great struggle to live our life our own way. Jesus is a gentlemen and He will not invade privacy, but will humbly let us go our own way. His wisdom cries out, Follow Me!

In 2 Timothy 3:5,7 (KJV), *"Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away; Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth."* This is a dilemma - a form but no power. We have all been there. Frustration and hollowness comes when we go through the motions, but don't experience God.

The cross changes our world. Because the flesh is so full of itself it must not be given the privilege to choose for us. The nails went through Christ's hands and feet to show that His ways were not His own. On purpose, we decide to seek the Lord above all; this will have divine consequence.

In Luke 9:23 (KJV), *"And he said to [them] all, If any [man] will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."* Denying self means that the flesh doesn't have priority - Christ does. We instruct our will with Christ is eternal value system. What will matter for eternity? The answer to this will define an eternal value system. In faith, we keep choosing righteousness, and the flesh loses its authority over us. We "feed" the spiritually healthy things in our life, and we starve the self-pleasing areas. What is fed will grow.

Rebound is a gift that is freely given as we "fall forward" into God's grace. When we fail, we turn to Christ and He picks us up as many times as we need. God is not a "bean counter," He doesn't count our failures, but instead he counts our faith steps, in Job 31:7. Don't underestimate the power of a decision by faith. It only takes a spark to get a fire going.

*"I call heaven and earth to witness this day against you that I have set before you life and death, the blessings and the curses; therefore choose life, that you and your descendants may live."*

*Deuteronomy 30:19 (AMP)*

## REINFORCE

### Radical Reliance

*"Being a Christian is more than just an instantaneous conversion. It is a daily process whereby you grow to be more and more like Christ."*

*Billy Graham*

Knowledge is so readily available today. Our mind is full of what "needs to be done," but entering into action can be missed. It is easy to analyze, but what does it take to be utilized? In Romans 7:18 (KJV), *"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but [how] to perform that which is good I find not."* Jesus makes known His will in prayer. We go out, not knowing all the answers, but in an attitude of faith.

The apostle Paul shares a secret in 1 Corinthians 15:10 (KJV), *"But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which [was bestowed] upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."* Grace labors? YES! When we are yielded to the Holy Spirit, grace is proactive with the passion of Christ! We begin to work smarter, rather than harder.

Our attitude before God determines if what we are doing is secular or sacred. Doing all things unto Jesus, regardless of what we are doing, it matter only who we do it unto. We all have measurements of what is spiritual or not, but God weighs the heart attitude. We could do the "right" things in the "wrong" spirit, and it is rubble for all eternity.

Radical reliance on Jesus is the gateway to radical obedience, and we begin to see God's action in us. As we surrender our will, and what we think we know, then the Spirit guides us and leads us into all truth. Trying then turns to trusting, and pressure turns into praise and we delight rather than "rush through" all those things in our schedule. We delight in the moment as we encounter God. Lean in close to Christ today and hear His heart beat. He is for you!

*"I appeal to you therefore, brethren, and beg of you in view of [all] the mercies of God, to make a decisive dedication of your bodies [presenting all your members and faculties] as a living sacrifice, holy (devoted, consecrated) and well pleasing to God, which is your reasonable (rational, intelligent) service and spiritual worship."*

*Romans 12:1 (AMP)*

## REINFORCE

### New and Living Way

*"The greatest thing is to be found at one's post as a child of God, living each day as though it were our last, but planning as though our world might last a hundred years."*  
C. S. Lewis

Prayer gives us insight into the invisible world. Without prayer we are blind to the kingdom purposes around us. Prayer leads us into a place of power and spiritual health that saturates and penetrates our heart. His Power has total authority over resistance, and we learn to function in faith regardless of evidence. Prayer unveils a hidden reality of a prepared way by God.

Our way is prepared, divinely orchestrated by God, Spirit led. In Psalms 23:5 (KJV), "The Lord prepared a table in the midst of my enemies." Walking with the Master, we discover a different way, anointed way, a prepared way and a hidden provision.

In the fullness of God's timing we see God's plan revealed God's way with great preciseness. Prayer releases God's authority over the devil, in great triumph. We cannot regulate God's power only by answered prayer, but we go deeper in seeking Him, regardless of the outcome. Our roots go into His underground waterways and He refreshes our souls with Himself, in Jeremiah 17:8,9 (KJV), The outward answer doesn't seem to matter, because we are fellowshiping with the Provider more than the provision.

Newness isn't something that we manufacture, but real power is seen in how we get ahold of God, and letting Him get ahold of us. As we give control to God, He leads in quietness. The old is gone, and all things have become new, in Revelations 21:4 (KJV). Rest in Him today. His anointed, new, and living way will be made known.

*"God [is] my strength [and] power: and he maketh my way perfect."*  
2 Samuel 22:23 (KJV)



## REINFORCE

### Seeing the Way It Truly Is

*"Faith is the light of time, it alone recognizes truth without seeing it, touches what it cannot feel, looks upon this world as though it did not exist, sees what is not apparent. It is the key to celestial treasures, the key to the unfathomable mystery and knowledge of God. Faith conquers all the fantasy of falsehood; through faith God reveals and manifests Himself, defying all things. Faith removes the veil and uncovers eternal truth. When souls are given the understanding of faith, God speaks to them through all creation, and the universe becomes for them a living testimony which the finger of God continually traces before their eyes, the record of every passing moment, a sacred scripture. How delightful the peace one enjoys when one has learned by faith to see God in this way through all creatures as through a transparent veil. Darkness becomes light and bitterness sweet. There is nothing that faith does not penetrate and seek out. It passes beyond darkness, and no matter how deep the shadows, it passes through them to the truth which it always finally embraces, and from which it is never separated."*

*Jean-Pierre de Crussade*

Mark 8:23-25 (KJV), "...when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw ought. And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking. After that he put [his] hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly." The blind man when first touched, he didn't see clearly, but the second time he saw with understanding. In prayer the natural "blindfold" comes off of us, and the scales fall from our eyes, we begin to realize the power of a touch from God. Life doesn't make sense unless the Lord touches us again and again in prayer and meditation. We are blind without prayer.

Hebrews 4:13 (KJV), says that God sees through everything to its core; nothing is hidden. Living a lie, or manufacturing behavior to please others is not God's plan. Being something that you are not is even worse. The flesh loves to create layers that build personality, but God sees the heart and He chooses to love beyond the knowledge of sin. He reminds us of who we are in Him. God sees the real you. He sees the raw potential the gifts that are in the process of cultivation. The "masks" of life can keep people at arms length, but God wants our heart. God doesn't have a standard on you, His desire is that we surrender and enjoy our life in Him. The desire to be accepted and to be valued can not truly be found horizontally, if we look for that in people, places, or things it won't satisfy. Psalms 145:16 (KJV), says "*Thou opens thine hand, and satisfies the desire of every living thing.*" His outstretched hand is toward you right now, look unto Jesus and discover that you are His master-piece. Bow before God and let Him put His hands on your eyes so you can see with divine viewpoint.

*"...What eye has not seen and ear has not heard and has not entered into the heart of man, [all that] God has prepared (made and keeps ready) for those who love Him who hold Him in affectionate reverence, promptly obeying Him and gratefully recognizing the benefits He has bestowed]."*

*I Corinthians 2:9 (AMP)*

## **Chapter 7 - RELEARN**

*"The soul that is attached to anything however much good there may be in it, will not arrive at the liberty of divine union. For whether it be a strong wire rope or a slender and delicate thread that holds the bird, it matters not, if it really holds it fast; for, until the cord be broken the bird cannot fly."*

*St. John of the cross*

It is easy to think logically and have quadrant thinking. Often life doesn't follow the rules, and messes are a part of everyday life. In the unexpected, our thinking can be broken into pieces. These pieces can easily create concepts, which are fragments of truths and/or lies mixed with limited knowledge. Concepts can hold us back from living in the fullness of God, because we are the only one interpreting what we see and feel. When Christ interprets our world view, we begin to see the way to live in fullness.

Living in fullness rescues us from small thinking. Our boxes keep us from false standards that we put on ourselves, and expectations that we put on others. Entitlement comes from these concepts, when we think we deserve something, a distorted view of what God desires begins to influence us. The apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 8:2 (KJV), "And if any man think that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know." Paul goes on to say in

1 Corinthians 4:4 (KJV), "*For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord.*" And in 1 Corinthians 2:2 (KJV), "*I am determined to know nothing but Christ and Him crucified.*" Paul came to the conclusion that the natural mind doesn't show the true picture.

The Cross crucifies our "little boxes", and leads us into a full dimension of God's nature. We have a 3-dimensional faith, the body which is world-conscious, the soul which is people-conscious, which ultimately needs to be controlled by the Spirit, which is God-conscious. We are moved out of the center, and Christ becomes in full view. Christ is unsearchable, and His ways are past finding out, in Romans 11:33 (KJV). We constantly need the Lord to renew our mind so we don't feed on our own understanding. "*Teach me Lord, I want to learn it all over again,*" is our prayer. This willingness will cause us to relearn what we think we know, and enter the reality and power of it. We will pass beyond mere knowledge and the familiar, and will enter into true worship and fullness; a large and immeasurable place at the foot of the cross.

***Action Point: Knowledge and facts not only factors that develop growth, learning reveals understanding. What are you learning through application. Journal .***

## RELEARN Shake it Off

*“A candle must give itself away.  
In the giving, the spending, the spreading, the sending, it finds itself.”  
John Wood*

If we were to go about our day, without shoes and socks, our feet would certainly get dirty fast! Without protection and covering we accumulate filth and are easily wounded. The same is true as we go through our day, things can stick to us, and begin to weigh us down, and the little things get under our skin. We can easily lose ourselves and attention on meaningless things.

Luke 9:5 (KJV), shows a secret to "shake the dust off" and keep moving! When little things compound, and begin to steal our joy, we recognize it, and let it go, we give it to God, and begin to praise Him! Worship is our protection and covering. Keeping ourselves in love is our greatest defense.

The apostle Paul didn't even let the judgment from his own people bog him down. He kept the main thing, the main thing, the main thing, and that was God's conclusion of him and his work. A personal question that helps shake the dust off is, "How can I glorify God in this?" This perspective will clarify and make visible God's will. Satan speaks from the dust, if we don't keep short accounts, we will be influenced by his unregenerate words. Satanic sand storms can suffocate us, but God has ordained a free spirit. Delight in Him today and don't sweat the small stuff!

*“[Most] blessed is the man who believes in, trusts in, and relies on the Lord, and whose hope and confidence the Lord is. For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters that spreads out its roots by the river; and it shall not see and fear when heat comes; but its leaf shall be green. It shall not be anxious and full of care in the year of drought, nor shall it cease yielding fruit”.  
Jeremiah 17:7-8 (AMP)*

## RELEARN Don't Be Fooled

*“The Christian faith is meant to be lived moment by moment. It isn't some broad, general outline--it's a long walk with a real Person. Details count: passing thoughts, small sacrifices, a few encouraging words, little acts of kindness, brief victories over nagging sins.”*

*Joni Eareckson Tada*

There is the unseen, immaterial realm that is very active, but often is not discerned. People blame people, places, and things for mishaps that often have a supernatural source. This life is in preparation for the next one; fatalism is a side step from the true reality. Just because we can't comprehend it, doesn't mean that it ceases to be true. There is a spiritual battle going right now.

While I sat watching my bird feeder the other day, I noticed these little birds with amazement. They are not much to look at, but they moved with purpose. They flew together in a group of 8-10 and they were very attentive to their surroundings. They were looking at the smartest way to get to the feeder without being entrapped in danger. One sat on the highest point of the feeder, while a few rested on a bush nearby as others darted back and forth from the feeder; chirping as they went. The sound was interesting, as if they were talking to each other, letting them know the coast was clear. Their heads were moving constantly and their necks were so flexible, seemly moving in all directions to detect any danger. I watched for about 5 minutes and then they all flew away, mission accomplished.

In Judges 7:4-7 (KJV), shows us how God narrowed down Gideon's army to the ones that were trained and watchful. God's majority is not always found in numbers, but in those who are watchful and moving in the Spirit. It is more powerful to be led by the still small voice of the Spirit than by our own power in Zechariah 4:6 (KJV). Today be "God-conscious" and we will discern God's work, and Satan will be exposed. Prayer keeps our spiritual eyes wide open, so we fight the right battle.

*“And Jonathan said to his young armor-bearer, Come, and let us go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised; it may be that the Lord will work for us. For there is nothing to prevent the Lord from saving by many or by few.”*

*And his armor-bearer said to him, Do all that is in your mind; I am with you in whatever you think [best].”*

*1 Samuel 14:6-7 (AMP)*

## RELEARN Real Source of Power

*"Spiritual maturity isn't measured by how high you jump in praise but how straight you walk in obedience."*

*Anonymous*

Matthew 26:7-10 (KJV), is a tremendous story of how a sinner broke a costly alabaster box to anoint her Savior. Surprisingly, the disciples reacted and "they had indignation, saying, to what purpose [is] this waste?" This was an opportunity to anoint and honor the Lord, and this precious sinner saw this hidden opportunity. Opportunities to honor God are obvious to the broken.

If we calculate the cost only, we will not break our alabaster box. What is this alabaster box? It can be our time, plans, dreams, opportunities, personal preferences, The box must be broken, otherwise our life will be more important than God's will. If we elevate any other purpose, we will hold back and hesitate when we should be moving and giving. Excuses will fill our mouths rather than faith; anything that has any worth has a price. There are no short cuts or half-hearted commitments; God calls for our life, poured out, and emptied for His purpose. Is God asking too much? It is easy to back away and say another will go and do, but Jesus is calling us.

If there is no sacrifice or cost, the value of eternity is small. The question isn't, "How much does it cost if I give," the question is "how much did God already give, and what would be the cost if I didn't give?" Just like throwing a rock into the pond and the ripples from the impact move across the water, so are the consequences of doing what God commands. They are far-reaching, beyond the here and now. There is unimaginable blessing in obedience. We can allow the cruelty of life to break us, or be broken in the Master's hands. Our valuable alabaster box, once broken for the Master, reveals the greatest value.

*"And whoever falls on this Stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom It falls will be crushed to powder and It will winnow him, scattering him like dust]."*

*Matthew 21:44 (AMP)*

## RELEARN All Surpassing Peace

*"God cannot give us a happiness and peace apart from Himself, because it is not there.  
There is no such thing."  
C. S. Lewis*

Walking on the shore, watching the waves come crashing in, is relaxing. The beauty of the foamy water cascading into the air, with the sound of the rushing waves, can calm our soul. Inner peace is greater than any tranquil environment we may enjoy. This perfect unity and harmony with the Holy Spirit releases God's peace to the inner man. The assurance of God's presence relaxes us to the inner core of our being.

As Jesus muzzled the storm on the sea of Galilee, He brought perfect peace and stillness over the demonic turbulence. The resident Truth, hidden in our heart, has the same authority to rebuke panic and restore order in our lives. As we confess Truth with our mouth, it becomes operational and a heart declaration, and then true peace is experienced. It supersedes any intimidation or pending danger. Jesus is our Prince of Peace.

Peace is not only given when things are all in order, and everything is in its proper place. Perfect peace is given to those who are focused on Jesus. It is easy to lose focus and get caught up in "what is going on" in our lives. But when our eyes are on Christ and we stay concentrated with our frame of reference in His promises, peace is multiplied.

The guarantee of the world is a false peace; it is building your house on sand. The promises of the world are unsustainable. Money, power, and success don't mean peace. We could have it all and be very miserable. With Christ, we may have very little, but the Prince of Peace is in our boat. We have the privilege to confess and abide in those things that Jesus has promised. He is our rock and strong foundation. Anything can change, but He remains faithful. We must have defensive promises that help bring in focus to the eternal reality, and offensive promises that disarm the devil. Let's not arm the devil with a wrong confession; release peace, as God's peacemaker, confess and abide in His truth regardless of the evidence.

*"Thou will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee."  
Isaiah 26:3 (AMP)*

## RELEARN

### Love Produces Growth

*"You can give without loving. But you cannot love without giving."*  
*Amy Carmichael*

Love's ability does what is impossible for us naturally to do. It is able to forgive, encourage deeply, and restore. Love doesn't fix people, but it heals from the inside out. Love fills the heart, which ultimately changes behaviour. If behaviour is our only concern, then we can be short-sighted and miss loves work in a person's life. Love can minister in any condition; its ability is what brings us to our potential.

The 101% principal that John Maxwell shares, is to focus on that 1% that is healthy, and put 100% of your attention there, to cultivate growth. Unconditional love thinks no evil; it bears, believes, and endures all things. Love is never defeated, and we can never be separated from it. As we receive this love, and fellowship with our position, privilege, and power that love produces, we experience a conquering life!

Hosea was shown love's ability in his own life when he was commanded to go "buy" back his wife, and to love her again in chapter 3. He could not do that in his own strength, but to the measure he received love, he could love. Love's ability changes us and turns our minds back to something regenerated. This love is perfected as we respond to God in the midst of failure. In God's eyes, sin has been paid for past, present, and future. The emphasis must be on rebound and recovery. Our consent and agreement with Him on the matter restores fellowship in the present. (2 Corinthians 7:10 KJV).

When Peter denied the Lord, Jesus looked at him in a way that convicted him and caused him to go and weep and ask for forgiveness. Love is what brought Jesus to that cross, and love kept him there. In Romans 2:4 (KJV), "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance." Sin's ugliness was dealt with in the power of the matchless blood of Jesus. Love's confrontation did more than words or reprimand ever could.

We have a forgiving Savior! The blood of Jesus speaks forgiveness, restoration, commission, new creations, and new beginnings! Let us put the emphasis on the right place today, not magnifying sin, but magnify a forgiving savior! Look for that 1% in yourself and others. Celebrate Him!

*"Behold, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs forth; do you not perceive and know it and will you not give heed to it? I will even make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert."*  
*Isaiah 43:18 (AMP)*

## RELEARN

### Impulse

*"The Jews tried to keep Christ contained within their law, while the Greeks sought to turn Him into a philosophy; the Romans made of Him an empire; the Europeans reduced Him to a culture, and we Americans have made a business of Him. God may thunder His commands from Mount Sinai and men may fear, yet remain at heart exactly as they were before. But let a man once see his God down in the arena as a Man--suffering, tempted, sweating, and agonized, finally dying a criminal's death--and he is a hard man indeed who is untouched."*

*J.B. Phillips*

Today we see many embrace a theology or belief-system void of the cross, and sadly they begin to drift into spiritual death. The devil is actively sending impulses to silence our witness. We experience impulses everyday by what we see and hear. Even unconsciously we can be impacted through subliminal messages that suggest involuntary action. We want to be in tune with the Holy Spirit's initiations.

When we make Christ into our image and understanding, our faith becomes a buffet at an all-you-can-eat restaurant, where we can pick and choose what we will live by or follow, according to what our heart is "telling us," This "selective" life is one void of personal power. Matthew 4:4 (KJV), it declares that we *"live by every word that proceeds out of his mouth."* If precise doctrine from the Bible is not in our focus, we will be deceived by human reasoning and fairness. Our feelings can distort the interpretation of God's will. Deception is very subtle; it will be a lie that is close to the truth, and will be justifiable in a pseudo-intellectual way, but a lie is a lie no matter how you dress it up!

Tolerance is another impulse from the kingdom of darkness. It is such a cop-out when eternal destinies are at stake. "I don't want to push my faith on anybody," I hear people say all the time. But, I would rather communicate God's life at an inopportune time than be standing in the grandstands at the White Throne Judgment, and having someone look over and say, "Why didn't you tell me?" Their blood will be on our hands. Our witness must be clear - not some abstract, subjective smorgasbord. Stand firm on what you believe and don't worry about being offensive - the cross was incredibly offensive to the flesh, but through death, life begins.

Living without responsibility in liberalism has no backbone, because it exalts the body, and all cultural spheres above the truth. When we are more concerned about how a person perceives us, or receives us, than communicating God's mind, we are upside-down spiritually. Let's stand on the truth of the Bible, and communicate in love, letting things fall where they may. The Holy Spirit is always initiating eternal perspective. Let's tune in and honor that. The consequences are the Lord's.

*"For [if we are] in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith activated and energized and expressed and working through love."*

*Galatians 5:6 (AMP)*



## RELEARN No Compromise

*"People do not drift toward Holiness. Apart from grace-driven effort, people do not gravitate toward godliness, prayer, obedience to Scripture, faith, and delight in the Lord. We drift toward compromise and call it tolerance; we drift toward disobedience and call it freedom; we drift toward superstition and call it faith. We cherish the indiscipline of lost self-control and call it relaxation; we slouch toward prayerlessness and delude ourselves into thinking we have escaped legalism; we slide toward godlessness and convince ourselves we have been liberated. "*

*D.A. Carson*

One of the oldest and most effective strategies in war is to separate and isolate your enemies. In choking their supplies lines they become very vulnerable. Our life today is not different, the battlefield may not have craters and refugees running in all directions, but the strategy is still the same. One of the devil's most effective strategies is to divide and conquer through imbalance. It is easy to chase the temporal value system, at the expense of our spiritual walk, but it will leave us hungry and thirsty again, in Isaiah 29:8 (KJV). Subtlety is Satan's tactic. In Job 41 (KJV), this chapter gives a very accurate picture of the devil and our flesh. If we pamper our flesh, and play with the devil by living casually about sin, then his lies will have consistent dominion. As we compromise and give an inch, the devil will fight for a mile.

No one has the gift to wait on The Lord; it can be one of our greatest struggles. But in waiting, our flesh is handicapped, and we are reduced to Christ's provision. We learn to engage the Lord and go deeper in our faith; these are the building blocks to growth. The devil wants us to sacrifice the eternal on the altar of the immediate. We can forget the value of God's best, to fulfill some temporal need or want. As we wait in faith, we realize the bowl of porridge is not worth the privilege of our God-given birthright in Genesis 25:34 (KJV). Our faith, call, family, our physical bodies, our time is not for sale. We are owned by another, Jesus.

Comfort and ease give temporary pleasure, but contentment is what God provides, a true satisfaction because of Him, regardless if we get what we want. Easy is not always better; if we take the easy way, it may not be God's way. God has called us to one fight and that is the good fight of faith; we cling to the cross, and the world will be crucified unto you, so it will have no power over you, in Galatians 6:14 (KJV). God has not called us to comfort, but to the Comforter! Our only authority is at the cross; surrender to Him, be transparent before Him, as a living sacrifice, and He will empower you in the power of His might.

*"Buy the truth and sell it not; not only that, but also get discernment and judgment, instruction and understanding."*

*Proverbs 23:23 (AMP)*

## RELEARN Brain Cramps

*"When you read God's Word, you must constantly be saying to yourself, 'It is talking to me, and about me.'"*  
Soren Kierkegaard

For all the things we say out loud, we speak to ourselves so much more. Bills, work, and uncontrollable circumstances are facts of life, but how we think about these things is important. Our inner filter determines if we will be stressed, or at rest. Our emotions don't have the ability to think things all the way through; they tend to respond in the immediate. Feelings often hijack the emotional thinker, because what is seen and understood, seems more real than eternal truth. Doubt causes brain cramps, and our five senses dictate to us, and give us a subjective disposition of fear, loneliness, and pride. Thinking according to what we see, such as results, possibilities, or opportunities, often steer a person into sporadic behavior and a driving spirit. Often reaction and outbursts of anger come from an overactive brain that is not thinking with God.

God has designed us not to react to life without responding first to Him. We have no idea what we need and we certainly can not discern it within ourselves. There will be times of confusion, but God's revelation will bring comfort and insight. Through radical reliance on Christ, we operate in and from the absolute promise. Rest in the mind comes from speaking to ourselves the promise as though it is more real than the things we are looking at. As we read the Bible and invest the clear sound of truth in our hearts through meditation, our emotions will appreciate and discern the right things. So as people, places, and things come into our life, we engage them with Christ's strength. Our Shepherd leads us inwardly by still waters and green pastures. Take the time to fill your heart and mind with God's absolute promise, don't let your heart defeat your mind.

What is on the mind of our Saviour? In 1 Corinthians 13:5 (KJV), *"Love thinks no evil,"* an all-knowing, all-powerful, and all-present God can't think evil, but dwells in the realm of absolute love. Jesus continually fellowships with His father's heart towards us and His love goes beyond all knowledge of our lives. He will give us the best from Heaven's throne. Don't second-guess or doubt His love; this is His unchanging mindset.

*"Now to Him Who is able to keep you without stumbling or slipping or falling, and to present [you] unblemished (blameless and faultless) before the presence of His glory in triumphant joy and exultation [with unspeakable, ecstatic delight]."*  
Jude 1:24 (AMP)

## RELEARN

### Impossible Is Not a Faith Word

*"Difficulty on the way to victory is opportunity for God to work."  
Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*

Someone recently said this statement to me, "relax, it is impossible." I laughed, and over the days I began to agree more and more with that statement. There are so many impossibilities in our lives, but God has so much more for us than we can imagine. Life and all its pressures can make us feel like quitting. When this overwhelming feeling comes over us, that usually is when we are at the threshold of a breakthrough. Something like throwing in the towel may feel like our only option, but if we quit, we really lose out. Impossibilities are only seen in the natural, but in faith that word doesn't exist. There is absolute power on the other side of faith. As Christ increases, and we decrease, we discover abundant life.

The cross is the gateway to the "much more life." Surrendering our rights and our past, and discovering God's possibilities now are liberating. Miracles are happening every day! Anything that is good in our life is a miracle. God wants to go way beyond just meeting our needs. He wants to give more, so that our life feeds others. Nothing is impossible with God. NOTHING!

God has called us to more than what we can do in a thousand lifetimes. As we are shepherded in a personal vision, corporate faith, and a faith-adventure, we are led to the edge of the cross. No matter what seemingly impossible thing is standing in our way, faith has confidence in one thing and that is the character of God. Nothing is too big or too difficult for Him. He will go way beyond what we can ask or think - *"Look fully into HIS wonderful face today and the world will grow strangely dim in the light of HIS Glory and Grace."*

*"The blessing of the Lord—it makes [truly] rich, and He adds no sorrow with it [neither does toiling increase it]."  
Proverbs 10:22 (AMP)*

## Chapter 8 - REVIVE

*"Give me one hundred preachers who fear nothing but sin, and desire nothing but God, and I care not a straw whether they be clergymen or laymen; such alone will shake the gates of hell and set up the kingdom of heaven on earth."*

*John Wesley*

God has called us to thrive - not only to maintain and survive, but to reign from Above, restored to fullness, firing on all cylinders! Life can get so busy and routine that we can forget who we really are, and why we are here on this earth. This earth is not our home, we are pilgrims in a strange land. If we make this earth our home; we may enter survival mode, where we manage our life in safety, but it can be dull. Looking beyond what we are doing, and having a vision and direction with faith steps, can revive us. We are empowered and energized by the Holy Spirit, the *"same spirit that raised Jesus from the dead can quicken our mortal bodies,"* in Romans 8:11(KJV). We may not be where we want to be now, but God is preparing us for a spiritual adventure.

In Jeremiah 48:11(KJV), *"Moab had settled on his lees; he has not been emptied from vessel to vessel."* He did the bare minimum, and comfort was his personal agenda. Comfort alone can't revive you; we need to be renewed in our mind. We all have our favorite chair, but if our spirit dries up, then we settle for so much less than God has planned. Don't settle and shrink back from God's will; put God first and HE will revive you in truth. An eternal viewpoint reminds us that every minute of the clock someone dies and goes into a Christless eternity! Don't lose sight of the importance of where you are, your job, and people you come across; these are your mission fields. You may be the only Jesus people see. People are watching your life; is there evidence of your new life?

Gideon was weak, but he kept getting up and running after Christ. He was "faint yet pursuing," in Judges 8:4 (KJV). Stir yourself up today, and ask God to quicken you. Don't let the "cosmic lullaby" drown out the living vision that Christ has placed in your heart. If dust and cobwebs have settled on your vision, fellowship with people who are on fire; it will fan the flame and ignite the embers again. Revisit and meditate on what God has said, and numbness and indifference will be dispelled. *"Oh Lord revive our weary souls! Breathe on us and restore to us the joy of our salvation."*

***Action Point: Creativity comes from dreaming with God. If you could not fail, what passion would you dream about? Journal.***

## REVIVE Avail It All

*"Sympathy is no substitute for action."  
David Livingstone*

What does it mean when someone says, "I am just being available to God?" It sounds good, but what is the spiritual weight of this? Availability is a condition, not necessarily an action. We could be in a state of availability, and be spiritually passive at the same time. Just as difficult as it is to steer a parked car, so would it be for a passive soul to get up and go for God!. True availability is, we must "avail" and yield ourselves to Christ. In this act of submission we are then empowered by His Spirit. We can get tangled up in "doing" something for God, but really we must abide in love, and let love redefine us.

Religion says that in doing, you're accepted, but in Christianity we do because we are already accepted. Jesus's faith produces a mindset grounded in love. We can boast about our faith, but when our faith meets Christ's response, that is when things happen. Love is an action word and our availability to be accountable to His perfect love casts out fear. Faith directives are always leading us forward TO Christ; the result of faith is the application of love. Love serves without care of recognition and focuses on the true value of people.

The accumulation of knowledge doesn't produce application; but to the measure we receive love, we love. When we are propelled by love and exercise faith, we automatically grow; this is the true meaning of availability. Let's be available today; take a step out of our comfort zones, "avail" ourselves to Christ, and be moved in His Spirit. It is not a question of needing more faith, but we need Christ to love us into HIS faith directives. He is always leading us where His grace will keep us. Christ gave it all, let's not hold back.

*"If we are faithless [do not believe and are untrue to Him], He remains true (faithful to His Word and His righteous character), for He cannot deny Himself."  
2 Timothy 2:13 (AMP)*

## REVIVE

### Look Again

*"Give me one hundred preachers who fear nothing but sin, and desire nothing but God, and I care not a straw whether they be clergymen or laymen; such alone will shake the gates of hell and set up the kingdom of heaven on earth."*

*John Wesley*

The mountain climber prepares his heart to reach the summit. He envisions the view he will see, and each step is calculated and planned. Each cable and foothold must be secure for him to reach the summit safely. Adventure is the viewpoint of the climb, where he will reach a new threshold and break through the old plateaus. With each forward motion or setback, he is conquering what is in front of him. The obstacles pale in comparison to what he will experience at the summit.

Reaching our growth potential is something we want in all areas of our lives. Time is not a renewable resource, so every decision counts. Discovering our potential is a journey of faith; it is a marathon, not a sprint. Each step prepares us for the next one. Often, this is a slow process. God is working something IN us first, so that we can have His ministry come OUT of us. Our potential is His ability in us; Christ in action through these jars of clay.

In the valley, or on the mountaintop, God has a perfect purpose. He is teaching us to be good stewards of His manifold blessing, or His suffering. Our viewpoint, and how we interpret issues and events in our lives will break us, or build us. There are no accidents or haphazard stunts. God is always working an eternal work.

Priorities are what keeps our traction and development. As we learn to be persuaded in faith, we will reach new heights. Faith has confidence in one thing - Gods character. As we agree with God, and go positive to His will, we discover our potential; Christ in us. God is always dealing with us in His potential of us! What could you do today if you knew you could not fail? Gods ability in you lacks nothing. Tap into this unfailing potential, and see your life from a brand new summit. Consider what Mother Theresa said, "We the willing, led by the unknowing, are doing the impossible for the ungrateful. We have done so much, with so little, for so long, we are now attempting to do anything with nothing."

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

*2 Corinthians 4:15 (AMP)*

## REVIVE

### Emotional Mutiny

*"I would rather live in a world where my life is surrounded by mystery than live in a world so small that my mind could comprehend it."*

*Harry Emerson Fosdick*

Fire has such beauty, and as you look at the dancing flames, you see a whole spectrum of colors. It gives off heat and energy, but when it is in the wrong place it can be very destructive. Our emotions can be like fire; but God has designed healthy emotions to appreciate the nature of God. Oftentimes, hurt allows our feelings to take over our heart, and take authority that is not rightfully theirs. Pity, depression and anger are common examples that consume and overwhelm us, like an internal mutiny. Just like someone of influence on a ship who conspires with a few, and persuades them with his own agenda. Then they crusade against their captain, and seize command of the ship. Our will can be the agent of the mutiny, this is why we need to have truth on the inward parts keeping us focused on the real truth, as in Psalms 51:8 (KJV).

Where there are people, there is drama. Often "fairness" can be a trigger when bad things happen to good people, or the death of a loved one, or hurtful words from a trusted friend. Our heart becomes divided, and a racing mind tries to make sense of it all. We get hurt and offended, and the little offence becomes a mountain. Healthy emotions humbly shout, "for me to live is Christ!" God's answer is "Be still and know that I am God" in Psalms 46:10 (KJV). Jesus had the most reason to gripe, but instead He submitted to His father's plan. There was no plan B. Surrendering to His father created the action of "crucified" emotions, and this gave way to objectivity! Objectivity shows us God's perspective. Things may not make sense, but everything is woven into God's master plan. Faith is the compass that navigates us through the unseen reality of truth.

Jesus was often misunderstood by people, and many crusaded to take His life prematurely. How did Jesus make it through? Christ never took his eyes off of His Father's plan and purpose for His life. He didn't take the opposition personally, and He knew that it wasn't flesh and blood coming against Him, but principality and powers from below. In the heat of the battle, don't let your emotions declare "mutiny." Hide the Word in your heart NOW, and it will preserve and protect you. We are called to enjoy Christ in the moment; discipline your disappointments by surrendering them to God. They are His appointments.

*"No unbelief or distrust made him waver (doubtingly question) concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong and was empowered by faith as he gave praise and glory to God, Fully satisfied and assured that God was able and mighty to keep His word and to do what He had promised."*

*Romans 4:20-21 (AMP)*

## REVIVE

### Glimpse of Glory

*"If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world. "*

*C.S. Lewis*

What is beautiful in your life? Many things come to mind - a child's laugh, your spouse's smile, or a landscape that calms you. In our brief moments of life, we can see glimpses of the beauty of Jesus in the good, the bad, and the ugly, In His all-surpassing glory, we are humbled that He always has time to hear our cry and attend to our prayer. He is never too busy, we are important to Him and we have His full attention.

The prophet Daniel caught a glimpse of Christ in Daniel 7:9-10 (KJV), *"I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne [was like] the fiery flame, his wheels burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened."* The apostle John caught a glimpse of the ascended Christ in the book of Revelation, and falls down as though he was dead. What a glimpse, this changed him forever.

Consider Him today: His Magnificent Presence; Pure Holiness; Surpassing Beauty; Ultimate Power; Everlasting Worship; Timelessness; Infinite Understanding; Unfailing Love. Enter into the true reality of His Presence a Divine Dimension. A place where there is no sin, pain, or tears. Perfection is waiting for us. Forsake all other realities.

*"The Lord reigns, He is clothed with majesty; the Lord is robed, He has girded Himself with strength and power; the world also is established, that it cannot be moved."*

*Psalms 93:1 (AMP)*



## REVIVE

### Relinquish Control

*"Nothing takes God by surprise. He knows the future and can therefore guide us through its trackless ways."*  
*W. T. Purkiser*

Why do we fight for control? Do we really know what is going on? None of us likes to be caught off guard and embarrassed. Control could be defined as wanting to manipulate to create a predictable outcome, a known environment, a "safe" secure place. But the reality of control is an illusion. It is a perception in the natural man. We can't even control what happens in our own body! To plan and be prepared is wise, but not if it limits the Holy Spirit. We limit Him when we overestimate ourselves, and underestimate God.

Today you may be surprised or caught off guard, but if the spirit is ruling your heart, you will have divine flexibility. Like a rubber band, we stretch and adjust. In Proverbs 16:32 (KJV), & 25:28 (KJV), speaks of having our heart ruled by the Holy Spirit. Calvary must conquer our mind, heart, and soul today. Having divine flexibility enables us to let things roll off our backs. When things seem to spin out of control, this is a growth opportunity to trust Him. It is uncomfortable when we do not know what will happen next, because we love to manage our lives, however God knows the end from the beginning. He is on the throne! We believe and step into that faith realm.

Anxiety and stress will wear us out, but God commands us to "learn of Him" during those times. "What would Jesus do?" is such a popular thought, but it would be better to say, "What has Jesus already done!" The answer to this brings us from perception in human reason to divine perspective, how God sees. Don't fight for control; lean on Him, and He will give you divine wisdom and capacity for the unknown, the unseen, and the inaudible. God is the one who is in control, and we are in Him! RELAX!

*"And God is able to make all grace (every favor and earthly blessing) come to you in abundance, so that you may always and under all circumstances and whatever the need be self-sufficient [possessing enough to require no aid or support and furnished in abundance for every good work and charitable donation]."*  
*2 Corinthians 9:8 (AMP)*

## REVIVE

### True Intimacy

*"There is not in the world a kind of life more sweet and delightful than that of a continual conversation with God."*

*Brother Lawrence*

Depth in relationships is priceless, but it doesn't happen by accident. Many strive for compatibility to share and be fulfilled, but intimacy is what produces true compatibility. Intimacy is a deep connection of love; looking beyond the issues, and loving the individual, even through failure.

It is possible to have compatibility without intimacy, and have only a surface exchange. The cliché, "You scratch my back and I will scratch yours," is our cultural norm. As long as there is mutual admiration, things go well. But when things go sideways, and the relationship is tested, we see the foundation it was built on. True depth comes as we give the way Christ gives, and we love with His love. Luke 5:4 (KJV) says, "Launch out into the deep." Jesus is constantly calling us into uncharted territory. It is easy to live behind our walls and fortify ourselves, so that no one really gets close. However then, emptiness becomes our companion. Often when we have been hurt, it is hard to trust again. We tend to hurt the ones we love the most, and function from a place of offence. But Jesus will not mishandle or reject us. He knows us better than we know ourselves.

Launch out into the depth of love, forgiveness, and self acceptance today. Saturate yourself in the understanding of how God thinks about you. God knows what we need better than anyone. God promises a fulfilling life, and He dwells below the surface. Leave the place of superficiality, and engage people from a place of security. Be still, and let Christ love you today. You will see the depth of who you really are in the beauty of grace!

*"No man has at any time [yet] seen God. But if we love one another, God abides (lives and remains) in us and His love (that love which is essentially His) is brought to completion (to its full maturity, runs its full course, is perfected) in us!"*

*I John 4:12 (AMP)*

## REVIVE Real Backbone

*"Be assured, if you walk with Him and look to Him, and expect help from Him, He will never fail you."  
George Mueller*

The Gadites were the "lion-faced" men of 1 Chronicles 21:8-14 (KJV). They were valiant in warfare, and trained to implement what they have been taught. Their secret was that they held nothing back, and their heart was committed to the one that they followed. These 11 men were David's finest generals. They had no reserve, and no retreat as part of their method of operation. In Jeremiah 35, we see the Rechabites were men that obeyed the commandment not to drink wine; even when it was presented to them as an option, they refused because they were following a settled decision. We see a secret here with these men; they were fully persuaded and had cancelled out any other option, but to follow and honor their convictions. The soldier must enter the battle already dead; otherwise the thought of death will paralyze him. Their heart's were captured in truth, and even in failure, a series of right decisions always avenges disobedience. To overcome, the conqueror must first be conquered. Calvary's Cross must conquer every other option to retreat, or any other path of convenience. Love must conquer any fear of self-preservation.

These Gadites had focus and divine ability. Have you ever asked yourself, "Who am I?" Sure. The devil can project the answer, and can persuade you of a false identity based on your feelings. Jesus even asked the question in Mark 8:27-29 (KJV), *"Who do men say that I am?"* Jesus always deferred to His heavenly Father as definition of who He was. When Jesus tells us who we really are in Him, our "I" shifts to "Him." Paul was delivered from the "I" syndrome in Romans 6,7 where he mentioned himself 36 times, then he proclaimed, "but God" in Rom 8:1 (KJV). Feelings can be a liar, and a poor navigator. Let God continue to remind us of who we are, mighty in His hand, as in Judges 6:12 (KJV)!

*"The Lord God is my Strength, my personal bravery, and my invincible army; He makes my feet like hinds' feet and will make me to walk [not to stand still in terror, but to walk] and make [spiritual] progress upon my high places [of trouble, suffering, or responsibility]!"  
Habakkuk 3:19 (AMP)*

## REVIVE Just Motions

*"There's nothing like a good crisis to increase my energy and remind me how much I need God. "*

*Anne Christian Buchanan*

In the day-to-day routine, things can get mechanical, without passion, the routine can be drudgery. We need to put the brakes on and consider the “why” behind the “what ” we are doing. No matter how insignificant the detail or chore, God is in it. It is easy to forget the privilege of serving God and that our freewill is a gift. He wants us to follow Him because of love, not because we are "supposed to" a personal walk with God precedes power with God. What is not personal to us, we will one day forsake. We follow a personal Redeemer, personal Friend. If we were the only ones on the earth, Christ would have still come for us! That is personal love!

Song of Solomon 1:4-8 (KJV), is a picture of how a person can be drawn to God in a personal, real way, and then drift away. It is easy to take care of others, and their “stuff,” but our own heart we have not cared for. This self-sacrificing mission isn’t God’s mission. When our output is more than our input, we are in danger of burning out. Intimacy is when we are touched personally, and begin to understand His heart behind His action.

Going through the motions can be doing the “good things,” but not the perfect work. Often we can get consumed with being a "good Christian," and doing the "right things," but how much is good enough and by whose standard? God is not asking for goodness. He is demanding perfection. Jesus fulfilled this debt for us and the perfect work is to receive and honor God with our whole heart and to walk with Him moment-by-moment. More than doing a great work for Him, the great work happens within, and will come as an overflow of fellowship with a great big God.

Our prayer is what touches God's heart, touches our heart. Learning and honoring God and making Him known is our desire. We are changed into His likeness, as we draw near to Him by faith, and “Hide His Word in our heart.” Resist the assumption that we know what God will do, or not do, based on the past. Set aside time for God on purpose. He wants to unfold to you His heart. Let go of the methodology and technique to “find” God, and just sit and be loved by Him. He will make Himself known, and inspire you with His passion. He is closer to you than the air that you breathe.

*“Then you will seek Me, inquire for, and require Me [as a vital necessity]  
and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart.”*

*Jeremiah 29:13 (AMP)*

## REVIVE Open Heaven

*"Why do so many Christians pray such tiny prayers when their God is so big?"  
Watchman Nee*

God loves when we seek Him, and ask according to His will. He answers prayer according to His will, in John 14:13 (KJV). Often we have not, because we ask not, or we ask in generalities. We may think we are bothering God with our requests, or that we don't deserve what we are asking, but God loves to hear from His children. Moses asked in Exodus 33:18 (KJV), *"And he said, I beseech thee, show me thy glory!"* Lord reveal yourself! The prophet Isaiah testifies in Isaiah 45:11(KJV), *"Thus saith the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask me of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me."* Then David writes in Psalms 2:8 (KJV), *"Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession."* These are great examples of believers going boldly to the throne of Grace, and travailing in prayer.

It is easy to stop asking when things don't change, but God is more interested in working in us than delivering us. His delays are working in patience and trust; these inner abilities strengthen us to believe Him for greater things. The process of knowing Him and learning His heart is what He is after; conversion happens as we cease from living in the natural, and He takes over.

We have an open heaven today. Are you silent? Talk to Him in your own way. God has so much to say to the one who cares to listen to Him. An illustration that Billy Graham used once was, that a man was getting a tour of heaven with an angel, and they were talking and the man notices a huge building on as they were on their way. "What is that place?" said the man. The angel brought him to the doors and opened them, and inside were scores of provisions stacked in order. The angel said, "these were prepared provisions for God's people, but they never asked God for them!" What a shame that a prepared provision was waiting to be released, and there was no petition. God wants to surprise you with His goodness! Fall on your knees and knock on the door of heaven. It is an open door!

*" You open Your hand and satisfy every living thing with favor."*  
*Psalms 145:15 (AMP)*

## REVIVE

### Loves Beyond Knowledge

*"Lord Jesus, I ask Thee, give unto me movement in Thy love without measure; desire without limit; longing without order; burning without discretion. Truly the better the love of Thee is, the greedier it is; for neither by reason is it restrained, nor by dread thronged, nor by doom tempted. "*

*Richard Rolle  
1290-1349*

“Knowledge is power” - that seems to be the cultural norm of our day. The insatiable desire to know and be informed has superseded more than any generation. We can see the technological advancements over the years, man's ingenuity is incredible, but the moral code has failed miserably. We can walk on far-away planets, but can't seem to manage a marital relationship. Where is the disconnect here?

Knowledge can be looked at in 2 categories; uncontrolled and divine. Uncontrolled knowledge is information that hasn't been through the Cross. This knowledge is beyond our control, and it will mismanage our expectations. When we hear gossip or evil about another brother, it puts a seed in us that grows, and changes our outlook then the next time we see the person. We must guard our hearts and minds from being deceived. In contrast, divine knowledge comes when we submit what we know and have received to God, then God imparts His wisdom from above. God's divine wisdom teaches us the eternal perspective. Then we begin to unlearn destructive thought patterns and behaviors. A willing mind and a soft heart are the foundations to healing and transformation.

In Hebrew 8:12 (KJV), an all-knowing God chooses not to remember our sin! He has paid for it, and dealt with it forever! His love goes beyond any knowledge of it, and He doesn't condemn us. God's love thinks no evil of us. It is as pure as, in 1 Corinthians 13:7 (KJV). Jesus chooses to know and fellowship with us on the basis of love. What do we “*know*” today? Does it release love or suspicion? Is my knowledge a loose cannon, or like a bull in a china closet? Or are we wise as serpents and harmless as doves? Let's use the knowledge that we have to build and not destroy, to encourage and not critique.

*"[That you may really come] to know [practically, through experience for yourselves] the love of Christ, which far surpasses mere knowledge [without experience]; that you may be filled [through all your being] unto all the fullness of God [may have the richest measure of the divine Presence, and become a body wholly filled and flooded with God Himself]!"*

*Ephesians 3:19 (AMP)*

## REVIVE

### Giant Killer or Grasshopper

*“Men may flee from the sunlight to dark and musty caves of the earth, but they cannot put out the sun. So men may in any dispensation despise the grace of God, but they cannot extinguish it.”*

*A. W. Tozer (1897-1963)*

Truth can be looked at through many lenses - perception, experience, or perspective by what God has said. The Bible is the basis of absolute truth, not reliant on man's ability or experience, but based on the purpose of God. The pendulum can swing from one extreme to another; victor or victim, triumph or self pity, faith confession or excuse. How we view ourselves is how we relate to God and others. How we interpret what we see, and hear determines what end of the pendulum we live from.

David was a giant killer at age 16, in 1 Samuel 17 (KJV). He came in the name of the Lord because He was conquered by Calvary. There was no room in his soul to be conquered by fear; he had surrendered his will to the Lord's will. Christ was not limited, because David was abiding in the Almighty's power. Christ went ahead and prepared the victory.

Ten of the twelve spies saw themselves as grasshoppers in the sight of the giants of Anak, in Numbers 13:33 (KJV). God had promised the land, but natural thinking brought in doubt and intimidation. God had giants in the land to keep the unbelievers out, but the giants were "paper tigers," they were defeated already!

A man who has intimacy with God is not intimidated by man, or anything else. His heart is full of pleasant riches and strength as in Proverbs 24:4 (KJV). Insecurity and loneliness flees away in the assurance that God is present every moment. We may be shaken, but not moved; we are facing Christ on our knees, rather than facing our difficulties. What is standing in front of you today? Find 5 smooth stones and swing your sling of faith and watch paradigms change. Victory is already secured.

*“Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once and possess it; we are well able to conquer it.”*

*Numbers 13:30 (AMP)*

## REVIVE Our Allegiance

*“Grace binds you with far stronger cords than the cords of duty or obligation can bind you. Grace is free, but when once you take it, you are bound forever to the Giver and bound to catch the spirit of the Giver. Like produces like. Grace makes you gracious, the Giver makes you give.”*  
*E. Stanley Jones (1884-1973)*

Giving authority to the right things in our lives empowers the Spirit or enables our flesh. What we pledge allegiance to is what we think on and trust in. This is what we worship. When we focus on the God of all grace, we enter into rest. As we fellowship and spend time in truth, personal revelation will uncover the riches of Christ. If we give validation and credit to what people say and do, we will be bound to people. Self-analysis and self-orientation, make our world very small. What we feed on, and what we reward with our time and energy, will grow.

God's grace is so powerful in our lives. It nourishes our soul and heals deeply. Grace is often seen and experienced through brokenness; in trials we discover this exquisite treasure. Satan will want us to enter into self-analysis and make it all “about us,” and what we didn’t do, or should have done. Our performance is always his target and weapon of accusation. Feelings can be a powerful measuring line, but they often exalt the wrong things. Our emotions just respond, without a full thought of divine truth. Grace is so different. It has nothing to boast in except Christ, and proclaims what Jesus has completely fulfilled in us.

Grace helps us look at the “whole picture.” We see God at work, despite us. Grace exalts Christ in us, magnifies His perfect work in us, and as Grace is embraced, reversals are not impossible! We may waffle and become double minded by looking at our experience, but the truth of permanent grace is that it declares that God is pleased with us as objects of His love, hidden in Jesus. We begin to see the impact of grace as we receive it first for ourselves and the overflow will go to those around us. Grace teaches us to love ourselves, forgive ourselves, and rightly relate to ourselves, while denying ungodliness, in Titus 2:12 (KJV). Release the Spirit by abiding in truth and live in the effects of grace.

*“However, we possess this precious treasure [the divine Light of the Gospel] in [frail, human] vessels of earth, that the grandeur and exceeding greatness of the power may be shown to be from God and not from ourselves.”*  
*2 Corinthians 4:7 (AMP)*



## Chapter 9- SELAH

*"The secret of the mystery is: God is always greater. No matter how great we think Him to be, His love is always greater."*

*Brennan Manning*

In Driver's Education, the stop sign was a big event in my instructor's mind. He was emphatic that I stopped completely, and even waited a few moments. One of my explanations of the word stop was to "sneak through on purpose." My instructor didn't appreciate that. He was a man who went "by the book." In the kingdom of God, to "STOP" is just as important as "GO."

"SELAH" is the stop sign in the Psalms, to pause and reflect, to take a second look and gaze, are some of the meanings of the word, "SELAH." It is mentioned 71 times in the Psalms because David wants us to slow down and worship, so we don't miss God's presence and message. "SELAH" also has a practical meaning that involves our volition. In the New Testament it means "Verily, Verily" which signifies that we "truly agree" with what the promises are saying. We personally yield ourselves, regardless of the evidence, waiting with the confidence that God is true to what He says. "AMEN" is a sister word to "SELAH." This emphatic, "So be it," is the declaration that we are acting in agreement, as though God has already answered. Radical reliance is cultivated as we have confidence in the Author and Finisher of our faith.

The Psalmist practiced "SELAH" in his life, and he encountered God in all of life's journeys in Psalms 41:3,13 (AMP). Don't ignore the road sign. There are no short cuts; this is where accidents happen. Without stopping, there will be collateral damage. Take a breather and stop and look around, and let the Word and your surroundings sink in deep. Don't move so fast that you don't have time to stop and smell the roses.

*"God is a Spirit (a spiritual Being) and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth (reality)."*

*John 4:24 (AMP)*

***Action Point: Practice listening. Hear not only what is said, but what is not said. Cast away psychic noise. Journal.***

## SELAH The Chief Shepherd

*"God Himself works in our souls, in their deepest depths, taking increasing control as we are progressively willing to be prepared for His wonder."*

*Thomas Kelly*

Shepherds are unique people. They wander with their sheep, guarding them as they graze. A good shepherd begins to smell like his sheep, because he is always with them. Jesus is our chief Shepherd. He tenderly cares for our soul. He sees us, knows us, and ultimately understands us! He leads us by green pastures and still waters, and we find His divine rest. His desire is to lead, guide, and bring us to a safe haven where we can feast. The sheep are incapable of defending themselves and lack sense to get out of difficulties. Without the shepherd, they are lost. As we get to know the Great Shepherd we become followers that follow wherever He leads.

We often get lost in our natural “felt” needs rather than hearing the Shepherd's voice that speaks to our real heart need. He will shield us and give rest on every side. We will not lack a thing, in 1 Chronicles 22:18 (KJV). He will be our ultimate provision. He will open His hand and satisfy our deepest longings, and His provisions will define what we need. The sheep can relax in the presence of the shepherd, knowing that the shepherd's eyes are upon them. In His Presence we find “times refreshing” in Acts 3:19 (KJV). In time we learn to feed on His faithfulness, in Psalms 37:3(KJV).

As God shepherds us, we won't lack. What He has done is enough – He has satisfied all the debt and demands for our sins. He completes us as the spotless lamb. The world's provisions will always leave us hungry and desiring more, but “feeding on the lamb of God” will change our hearts forever. Hear the shepherd's voice, and let Him lead you into rest.

*"The Lord is my Shepherd [to feed, guide, and shield me], I shall not lack."  
Psalms 23:1 (AMP)*

## SELAH

### Green Pastures

*"We have to pray with our eyes on God, not on the difficulties."  
Oswald Chambers*

Green Pastures are God's intended destination for all believers. No matter what turbulence we are facing, God's is before us, behind us, beside us, above and beneath us. The dew of the valley refreshes our hearts, and the sweetness of the grass strengthens us. We may not be in a green pasture externally, but on the inside there is a restful place in God's presence. No doubt we have all experienced life trying to lead us out of these green pastures through fear and doubt. The suggest to us that we should look at the difficulty without God's perspective. As we face the Lord, we find peace that passes all understanding, and wisdom for the battle.

God promises to lead us by still waters. As the water flows quietly, we stoop to see our reflection, and as we look, we see a face beyond our face. This catches our attention, and we take a moment to breathe, seeing ourselves in the light of His countenance. In this moment of rest, we enter a green pasture, and still waters. We choose to feed on the life of God to nourish our soul. In these quiet places the whisper of God is heard like a shout.

Breathe, and raise your hands to your Saviour, and discover the promise of 1 Kings 5:4 (AMP) *"But now the Lord my God has given me rest on every side, so that there is neither adversary nor evil confronting me."* These secret places of His presence are the refuge for our soul. Let the world rush by you today. Just bask in His glorious presence.

*"He makes me lie down in [fresh, tender] green pastures; He leads me beside the still and restful waters."*

Psalms 23.2 (AMP)

## SELAH Glad Surrender

*“Time spent alone with God is not wasted. It changes us; it changes our surroundings; and every Christian who would live the life that counts, and who would have power for service must take time to pray.”*

*M.E. Andross*

The ultimate place of rest is in God's presence. The holy hush hovers and fills the empty place. Calvary's love has conquered it all, and everything is subdued in Him. Often we live as though our world has conquered us. If this is the case, we have a cruel master. In His presence, Christ's love passes knowledge, and perfect peace, which passes all understanding, ministers to us. Surrendering and yielding to Calvary's love, releases a personal rest that floods our body, soul and spirit.

Christ desires to invade our lives, and infuse us with His resurrection life. Our natural body, which is world-conscious, and our soul which is people-conscious, is renewed by the Spirit which is God-conscious. As we say "yes" to God, we are realigned and restored inside, then out. All things are made new. Discern God's presence and abide there. Be strengthened in the inner man, and the hidden man of the heart, of 1 Peter 3:4 (KJV), will govern you. Jesus is always leading us to Himself. For all of who He is, is taking care of all of who we are.

*“He refreshes and restores my life (Body, Soul and Spirit) He leads me in the paths of righteousness [uprightness and right standing with Him—not for my earning it, but] for His name's sake.”*

*Psalms 23:3 (AMP)*

## SELAH

### Not Alone

*“As mercy is God's goodness confronting human misery and guilt, so grace is his goodness directed toward human debt and demerit.”*

*A. W. Tozer (1897-1963)*

Dark times can cause feelings of loneliness and indifference. The echo of the heart of “no one understands or cares” can be deafening. These feelings can be so real, but Jesus went through all the feelings of our infirmities, and He didn't run away. He is right beside you!

Often we seek natural comfort and understanding in these dark times, but Jesus loves like no one else can. His embrace comforts and strengthens to the very depths of our being. No one has suffered like Jesus. We all take comfort and seek ease to relieve our pains, but Christ endured the cross for us! Often after our mountaintop experience we are led right into the valley. But the sweetest grass can be in the valley, and what is learned in the valley will equip us for the high places. Jesus will meet us right where we need Him the most.

The rod and staff of Psalms 23 (KJV), keep us in a place where we are directed in our eternal purpose, and learn the spiritual lesson Christ is teaching. In time, we understand that our decisions in time affect how we reign with Him in eternity! As our Heavenly Father, He chastens us like an earthly father, and keeps us walking circumspectly. Take comfort today, that your pain and trial is not in vain, but you are being made a new creation and a display for all of heaven.

*“Yes, though I walk through the [deep, sunless] valley of the shadow of death, I will fear or dread no evil, for You are with me, Your rod [to protect] and Your staff [to guide], they comfort me.”*

*Psalms 23:4 (AMP)*

## SELAH

### Fresh Oil

*“Grace is an energy; not a mere sentiment; not a mere thought of the Almighty; not even a word of the Almighty. It is as real an energy as the energy of electricity. It is a divine energy; it is the energy of the divine affection rolling in plenteousness toward the shores of human need.”*

*Benjamin Jowett (1817-1893)*

Oil had many uses in the Bible. It was used in cooking, or in purifying and bringing comfort to a wound. In Isaiah 21:5 (KJV), anointing the shields for battle was instrumental in victory for quenching fiery arrows. Often a king would be anointed, receiving his charge. Unique oils have a beautiful fragrance, and can be used in homes to address unwanted smells. Oil was used in burial, in embalming a corpse, as a sign of honor and dignity.

Oil was a symbol of power from above; being set apart in the Holy Spirit's ministry. Our life has a fragrance, the apostle Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 2:14-16 (KJV), *“But thanks be to God, Who in Christ always leads us in triumph [as trophies of Christ's victory] and through us spreads and makes evident the fragrance of the knowledge of God everywhere, For we are the sweet fragrance of Christ [which exhales] unto God, [discernible alike] among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing: To the latter it is an aroma [wafted] from death to death [a fatal odor, the smell of doom]; to the former it is an aroma from life to life [a vital fragrance, living and fresh]. And who is qualified (fit and sufficient) for these things? [Who is able for such a ministry?]”*

God promises fresh oil to nourish the soul, through the personal ministry of the Holy Spirit. We need fresh oil everyday; otherwise, life's pressures can dry out, and wrinkle the soul. Regeneration and renewal come as we are touched by the Master, and the oil saturates deep to renew our mind.

Jesus often would spend time with His Father in prayer. He often would move away from "the crowds" and refresh His heart and receive fresh oil, a fresh word and anointing from His Father. Without fresh oil, we become like a desert, dry and parched, living on the words and actions of yesterday. Take the time and take care of your heart; get alone with God, and He will pour out His oil, and anoint your head with a fresh mission and vision.

*“You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my [brimming] cup runs over.”*

*Psalms 23:5 (AMP)*

## SELAH Here I Am

*“A man must completely despair of himself in order to become fit to obtain the grace of Christ.”*

*Martin Luther (1483-1546)*

There is no question that the tools God uses to accomplish His purpose and program hurt. In this grace process, Christ adds supernatural life and ability to ours. If we are to be conformed to the likeness of Jesus Christ, we will experience tension, for it takes tension to develop freshness and character.

I found a good illustration recently that proves this point. *“In the northeastern United States, codfish are a big commercial business. There’s a market for eastern cod all over our country, especially in sections farthest removed from the northeast coastline. But the public demand posed a problem to the shippers. At first they froze the cod, then shipped them, but the freeze took away much of the flavor. So they experimented with shipping them alive, in tanks of seawater, but that proved even worse. Not only was it more expensive, the cod still lost its flavor, and in addition, became soft and mushy. The texture was seriously affected. Finally, they tried placing the codfish in the tank of water along with their natural enemy—the catfish. From the time the cod left the East Coast until it arrived at its destination, those ornery catfish chased the cod all over the tank. When the cod arrived at the market, they were as fresh as when they were first caught. There was no loss of flavor nor was the texture affected.”*

Without catfish, we become flabby. Tension gives us spiritual muscle and keeps us spiritually fit. Can you name some catfish swimming in your tank? Maybe you live with one of them. Or it’s somebody at work whose irritating presence drives you to your knees several times a week. They are there to keep all the cod from getting soft, mushy and tasteless. God’s ways are past finding out, and His ways are perfect. We are not called to figure God out, but to trust Him and learn of Him. Let God “season you” in whatever situation you’re in today, He is equipping you for the blessing of ministry to come. “He will perfect that which concerns me,” Psalms 138:8 (KJV).

Often we try to pursue the Lord in our own ideas, when ultimately He is trying to lay hold on us. Stop struggling in all of your pursuits and say, “Lord here I am.” Wait there, let Him take hold of you - body, soul, and spirit.

*“Surely or only goodness, mercy, and unfailing love shall follow me all the days of my life through the length of my days the house of the Lord [and His presence] shall be my dwelling place.”*

*Psalms 23:6 (AMP)*

## *Conclusion*

*My prayer is that God caused you to discover His rest. Delight and guard that sacred hiding place. Come often, and be refreshed in His presence. As you minister to you Saviour, and take care of His bidding, He will more than take care of you.*