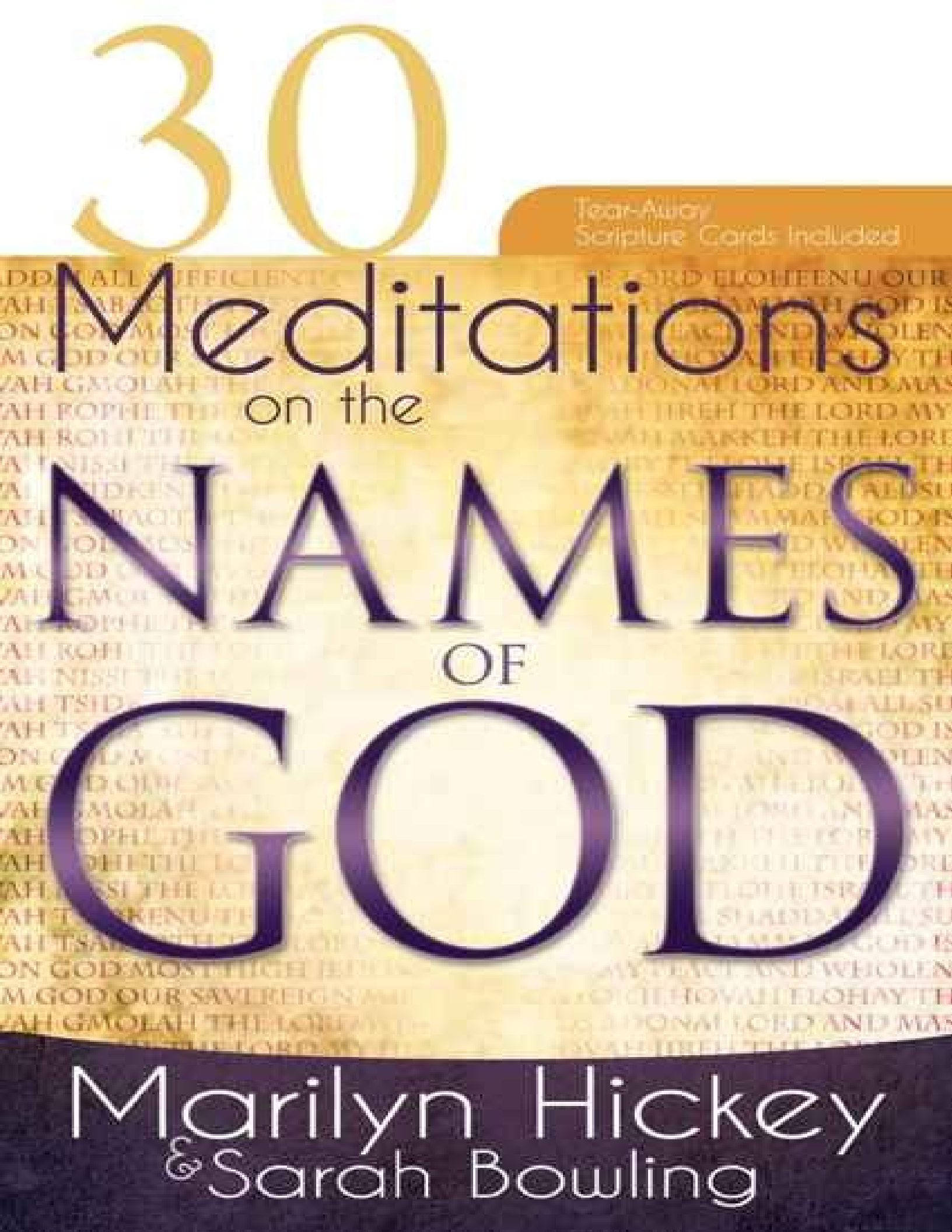

30
Tear-Away
Scripture Cards Included
Meditations
on the
NAMES
OF
GOD
Marilyn Hickey
& Sarah Bowling

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30 Meditations on the NAMES OF GOD

Marilyn Hickey
& Sarah Bowling

WHITAKER
HOUSE

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30 Meditations on the Names of God

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FOREWORD

In the twenty-first century, meditation has become a lost spiritual discipline.

During the time of Christ, some rabbinic schools required students to memorize the entire Torah, or at least the Pentateuch. In the Middle Ages, individuals memorized the entire book of Psalms. Jesus overcame temptation through memorized Scripture. The apostles quoted Scripture in their sermons and in their writings.

Today, many followers of Christ have electronic versions of the Bible loaded onto their phones, their iPads, and their computers, as well as dust-covered physical Bibles, stacked on bookshelves; but few followers of Christ systematically meditate upon the Word of God.

Marilyn Hickey has personally inspired me to meditate on the Word of God. I know her teachings will inspire you, too.

—Dr. Darryl Wootton
Lead Pastor, First Assembly of God
Bartlesville, Oklahoma

INTRODUCTION

MEDITATING: THE #1 KEY TO SUCCESS

Hide-and-seek was a fun game. I can hear the refrain: "Ready or not, here I come!" One child was "it," and he would cover his eyes on home base as all the other children ran and hid. The object was for those who were hiding to get "home" before they were found.

It was great entertainment, and amusing, but there's a "hiding" that is essential to our walk as Christians that I want to present here.

I'm referring to hiding the Word in our hearts, and the "who, what, when, where, and how" of doing this. The Bible says, *"Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You!"* (Psalm 119:11). When we hide the Word in our hearts, it not only keeps us from sin, as the psalmist said, but it also will bring success.

Most promises in the Bible relate to specific actions:

> "Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise: "that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth." (Ephesians 6:2–3)

The command (action) involves honoring your parents, and it is accompanied by a specific promise: that you may be well and *"live long on the earth."*

God gave a command to Joshua. It was given because of God's promise to lead Israel into the Promised Land. After forty years in the wilderness, Joshua was chosen to fulfill the hundreds-of-years-old pledge. In Joshua 1:8, he received a command to meditate. The instruction was for *all people*, as you'll see from reading further Scriptures on meditation, and it carries a promise that goes with everything in your life. This Scripture enlightens us about hiding the Word. It says,

> This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. (Joshua 1:8)

God said, in effect, "If you meditate on My Word, day and night, and if you speak that Word and obey it, everything in your life will be prosperous and successful!"

I've discovered that God has a lot to say about meditating, and I've become excited about what meditating on His Word accomplishes. It is important that you understand what meditation is and what it will do for you. Meditating on God's Word changes lives—in fact, it *is* life.

I've heard many testimonies regarding the effects of medication. If you know me, I'm sure most of you know Sarah Bowling. She's a wife, a mother, a teacher of the Word, a pastor, and my television cohost on *Today with Marilyn and Sarah*. And, if you did not know, she is my daughter. She ministers alongside Reece Bowling, her husband, who is senior pastor of Orchard Road Christian Center in Greenwood, Colorado. The crux of her heart's cry is a ministry she founded, called Saving Moses, which concentrates on saving young children, from newborns to the age of five.

Sarah's life has been strongly affected by meditation. This is what she says:

The most powerful experience I've had meditating on the Bible was when I was in my early twenties. I was spending the summer doing missions work in Hong Kong. At the time, I was a schoolteacher and had made some bad decisions in my personal life during the preceding school year. During my time there, I was not only involved in missions work but I also was trying to get past the dilemma created by those choices. Thankfully, I had supportive people around me and made great friendships.

Over the course of that summer, what helped my thinking the most was my experience with memorizing and meditating on Colossians 3. I found that the longer I memorized and meditated on those verses, the more healthy my mind and thoughts became. As I continued to progress through the chapter, it felt as though the verses I memorized were figuratively washing out all the garbage those bad decisions had deposited in my mind. Furthermore, it felt like those verses were not only cleaning my mind, but they also were replacing destructive mind-sets with more truth-oriented thoughts and convictions.

I've never forgotten that experience and the transforming power of meditating on the Bible. Subsequently, I've used the principles of meditating over the course of my life with equally powerful results and transformations.

I'm sure most of you are familiar with Rick Warren's book *The Purpose Driven Life*. Rick is the founder and senior pastor of Saddleback Church in Forest Lake, California. This is what he said in his book about meditation:

Meditation is "thinking about God"—His essence, His desires, His plans, His mercy, etc.—throughout each day. And the only way a Christian can do this is by *knowing* God—and the *only* way a Christian can *know* God is *through His*

Word. Meditation (similar to the process of "worrying"), which is only "focused thinking," is accomplished when one mulls over (contemplates, ponders) God's Word continually during the day.

Meditation allows God to share His secrets (revelations) with His children—to speak to His children in a close and personal way. To properly meditate requires a life of studying God's thoughts recorded in the Bible. It also means that a Christian should continuously review biblical truths when they are presented in sermons, radio broadcasts, Bible studies, etc."[1]

Meditation isn't always easy, and it's no small wonder the enemy has desperately tried to mask the topic of meditation on God's Word. He's brought in many counterfeits, such as transcendental meditation, and all kinds of distraction. Whenever you see the devil putting up a smokescreen, you can be sure he's counterfeiting something real. The devil never created anything. All he can do is falsify and imitate what already exists.

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1. Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 85.

1

The “Who” of Meditation

I mentioned earlier God’s promise for success in Joshua 1:8.

What is success? Let’s look at the Hebrew word for “prosperous”: tsalach.

It means:

1. to rush
2. to advance, prosper, make progress, succeed, be profitable
3. to make prosperous, bring to successful issue, cause to prosper
4. to show or experience prosperity, prosper

You see how success and prosperity go hand in hand? This Hebrew word has the correct signification. When I read “to advance,” I think of wading across a river or pushing forward toward a goal. Proverbs 13:19 says, “*A desire accomplished is sweet to the soul.*”

Another meaning of this word is “to fall upon.” Picture God’s riches falling upon you. Also hidden in this good word is the meaning “to finish well.” God’s Word has happy endings.

Lastly, it can be translated as “promote.” The Hebrew connotation means it brings promotion.

If you so desired, you could place meditate before each meaning and make an equation straight across the line. Do you want to prosper as a wife, a husband, a mother, an employer, an employee, a friend, a sweetheart, a neighbor, a minister, or as a Christian? Meditation on God’s Word is the unusual key that unlocks all of His success. It is the solution, and we need to know what it is and how to do it.

Many will say that this passage was only written for Joshua. They may say, “Well, God gave Joshua success because he had to take the Promised Land.” But I want to tell you that God did more than tell us to take the Promised Land—He told us to take the world for Jesus.

Meditation can dramatically change your life. In this passage, God is talking about a “blessed man.” He says: Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night.

He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper. (Psalm 1:1–3) If you meditate on the Word day and night, you'll implement the key element of being blessed, prosperous, and successful in every area of your life.

"Oh," you say, "there's that ugly word *meditate*." I think some Christians have this word confused with *medicate*. I think they associate it with a task that is time-consuming and difficult. However, meditation does not need to be drudgery. Rather, I have discovered that it adds a *refreshing* quality to my study of God's Word. It is my desire for you to see transformation take place when you begin applying the principles of meditation to your own life. As Rick Warren suggested, if you know how to worry, you already know how to meditate!

In the passage above, we run into the same idea found in Joshua 1:8. *"Blessed is the man…."* The man who meditated on the Word will be prosperous and successful in all that he does. Shall we embrace the truth of meditating? Or shall we simply stand aside and, with words and acts, watch other Christians meditate? We are too busy, too old, or too "out of it" to be bothered.

However, you see, Psalm 1 whets every believer's appetite for meditation. It states, *"Blessed is the man who…meditates"* (Psalm 1:1–2). The word *blessedness* is not found in the Hebrew text, because there is no such thing as a singular blessing, only plural blessings. Psalm 1 says that meditating will give you vitality *"like a tree"* (Psalm 1:3). It will give you security, for you will be *"planted"* (verse 3). Your capacity will be unlimited because His sources are *"the rivers* [plural] *of water"* (verse 3). You will be fertile, because meditating *"brings forth its fruit"* (verse 3). You will have seasons and perpetuate, because your *"leaf…shall not wither"* (verse 3). What prosperity! Everything you do *"shall prosper"* (verse 3).

Can you look into the mirror of these words and see yourself?

Because of the blessings, successes, and revelations I've received, I've condensed hours of study, practical experience, and character studies on meditation, which I believe will compel you to meditate on His Word—letting it dominate and change your life for the better. I pray the Lord will throw open the shutters of your spiritual understanding so that you may receive all the blessings He has for you in the fullness of His Word.

Let this truth be gladly received in your mind and your will. Embrace this truth. There's only one way to go—forward!

2

The "What" of Meditation

"This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success."
—Joshua 1:8

M*editate*—a word abused, misused, and charged by Christians as an unscriptural principle. Yet God spoke to Joshua, saying that if he would not allow His Word to depart out of his mouth, but instead meditate on it day and night, observing to do it, He would make everything Joshua put his hands to prosper and be successful. It's a simple thing for us to rationalize and simply pass off the strong admonition given to Joshua. It's easy to insist that the command was for Joshua only. After all, he had a big Promised Land to conquer. However, lest we speak too lightly of such words, Jesus told us to conquer a gigantic world with His Word. If meditation on the Word conquered Canaan, a land of giants, as well as walled cities, and brought forth milk and honey, could it conquer our giants, bring down the walls of our opposition, and pour forth milk and honey into our daily lives? Could we, too, conquer a world of Canaanites, as Joshua did?

What is meditation? It is to chew, to mutter, to memorize, visualize, and personalize the Word of God. Meditation presents a zealous promise that is tremendous in scope.

Genesis 24:63 is the first reference to meditation recorded in the Bible: *"And Isaac went out to meditate in the field in the evening; and he lifted his eyes and looked, and there, the camels were coming."*

It was the first time Isaac laid eyes on his beloved Rebekah, and it was love at first sight. And it happened as he was meditating.

What can we glean from this initial reference? It says, Isaac *"lifted his eyes."* I've found lifting your eyes will help you to see Jesus in your circumstances. When Abraham *"lifted his eyes,"* he received a divine visitation. He also *"lifted his eyes"* (Genesis 22:13) when Isaac was delivered from being sacrificed on Mount Moriah.

God's promises were incubated with Abram (who later became Abraham). He spoke to Abram the first time and told him to do three things:

1. Leave the city of Ur.
2. Don't take relatives.
3. Go to the Promised Land.

God told Abram he would receive specific blessings for obeying. When he fully obeyed these three commands, he received the blessings (promises) the Lord set forth. Even though he didn't see them all come about in his lifetime, he received them nonetheless.

As we know, Abraham wanted Isaac to have a righteous wife. He didn't want him to marry any Canaanite women. We'll see why later. So, he called for his servant, who took a vow to find the right woman. He found Rebekah and brought her to meet Isaac.

As we read, the Bible tells us that Isaac was meditating in the field. Now this happened at night, mind you, when one wouldn't anticipate anyone coming to his home. Isaac lifted his eyes. What caused him to do this? It was dark, and he probably couldn't see very well. Don't you think his meditation had something to do with it?

The Hebrew word used here for *meditation* is used only once in the Bible: *suwach*. It means "to muse," which is to ponder, consider, or mull over. So here we have Isaac, at the end of the day, in the field by himself. What a lonely portrait. However, he was most likely ruminating on the promises God gave to his father, Abraham. God's pledge to him was,

> I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed. (Genesis 12:2–3)

These promises included assurances of another land, another nation, and a spiritual blessing for generations to come. They were great and mighty promises, and they required that Isaac marry the right woman. No doubt, it weighed heavy on his shoulders as he deliberated. That evening, his answer came; God solved his dilemma.

How is that going to help you? Lift up your eyes. The Lord knows the perfect one for you. You don't. Maybe you're already married, and you don't need a mate. Lift up your eyes and thank God for the mate you have. But know that as you meditate on His promises, He will bring them to pass. I love how God works.

To meditate gives forth the flavorful meaning of being separated, as the dross is

separated from the silver. So, must a man separate himself from the crowd in order to help the crowd? Isn't that goofy? Proverbs 25:4 says, *"Take away the dross from the silver, and there shall come forth a vessel for the finer"* (kjv).

Psalm 119:15 says, *"I will meditate on Your precepts, and contemplate Your ways."* It gives the idea of bowing down and musing. There is the idea of a pilgrimage in this word. Imagine, taking a trip into God's Word. Fantastic!

Lastly is the concept of Psalm 39:3, *"My heart was hot within me; while I was musing, the fire burned. Then I spoke with my tongue."* It infers the focusing of the rays of God's love and power on a man's heart, which starts a fire, before the tongue begins to speak. This sums up the process of taking the Word, speaking it, walking with it, and allowing it to guide you.

Bill Gothard has stated that meditating is: (1) to memorize, (2) to personalize, and (3) to spiritualize. How precise and true.

As you see, to meditate is to walk and talk. Plan on becoming a spiritual "walkie-talkie."

Scriptures on meditation say that if you meditate on the Word, keeping it in your mind, letting it go from there to your mouth, and acting on it, you will be successful spiritually, physically, mentally, and emotionally. As a parent, a spouse, a child, a cook, or a student—no matter what you do—you will be prosperous if you obey the command in Joshua 1:8. This is a Scripture key in the Bible that carries tremendous impact.

Three Components of Joshua 1:8

As we continue to look at what meditation is, we see three parts to Joshua 1:8.

Part one involves your mouth: *"This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth."*

The Message version reads, "And don't for a minute let this Book of The Revelation be out of mind."

You have to spend time thinking the Word first, which, of course, comes by reading. Please realize that as you memorize a Scripture, it is for you. Visualize it in your mind's eye. Part two involves the meditation itself: "Y*ou shall meditate in it day and night*." I mentioned to mutter earlier. The Hebrew word meditate translates as "to moan, growl, utter, muse, mutter, meditate, devise, plot, and speak." Remember that meditation involves "talking" God's Word, or muttering. By doing this, you will fulfill the first part of this command, and then you will not let it depart from your mouth. You may say, "Wait a minute. You're telling me to

speak, but also that it won't depart from my mouth." Yes, when you mutter the word and speak it to yourself, it will become ingrained in your brain, rooted in your mind. It won't depart from you, I promise.

Part three brings in the action: "*…that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it*." Meditation not only involves thinking and talking, but it also involves walking. We are to be doers of God's Word, not hearers only. (See James 1:22.)

These three elements of meditation bring forth the promise, "*…then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success*."

Many people say, "If only there was something that I could do about this terrible situation." What can you do? Meditate on the Word.

God did not say, "If you'll do this, I'll make your way prosperous." He said, in effect, "If you'll meditate, you will make your way prosperous." That is a big difference. You alone are the deciding factor. God will never force you to meditate on His Word; neither will He force prosperity on you. Meditation on God's Word is a consuming effort, not merely a pastime.

The word *meditate* in the above Scripture means to speak with oneself in a low voice, or to think aloud on the Word of God. This keeps the mind saturated with God's truth so that it can give a proper answer.

Joshua Affected Three Ways

There's something interesting about the first chapter of the book of Joshua. There are three separate places in the chapter where God told Joshua to be strong and courageous.

The first instance is in Joshua 1:6:

Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them.

This command appears in two other places:

> Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. (verse 7)
>
> Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go. (verse 9)

That bothered me at first. I wondered, Why did God tell Joshua to be strong and courageous three times in the same chapter that He tells Joshua to meditate on the

Word? Then I looked carefully at those verses, and I realized that God wanted Joshua to be strong and courageous in three different ways:

1. In his body
2. In his spirit
3. In his soul (his mind, emotions, and will)

First, let's see how God wanted to strengthen Joshua physically. When the Lord told him to capture the Promised Land for his people, Joshua was more than eighty years old. He was going to need supernatural strength to take that land. And he received strength in his body; and you will, too.

Then, in Joshua 1:7, the Lord spoke about Joshua's spirit. He said, "Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left." Just stay with it, and receive it into your spirit. Joshua received strength and courage in his spirit. This Scripture pertains to all of us.

Finally, God spoke to Joshua about having strength and courage in his soul when he said, "Do not be afraid, nor be dismayed" (Joshua 1:9). God wanted to bind Joshua with the wonderful strength provided through His Word in every area of his life. Joshua received strength through meditation, and so can you.

A Foundation

Since God told Joshua that meditation on the Word would make him prosperous and successful, I decided to study Joshua's life, and I saw that the "proof of the pudding is in the eating." After examining his life, I discovered that meditation had a definite impact on all that Joshua did. Before we look at how this occurred, I want you to understand what is involved.

Changes in Your Life

Are there areas in your life that need changed or a refreshed? The Bible says if you meditate on the Word of God day and night, you'll be prosperous and successful in every area of your life. The Word profited my very first meditation partner in the area of her personality, because she considered the Word, instead of her problems. It was tremendous to see the transformation that occurred in her life. I want to challenge you to meditate on the Word of God and see how it will change your life, too. Meditation isn't just for Joshua, and it isn't just for pastors—it's for you, too!

Three Basic Steps

The three basic steps of meditation are:

1. Memorize
2. Personalize
3. Visualize

Memorize

If you're like most people, you may get uptight as soon as you hear the word *memorize*. Some people say, "I'm beyond forty years old; I can't memorize anymore." Don't say that. The Bible says you have the mind of Christ. (See 1 Corinthians 2:16.) In John 14:26, Jesus promised, "*But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.*" This is very important: How can the Holy Spirit bring something to your remembrance if there is nothing to remember? You are to meditate God's Word so that He can make you remember.

Personalize

As you meditate, don't just say, "This is God's Word to all Christians." You should say, "This is God's Word for *me*!" Some people read the Bible as though it's for everybody but them. God isn't a respecter of persons. (See Acts 10:34 kjv.) That means that He is not more interested in other people. His promises are for you.

Visualize

You must see God's Word as finished. See His Word happening in your life, in spite of what your circumstances may look like. I call visualization "faith sight." Visualization is found in the life of Abraham:

> By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called," concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense. (Hebrews 11:17–19)

When Abraham was on his way to offer Isaac to the Lord as a sacrifice of consecration, he told his servants, "*Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and* ***we will come back to you***" (Genesis 22:5). What was Abraham saying? He was visualizing God's promise to bless his seed—Isaac, his son. He was seeing God's Word as complete truth, and saying, in effect, "Even if I do sacrifice Isaac and God has to resurrect him from the ashes, He has made me a promise, and He will keep it." Abraham was seeing God's Word as complete, through visualization, which caused him to receive Isaac "in a figure."

When you meditate on the Word, begin saying what God says; accept His Word as a reality in your life; visualize it happening.

Have you ever daydreamed? Everybody has. You can have a spiritual dream by visualizing God's Word as if it were already accomplished in your life. This is the final step involved in the threefold process of meditation: first, you memorize; second, you personalize; and third, you visualize the results.

Joshua's Life of Meditation

Joshua's life was a testimony of the power of meditation and the blessings that it brings. Even in his mistakes, he was still prosperous and successful.

One of his mistakes was allowing himself to be deceived by some Gibeonite people. Gibeonites came from the Hivite tribe. *Hivite* means "snake" or "serpent." The Gibeonites were living in the land where the children of Israel were. It's easy to see why Hivite means "snake," because these people were crafty.

> But when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai, they worked craftily, and went and pretended to be ambassadors. And they took old sacks on their donkeys, old wineskins torn and mended, old and patched sandals on their feet, and old garments on themselves; and all the bread of their provision was dry and moldy. And they went to Joshua, to the camp at Gilgal, and said to him and to the men of Israel, "We have come from a far country; now therefore, make a covenant with us." (Joshua 9:3–6)

God distinctly warned Joshua not to make a covenant with the Gibeonites; but when they came to him, he didn't realize who they were, and he entered into a covenant with them.

> *They said to Joshua, "We are your servants." And Joshua said to them, "Who are you, and where do you come from?" So they said to him: "From a very far country your servants have come, because of the name of the Lord your God; for we have heard of His fame, and all that He did in Egypt, and all that He did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan; to Sihon king of Heshbon, and Og king of Bashan, who was at Ashtaroth."* (Joshua 9:8–10)

The Gibeonites were intimidated by the Israelites, having heard about their victories in past battles. They wanted to be assured of favor and protection, which they would be guaranteed through a covenant.

Joshua made a covenant with them, and three days later, he received news that made him angry:

> And it happened at the end of three days, after they had made a covenant with them, that they heard that they were their neighbors who dwelt near them. (Joshua 9:16)

Now what would Joshua do? This did not look like a prosperous situation. The people said, *"We have sworn to them by the Lord God of Israel; now therefore, we may not touch them"* (Joshua 9:19). The Lord knew Joshua was a man of the Word. He had caused the Gibeonites to be their servants, and their descendants were a group of people called the Nethinims, meaning "devoted men of God."

After the children of Israel made a league with the Gibeonites, a king of Jerusalem heard about the victories that the Lord had given the Israelites. He also heard that the Israelites had covenanted with the Gibeonites, and, because Gibeon was a great city, he felt threatened. He sent armies to make war against Gibeon, but the men of camp called on Joshua:

> Do not forsake your servants; come up to us quickly, save us and help us, for all the kings of the Amorites who dwell in the mountains have gathered together against us. (Joshua 10:6)

What happened? God protected the Israelites and their servants. First, He sent hail that only hit the attacking army. Then, He sent confusion and ambush, which caused them to fight against each other. And something else happened that made this day unique to its kind:

> Then Joshua spoke to the Lord…and he said in the sight of Israel: "Sun, stand still over Gibeon; and moon, in the Valley of Aijalon." So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, till the people had revenge upon their enemies. (Joshua 10:12–13)

When Joshua spoke, even the sun and the moon stood still. Here is a man who kept God's powerful Word in his mouth all the time. Joshua meditated on the Word and moved in its authority.

Do you need the power and strength of God in your life? Do you want to be prosperous? The key is meditation.

Then I wondered, *What about Joshua's financial statement? He was successful physically, because he led the Israelites to take the Promised Land, and it only took them six-and-a-half years to take it. Was Joshua financially successful?*

Many people imagine the children of Israel to be dressed in rags, owning next to nothing, as they wandered through the land. That is not so. When the Israelites cast lots to determine where people would settle, according to their tribes, Joshua did not choose some little old tent. No. He asked for the city Timnath Serah (see

Joshua 19:50), which means "the city of the sun." Joshua owned a whole mountain with a city on top of it. Some would say, "I'm going to be humble; just give me a little nest in the west." Joshua received a double portion of wealth. Why? Because his priority was the Word of God.

If you are in the ministry, there are those who may wonder about your family. Once, when I was teaching in a church, a big, tall, Church-of-God minister stood up, turned to me and said, "I'd like to ask you, what does your husband think about you traveling all over the countryside?" I thought, *Oh, God, give me a good answer.* Then I asked him, "Which husband?" Everybody laughed, and that night, he came forward after the service and received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. People always wonder about your family when you're in the ministry, and I wondered the same thing about Joshua's family. The Lord showed me the answer, too. It's in Joshua 24:15–16:

> [Joshua said,] *"But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." So the people answered and said: "Far be it from us that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods."*

Joshua and his family served the Lord. And what happened? They inspired all of the people of Israel to serve the Lord, too. A family that diligently seeks after God will bring Him glory, and meditating on God's Word will bring you total success in your family life.

Sometimes in my own life, when situations have appeared impossible, I've reminded the Lord, "You said that if I meditated on Your Word day and night, my way would be prosperous and successful. That includes my children."

Meanings of ***Meditate***

The word *meditate* is translated from three Hebrew words and two Greek words. One of the Hebrew words, *hagah,* found in both Joshua 1:8 and Psalm 1:2, means "to speak to one's self in a low voice," "to think out loud the Word of God," and "to keep the mind saturated with truth for a proper answer." *Meditate* can also mean "to separate the dross from the silver," as used in Proverbs 25:4: *"Take away the dross from the silver, and there shall come forth a vessel for the finer."*

Why separate the dross from the silver? To purify it. Meditation brings forth a cleansing; it is the washing of the water of the Word. How does a silversmith know that the silver is pure when he separates it from the dross? Because he can see his image reflected in it. Meditating on the Word of God will cleanse and purify you, so that His image will be reflected in all that you do. Your personality will be more like His than ever before, and you will be prosperous and successful

in all that you do. You'll be *"a vessel for the finer."*

There's a beautiful picture formed by the Hebrew word *hagah*. The first letter, as it's written in Hebrew, is He, which stands for grace. The second is Gimel, which means "camel," and the third is He again. The depiction we see is grace, a camel to travel, and another level of grace. You may say that God gives us the means (the camel) to travel from grace to grace. Remember Genesis 24:63, when Isaac was meditating in the field in the evening? He lifted his eyes and, behold, camels were coming.

Just as Isaac bowed in reverence to the Lord, you, too, can literally bow in holy reverence to Him as you meditate; this is a precious practice. If you are meditating in a place where bowing is impossible, I believe you can "bow in your spirit" unto Him. It is a state of giving Him total control, when your mind, spirit, and body are subject to the Lord.

In this verse of Scripture, Isaac bowed and mused over God's Word. As I said earlier, when he lifted his eyes, camels approached, bringing him his bride. How wonderful it must have been: The first time Rebekah ever saw her husband, he was meditating on the Word of God.

Also recall Psalm 39:3, which offers another concept of meditation: *"My heart was hot within me; while I was musing, the fire burned. Then I spoke with my tongue."* The word *muse* means to meditate, and it focuses on God's love and power, starting a fire in a man's heart, causing him to speak. Jeremiah once refused to speak the Word of God, but then he said, *"But His word was in my heart like a burning fire shut up in my bones; I was weary of holding it back, and I could not"* (Jeremiah 20:9).

In Luke 24:32, the disciples saw Jesus after His ascension, and they said, *"Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?"*

The Word of God will start a spiritual fire within you, and then it will cause you to utter words and articulate sounds with your voice. Meditate on the Word of God, let it come out as fire, burning the chaff out of your life.

Meditating is supremely the most important thing that you, as a Christian, can do.

3

The "When" of Meditation

Meditation carries the highest level of importance. The following Scripture provides a key for *when* we should meditate:

> My son, keep your father's command, and do not forsake the law of your mother. Bind them continually upon your heart; tie them around your neck. When you roam, they will lead you; when you sleep, they will keep you; and when you awake, they will speak with you. (Proverbs 6:20–22)

I memorize Scripture first thing in the morning, even before I brush my teeth. It's the best time, because my mind is clear and fresh. I recall my Scriptures early in the afternoon, because God's Word guides me. Then, the last thing I do before I go to sleep is say my Scriptures for the day aloud once again. You'll read more about this in chapter 5—the "How" section.

That final time I speak the Scripture, it saturates my very being. Solomon spoke these words to his people: "Let your heart therefore be loyal to the Lord our God, to walk in His statutes and keep His commandments, as at this day" (1 Kings 8:61). You say this takes discipline. You are so right. Isn't discipline worth it when it makes you prosperous and successful in all you do?

One night, a woman broke into our house when I was there alone. Actually, our toy poodle was with me, but that wasn't going to be of much help. However, God delivered me.

Several passages in the Bible talk about deliverance from evil by the blood of Jesus. (See Hebrews 2:14; Colossians 1:13; 2:15; 1 John 3:8; Revelation 12:11.) I had memorized this verse: "He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love" (Colossians 1:13). I spoke this Word and found that it kept me; and I was delivered, praise be to God.

There are days when Scripture memorization goes easily and every taste of His Word in my mouth is delicious. But then there are days when it's hard; it feels drab and discouraging. There are times of tremendous pressure on my time and energy, and there are times when my mind is fuzzy with exhaustion. There are also times when the enemy whispers, *What is this proving?* However, beyond all of this is, "the entrance of His Word gives light" (see Psalm 119:130)—a light I've never known before.

Job stored the Word, and it became gold in his heart:

> Receive, please, instruction from His mouth, and lay up His words in your heart. If you return to the Almighty, you will be built up; you will remove iniquity far from your tents. Then you will lay your gold in the dust, and the gold of Ophir among the stones of the brooks. (Job 22:22–24)

David said, *"My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips. When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches"* (Psalm 63:5–6). He found that meditating at night brought richness to his soul. His meditation brought him through tremendous trials.

I once spoke with a lovely pastor's wife in Rapid City, South Dakota, and she told me, "I have started an 'M&M Club' in our church; it means *Memorize* and *Meditate*." She said, "There are sixteen of us that meet once a week, and we have memory partners. We get together to encourage each other with revelations that we've received during the week." She shared a lot of things about meditation with me that God had revealed to me, too. She spoke of how the Word of God had literally transformed them.

Meditating takes the Word and makes it glow within you; it puts fire in your mouth. It will put lightness in your steps and brightness in your eyes. The saturating of your spirit in the Word will conquer old problems and make new victories a reality. I've yet to meet one person who was sorry they memorized and meditated on the Word of God. You won't be sorry either.

Key Moments

One time, I took a private plane to a seminar in Billings, Montana. We departed early in the morning and decided to return home late that night. That evening, the plane would not start. The pilot said, "Oh, it's the battery." Someone was sent to recharge it, but when the plane finally rolled down the runway, one of the women onboard said, "The wheel on my side is on fire."

I looked out the window on my side and confirmed that the wheel was indeed on fire, and I told the pilot.

"Oh," the pilot responded, "the wheels aren't on fire; the brakes are."

"Isn't that dangerous?"

"No," he said. "We've just recharged the battery, and we're going against the wind. We'll taxi around, and the fire will go out."

The pilot was calm, but I didn't feel very peaceful. Neither did the woman beside me. She said, "I think you should suggest that we stay in Billings tonight."

Trying to remain tactful, I said to the pilot, “Roger, do you think that it’s safe for us to leave Billings tonight?”

“Don’t you think that I know how to fly this plane?” he asked. “If I didn’t think this was safe, I wouldn’t be doing it.”

I told the woman next to me, “Virginia, you ask the next time.” Then, I said, “Let’s pray that, if God doesn’t want us to leave Billings tonight, He’ll cause the plane to be unable to take off.” We prayed.

I don’t know how far we were from Billings when the pilot lifted the plane’s wheels, but when he did, every light and electrical instrument in that plane went out. My only thought was, *The electricity took up the wheels, and we have no electricity to put them back down*. I’d never been in a plane that landed without wheels, and I really did not want to be in one. I was frightened.

The pilot asked, “Does anybody have a flashlight?”

I thought, *Who carries a flashlight around?* That’s not something that I normally carry during my travels. Nobody had one. The pilot could not see the dials, and with the radio dead, he could not call in. It was raining, so there was no depth or speed perception at all. Then I heard the pilot say, “We’d better prepare for a crash landing.”

At that moment, a thought struck me: *The Word will keep me*. The Lord brought to mind this precious Scripture:

> “No weapon formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue which rises against you in judgment You shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is from Me,” says the Lord. (Isaiah 54:17)

You will find that when you meditate on the Word of God, He will bring Scriptures to your mind at key moments in your life. Some Scriptures that I memorize will not return to me until ten weeks later, but I’ve discovered that the Lord will bring them back when I really need them. He gave me that Scripture on the plane when I surely needed it.

“Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom” (Psalm 51:6). Truth is the Word of God. I had put truth into my spirit, and God activated it in my life, making it wisdom. If there had been nothing there to “activate,” there wouldn’t have been any wisdom; but that night in the plane, God’s Word became wisdom and vibrant life to me.

I repeated the Scripture aloud. I said it again. What happened? The plane turned

around and we landed in Billings without a problem. I saw the Word of God work with power that night.

Do you want the Word of God to work tangibly in your life? Do you want it to make you prosperous in every area of your life? Meditation is your key. Unless you commit yourself to God's answers, you cannot expect His results. You'll find His answer to whatever you need by meditating upon His Word.

4

The "Where" of Meditation

One of the best things about the Bible is that it provides us with practical examples, and these examples are evidence that God's Word works. I want you to see the importance of meditation and where it has been used. As we've seen, Joshua 1:8 proclaims that the key to all prosperity and success is not to let the Word depart out of your mouth, but to meditate on it, day and night, doing what it says. In fact, the history of the children of Israel is enveloped in meditation.

We tend to associate certain people with Scripture, by saying, "It is their ministry to study the Word." God didn't say studying the Word was a priority only for those in the ministry. He desires His Word to be the center of *everyone's* life. Jesus emphasized this in His Word when He said, *"If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"* (John 8:31–32).

What does it mean to "*abide*" in the Word of God? It is meditation—memorizing, personalizing, and visualizing the Word of God. You never have to worry about whether the sun will rise in the morning or whether the moon will shine at night. Do you realize God's Word placed the sun and the moon where they are? It also keeps them there. Hebrews 1:3 says that God is *"upholding all things by the word of His power."* Continuing in the Word is very important; meditating on the Word of God is extremely important. If it is powerful enough to uphold the sun and the moon, as it did for Joshua, then it is powerful enough to take care of you.

When I first read the book of Ezra, my immediate thought was: *This is a marvelous book. Why has it taken me so long to get into something this commanding and mighty?* It demonstrates the power of the Word in the lives of individuals and nations, and it has the ability to change the entire world.

The story opens in a part of Israel's history that is critical. Before we can thoroughly understand it, however, we need to look at the events that preceded it. Joshua and his men took the Promised Land in only six-and-a-half years. Joshua was a man who meditated on the Word and didn't let it depart from his mouth. He was obedient.

The book of Judges follows Joshua and describes the early government of Israel. Then, the Bible gives the history of kings—both good and bad—and the prophets' ministry to the kings.

As we read, we see that Israel consisted of two separate kingdoms: the northern and the southern kingdoms. During this period, the Israelites began to lean increasingly on the repulsive idols of the heathen people in the land. God repeatedly warned the people of Israel about this danger, before He finally decided that enough was enough. He led King Nebuchadnezzar and the Assyrian nation in battle against the northern kingdom of Israel, and they were taken captive.

Several years later, the southern kingdom was attacked by the Babylonians, and they, too, were taken into captivity. All of Israel had been taken captive, even though, years before, the prophet Jeremiah had warned them what would happen if they did not repent.

God had used Jeremiah to tell the Jews about the horrendous penalties of idolatry. He used a group of people called the Rechabites as a visual aid in His message of warning. The Rechabites were descendants of a man named Jonadab, who had lived two hundred years prior. God gave Jonadab specific orders:

1. Don't bow down to idols
2. Don't plant vineyards
3. Be nomadic and do not buy land
4. Don't drink of the vine

Jonadab taught these rule to his children, his children's children, and so on. The Rechabites never owned land. For two hundred years, they wandered the northern kingdom with their sheep and goats and never drank wine or planted vineyards.

When Assyria attacked Israel's northern kingdom, the Rechabites weren't there. Since the area had dried up, they had taken their flocks and wandered into the southern kingdom. By doing so, they avoided the Assyrian captivity. The prophet Jeremiah warned the southern kingdom that they would taken captive by the Babylonians if they did not obey God's commands.

Jeremiah set pots on a table and filled them with wine. Then he invited all of the Rechabite leaders living in Judah to join him. "Have a drink," he told them. The Rechabites replied, "Jeremiah, you know we don't drink. God spoke to Jonadab two hundred years ago and told us not to drink. Since that day, we have never tasted of the vine." (See Jeremiah 35:5–6.)

God was using Jeremiah's demonstration to mercifully warn the people of Judah. He was saying, in effect, "Do you see that the Rechabites have obeyed My Word for two hundred years? They have never tasted of the vine, never planted

vineyards, and never bought land. Now, because they have obeyed the Word, it is going to profit them."

Did you know that the Word of God is always profitable? This is right in line with the message of Joshua 1:8—the Word brings good success.

The Rechabites weren't taken captive when King Nebuchadnezzar led the Babylonians into the southern kingdom. When Nebuchadnezzar invaded, he said, "Anybody who owns land goes into captivity. Anybody who doesn't own land can stay here." And the Rechabites stayed. What can we learn from the prophet Jeremiah's message? "It pays to do what the Word says."

The Israelites were captured, and so were the people of Judah. Many of them were slaves, but don't get the idea that all of them were groveling in the ground. There were those who held esteemed positions. Ezra held a high court position, as did Nehemiah. During this same time, Esther was a queen. Notice that these Israelites were devoted servants of the Lord. When you are obedient to God, He can take care of you no matter where you are. Later, when the time came to return to Israel, many of the Jews in Babylon were so wealthy, they chose not to return. We see this in the New Testament, when the apostle Peter preached to the church at Babylon, to the Jews who had never returned to Israel.

Meditation in Captivity

Before the Israelites were taken into captivity, Jeremiah prophesied that they would be captive for seventy years.

> "And this whole land shall be a desolation and an astonishment, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. Then it will come to pass, when seventy years are completed, that I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity," says the Lord; "and I will make it a perpetual desolation." (Jeremiah 25:11–12)

What were the Jews in Babylon thinking during all that time? For the most part, they had their minds fastened on the Word of God. They remembered the words of the prophet: In seventy years, we get to go back. Jeremiah's prophecy was a hope, a strength, and a comfort to all those who were in captivity. We, too, have a hope, a strength, and a comfort; we can fasten our hearts on what the glorious Word has said about Jesus' return. That is a sustaining hope; and we are to comfort one another with the hope of Jesus' return. We don't know the day or the hour, but Jesus is coming back. The New Testament says that this hope is purifying. (See 1 John 3:3.)

When your thoughts are fastened to the Word of God, you are involved in a form

of meditation, and the truth will both keep and sustain you.

In captivity, the children of Israel kept and obeyed God's Word to remain pure in their intent toward God. I'm sure that when the seventieth year arrived, many said, "What's going to happen? God said seventy years, and His Word cannot fail."

God had already started to prepare for the seventieth year, when His people would return to their Promised Land. I became excited when I saw how He had begun to prepare for this event one hundred fifty years earlier, through the prophet Isaiah:

> Who says of Cyrus, "He is My shepherd, and he shall perform all My pleasure, saying to Jerusalem, 'You shall be built,' and to the temple, 'Your foundation shall be laid.'" Thus says the Lord to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have held; to subdue nations before him and loose the armor of kings, to open before him the double doors, so that the gates will not be shut: "I will go before you and make the crooked places straight; I will break in pieces the gates of bronze and cut the bars of iron. I will give you the treasures of darkness and hidden riches of secret places, that you may know that I, the Lord, who call you by your name, am the God of Israel." (Isaiah 44:28–45:3)

In this prophecy, Isaiah prophesied about a man named Cyrus, a man chosen by God to set the Israelites free after their seventy-year captivity in Babylon. Before the kingdom of Babylon had ever been built, Isaiah prophesied in this passage that Cyrus would subdue that nation, which he did! Then Isaiah even described what Babylon would look like in a vision. Herodotus, supposedly the most credible historian of the Babylonian captivity, wrote that the city had two-leaved gates with bars of iron, as mentioned in the prophecy.

Why would God name Cyrus, long before his birth, and tell him that he would subdue the Babylonian kingdom? Why tell him that He would allow the temple to be rebuilt in Jerusalem? The answer is in this Scripture:

> …that you may know that I, the Lord, who call you by your name, am the God of Israel. For Jacob My servant's sake, and Israel My elect, I have even called you by your name; I have named you, though you have not known Me. (Isaiah 45:3–4)

God was saying, in effect, "Cyrus, I called you by name one hundred fifty years ago so that you would know that I ordained you to be the man who frees My people. You are going to free them after seventy years, according to what Jeremiah prophesied. Then you will let them rebuild Jerusalem and the temple."

Cyrus was a Persian, not a Jew. Why would he want the Jewish temple to be rebuilt? Josephus, a Jewish historian, claimed that somebody brought the book of Isaiah to Cyrus and said, "Your name is in this book."

Cyrus must have said, "Is it really? Let me see." Then, the person showed Cyrus the Scriptures and said, "The seventy years are over; you're supposed to let us return to Jerusalem and build the temple." According to Josephus, Cyrus was impressed, and he allowed the Israelites to be freed.

Josephus stated,

For he stirred up the mind of Cyrus, and made him write this throughout all Asia: "Thus saith Cyrus the king: Since God Almighty hath appointed me to be king of the habitable earth, I believe that he is that God which the nation of the Israelites worship; for indeed he foretold my name by the prophets, and that I should build him a house at Jerusalem, in the country of Judea."[2]

The Bible concurs.

> Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying, thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the Lord God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah. (Ezra 1:1–2)

What stirred Cyrus' heart? What motivated him to release the captive Israelites to return to Jerusalem? The Word of God moved Cyrus.

> Who is among you of all His people? May his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel. (verse 3)

Cyrus not only said, "Go back to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple"; he also said, "Any remaining Jews will pay money to help those who are going."

> King Cyrus also brought out the articles of the house of the Lord, which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from Jerusalem and put in the temple of his gods; and Cyrus king of Persia brought them out by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer, and counted them out to Sheshbazzar the prince of Judah. (Ezra 1:7–8)

King Cyrus gave the Jews all sorts of wealth to take back to Judah with them. I think God must have been saying, in effect, "Ha, ha, ha. Persia is going to pay the expenses of rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem." It was just like the Egyptians paying for the tabernacle when the Israelites brought their gold from Egypt during

their exodus.

Then, Ezra chapter 2 describes how all of the people prepared to go back to Judah. They divided the people by tribes, by priesthoods, and by cities, and if someone didn't know quite where they belonged, they went in a special lot, too. When they were ready to go, there were about 300,000 of them.

This was a tremendous trip. For one thing, they had to travel way up north in order to follow the Euphrates River down through Syria and into Jerusalem. It was a journey of around one thousand miles; it took them four months to complete. Nebuchadnezzar had taken captive 600,000 Jews, and this did not include the people taken captive by the Assyrians in the northern kingdom. Certainly, people died during those seventy years; but babies were born. Still, many Jews chose not to leave Babylon, unwilling to start from scratch all over again.

When the Jews arrived in Judah, they encountered many enemies, people who had settled into the area. They were the Ammonites, Edomites, Moabites, Egyptians, and mongrel Jews, who had intermarried with some of the Assyrians (this is how the Samaritan race began to emerge).

When the Jews arrived and found people living in their land, they were unhappy and felt threatened.

> Though fear had come upon them because of the people of those countries, they set the altar on its bases; and they offered burnt offerings on it to the Lord, both the morning and evening burnt offerings. (Ezra 3:3)

Notice the Jews' spiritual behavior after spending seventy years with their thoughts on the Word of God. The first thing they said was, "We need to build an altar, and God will protect us." I love that. When I read it, I thought, *They are seeking first the kingdom of God.*

These people fastened their minds to the word that came through the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah. As they travelled that arduous long distance, what had they been doing? Obeying and fulfilling the Word of God, which had stirred their hearts.

God stirred the heart of Cyrus, and He stirred the hearts of the Israelites—with His Word. Whenever the Word supports anything, you know the foundation is secure. The Israelites built an altar, demonstrating their trust in the Lord. They started building the foundation for the temple. After it was built, there were mixed reactions. The old men cried, "Oh, this isn't the way that it used to be. It won't be as gorgeous as Solomon's temple was." (See Ezra 3:12.) They remembered how things had been in the past. However, the young men shouted for joy. "We're

fulfilling the Word of God," they cried out. (See Ezra 3:13.)

When I read this, I was reminded of something I've seen in church. I've heard older people say similar things: "These days just aren't like the days when we tarried all night for the baptism of the Holy Spirit." "These people must not have what we received." That really bugs me, because the Bible says we don't receive anything through works, but only through faith. It is acting on the Word that brings anything from God. The older men were really saying, "This just isn't like the good old days." And the young men probably said, "Shut up. That's not faith; stop looking back."

It must have been an exciting adventure to be involved in the rebuilding of the temple. But then the enemy stepped in. After the temple's foundation was laid, the idolatrous people said, *"Let us build with you, for we seek your God as you do"* (Ezra 4:2). These were the mongrel Jews, along with the Ammonites, the Edomites, the Moabites, and the Egyptians, none of whom were supposed to take any part in the work of God. These people were not just saying that they wanted to help; they also wanted to bring in all of their idols, and that scared the Jews. No Jew wanted these idolaters to help. They thought, *We were sent to Babylon for seventy years because of idolatry. We don't want to go back.*

The Babylonian captivity did one thing in particular for the Jewish people. It cured them of idolatry forever, for they never involved themselves in it again. They told the people, *"You may do nothing with us to build a house for our God; but we alone will build to the Lord God of Israel, as King Cyrus the king of Persia has commanded us"* (Ezra 4:3).

The others were enraged, and the Bible says that they sat and wrote to the Persian king. The Persians tended to change kings like they changed clothes—there were three different rulers in the book of Ezra alone, and the time span wasn't long.

> In the days of Artaxerxes also, Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabel, and the rest of their companions wrote to Artaxerxes king of Persia; and the letter was written in Aramaic script, and translated into the Aramaic language. (Ezra 4:7)

They were saying, "Dear King Artaxerxes, do you know what the Jews are doing down here? They are rebuilding their temple. The next thing you know, they'll rebuild the walls. After that, it'll be a fortress; and before you know it, they'll rebel against you. Have you looked at the Jews' history? They're a rebellious people!"

The letter never mentioned King Cyrus' decree for the temple's rebuilding, and Artaxerxes didn't look for it. Instead, he wrote back, saying,

> Now give the command to make these men cease, that this city may not be built until the command is given by me. Take heed now that you do not fail to do this. Why should damage increase to the hurt of the kings? Now when the copy of King Artaxerxes' letter was read before Rehum, Shimshai the scribe, and their companions, they went up in haste to Jerusalem against the Jews, and by force of arms made them cease. (Ezra 4:21–23)

In other words, Artaxerxes said, "Stop those Jews right now. Don't let them build one more thing. Nothing."

When the Israelites received the letter, they were discouraged and said, "Well, what's the use?" And they stopped building the temple. They were not standing on the Word at the time, and when that happens, people tend to look only at the circumstances, and they get in to trouble. They could have responded by saying, "Dear Artaxerxes, look up Cyrus's decree. We have permission to rebuild the temple." Instead, they fell apart.

That is bad news. Here's the good news: Although you may delay God's plan, you'll never do away with it. God's Word *will be* fulfilled.

For fifteen years, the Israelites stayed in Judah and had a pity party. Pity, by the way, is faith's worst enemy. They said, in effect, "We came all this distance with our children, and we can't build the temple."

Was God's Word going to get the temple built? As I read this, I thought, *If God called Cyrus by his name one hundred fifty years before he was born, His Word would complete the rebuilding of the temple. These people didn't stop God's plan; they only delayed it. And that wouldn't have happened if they had been meditating on His Word.*

During that time, God raised up two men to complete the task of rebuilding of the temple. Their names were Haggai and Zechariah. The books of Haggai and Zechariah become easier to understand when you realize they were prophesying to the people about finishing the mission. Reading the prophetic books can confuse people because they don't know the timeline of events. That is why it is easier to understand the Bible by reading it chronologically rather than in the order they've been placed in the Old Testament.

The prophet Haggai was an older man who had seen Solomon's temple. He said, "You know God's Word told you to complete this temple." Haggai prophesied positive words and greatly stirred the peoples' hearts. Because Haggai was a

contemporary of the older people, they could not say, “Well, these kids just want to do their own thing.” They had to receive his prophecies. But look at God’s provision: Had He raised up only an older prophet, the young people would have written him off as an old man, dreaming dreams. But they couldn’t say that because God raised up another prophet, a younger man named Zechariah, who not only had prophecies, but who also had visions.

When Haggai and Zechariah prophesied together, the Word of God touched those people and stirred their hearts. They thought, *Why aren’t we building the temple, as God commanded?*

What happens when the Word of God stirs you? It triggers faith, and faith brings action. When you have faith in the Word, there will be movement, because faith produces works.

By the time the prophesying through Haggai and Zechariah took place, Persia had another king, and the Israelites wrote him a letter saying, “We have permission to rebuild the temple.” They explained,

> In the first year of Cyrus king of Babylon, King Cyrus issued a decree to build this house of God. Also, the gold and silver articles of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple that was in Jerusalem and carried into the temple of Babylon; those King Cyrus took from the temple of Babylon, and they were given to one named Sheshbazzar, whom he had made governor. (Ezra 5:13–14)

The letter said, “Dear King Darius, we’re here in Israel, and King Cyrus told us to build this temple. He even gave us money for it. We laid the foundation. Even the mongrel Jews, Egyptians, Ammonites, Moabites, and Edomites wanted to help build and bring in their idols, but we’re not supposed to let them help. So, they told us to stop building and wrote a letter to King Artaxerxes, making us look bad. He told us not to build, but we already had a decree from King Cyrus. Look it up, because we’re going to obey King Cyrus.”

Darius looked up the decree.

> Then King Darius issued a decree, and a search was made in the archives, where the treasures were stored in Babylon. And at Achmetha, in the palace that is in the province of Media, a scroll was found, and in it a record was written thus: in the first year of King Cyrus, King Cyrus issued a decree concerning the house of God at Jerusalem: “Let the house be rebuilt, the place where they offered sacrifices; and let the foundations of it be firmly laid.” (Ezra 6:1–3)

What happened when Darius finally found these instructions from King Cyrus? His heart was stirred. He wrote back and said,

> Let the work of this house of God alone; let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews build this house of God on its site. Moreover I issue a decree as to what you shall do for the elders of these Jews, for the building of this house of God: let the cost be paid at the king's expense from taxes on the region beyond the river; this is to be given immediately to these men, so that they are not hindered. And whatever they need; young bulls, rams, and lambs for the burnt offerings of the God of heaven, wheat, salt, wine, and oil, according to the request of the priests who are in Jerusalem; let it be given them day by day without fail, that they may offer sacrifices of sweet aroma to the God of heaven, and pray for the life of the king and his sons. (Ezra 6:7–10)

He was asking all the non-Jews to start giving the Jews food and animals for their burnt offerings, that they might offer sacrifices unto God. Then, he even asked the Israelites to pray for him and his children.

Also I issue a decree that whoever alters this edict, let a timber be pulled from his house and erected, and let him be hanged on it; and let his house be made a refuse heap because of this. (Ezra 6:11)

Darius directed his attention to the enemies of the Jews, saying, "The rest of you down there, you'd better stop giving them trouble. We'll hang you if you don't stop."

When you put faith in God and His Word, circumstances will change. Haggai and Zechariah caused the Israelites to have active faith in the Word, so their circumstances had to line up accordingly. God will even move people around, if necessary. In fact, I am often shocked at how God moves people around. For instance, look at how He dealt with the heart of a young man named Ezra:

> For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel. This is a copy of the letter that King Artaxerxes gave Ezra the priest, the scribe, expert in the words of the commandments of the Lord, and of His statutes to Israel. (Ezra 7:10–11)

Ezra was a priest, living in Babylon, who had never been in the temple; he had never made a sacrifice, and yet his first love was the law of the Lord. He must have thought, *If the Word isn't there, the people will return to idolatry.* Ezra prepared his heart to seek God through meditation, teaching, and obeying the Word of God. Then the Lord gave Ezra a burden for the hearts of the people who would worship there. He knew that the people had to be given the Word of God, or they

would not endure against their enemies.

I examined historical accounts, because it often helps to make biblical stories more clear. I don't consider history to be divine; it isn't the Word of God, but it can provide helpful insights into the Bible. Historians say that when Nebuchadnezzar seized Judah, he took copies of the law, the Psalms, the Proverbs, and other poetical books, and burned them. He didn't want God's Word to enter Babylon.

But you can't destroy the Word of God, can you? One hundred years ago, someone said, "In twenty years, there won't be a Bible." You can't listen to such ridiculous talk. God knows how to protect His Word. There will always be people predicting kooky things like that, but the Bible is a worldwide best seller.

Though Nebuchadnezzar attempted to destroy God's Word, someone smuggled a copy of the Hebrew Scriptures into Babylon—it must have been a large portion of the Old Testament. It would not have contained the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, Zechariah, or Malachi, of course, but it probably contained three-fourths of our current Old Testament. Historic accounts tell us what the wonderful priest Ezra did. He *memorized* all of it.

Ezra had a tremendous devotion to the Word of God. His name means "help." (Anybody who is as full of the Word of God as Ezra was will always be a help in any situation.) Ezra was the first scribe of the Bible. Scribes were the people who copied down God's Word. It is said that Ezra memorized the Scriptures, wrote them all down, and divided it into the Pentateuch, the historical and poetical books, the prophetical books, and so on. Ezra was the first one to categorize the Word of God; he was stirred and motivated by the Word, and he wanted the rest of the Israelites to be stirred and motivated by it, too.

He talked to the king and requested permission to return to Judah to bring God's Word to the Israelites. The king granted his consent; but that's not all he gave Ezra—he also gave him great wealth and gold to refurbish the temple. Ezra accepted these bountiful gifts, and he told the king, "There is no use in my returning to Jerusalem alone. The Word of God is in my heart, but I want to pour it into the hearts of the priests, so that they will pour it into the people's hearts."

Ezra made a call for the Jews to go back to Judah with him, and around five thousand made the journey. But among them were no priests. This disturbed Ezra. He wanted successors who would take hold of the Word. He told the people to rouse the priests, and, finally, about forty-five priests answered the call. Then Ezra said, "We will also need protection," and he called the people to fast and pray.

Isaiah 58, one of the most well-known fasting chapters in the Bible, says that fasting brings a reward, *"The glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard"* (Isaiah 58:8). Notice that it says that the glory of the Lord will be your *rear* guard; it protects the back of you. Ephesians chapter 6 tells Christians how to put on the armor of the Lord, a protection for the front of the body. But fasting brings protection from sneak attacks by covering the back. I believe strongly in regular weekly fasting; and I think Christians can take a lesson from Ezra's steadfast faithfulness.

Prayer Meditation

Meanwhile, Haggai and Zechariah were prophesying, and the people began to turn to the Word of God. While they were building the temple, they sang Psalm 136:1–3 as they worked:

> Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever. Oh, give thanks to the God of gods! For His mercy endures forever. Oh, give thanks to the Lord of lords! For His mercy endures forever. (Psalm 136:1–3)

The rest of Psalm 136 rehearses what God had done for the Israelites. They were singing that song as a way of saying, "God, You helped us then, and You are helping us now." All the time they were building, the song went on, reminding them that God performed His Word in the past, and He was performing it in the present.

Again, here is prayer that says:

To Him who laid out the earth above the waters, for His mercy endures forever; to Him who made great lights, for His mercy endures forever; the sun to rule by day, for His mercy endures forever; the moon and stars to rule by night, for His mercy endures forever. To Him who struck Egypt in their firstborn, for His mercy endures forever; and brought out Israel from among them, for His mercy endures forever; with a strong hand, and with an outstretched arm, for His mercy endures forever; to Him who divided the Red Sea in two, for His mercy endures forever. (Psalm 136:6–13)

That is an effective prayer. It's scriptural to pray the way the Israelites did. This type of prayer is another form of meditation.

Meditating on What You Hear

When Ezra arrived in Judah with the Jews who traveled with him, he delivered treasures to the house of God. Then he gathered the people and started reading the Word to them. He made everybody stand while he read, and he continued for three hours. Do you think your preacher is longwinded? You wouldn't if you listened to

Ezra. The listeners had not heard the Word of God for a many years. All the men, women, and children stood for hours, listening intently, as Ezra poured it into their hearts.

I have always been interested in the way priests and kings were instructed to handle the Word of God; God wants His people to have the same reverence for His Word.

First, priests were responsible to write down all of the Scriptures, as Ezra had done. Then, they were to carry the Word behind their breastplate, and when someone had a problem, they would pull out the Word and tell them what it said.

When kings were placed in office, they went to the priest and said, "Give me your copy of the Bible." (See Deuteronomy 17, 23, 31.) Then they would personally transcribe the Bible, making their own copy. The king was to read it every day, so he could judge the people appropriately. God always wanted to be the center of men's lives. He wanted His Word in a prevalent position, so the people would not get in to trouble.

Every seven years, the priest was supposed to stand before the people, as Ezra had done, and read all of the words that had been written. What was the seventh year? It was very special:

So Moses wrote this law and delivered it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and to all the elders of Israel. And Moses commanded them, saying: "At the end of every seven years, at the appointed time in the year of release, at the Feast of Tabernacles, when all Israel comes to appear before the Lord your God in the place which He chooses, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing." (Deuteronomy 31:9–11)

Notice they read these Scriptures during the year of release. What did Jesus say? "*If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"* (John 8:31–32). That is exactly what Ezra was doing; he was releasing the people from bondage by reading them God's Word.

As he read, the mongrel Jews were convicted. They said, "We've been doing some wrong things. We haven't been living right; we've lived with these idolatrous women, and we want to separate ourselves from them."

The Word of God does so many things, doesn't it? What was happening here? It was the washing of the water of the Word. The Word began cleansing the people from sin, and a real revival started.

The Word of God brought the captives home and rebuilt their temple; the Word of God was their protection, their refreshing and cleansing. What happened? It released them.

Every time I see Ezra's name, I think, "God bless you, Ezra." He loved the Word of God so much that he memorized it so it couldn't be destroyed. Then, he wrote it down and gave it to the people. It was passed on from generation to generation and was given to you and me.

Where to Meditate for You and Me

I find that you can meditate in any place you set your heart to do so.

One time, I was on a very early flight to Casper, Wyoming. I was meditating on Proverbs 11:30, *"The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who wins souls is wise."* As I was spiritually chewing on these words, the Lord spoke to my spirit, saying, *Wouldn't you like to win a soul to Christ?*

I looked around the plane. At that early hour, almost every seat was vacant. I thought, *Who, Lord?*

His response to me was, *How about the flight attendant?*

As she served coffee, God opened her heart to the *Four Spiritual Laws* tract,[3] which I had studied earlier.

You may find that the same Scriptures you meditate on one day will be used in fantastic ways that same day. I've discovered that if you really desire something, you will whatever is required to attain it. If you want to be successful in every area of life, then you'd better meditate on the Word of God. Perhaps you can't start out memorizing five verses a day; but you can learn one verse every other day, can't you?

When God told Joshua to meditate on the Word, He was saying, "I want you to be saturated, completely soaked, with the Word of God: keep it in your mind, your mouth, and your actions." Joshua became an example of God's living Word in action—and so can you. Joshua was over eighty, and a very busy man, as we've seen. As I studied him, I thought, I wonder what he meditated on. Did he pick Proverbs?

The first year I began meditating God's Word, I memorized Proverbs. It was so exciting that I thought everybody should memorize them. I even made my children start memorizing the book. My son really complained, saying, "There isn't a mother in our church that's making her kids memorize the book of Proverbs." Then, he really started crying the blues. He said, "There isn't a mother in this city

that makes her children memorize Proverbs. I doubt there's a mother in the nation!" I decided to stop him before he got to the world, so I said, "Oh, honey, how fortunate you are to have me for your mother. You have the only mother in the nation who makes you memorize. Aren't you pleased?"

The only books that were written when Joshua meditated on Scripture were the first five books of the Bible, or the Pentateuch (or Torah), which was written by Moses and consisted of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. How would you like to memorize Leviticus? Yet that is what Joshua meditated on, day and night.

Once when I was teaching on meditation, a man came up to me after the service and said, "Marilyn, I am eighty-three years old. I started meditating on God's Word when I was twenty-six." He started quoting chapter after chapter of the gospel of Matthew. I listened to him quoting the Word, and I cannot tell you what happened to me spiritually. It seemed as though my spirit jumped up and said, "Whee!" The Bible says that hearing the Word brings faith. My hearing of the meditated Word of God coming out of that man's mouth was "faith hearing."

I asked him, "Are you retired?"

"Retired? Do I look retired? I am a professor at a university, and I'll never retire. I'll teach until I die."

I thought, Of course. All of the Word inside of him is filling him, jam-packed with God's life. That man was also prosperous in every single area. I thought, Oh God, I wish I'd started meditating at the age of twenty-six. It's like exercise; it's never too late to begin.

The bathtub is a good place to say your Scriptures aloud. Sometimes, I ride a bike and rehearse them. David meditated on his bed. (See Psalm 63:6.) Everyone has a perfect place.

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2. Flavius Josephus, *The Works of Josephus, Complete and Unabridged* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998), 286.

3. Bill Bright, *The Four Spiritual Laws* (Peachtree City, GA: Campus Crusade for Christ, 2007).

5

The "How" of Meditation:

I want to share what I wrote about my method of meditation in my recent book *Your Pathway to Miracles*:

> The following is the method I used. I took Proverbs 6:22 as my guide, which talks about taking the teachings of one's parents to heart: *"When you walk, they will guide you; when you sleep, they will watch over you; when you awake, they will speak to you"* (niv).
>
> I decided to begin in the morning, corresponding to the phrase, *"When you awake, they will speak to you."* So, when I got up each day, I would say my memory verse ten times.
>
> In the afternoon, I would say the verse one time, in conjunction with the phrase, *"When you walk, they will guide you."*
>
> Then, at night, I would recite my verse once before going to bed, and I would say the verse for the next day one time, in relation to the phrase, *"When you sleep, they will watch over you."* It's been said that the last thing you hear at night goes through your mind seven times.[4]

The Absolute First

As I said earlier, as you get out of bed, your mind is at its freshest and cleanest. It's like a blackboard without writing. Why waste it on anything other than God's Word? Even before I brush my teeth, I meditate on the Word. Because your mind is uncluttered with cares and thoughts, you'll find that you begin to grasp the Scriptures as never before.

Then, sometime during the day, review the Scriptures again and ponder them. Say them aloud, several times. Refresh your mind as to what you're memorizing.

Later, before you go to sleep, say them in bed. Say them several times. Let's review that passage from Proverbs that we read in chapter 2. These are precious verses that explain how the Scriptures will rule your spirit when you meditate on them:

> My son, keep your father's command, and do not forsake the law of your mother. Bind them continually upon your heart; tie them around your neck. When you roam, they will lead you; when you sleep, they will keep you; and when you awake, they will speak with you. (Proverbs 6:20–22)

The Word of God will keep you. I believe that when God's Word is continually

fresh in your spirit through meditation, it will protect you throughout the day and during the night.

Select the Material

The first step in getting started with meditation is to select the book of the Bible you want to study. Notice I said *book*, not *verse* or *chapter*. There are plenty of short books, if you don't want to tackle one of the longer ones. You might begin with Jude or Colossians.

For this book, I have included verses arranged by topic that can prepare you to memorize entire books of the Bible. I started memorizing by learning a verse each day. Even that small amount of Scripture quickened my mind, and I began increasing the amount I memorized. Eventually, I was up to fifteen verses each day. The Word of God will quicken you, so don't get discouraged. Start small, and you can be assured that your meditation will grow easier, if you stick with it. Think of it as a physical exercise. You begin with a few push-ups or a short jog, and then you gradually increase your workout each day until, before you know it, you are buff and running long distances.

After you've selected the material, choose the number of verses you want to learn for that day. Start with an amount that is comfortable for you, even if it's only a verse each day. Be sure to set a daily goal for yourself and consistently meet those goals.

Choose a Partner

I think having a partner is wonderful. Lately, my busy travel schedule has made it hard for me to meditate with same partner, but I've had some great partners over the years. I would recommend that you choose one. You don't need to have long conversations each day, just go over your verses together. When you know that you have to call your partner in the morning with memorized Scripture, you'll be more diligent about it. Even when your mind is tired and fuzzy, you'll get those Scriptures in.

I won't kid you. There are times when you'll feel discouraged. Some days, the devil says to me, *Why are you going through all this effort? What are you trying to accomplish?* But if you have a partner, you will have someone to encourage you when your meditation becomes a struggle.

When I meditated on the book of Proverbs, I breezed through a few chapters. Then I got to a chapter that was a struggle to get through. I found the same thing happened when I read some of the psalms. Psalms 63 and 64 were easy, but another chapter made me wonder whether I'd ever get through it. A partner will

help you keep the pace when you're discouraged. If you fall behind, that's okay. Fall behind. You have the rest of your life.

A Chapter at a Time

I like to meditate on one chapter at a time before I go on to the next. I do not totally review a book. I'm not memorizing so that I can say, "I can quote thirty-one chapters of Proverbs, if you have enough time." The purpose of meditation is to get the Word into your spirit so that it can become wisdom in your life. If I'm learning four verses at a time, and the chapter has twelve verses, then I'll have memorized the whole chapter on the third day.

Refresh Past Meditations

Wherever I happen to be meditating, I like to read a verse from books that I've meditated on previously. When you finish one book and move on to another, look back occasionally and review what you've meditated on in the past.

Why meditate on the Word? Because God said it would bring success into every area of your life. God's Word is going to dominate your thought life, your emotional responses, and your attitudes. You will be, as Joshua was, a living epistle to others. When someone talks with you, the Holy Spirit will begin quickening those memorized Scriptures to your mind, and you'll think, *He needs this Scripture; it just fits him.*

Keep a Notebook

This is another practice you'll find both helpful and encouraging. Carry around a small notebook and write down the revelations the Lord gives to you. If you don't write them down, you'll likely forget them. Through meditation, you'll discover that your spirit becomes more alive than ever before, and a notebook will come in handy to record those moments of fresh revelation. Because you are making the Word of God precious in your life, you'll find the Lord revealing more to you than ever before. If you're ever in a place of discouragement regarding your memorization, read your notebook past revelations, and let them be an encouragement.

Prescription of Meditation

My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips. When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches. (Psalm 63:5–6)

People will say to me, "I'm starving for the Word in my church. I get no spiritual food, and my pastor isn't much of a preacher." Psalm 63 says you are supposed to

remember the Lord and meditate on *Him*; don't rely on your pastor for all of your spiritual food. This Scripture says your soul will get *fat* and your mouth will be *full of praise* when you meditate on the Lord.

Notice, too, that the psalmist's meditation was at night. Have you ever noticed that problems seem to loom ten times larger at night? I'm not one to wake up in the middle of the night, but when I do, it's usually because of a difficult circumstance. It's then that my problems look like mountains. That's the time to meditate on the Word of God.

At a seminar in Schenectady, New York, I remember thinking that every possible thing that could go wrong seemed to be hitting me all at once: finances, family, radio ministry, and so on. I also had a terrible pain and a swollen area, from which red streaks were starting to appear. I prayed, and said, "I am not going to be moved by those symptoms." I went through my memory verses, but I still could not sleep because of the pain.

When I travel, I carry audio versions of the New Testament with me, and I finally said, "All right, devil, you're going to be sorry for keeping me awake." After about an hour of listening to the Word, the soothing quality of it caused me to fall back asleep. I turned the cassette off and said, "Father, it's not my problem. I cast my cares on You."

In the morning, there weren't any red streaks, and two days later, the swelling was gone, too. The Word works.

As I noted in the beginning, Psalm 119:11 says, *"Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You!"* Fair enough. The action, *hiding the word*, and the reason, *so as not to sin against God*, are captured in this one short verse. How do we do this?

Again, here are a few simple tips:

1. Gather a collection of Scripture passages you desire to meditate upon. I would suggest the books Ephesians or Colossians. (I began with Proverbs and loved every minute spent there.) Or, as I stated, you can start with a few verses. I have included some examples for you later in the book.

2. Decide on a certain portion to memorize each day—one verse a day, one verse every other day, or two verses. Begin at a comfortable pace.

3. Select a partner, someone who desires to meditate on the same material. Call your partner daily and rehearse the Scripture. Keep your

telephone conversation short.

I want to stop here and take a moment to share an experience about one of my previous prayer partners. When I started to meditate, I decided I needed to find a partner. I thought that in case I ever felt the urge to stop meditating, or I became discouraged, a partner would keep me encouraged. It seemed like a good way to start; so I prayed, "Lord, who would You have me to be partners with?" The Lord spoke to me, and it was not the person I wanted Him to choose. It was a person who attended our church, who tended to gripe a lot. Whenever she came in the room, you felt like you wanted to be somewhere else, because if she got hold of you, it took half an hour for her to tell you all of her problems. Then she'd look you up later, because she hadn't finished telling you about them.

The Lord said to me, *I want her to be your meditation partner.*

I thought, *Oh, Lord, anybody but her.* I thought she would spend the time griping, and we wouldn't be able to get through the verses. Then I thought, *Oh, she'll probably say no.* So, I called and said, "For the rest of my life, I'm going to meditate on the Word of God. I'll start in Proverbs, and I would like you to be my partner for that book, if you will."

"Yes," she said. "I want to be your partner."

I arranged to call her at seven each morning and told her I wouldn't be able to talk for very long because my children had to go to school.

The next morning, when I called, she immediately started griping.

"Let's go over our verses," I said.

"No," she answered. "I need to tell you this first. I am so depressed."

"I don't have time, because my children have to get to school," I replied, and we proceeded to go over our Bible verses.

Over the next two weeks, every time I called this lady, she wanted to gripe, but I didn't have time for griping, so we would go over Scriptures we wanted to meditate on, and that's all. By the third week, however, something had happened. I called her the first morning of the third week, and instead of griping, this lady said, "I got the most marvelous thing out of this chapter. Did you get this?" Then she shared the revelation she received from the Word, and it was so exciting. From that day forward, her whole attitude had changed.

Some time afterward, my husband asked, "What happened to that woman? She used to be the most negative person I've ever seen."

I said, "I can tell you what happened to her. The Word of God started coming out

of her mouth through meditation—and it changed her." And it can change you, too.

Okay, let's continue with tips on meditation:

1. Encourage one another—especially if you get behind.
2. Keep a notebook on the revelations you receive while meditating.
3. Be sure to memorize the chapter and verse of the book you're memorizing when studying verses alone. It's good to know the where the Scripture is found.
4. Don't get discouraged.

Meditation is the way we hide the Word of God in our hearts and receive the benefits mentioned in Psalm 119:11, Joshua 1:8, and numerous other passages in the Bible.

You can hide the Word, and when you seek it, you'll find something rich and more rewarding than a child's game. You'll find the key to a blessed, prosperous, and successful life.

I'll be honest, when I began studying Joshua 1:8, I was troubled. I thought, Lord, You are telling me here and in Psalm 1 to meditate on Your Word day and night—but have You seen my schedule? I'm busy. I'm a mother, a pastor's wife; and then there is the radio and television ministry, along with writing and traveling. How can I possibly meditate on Your Word day and night? You must not understand my schedule. Then the Lord began dealing with me about Joshua's schedule. He said, Did you know that Joshua was responsible for the food, water, clothing, and spiritual and military guidance for over a million people? Think about that. While the Israelites had been in the wilderness, God provided everything: food (manna), clothing that didn't wear out, heat and air-conditioning (the pillar of cloud and fire), military protection, and water. God met every provision of the children of Israel while they were wandering in the wilderness. After they crossed the Jordan River, this provision was made Joshua's responsibility.

Joshua had a tremendous sense of accountability and a very busy schedule. The Lord said to me, You get nervous if ten people come over for dinner. What if you had a million people to feed every day? That's a conservative figure. I thought, Well, Lord, if You are telling me to meditate, I'd better find out more.

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4. Marilyn Hickey, *Your Pathway to Miracles* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker

House, 2011), 76.

6

What's in a Name?

"Remember that a person's name is to that person the sweetest and most important sound in any language."
—Dale Carnegie

What's so important about a name? If you think about it, many movie and rock-and-roll stars have what they call "stage names"—usually ones that sound more hip or cool than their given names. Consider that Meg Ryan's real name is Margaret Mary Emily Anne Hyra, and Michael Caine is actually Maurice Micklewhite. YOWZERS! Names are obviously important, but why do they mean so much to us? What do they say about us?

When we hear a name, we immediately think of someone we know who is associated with that name. For example, when my husband, Reece, and I were trying to decide on names for our kids, we each had our own negative experiences with various people of certain names and consequently steered clear of those names like raw meat in a Third-World market. On the positive side, there were people whom we greatly admired and whose names were absolutely on the list of possibilities.

Think about your name and the various nicknames you may have had at various times in your life. In high school, my nickname was "Hickster" or "Hick," based on my last name, Hickey. Needless to say, while I was growing up, my last name gave me lots of opportunities to develop self-control. It was also interesting that during my school years, I was one of very few girls with the name Sarah. One time, I asked my parents about their thought process in giving me that name, and they explained that they both had thought it was a pretty name and that it seemed particularly fitting when they first saw me after I was born.

When you think about various people and their names, you may experience some knee-jerk reactions, because when we think of various names, not only do we think of people, experiences, and emotions associated with those names; we also have sense of communicating something deep and meaningful through names. During each of my pregnancies, Reece and I went through interesting experiences in naming our kids. I was in favor of using more modern, trendy names, while he preferred names that were more tradition and even regal-sounding. We both felt strongly about our preferences, and we had to work through various compromises to agree upon the names that we ultimately selected. By my third pregnancy, we

knew that the name game was going to be "entertaining," to say the least. For our third child, I remember having the "name conversation" with Reece as the technician was conducting the ultrasound to check on various health indicators for the little person growing inside of me. We had agreed on a name if it was a boy, but a girl name was proving difficult for us to nail down. Thankfully, the technician interrupted our discussion to let us know that we were definitely having a boy; thus, problem solved!

Knowing About God Versus Knowing God

Obviously, names are important. They give us a sense of identity and communicate a lot about us. If you're going to know someone, the most basic place to start is with his or her name.

As this relates to God, I have made it my goal in life to know Him based on Jeremiah 9:23–24, one of my top-three favorite passages in the Bible. In these verses, we read about the importance of living a life to know God:

> *Thus says the Lord: "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, nor let the rich man glory in his riches; but let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight," says the Lord.*

These verses are an ongoing challenge to me to live in such a way as to know God better and better every day. When I write about knowing God better every day, let's make the distinction that I'm not merely learning *about* God; rather, with God's help, I'm coming to *know* God more deeply and intimately through an ever-increasing connection and relationship. In my way of thinking, this is very different from merely learning about Him.

As we think about this difference, let's consider that a stalker learns a lot about the person whom he is stalking, but at a safe distance, so as not to formulate a personal connection or relationship. Sometimes, I think we inadvertently do this with God—we "stalk" God from a safe distance.

In the Bible, there are many things we learn about God, including:

- That God directed and blessed Abraham in the book of Genesis.
- That God spoke with Moses through a burning bush.
- That God gave His people the Ten Commandments.
- That Jesus was born of a virgin.

- And so much more!

Likewise, there are things you can know about me:

- I have three children.
- I've been happily married to Reece Bowling for more than twenty years.
- I earned my undergraduate degree in German.
- I prefer spicy to bland food.

You can know lots of things *about* me, but that doesn't mean that you really *know* me. I think the same is true with God. If we aren't careful, we can check off boxes about God—reading through the Bible, memorizing verses, attending church, and reading the Christmas story every December—but that acquisition of knowledge doesn't guarantee an intimate relationship with God.

Relationships happen through connection and engagement. They grow by presence, communication, listening, becoming aware of the other person's values and priorities, and participation in a plethora of activities together. Relationships take time and commitment. The more time, commitment, and engagement you put into a relationship, the deeper the connection. I also find that relationships deepen when I take the opportunity to understand the other person better, learning what is important to him or her and how he or she views the world in which we live.

The Names of God Have a Wide Application

With these thoughts in mind, let's consider what this looks like in relation to God and who God is. As you read through this book, you will see that God uses many names in the Old Testament to describe Himself. Let's be mindful that some of God's names may not seem very relevant or applicable at various times in our lives. But let's also consider that our lives have many different twists, unexpected events, and challenges that we don't foresee. It is through these unique and sometimes difficult experiences that we can experience the various realities found in the richness of the names of God.

Consider Psalm 23, in which David begins by introducing the name of God as "the Lord my Shepherd." I'm thankful that David didn't just throw out the shepherd thing and deny us more insights as to what it means for the Lord to be our Shepherd. In this psalm, David goes into great detail about what a shepherd does. But, more important, David helps us to connect with the characteristics of God through his explanation of how a shepherd carries out the routine care,

maintenance, and protection of the sheep entrusted to his oversight. As you read through this psalm and consider that God is our Shepherd, you will begin to see all the aspects of God's protection, guidance, correction, and loving care. You will recognize the deep connection and relationship that grows between a sheep and his shepherd. To make this psalm become even more vibrant, I encourage you to read John 10 in the New Testament and consider what Jesus has to say about us as His sheep and Himself as our good Shepherd!

One time, I was thinking about what it meant to be one of God's sheep and for Him to be my Shepherd. I thought about the various ways in which God provides for the things I need in life—not only material items but things like wisdom, direction, and support. I thought about how God, as my Shepherd, leads me, and about what Jesus said in John 10 about the sheep knowing God's voice and refusing to follow the voice of a stranger. As I was considering this idea of being God's sheep and knowing His voice, I felt as though God was challenging me about listening to, and even following, the voices of strangers. If you're like me, you know how easy it can be to get discouraged by various circumstances, situations, and difficulties. It was in one of these moments of discouragement that I felt God confront me about listening to the stranger's voice. In this case, the stranger's voice was inside my own head, saying things like, *Sarah, you're a failure and a loser! This setback you're experiencing is because you're a loser!*

If we're not careful, each of us can listen to and entertain voices within our own minds. Any voice that contradicts the Bible is fundamentally the stranger's voice; and we, as Jesus' sheep, should not allow our ears to be attuned to or to follow the stranger's voice. Rather, as Jesus' sheep, we must keep our ears and our hearts attentive only to Jesus' voice. So, with Jesus as our Shepherd, we can be settled into following His voice, His words, and His fellowship in our lives for the simple, clear, and resounding truth that we are His sheep and He is our Shepherd.

I give you this example about Jesus being our Shepherd who leads us by His voice because the Lord our Shepherd is one of the names of God that has an overwhelming degree of richness and application for our daily living. As you read through this book and go through the various meditations associated with the names of God, consider that He wants to reveal Himself and His character to you through these names that are scattered throughout Scripture.

The Names of God Make Important Distinctions

Here's another exercise that I would encourage you to try: Read through the first two chapters of Genesis and watch for the two main names that are used for God. After you recognize them, take a minute to consider the context for these names. If

you look carefully, you'll see that the name for God in Genesis 2 is different from His name in Genesis 1. You'll also note that Genesis 2 is where God goes into significantly greater detail about creating Adam and Eve—humankind. As I studied these chapters from a Jewish perspective, I began to see that from the very beginning of creation, God positioned Himself as the all-powerful Creator of the universe in Genesis 1; but with the advent of man in Genesis 2, God presents Himself in a relational context rather than as the omnipotent Creator. God is, of course, all-powerful; but with humanity, God has always desired to be viewed in a relational context rather than merely as a source of power.

As you consider the names of God, one of the very first things that God reveals to us about Himself is that He is after a relationship with us, and not a relationship from a distant, cold, and impersonal position of mere observation. God spoke all of creation—with the exception of humans. When it came to the creation of mankind, God not only spoke but also put His hands into the dirt and "got muddy," as it were. God shaped, fashioned, and sculpted us—a relational God connecting on a deeply personal level by becoming intimately engaged in human life. It would have been magnificent enough if God had simply completed a sculpture of inanimate man—Michelangelo's teacher making the ultimate and perfect sculpture. But our relational God didn't stop at creating a tribute to His power, perfection, and creativity; rather, He breathed the breath of life into His perfect sculpture, and man became a living being with whom God could have fellowship and communion—the ultimate reason for your very existence!

I often wonder what it must have been like to be Adam and Eve before the whole scene with the serpent in Genesis 3. I wonder what it was like to walk with God in the cool of the day. I wonder what it was like for God to encourage Adam to name all the animals. I wonder what it was like to have communion and fellowship with God without any hint, influence, or history of sin or disobedience. Perhaps Adam and Eve knew God's names and fellowship far beyond the boundaries of the finite existence in our current world. Maybe God places in each of us an inherent desire to know and to have fellowship with Him for the simple reason that He desires your company, as He did in the garden of Eden, when He breathed life into Adam and when He fashioned Eve from Adam's rib.

Knowing God Personally

Let's consider how the various circumstances and situations we go through in our lives can be divinely afforded opportunities to get to know God better and on a more personal level. In Acts 17:24–28, Paul said,

God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and

earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshipped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, "For we are also His offspring."

As God's children, let's join in the adventure of a lifetime to know God in ever-increasing and ever-deepening ways. As I conclude this chapter, I would like to leave you with one thought. My challenge to you throughout this book is not to merely acquire information *about* God but to deepen your connection *with* God by experiencing, in various ways and at various times, *who God is* through His names and what they reveals to us about Himself in His Word.

Meditations on the Names of God

1. Unity in Plurality

We are meditating on the name above all names. God's names reflect His provisions. The fourth word in the Bible is the plural name of God: *Elohim.*

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. (Genesis 1:1) *The Hebrew ending for Elohim is plural! Why? Because it describes the divine trinity of the Godhead—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. No singular word could describe this element of God's personality.*

There is unity in plurality. Thirty-five times it occurs in the first two chapters of Genesis in conjunction with His creative power. I believe this is the Trinity acting in unity. I like this analogy: God is the Architect, Jesus is the Builder, and the Holy Spirit is He who breathes the life of God into the structure. *Elohim*: *Those* who are mighty and powerful; *Those* who are creative and sovereign.

It is also the name used in covenant. It is *Elohim* who makes covenants with those whom He created!

We see God as *Elohim* in…

- The creation of man. (See Exodus 20:11.)
- The Son. (See Colossians 1:16.)
- The Holy Spirit. (See Job 26:13.)

Let us meditate on our *Elohim.* We need His creative power.

Scripture Memorization #1

"I will say of the Lord, 'He is my refuge and my fortress; my God, in Him I will trust.'"
—Psalm 91:2

2. Strength

E*l* means “the strong One.” It is the root word of *Elohim*, and it describes God’s greatness and glory; it displays God’s power and sovereignty. Although this word is composed of only two letters, it offers a glimpse into the depth of the Hebrew language, which is a language of pictures.

It is used mostly in the book of Job and the Psalms. It is one of the names given to the promised Messiah in Isaiah 9:6: *“And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God* [‘*el*].*”* This name is used first with Melchisedec.

Jesus used this name of God on the cross. In Mark 15:34, He prayed, in effect, “My strength, My strength” when He said, *“‘Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?’ which is translated, ‘My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”* The name *Eloi* is used in the compound name *El Shaddai*. When we are weak, He is strong.

On many occasions, I have called on God’s strength. Sometimes I have felt that He picked me up and carried me through.

Scripture Memorization #2

“And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.”
—John 10:4

3. The God Most High

E*l Elyon* is one of the most majestic names we find in the Scriptures. It means "the God Most High" or "the mighty One Most High," a name that carries great authority on our behalf. It is a name that says there is no existing thing that is higher than the Most High God. He is the possessor of heaven, earth, and everything within them. His name is so high, so exalted, and so marvelous that there is no other name to compare with His name. *El Elyon* is a name that is untouchable in quality and incomprehensible in dominion and might.

Psalm 97 employs this name:

Let all be put to shame who serve carved images, who boast of idols. Worship Him ['elohiym], all you gods.(Psalm 97:7) He is the high and lofty one who inhabits eternity. The name El Elyon is used twelve times in Daniel, as well as in Psalm 82:6, where we are called "children of the Most High." Even when we see world leaders acting sinfully, we can remember that the God we serve is the Most High.

Sometimes, it is a challenge for me to lift my eyes above the problem. Abraham lifted his eyes when he saw the ram in the thicket. In Genesis 15:1, Abraham saw Him as His shield and great reward.

You have the name of *El Elyon* to back up your authority and hold you higher than anything that will ever come your way!

Scripture Memorization #3

"He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth shall be your shield and buckler."
—Psalm 91:4

4. The God of Eternity

E*l Olam* is our everlasting God. Abraham moved seven times and always lived in tents. His security was not in where he lived. Instead, he found that his God filled all, a fact that he expressed to a heathen king after he had lied concerning Sarah: "Then Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba, and there called on the name of the Lord, the Everlasting God ['el olam]" (Genesis 21:33).

We are in a process of God revealing Himself to us. He is there in our failures and successes alike. He always expresses His love. It was after the above failure that Abraham prayed the first healing prayer in the Bible.

Solomon was worshipping *El Olam* when he wrote this psalm: His name shall endure forever [olam]; His name shall continue as long as the sun. And men shall be blessed in Him; all nations shall call Him blessed. (Psalm 72:17) Scripture Memorization #4

"Trust in the Lord forever, for in Yah, the Lord, is everlasting strength."
—Isaiah 26:4

5. The All-sufficient One

E*l Shaddai* describes the bountifulness of God. Its first mention is to Abraham in Genesis.

When Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God [*El Shaddai*]; *walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly.*(Genesis 17:1–2) *Here, Abraham is ninety-nine years old, well beyond the age of having any hopes of fathering a child. This name of God seems to appear whenever hope is gone, so that God might display His all-sufficiency by turning nature around and performing miracles that are contrary to natural events. As El Shaddai, God caused Abraham and Sarah to conceive a child in the context of total impossibility.*

Basically, this name is derived from the word *field*, as in, "the fields produce abundance." This is a compound name. *El* displays God's qualities of power and might; *Shaddai* means "the many-breasted One." He is the all-sufficient God, who is more than enough to meet your needs in any situation.

El Shaddai wants to be more than enough to you. Speak of Him. Get to know Him, and trust Him as the all-sufficient One.

Scripture Memorization #5

“Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.”
—Psalm 90:2

6. Master and Owner

Stir up Yourself, and awake to my vindication, to my cause, my God [Elohiym] and my Lord [Adonay].
(Psalm 35:23)

Here, David shows a beautiful combination of "my God," *Elohim*, and "my Lord," *Adonai*. These are the words Thomas spoke when he saw the resurrected Christ.

And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord [kyrios] and my God [theos]!" (John 20:28) *In New Testament Greek, Kurios is related to Adonai. This name has to do with Master and Owner. This has to do with our desiring God's will in a situation more than our own will. It is a name that signifies ownership and indicates the personal responsibilities of being owned by God.*

Jesus, the bond slave to His Father, willingly hung upon a cross. He *"took upon him the form of a servant"* (Philippians 2:7) and was willingly pierced because of His great love for you and for me.

I was a foreign language student in my university years. I so wanted to be a foreign ambassador. However, when I met my husband, it became obvious that he was called to be a pastor. What was I to do? I surrendered to Jesus' lordship. I became a foreign ambassador in a different way, by taking the gospel around the world!

Jesus wants to be much more than Savior to you. He wants to be your *Adonai*—Master and Owner. Is He the Master over your life? Are you allowing His tender protection to keep you each day?

Scripture Memorization #6

"Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the
Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God,
and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify
God in your body and in your spirit,
which are God's."
—1 Corinthians 6:19–20

7. Abba, Father

F*ather* is the distinguishing title of God the New Testament. However, the Old Testament also shows Him as Father.

> As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear Him. (Psalm 103:13) In the gospel of Matthew, God the Father is mentioned forty-four times. On the cross, Jesus addressed God as "*My God*, *My God"* (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34). Otherwise, He addressed Him as "*Father*." After the resurrection, Jesus also called Him "our Father" and "our God."

In Mark 14:36, there is an even more intimate term for father in the Aramaic: *Abba*.

And [Jesus] said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will."

Abba is a very familiar name, like saying "Daddy." Maybe you never had an earthly daddy, but you have a heavenly one.

Scripture Memorization #7

"For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father.'"
—Romans 8:15

8. The Unchanging One

J*ehovah* is "the self-existing One," the unchanging, intimate God. This name of God brings Him forth in a very personal way, and it is the very essence of the present tense. *Jehovah* reveals Himself as your intimate, personal God. He walks with you—always in the present tense—and He will never leave or forsake you. (See Hebrews 13:5.) The more you grow in this relationship with Him, the more of Himself He will reveal to you.

This name has to do with covenant relationship. God enters our lives and forms a covenant relationship with us. *Jehovah* also denotes the unchangeability of God, *"with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning"* (James 1:17).

Jehovah comes from the Hebrew word *chavah*, which means "to live" and also means "to be," or "being." It was used at the burning bush when Jesus spoke to Moses.

And the Lord [Jehovah] said: "I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows." (Exodus 3:7) As God revealed Himself in the circumstances of His people, His name became a compound name, like Jehovah-Jireh. Jehovah reveals a present-tense Lord in all our circumstances.

I need Him in my past, my present, and my future.

Scripture Memorization #8

"For I am the Lord [Jehovah], I do not change; therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob."
—Malachi 3:6

9. The True Vine

The last symbol Jesus gave us of Himself on the earth was *"the true vine"* (John 15:1). John liked to use the word *true* concerning Jesus: *"the true Light"* (John 1:9), *"the true bread"* (John 6:32), *"the True Witness"* (Revelation 3:14), and *"the only true God"* (John 17:3).

Jesus said *"I am the true vine"* to His closest friends who were gathered around Him at a table in Jerusalem. It was only hours before Judas would betray Him. He was preparing the twelve men for His impending crucifixion, resurrection, and subsequent departure for heaven. Knowing how disturbed they would feel, He gave them this beautiful metaphor of the true Vine as one of His encouragements.

We can have vital union with Him today. We bear fruit only as we abide in Him. Jesus said, "I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom" (Matthew 26:29). When we receive the sacrament of Communion, we do it in remembrance of the fruit of His death and resurrection. We are His fruit.

No one can serve God effectively until he or she is connected with Jesus Christ by faith. Jesus is man's only connection with the God who gave life, the true Vine who sustains life and who produces within us the fruitful life.

Scripture Memorization #9

"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing."
—John 15:5

10. Made to Order

J*ehovah Hoseenu* means “the Lord is our Maker.”

There are three ways we can approach life: 1) We can do all that is in our power to escape reality; 2) We can constantly rebel against reality; or 3) We can hand over our realities to Jesus and let Him develop us.

Too often, people turn to alcohol or narcotics to escape the weight of life. But as they continue to face the same harsh, unpleasant realities, they soon discover that they can’t escape them on their own. Christ came to set us free *in* our realities, not *from* our realities.

In real life, I am a woman. In our culture, there are certain negative stereotypes associated with my gender: lack of intelligence, lack of leadership abilities, lack of toughness, and many other falsehoods that can limit me if I let them. But I have found the exact opposite to be true in Christ. God did not make a mistake when He made woman. I have experienced abundant favor. I have lived in His ability to develop daily miracles. And He can do the same for you, too!

Scripture Memorization #10

“In whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”
—Ephesians 2:22

11. The God of Foresight

J*ehovah Jireh* is "the Lord our Provider." It also means "the Lord will see."

God sees ahead of our need and makes a provision for it. Here is vision and provision. Remember, *Jehovah* is the eternal, changeless One who reveals His ways to you. By calling Himself *Jehovah Jireh*, God is saying, "My ways do not change; therefore, I desire to meet your needs, just as I met the needs of the children of Israel in their exodus from Egypt."

Jehovah Jireh first revealed this name in the life of Abraham, when he faced perhaps the most difficult trial of his faith: Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." Then He said, "Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you." (Genesis 22:1–2) This was on Mt. Moriah. *Moriah* means "shall be seen." Jesus said that Abraham saw His day and rejoiced in it. (See John 8:56.) God has seen our trials ahead of time and has already made a provision for them. Lift up your eyes.

I take God's Word literally, and you should, too. Practice what it says each day. If you have children in rebellion, and you're hearing and seeing bad things, don't focus on them. You cannot afford to let God's Word depart from before your eyes. You must hold fast to His Word—your confidence—in order to see your reward.

Jesus is your perfect Provision for all you will ever need. Praise the Lord that *Jehovah Jireh* saw ahead and made provision: He gave you Himself.

Scripture Memorization #11

"And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."
—Philippians 4:19

12. Complete Healing

The name *Jehovah Rophe* actually means "Jehovah heals" or "Jehovah my Health." When the children of Israel arrived at Marah, they found a huge pool of water, but it tasted terribly bitter. In fact, *marah* means "bitter." Then the people began murmuring against Moses because they could not drink the water. It certainly wasn't his fault.

> [Moses] cried out to the Lord, and the Lord showed him a tree. When he cast it into the waters, the waters were made sweet. There He made a statute and an ordinance for them, and there He tested them, and said, "If you diligently heed the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I am the Lord who heals you." (Exodus 15:25–26) Moses threw a tree into the water. This is significant. Jesus is the cross thrown into the bitter waters. And He healed all the people, just as He did in Matthew 12:15.

King David knew God as *Jehovah Rophe,* too.

Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases. (Psalm 103:1–3) *If you are hurting in the soul area (mind and emotions), Jehovah Rophe has given you a provision. Rophe has to do with "wholeness."*

> [Jesus] Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness; by whose stripes you were healed. (1 Peter 2:24) I have experienced healing in my spirit, in my mind and emotions, and in my body multiple times. Meditate and speak God's Word over your whole body. There are no negative side effects.

Scripture Memorization #12

"*My son, give attention to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. Do not let them depart from your eyes; keep them in the midst of your heart."*
—Proverbs 4:20–21

13. An Awesome Display

J*ehovah Tsebaoth* is "the Lord of Hosts." This name of God appears in the New Testament in Romans 9:29 and James 5:4.

Tsebaoth comes from the Hebrew root word *tsaba*, which can be used as either a verb or a noun. In its verb form, *tsaba* means "to wage war," but it also holds a broader sense of meaning: "to render service unto God." This is a service of total dedication and careful regimentation associated with spiritual warfare and worship.

Psalm 147:4 tells us that God is the Lord of all the stars that He made, and He calls them by name. He even knows how many stars there are, and these stars move at His bidding.

Most of all, it has to do with gathering.

The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. (Psalm 46:7) This verse tells us how God brings all His resources to our aid.

The Lord of Hosts does not command some bedraggled group of soldiers. The hosts of *Jehovah Tsebaoth* are an awesome display of His power and ability. He sees each of us as a unique individual with magnificent qualities and attributes—loyal and dedicated to Him, and Him alone.

That's who you are! Under the command of *Jehovah Tsebaoth*, you are a mighty warrior of great authority and ability through Jesus Christ. He has made you more than a conqueror! (See Romans 8:37.) Scripture Memorization #13

"Bless the Lord, all you His hosts, you ministers of His, who do His pleasure."
—Psalm 103:21

14. Name Above All Names

J*esus* is the name above all names. In Philippians 2:9, it is His personal name: Therefore God also has highly exalted Him [Jesus] and given Him the name which is above every name.

All other references of Him are titles. *Je* has to do with *Jehovah*. This is "the great I Am" found in Exodus 3:14: "*Y*ou shall say to the children of Israel, 'I Am has sent me to you.'"

God revealed Himself as *Jehovah*—the One who is the same yesterday, today, and forever. (See Hebrews 13:8.) He was saying, "I am Abraham's God, Isaac's God, Jacob's God, and your God! Generations change, but I will never change."

Sus has to do with *Oshea* or *Hosea*, which means "help." Signs and wonders can be accomplished by the name of Jesus. He is *"King of kings and Lord of lords"* (1 Timothy 6:15).

His kingdom is forever. Use His name.

Scripture Memorization #14

"That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord."
—Philippians 2:10–11

15. The Lord My Shepherd

The name *Jehovah Rohi* means "Jehovah, my Shepherd." Psalm 23 was written by David, the shepherd boy who became Israel's king and a "type" of our great Shepherd—the Lord Jesus Christ. David began that psalm with the words, "*The Lord is my shepherd,*" and he proceeded to give a very personal portrayal of *Jehovah Rohi*.

Keep in mind that this psalm is preceded by Psalm 22, which depicts the suffering Savior: My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me, and from the words of My groaning? O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear; and in the night season, and am not silent. (Psalm 22:1–2) This is very important. Without Psalm 22, there would be no Psalm 23.

God's own sheep are those who have been redeemed out of the hand of Satan. Jesus knows the number of His sheep and their names.

> But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers. (John 10:2–5) He redeems us; He resurrects; He rewards us.

Scripture Memorization #15

"Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away."
—1 Peter 5:2–4

16. His Presence

J*ehovah Shammah* means "Jehovah is there." This name is first found in Ezekiel 48:35, where Ezekiel spoke of a city, saying, *"And the name of the city from that day shall be, The Lord is there."* This is the Lord's promise and pledge to His people that His presence will be with them. Let's examine why this name was first recorded in this particular place in Ezekiel.

The people had been brought out of bondage in Egypt "with His Presence, with His mighty power" (Deuteronomy 4:37). The Israelites were obsessed with having a natural presence of God that they could perceive through their senses, but God's presence was not just an article that they could hang up in a temple. God wanted His presence to be more than that. Why? Because He desired their fellowship.

Jacob experienced God's presence when he fled from his brother Esau. (See Genesis 28:16.) David tells us that God's presence is found even in darkness. (See Psalm 18:11.) Jonah experienced His presence in the belly of a fish. (See Jonah 2.) Jesus' name was called *Immanuel*, meaning "God with us." (See Matthew 1:23.) How many times have we realized that God was with us long after the fact?

Scripture Memorization #16

"For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.'"
—Hebrews 13:5

17. The Lord Who Molds Me

When we were born again, we were still awkwardly shaped because of the toll that sin had taken on our lives. Our minds had not been renewed to the Word; therefore, we still had worldly ideas and attitudes. So, the Lord began to mold us and shape us according to His Word so that we would fit perfectly into our places within the body.

This is *Jehovah Makkeh*, "the Lord our Smiter," and His purpose is to shape and perfect us into smooth, lovely stones that are molded together to operate in a unified manner.

The prophet Ezekiel was the first person to call the Lord *Jehovah Makkeh*: Mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: I will recompense thee according to thy ways and thine abominations that are in the midst of thee; and ye shall know that I am the Lord that smiteth. (Ezekiel 7:9 kjv) How does *Jehovah Makkeh* work in our lives? He chastens us with His Word and inspires other godly people to correct us, as well. His gentle molding and chiseling shape us into the image of His dear Son and help us fit perfectly into our positions within the body of Christ.

Jehovah Makkeh, the Lord our Smiter, also took our "correction" on the cross. God smote Jesus with our sins, griefs, and sorrows so that we wouldn't have to be smitten with them. Now we can cast our burdens on Him when others' unfair criticisms hurt or offend us. Allow *Jehovah Makkeh* to do His perfect work in you today.

Scripture Memorization #17

"For whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges
every son whom He receives."
—Hebrews 12:6

18. Our Righteousness

J*ehovah Tsidkenu* means "Jehovah, our Righteousness." This was the name of God that was revealed to the prophet Jeremiah.

> "Behold, the days are coming," says the Lord, "that I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; a King shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell safely; now this is His name by which He will be called: The Lord Our Righteousness." (Jeremiah 23:5–6) Basically, *righteousness* means "the quality of being right." It shows a picture of a man trusting in God and becoming the righteousness of God. When Jeremiah uttered the prophecy about a righteous Branch, the kingdom of Judah was in a terrible state of sinfulness; therefore, God revealed Himself as Righteousness.

Abraham received imparted righteousness because of his faith. (See Romans 4:9.) Jesus took our unrighteousness upon Himself on the cross *"that we might become the righteousness of God in Him"* (1 Corinthians 5:21).

Sometimes, just saying "I am the righteousness of God!" makes me feel and act better. When you start saying who you are, you start acting like who you are. What a wonderful name—*Jehovah Tsidkenu*! It reveals the fullness of the measure of our acceptance in the presence of God.

Scripture Memorization #18

"For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ."

—Romans 5:17

19. Our Payback

J*ehovah Gmolah* is "the Lord of Recompenses." *To recompense* means "to repay, to reward, or to compensate." The Lord always compensates the choices we make. The first biblical reference to *Jehovah Gmolah* is found in Jeremiah 51, where God promised that Babylon would reap whatever it sowed during its siege on Jerusalem.

Because the spoiler is come upon her, even upon Babylon, and her mighty men are taken, every one of their bows is broken: for the Lord God of recompenses shall surely requite. (Jeremiah 51:56 kjv) *Sometimes our hearts can be so broken that we want to take revenge. I have heard people say, "I don't get mad, just even." But getting even can bring long-term wounds. Both vengeance and recompense belong to the Lord. As He says, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay" (Romans 12:19; Hebrews 10:30; see also Deuteronomy 32:35). God has promised to heal our hurts and enable us to overcome crippling emotional blows from others. What happens when we try to avenge ourselves? We put ourselves in God's place; we try to be Jehovah Gmolah. Then, God says, "You've taken control, so I can't intervene in the situation."*

The world has been in a constant state of war because of man's desire to take revenge. Since we put our faith in God to save us, can't we also have faith in the same God to recompense us?

If you obey God's Word, you will receive a great reward. Put your confidence in Him! *Jehovah Gmolah*, the Lord of Recompenses, guarantees a wonderful harvest of blessings.

Scripture Memorization #19

"Do not say, 'I will recompense evil'; wait for the Lord,
and He will save you."
—Proverbs 20:22

20. Redeemed by His Blood

We have a Redeemer in Jesus. To be redeemed is to experience a complete change in condition. In the Bible, the seal of redemption is blood, as in Exodus 12, when the Israelites applied blood to their doorposts so that the spirit of death would pass over their homes.

Job caught the vision of Jesus, his Redeemer, in Job 19:25: "For I know that my Redeemer lives."

Jesus bought us *"with His own blood"* (Acts 20:28) and restored what Satan had stolen.

When the Israelites were redeemed from Egypt, they were not merely freed from slavery. They left Pharaoh healthy, wealthy, and destined for their Promised Land. Redemption includes our past, present, *and* future.

Scripture Memorization #20

"For their Redeemer is mighty; He will plead their cause against you."
—Proverbs 23:11

21. Our Beloved

Jesus is the Father's beloved and our beloved.

> Behold! My Servant whom I have chosen, My Beloved in whom My soul is well pleased! (Matthew 12:18) We are also His beloved. We are called *"beloved"* more than forty times in the New Testament.

> Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers. (3 John 1:2) And we are accepted in the beloved.

To the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved. (Ephesians 1:6) There are countless benefits of being God's beloved. For example, He gives His beloved sleep. (See Psalm 127:2.) Because we are His beloved, we can love one another. (See 1 John 4:7.) As we learned in Meditation 19, we need not avenge ourselves, because we are His beloved. (See Romans 12:19.) And as His beloved, we can build ourselves up praying in the Holy Spirit. (See Jude 20.) Scripture Memorization #21

"Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."
—1 John 4:11

22. Fashioned by God

J*ehovah Hoseenu* is "the Lord our Maker." This is not referring to His work at Creation when God spoke it and it was done. This refers to His ability to shape and use something from what already exists. Abraham looked for a "city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:10).

Scripture tells us that *"we are His workmanship"* (Ephesians 2:10). I really like this concept. It is evident that His hand is on me, fashioning me through the circumstances of my life.

When the seven pieces of furniture were fashioned for the tabernacle, this term *Hoseenu* was used. Each piece—the altar of burnt offering, the laver, the table of showbread, the lampstand, the altar of incense, the ark of the covenant, and the mercy seat—was patterned after a similar piece in God's heavenly tabernacle. (See Revelation 8:3; 11:19; 15:5.) We are being fashioned by God, patterned for heavenly living.

Scripture Memorization #22

"Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker." —Psalm 95:6

23. Our Victory Is Won

J*ehovah Nissi* means "Jehovah, my Banner." This name is found for the first time in Exodus, when the children of Israel were just becoming acquainted with the Lord.

And Moses built an altar and called its name, The-Lord-Is-My-Banner. (Exodus 17:15) At that time, when battles were won, banners were carried to tell the rest of the world of the victory. Here, Moses declares the victory that had been won by his mighty God! He had sent the plagues upon Egypt and delivered His people in a miraculous way. They had met Jehovah as the victorious One, step-by-step, in every experience and situation.

Jesus is our banner. He purchased our victory through the cross and resurrection. His banner over us is love. (See Song of Solomon 2:4.) You go from strength to strength, from faith to faith, and from glory to glory in Him. First Corinthians 15:57 does not say that you can win only some of the time. It doesn't tell you that you'll be only a part-time conqueror.

> Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 15:57) Thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ. (2 Corinthians 2:14) God did not say that you can triumph only in a few situations. He said that, in Him, you're always a victorious one! Jesus sees you as a winner. He paid the ultimate price for your victory.

Scripture Memorization #23

"You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over."
—Psalm 23:5

24. Friend

A man who has friends must himself be friendly, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.
(Proverbs 18:24)

Jesus is a *friend* who sticks closer than a brother. When He walked the earth, Jesus was often accused of being friends with those unworthy of friendship. (See Luke 15:1–2.) Jesus is a friend who loves at all times. (See Proverbs 17:17.) Even when He rebukes and corrects, He does so out of love. (See Proverbs 27:6.) Abraham was called "*the friend of God*" (James 2:23). Jesus called His disciples His friends. (See John 15:15.) Perhaps most shocking (or most comforting?) is that Jesus called Judas His friend—even in the midst of his betrayal.

> But Jesus said to [Judas], "Friend, why have you come?" Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and took Him. (Matthew 26:50) What a friend we have in Jesus!

Scripture Memorization #24

"As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the
countenance of his friend."
—Proverbs 27:17

25. The Chief Cornerstone

Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of
God in the Spirit.
(Ephesians 2:19–22, emphasis added)

Jesus is *"the chief cornerstone."* This was part of Isaiah's prophecy: Therefore thus says the Lord God: "Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation." (Isaiah 28:16; see also 1 Peter 2:6) What does this mean to you and me?

In the construction of a building, the cornerstone is of fundamental importance. It is the principal stone laid at the corner of an edifice. It is usually the largest, the most solid, and the most carefully placed of all the stones in the erection of a building.

Jesus is a living cornerstone. Those who are redeemed by His blood are *"living stones"* (1 Peter 2:5). We are "chips off the old block."

Jesus is our solid cornerstone. We are the living stones He uses to construct *"a spiritual house"* (1 Peter 2:5), a living temple built according to a heavenly blueprint or pattern. Together, with Jesus as our cornerstone, this spiritual house will last for eternity.

Scripture Memorization #25

"Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things,
be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without
spot and blameless."
—2 Peter 3:14

26. Our Consolation

And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel.
(Luke 2:25)

Jesus is our consolation. *Merriam-Webster's 11th Collegiate Dictionary* defines *consolation* as "the act or an instance of consoling: the state of being consoled: comfort." Before His ascension, Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit as our Comforter. (See John 14:16, 26 kjv.) The early church of Acts walked in the comfort of the Holy Spirit.

As believers, we don't just have a little consolation; Christ abounds in it. (See 2 Corinthians 1:5.) Jesus is the consolation of Israel. (See Hebrews 6:18.) Every spiritual blessing, including consolation, is wrapped up in Christ. (See Ephesians 1:3.) Are you trying to find comfort in your circumstances? Stop. Ask Jesus to be your consolation. When every circumstance seems to be lined up against me, I find that He comforts me far more than anyone or anything else can.

Scripture Memorization #26

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort."
—2 Corinthians 1:3

27. The Great "I Am"

Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I Am."
(John 8:58)

This was the shocking statement Jesus gave to the religious men of His day. It was shocking because this was the name God used to identify Himself before Moses. (See Exodus 3:14.) Who is "I Am"? He's *Jehovah*, the One who revealed Himself to the children of Israel. Not only did He reveal Himself to them, but He also revealed His plan to deliver them from the Egyptians and to lead them into the Promised Land.

Just as the Old Testament gave compound names to be used with *Jehovah*, the gospel of John gives us a wonderful list of Jesus' "I Am"s.

Faith is present tense. Jesus didn't say "I will be" or "I have been" but "*I Am.*"

Use each one of these today in your life.

Scripture Memorization #27

“I am the bread of life.”
—John 6:35

“I am the resurrection and the life.”
—John 11:25

“I am the way, the truth, and the life”
—John 14:6

“I am the good shepherd.”
—John 10:11

“I am the true vine.”
—John 15:1

28. A Personal God

There are three closely related names of God that reveal Him as a very personal God. This personal God is One on whom we can call when we need a miracle, knowing that He will work on our behalf to bring us victory and success.

Jehovah Eloheenu is "the Lord our God." This name is found nineteen times in the book of Deuteronomy alone. This is the commonwealth God's people have in Him. He is our God. He reveals His all-sufficiency.

Jehovah Eloheka is "the Lord your God." This name expresses His personal relationship with you, individually. Found twenty times in Deuteronomy 16, it reflects a relational God and His responsibility in relationship.

Jehovah Elohay means "the Lord my God." This name reflects is a personal faith in God and in His power. Many Old Testament heroes of faith called upon *Jehovah Elohay* when they needed strength and spiritual power.

We need to know God in all the aspects of His power—He is our Healer, Creator, and Deliverer. But we also must know God personally—as our Friend and adoring heavenly Father.

Scripture Memorization #28

"Then you shall flee through My mountain valley, for the mountain valley shall reach to Azal. Yes, you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Thus the Lord my God will come, and all the saints with You."
—Zechariah 14:5

29. The Lord My Peace

In this busy world, peace might seem hard to attain; however, it doesn't have to be when you know *Jehovah Shalom.*

Shalom appears more than four hundred times in the Bible. I believe our deepest desire is to have peace. It is the one thing that all the money in the world can't buy. Peace is ever eluding the busy world, and it is wonderful that we, the children of *Jehovah Shalom*, have exactly what the world is looking for—perfect peace!

Shalom is also translated as "welfare, prosperity, a harmony of relationships." Because of this, it is a common form of greeting in Israel.

In the New Testament, peace is not something but *Someone*. Christ made peace by His shed blood. Jesus said, *"I will never leave you nor forsake you"* (Hebrews 13:5). His peace is better than anything the world has to offer. And the best part is, His peace will never leave you!

Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. You have heard Me say to you, "I am going away and coming back to you." If you loved Me, ye would rejoice…. (John 14:27–28) *You can have peace while everyone and everything around you seems to be falling apart. Jesus is coming back soon! Live in His peace. Let it reign and rule in your life. Jehovah Shalom is something to have peace about.*

Scripture Memorization #29

"For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation."
—Ephesians 2:14

30. Our Divine Advocate

Jesus is our advocate in heaven. While the Holy Spirit is the advocate in our hearts, it is Jesus who pleads for us in heaven.

> My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. (1 John 2:1) We have two divine advocates—one within and one in heaven. One is "Comforter"; the other is "Attorney." Jesus pleads our case before God against Satan, our accuser. (See Revelation 12:10.) Jesus is the *"High Priest of our confession"* (Hebrews 3:1). Jesus was the Apostle sent out by God to provide redemption. Having provided redemption, He returned to God to be our High Priest in the presence of God. Before the Father, He confesses the promises we confess. If we close our lips on earth, we silence our Advocate in heaven. Thus, the more we confess, the more we release His high priestly ministry on our behalf.

Remember, His Word does not return to Him void. (See Isaiah 55:11.) Scripture Memorization #30

"[Jesus] is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them."
—Hebrews 7:25

About the Authors

Marilyn Hickey

As founder and president of Marilyn Hickey Ministries, Marilyn is being used by God to help cover the earth with the Word. Her Bible teaching ministry is an international outreach via television, satellite, books, CDs, DVDs, and healing meetings. Marilyn has established an international program of Bible and food distribution, and she is committed to overseas ministry, often bringing the gospel to people who have never heard it before.

Marilyn's message of encouragement to all believers emphasizes the fact that today can be the best day of your life if Jesus Christ is living in you.

Marilyn, along with her late husband, Wallace Hickey, founded the Orchard Road Christian Center in Greenwood Village, Colorado. She has two grown children, five grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren.

Sarah Bowling

Sarah Bowling, the daughter of Marilyn Hickey, is vice president of Marilyn Hickey Ministries and cohost of the internationally broadcast television program *Today with Marilyn and Sarah*. She is the founder of Saving Moses, a humanitarian initiative dedicated to reducing infant mortality throughout the world. She is also a guest speaker at seminars, conferences, and college campuses worldwide. Sarah and her husband, Reece, are senior pastors of Orchard Road Christian Center. They have three children and live in the Denver area.